

How Do Aliens Think?

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Science Channel Looks to Faculty Member David Edelman's Research for Clues

If the stuff of life is spread throughout the cosmos, then the universe could be teeming with aliens. Will alien brains think in ways we understand? Without an alien to study, that seems impossible to answer. But by studying non-humans here on Earth, scientists are learning how alien minds might work. The popular Science Channel program *Through the Wormhole* with Morgan Freeman looked to a number of experts, including Bennington faculty member and neuroscientist David Edelman—whose research involves putting octopuses through mazes—for clues about the inner workings of the alien mind.

Edelman's research explores octopus visual perception and its neural basis using a video-based psychophysical approach. A long-term goal of his work is to combine such psychophysical studies with neurophysiological recording in free behaving animals in order to reveal neural signatures of octopus visual perception that may be compared with those already characterized in vertebrates, and to provide the basis for investigating the possibility of conscious states in the most complex of all invertebrates.