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Nature visits The Animal House **Wednesday, November 2, 2011 on PBS**

Exclusive content and streaming videos available at pbs.org/nature

Before the Bauhaus, there was the “bower” house. Before we built our skyscrapers and subways, termites had long perfected their version of a towering metropolis, while ants and prairie dogs carried out plans for enormous underground cities, complete with heating, cooling, and intersecting highways. Animals build their homes for reasons similar to our own, but they have been building their architectural marvels for much longer, leading to some remarkably sophisticated DIY. From bachelor pads to mega-condominiums, ***Nature*** takes viewers on an open house tour through the animal kingdom to explore the home life of wildlife.

The Animal House premieres Wednesday, November 2, 2011 at 8 p.m.(ET) on PBS (check local listings). Chris Morgan (*Bears of the Last Frontier*) narrates. After broadcast, the film will stream online at pbs.org/nature.

Celebrating its 30th season, ***Nature*** is a production of THIRTEEN in association with WNET New York Public Media, the parent company of THIRTEEN and WLIW21, New York’s public television stations and operator of NJTV. For nearly 50 years, WNET has been producing and broadcasting national and local documentaries and other programs for the New York community.

Guided by instinct, animal architects have developed some of the most innovative and practical dwellings in the world. Beavers build 50-ton log dams, hundreds of yards long, changing the landscape to create a safe environment for their lodges, which are themselves a stronghold from the elements. Prairie dog “towns” consist of tunnels that stretch for miles and accommodate an extended community, including a home-grown police force and a variety of animal tenants.

Ants are spectacular engineers. Leaf-cutter ants can move 40 tons of earth to create a subterranean city for 12 million residents, and army ants are able to create living buildings made entirely of their own bodies – a sort of organic LEGO® set.

In Africa, millions of Socotra cormorants nesting on desert islands off Arabia strategically build their nests just beyond pecking range of their neighbors, creating a kind of “Levittown” community made up of inch-perfect geometric plots. Termites across Africa’s plains build ten-foot-high mounds that provide shelter, food, flood protection, and a temperature-controlled environment, kept within a degree of 86° Fahrenheit year-round.

While some animals use basic building materials, others are more creative. In Borneo, cave swiftlets mold crystal nests from their gluey saliva. New Guinea’s male Vogelkop bower birds are meticulous interior decorators, using their artistic visions to woo a potential mate into their unique seduction pad. Burrowing owls use their décor for a different purpose. The buffalo dung they place outside their front door is really a lure for dung beetles, a tasty treat for the owls. When the beetles come calling, they become lunch.

They may be single-use, multi-generational, or multi-purpose; they may be anything from a small depression in the sand to an elaborate many-chambered tunnel, a nest, a burrow, or a mound, but for animals big and small, these dwellings are always impressive home sweet homes.

Nature is a production of THIRTEEN in association with WNET for PBS. Fred Kaufman is executive producer. **The Animal House** is a co-production of THIRTEEN and BBC in association with WNET New York Public Media.

Nature pioneered a television genre that is now widely emulated in the broadcast industry. Throughout its history, **Nature** has brought the natural world to millions of viewers. The series has been consistently among the most-watched primetime series on public television.

Nature has won more than 600 honors from the television industry, the international wildlife film communities, and environmental organizations including 10 Emmys, three Peabodys and the first award given to a television program by the Sierra Club. In October 2010, the series won the Christopher Parsons Outstanding Achievement Award, given to “an organization or individual that has made a globally significant contribution to wildlife filmmaking, conservation and/or the public’s understanding of the environment.” The award, given by the Wildscreen Festival in Bristol, England, is one of the wildlife film industry’s highest honors.

PBS.org/nature is the award-winning web companion to **Nature** featuring streaming episodes, teacher’s guides, and more.

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About WNET New York Public Media

WNET is America’s flagship public media outlet, bringing quality arts, education and public affairs programming to more than five million viewers each week. The parent company of public television stations THIRTEEN and WLIW21 and operator of NJTV, WNET produces such acclaimed PBS series as [Great Performances](http://GreatPerformances), [American Masters](http://AmericanMasters), Nature, [Need to Know](http://NeedtoKnow), [Charlie Rose](http://CharlieRose), [Tavis Smiley](http://TavisSmiley) and a range of documentaries, children’s programs, and local news and cultural offerings available on air and online. Pioneers in educational programming, WNET has created such groundbreaking series as [Get the Math](http://GettheMath), [Noah Comprende](http://NoahComprende) and Cyberchase and provides tools for educators that bring compelling content to life in the classroom and at home. WNET highlights the tri-state’s unique culture and diverse communities through SundayArts, [Reel 13](http://Reel13), [NJ Today](http://NJToday) and the new online newsmagazine MetroFocus.