

## BIG IDEA

# Pigeons that track pollution

It's a bird! It's a plane! It's... a pigeon wearing a backpack? As part of an experiment that ran March 14 to 17, French startup Plume Labs outfitted 10 of the so-called rats of the sky with tiny sensors designed to offer a real-time snapshot of London's ozone and nitrogen dioxide levels. But the ultimate goal, says Romain Lacombe, who worked on the project, is to get humans to wear similar devices that Imperial College London could mine for shareable insights—like which route people should walk if they want to breathe the best air. “It's harder to get that from fixed monitoring stations, which is how we measure pollution right now,” he says. —*Olivia B. Waxman*



## QUICK TAKE

# The surprising link between dreams and faith

By Kelly Bulkeley

IT'S EASY TO ASSUME THAT DREAMS ARE nothing but neural nonsense: a series of random scenes and images, with few discernible health benefits, that distract us while we sleep. But modern neuroscience tells a different story—namely, that dreams can prime us to be spiritual, in one form or another.

To understand why, it helps to understand what happens to our bodies when we dream. Though we may not be physically conscious during sleep, at times our brains remain extremely active, especially in the networks responsible for visual imagination, emotional memories and instinctual responses.

These are the elements that characterize what psychologist C.G. Jung called “big dreams”: intense, memorable experiences such as magical flying, visitations from the

dead, nightmares of demonic attack and lucid dreams of higher consciousness. And such dreams are fairly common. My research with the Sleep and Dream Database has found, for instance, that about half of American adults (51% of women; 38% of men) say they've had at least one visitation dream, and well over half (75% of women; 68% of men) say they've had one involving lucid self-awareness.

Science may not be able to prove the existence of God or the gods. But it can prove that, for many people, dreams offer a way to expand their sense of reality and attain a higher level of being—not unlike religion.

*Bulkeley is a dream researcher and theologian and the author of Big Dreams: The Science of Dreaming and the Origins of Religion*



## HOW TO DEVELOP A TASTE

Want to trick your kids into eating more veggies? Or get yourself to like foods that are better for the planet? We asked Andrew Zimmern, host and co-creator of Travel Channel's *Bizarre Foods*, for some tips.

1

### TRY DIFFERENT PREPARATIONS

A good place to get ideas: other cultures. Consider “the European model” for kale, says Zimmern: Pick it younger, julienne it, rub it with lemon juice and olive oil, and toss it with some lemon juice, salt and Parmesan cheese.

2

### INCREASE YOUR EXPOSURE

A 2010 study found that children who tried a vegetable they didn't like eight or nine times began to like it more.

3

### ADD A FAIL-SAFE INGREDIENT

Sugar, fat and salt “have become the sex lube of our culinary generation,” says Zimmern. But he's not opposed to them, so long as they're “used very, very prudently.”

