

Write the Docs

James Bennett · PyCon US 2013
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Hi.



django





Bradypus variegatus
(brown-throated three-toed sloth)

SLOTH FACTS

- Can extract energy from low-nutrition food sources
- Multi-part stomachs (up to a month to digest!)
- Native to Central and South America





Software users



Happy sloth
(its name is Herman)

Happy users

- Stay with you
- Promote your software
- Contribute to your software

■ Bad documentation

■ Great documentation

100

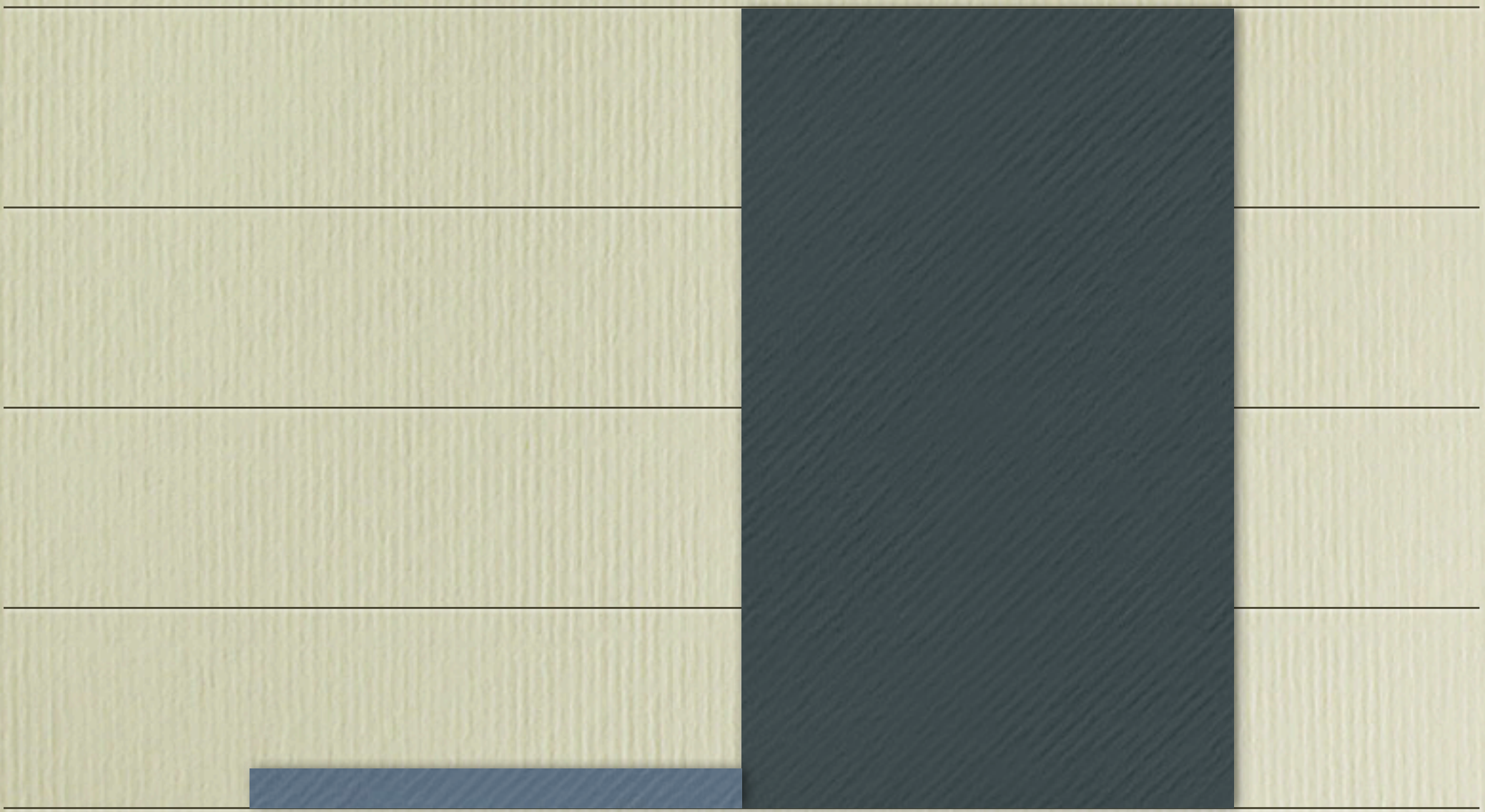
75

50

25

0

Happy users

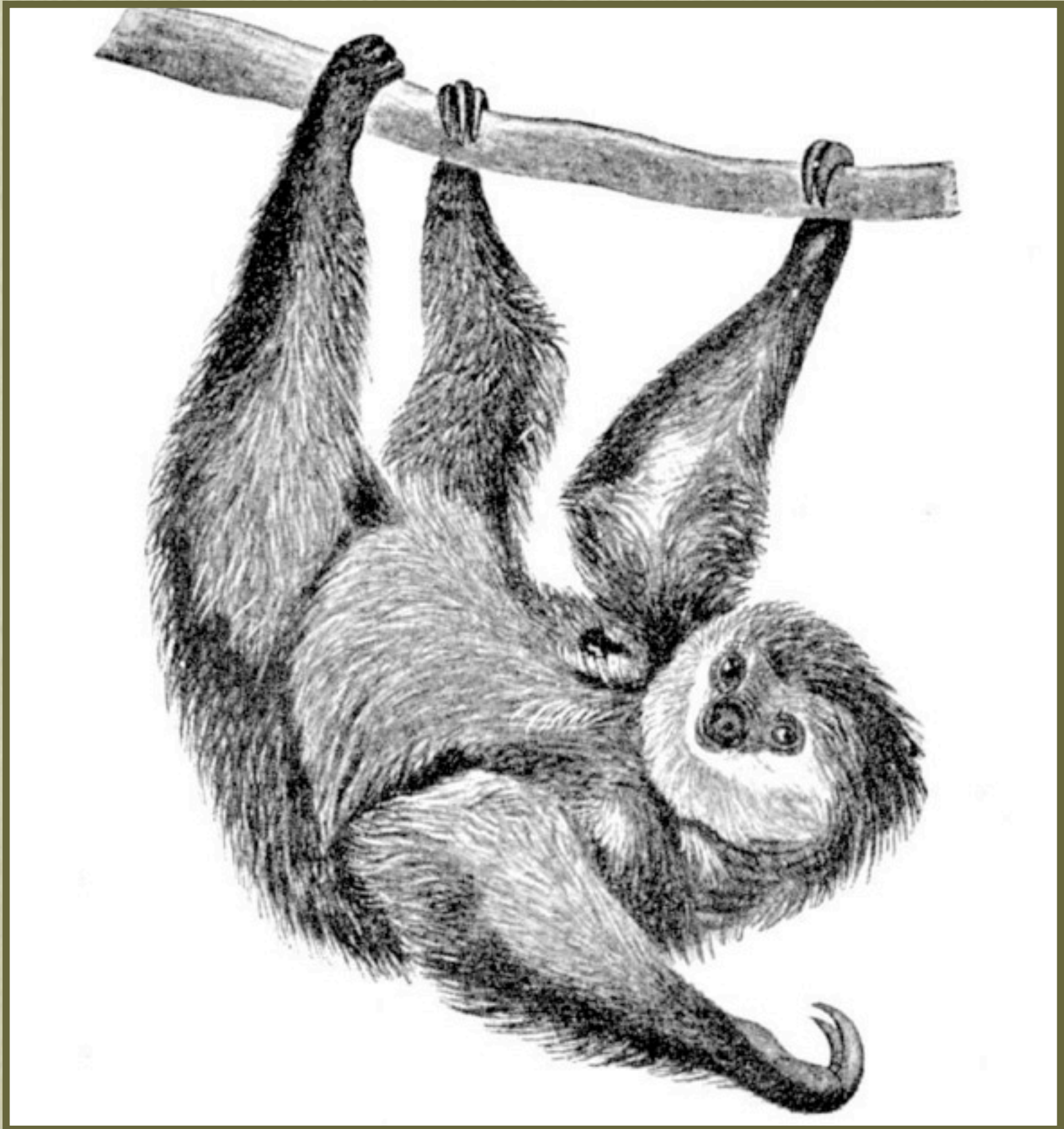


You need great
documentation



Make this happen

The one thing



Remember the second sloth
fact?

Your users have multi-part
stomachs

Here's some stuff

- Tutorials
- High-level overviews
- Specific examples
- API references
- Topical guides
- Downloadable samples
- FAQs
- In-depth guides
- Contributing guides
- Extension guides

FEED



ALL THE STOMACHS

memegenerator.net



Know your audience

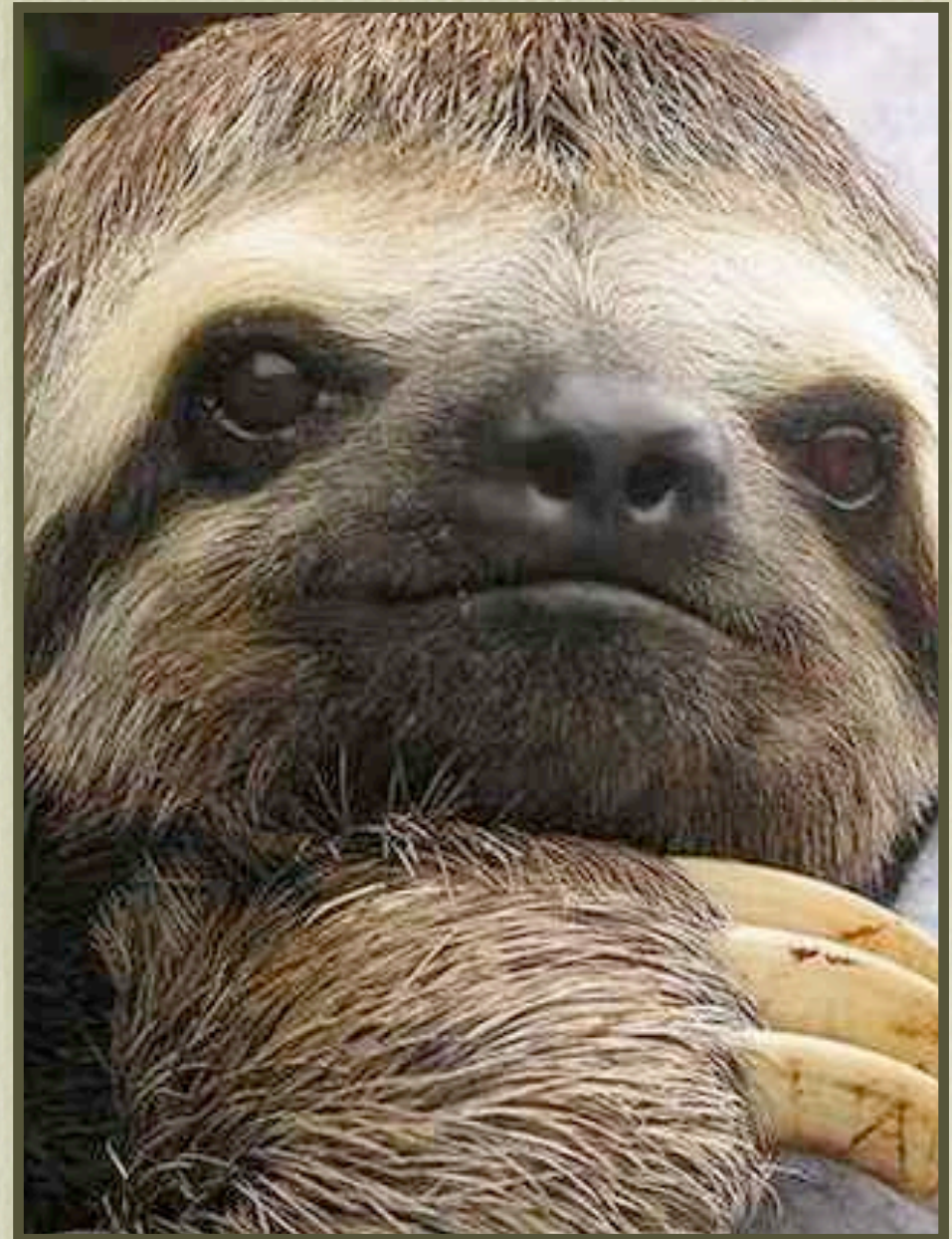
New users

- Assume *nothing*
- Don't bury them in details
- Give plenty of care and feeding (definitions, explanations, examples)



Experienced users

- Assume a few things
- Include plenty of links and cross-references
- Give practical examples





Bonjour



django





Bradypus variegatus
(paresseux à gorge brune)

The worst language
(except for all the others)

Eschew sesquipedalian
loquaciousness



Documentation-driven development

You know how it's supposed
to work

“If the implementation is hard to explain, it’s a bad idea.”

“If the implementation is easy to explain, it may be a good idea.”

No docs = no merge

(but don't go overboard)



Image credits

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/kcunning/4375118615/>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bradypus.jpg>

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<http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/unleashed/2010/08/baby-sloths.html>

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