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SCIENCE

What Will Suspended Animation Really Be Like? A New Study Offers Hints.

By [Annalee Newitz](#) on February 18, 2011 at 1:09 PM

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In early winter, brown bears find a comfy spot in a cave or burrow that's well-protected from the cold. Then they curl up, fall asleep, and don't awaken or eat for five to seven months. It's called hibernation, and until now we weren't really sure what happened in bears' bodies during that time.

How could they survive for half a year without food? Today, Science published the first comprehensive study of bear hibernation, which revealed that many of our assumptions about it were wrong.

What we learned will help scientists studying suspended animation for humans on long space voyages. For one thing, they won't be packed in ice boxes like River Song was on Firefly. Here's why this study means you'll have to revise everything you've learned about cryo-sleep in science fiction. [via io9]

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Kal February 18, 2011 at 2:48 PM [Permalink](#) [Reply](#)
River Tam. River Song is from Dr Who, not Firefly :)

ozoneocean February 18, 2011 at 3:02 PM [Permalink](#) [Reply](#)
OK, this is silly. The study of how bears hibernate was very interesting, but the speculation about how that relates to humans and SciFi is nonsense. Bears hibernate in that specific way because a few million years of evolution have resulted in it, it's a specific physical and instinctual ability that is part of their bodies at a really basic level. As soon as humans grow massive fat layers, layered fur pelts, start eating on fish berries and carrion, gorge themselves in late summer and then go off to sleep in snowy cave through the winter, THEN it might translate.

Maybe in their version of scifi a bunch of woolly humans in flying space caves seems more "realistic" to these people.

randomambling February 18, 2011 at 3:58 PM [Permalink](#) [Reply](#)
yeah – maybe. Never seen a grizzly hook up an IV and some monitoring gear to allow control of a few bodily functions as it goes into the cave though.

Did not even bother to read the article (bad me) but someone someday will get this working in a form. The real challenge is in the changes / damage to brain chemistry and function – particularly long term. Thats before you consider the emotional whack of waking up "substantially" time shifted.
/randomambling

Matt February 18, 2011 at 3:08 PM [Permalink](#) [Reply](#)
Dont we mean River Tam – I doubt Doctor Who's wife River Song has much need for hibernation given the TARDIS' time travelling capabilities

Ryan February 18, 2011 at 3:15 PM [Permalink](#) [Reply](#)
I too mix up my Tams and Songs.

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