Eureka! Daily discoveries for the scientifically bent

by Scott_LaFee

ELECTRON INK

VERBATIM - 'Climate is what we expect, weather is what we get.' - American humorist and writer Mark Twain. CNS Photo WHAT IS IT - This is a scanning electron micrograph of the head of a dung beetle. CNS Photo TRUE FACTS - The strongest surface wind known is a gust recorded during a spring storm atop Mount Washington in New Hampshire in 1934. It measured 231 miles per hour. CNS Photo CAUGHT RED AND DEAD - Observations from NASA's orbiting Spitzer Space Telescope have caught a distant galaxy in a brazen act of theft: It's stealing vast reservoirs of gas from a smaller neighboring galaxy. CNS Photo. Map of Strange

mapofstrange.com

Armchair travelers can see some of the world's more unusual sites here via Google maps - everything from the Cadillac Ranch in Texas to a giant iron atom in Belgium.

OUR IGNOBEL HISTORY

Mayu Yamamoto of the International Medical Center of Japan was awarded this year's 2007 Ig Nobel Prize for chemistry for discovering how to extract vanillin, the essence of vanilla flavor, from cow dung.

'TRUE FACTS'

The strongest surface wind known is a gust recorded during a spring storm atop Mount Washington in New Hampshire in 1934. It measured 231 miles per hour.

BRAIN SWEAT

The following words are all anagrams of other words, their initial letters forming an anagram of another word. What is the answer?

1. bruise

2. warned

3. please

4. listen

5. veined

6. trance

PRIME NUMBERS

28: Minimum speed, in miles per hour, before qualifying winds are designated as Santa Anas

115: Maximum recorded speed, in mph, of Santa Ana wind gusts

29: Degrees Fahrenheit that down-slope Santa Ana winds can warm per mile

Sources: CalFire; NASA

VERBATIM

Climate is what we expect, weather is what we get.

- American humorist and writer Mark Twain (1835-1910)

CAUGHT RED-HANDED

Observations from NASA's orbiting Spitzer Space Telescope have caught a distant galaxy in a brazen act of theft: It's stealing vast reservoirs of gas from a smaller neighboring galaxy. The gas, which is scorching hot, may eventually cool down, providing material for new stars and planets.

In the images sent by Spitzer, a larger galaxy called 3C 326 North can be seen riding atop a smaller galaxy called 3C 326 South. Both are about 1 billion light-years from Earth.

CAUGHT RED - AND DEAD

Trekkies are no doubt already familiar with the Red Shirt Phenomenon, but for earthlings unable or unwilling to boldly go anywhere, the phenomenon refers to the disconcerting likelihood of death for any USS Enterprise crew member who wears a red shirt.

Here's the statistical analysis, courtesy of Matt Bailey (sitelogicmarketing.com):

The starship Enterprise had a crew of 430, of which 59 were killed during the TV series' 80 episodes (1966-69). Of these doomed crew members, 43 (73 percent) wore red uniform shirts. Slightly more than 57 percent of red-shirted crew members were killed while beaming down to a planet.

During the Enterprise's five-year mission, there were 130 fights, occurring onboard, on planets and in various space stations. Some involved aliens, some involved crazed crewmen - the latter often wearing red shirts. In 18 of the 130 fights, somebody died. In 13 of those deadly fights, it was somebody wearing a red shirt.

Red-shirted crew people tended to die in groups: 34 dying in just eight multiple-fatality events. Slightly less than half of them were vaporized.

Bailey notes that the probability of a red-shirted crew fatality was about 53 percent over the lifetime of the show; 72 percent if there was a fight ending with a fatality.

Red-shirt survival rates improved to 84 percent, however, if Captain Kirk made "contact" with an alien female. In only three of Kirk's 24 extraterrestrial relationships was a red-shirt crewman vaporized.

BRAIN SWEAT ANSWER

The answer is: Asleep (3), Nectar (6), Silent (4), Wander (2), Envied (5), Rubies (1).

WHAT IS IT ANSWER

A scanning electron micrograph of the head of a dung beetle, which one hopes never to find in vanilla ice cream. (See Our Ignobel history.)