

by Scott_LaFee

VERBATIM

The dinosaurs became extinct because they didn't have a space program.

TRUE FACTS - To have sex, a yeast cell must reshape itself, becoming elongated like a microscopic pear. CNS Photo. WHAT IS IT? - This is an egg case of a pirate spider attached to a plant stem. CNS Photo. FAKING IT - Researchers say men would enjoy 'chick flick' melodrama movies more if they were told that the plot is all fake. CNS Photo. PICKY EATER - Scientists say the blue tit bird feeds spiders to its young offspring because spiders are rich in taurine, an amino acid that's essential to developing visual acuity, intelligence and resistance to anxiety. CNS Photo. - Science fiction writer Larry Niven

BRAIN SWEAT

Below, 10 nine-letter words have been divided into three-letter segments and mixed up. Using all of the segments, but none more than once, can you re-create the 10 words?

ely rec ant htn fer ort ent cer por sin lig ian lio row use rar lib ive tfo sca ing ing far eth som dif est dig imp mho

'TRUE FACTS'

Yeast cells don't have casual sex. Preparations are involved. In particular, the cell must reshape itself, becoming elongated like a microscopic pear. Scientists have a name for a cell in such a state: "shmoo." The word was coined in 1974 and inspired by the pear-shaped character, the Shmoo, in Al Capp's comic strip, "Lil Abner."

BRAIN SWEAT ANSWER

different, digestive, farmhouse, important, librarian, lightning, portfolio, scarecrow, sincerely, something

ANTHROPOLOGY 101

Numerous tribes in central Australia once kept large banks of dried human foreskins, which were thought to have magical rainmaking properties.

NO THANKS, I'LL GO STRAIGHT TO DESSERT

Ornithologists studying the blue tit, a European relation to the chickadee, had long been perplexed by the bird's culinary tastes. Mother birds invariably seemed to heap large helpings of spiders upon their newly hatched chicks when caterpillars (another food favorite) are juicier, more abundant and much easier to catch.

Kathryn Arnold of the University of Glasgow says she's found a possible answer: Spiders are rich in taurine, an amino acid that's essential to developing visual acuity, intelligence and resistance to anxiety. Interestingly, the mother birds only begin feeding the chicks spiders on day five of life when the chicks open their eyes for the first time.

POETRY FOR SCIENTISTS

Star light, star bright

First star I see tonight.

Wish I may, wish I might

Damn, it's just a satellite.

ELECTRON INK

Adopt a microbe;

adoptamicrobe.blogspot.com

Francisella tularensis is a gram negative bacterium that lives mostly on rabbits, but can also infect humans

with generally bad results. On blogger Emma Lurie's Web site, a cartoon rendering of the bacterium is absolutely adorable. Learn all about microbes. Just don't hug them.

FAKING IT

Conventional wisdom says most guys just don't get movies in which the guy gets the girl, otherwise known as "chick flicks." Better to give them guns and/or gore.

But Canadian researchers say they've discovered how to increase the attraction odds between men and melodramas: Tell the fellows it's all fake.

"We looked at fact and fiction stories and found that if people have high empathy - usually women - they will enjoy a story more if it's based on fact," said Jennifer Argo, an associate professor of business at the University of Alberta. "Conversely, people who are low in empathy, typically males, when you tell them in advance that it's fiction, they'll enjoy it more. We think it's because it gives them an excuse to enjoy it. They let down their guards."

Argo's research, done with colleagues at the University of British Columbia, will be published in the February issue of the Journal of Consumer Research.

WHAT IS IT? ANSWER

The egg case of a pirate spider, attached to a plant stem. The photo was taken by Steven Valley, an entomologist with the Oregon Department of Agriculture. Image courtesy of Nikon Instruments Inc.

Eureka! Daily discoveries for the scientifically bent by Scott_LaFee