

Eureka! Bobbing for the Big Apple

by Scott_LaFee

Sea level is a misnomer. The surface of the ocean varies greatly from place to place. Along the northeastern seaboard of the United States, for example, it's lower than it is farther out to sea.

If climate change greatly affects sea levels within the next 100 years, New Yorkers may be in trouble. Coastal waters are predicted to climb 112 feet around New York, Boston and Washington, D.C., by 2100; sections of Manhattan are only 5 feet above sea level. Four billion meteorites fall to Earth each day, but most burn up in the atmosphere.

Multiple villains, including Napoleon, have been blamed for the loss of the Sphinx's nose. The likely reason is wind and weather wearing down the limestone.

A new computer model, however, suggests New Yorkers and others might want to buy some waders if climate change seriously raises sea levels over the next 100 years.

Created by researchers at Florida State University, the model suggests that climate change will alter the flow of the Gulf Stream and North Atlantic currents, which produce, among other things, the anomalous effect of lower sea levels along the northeast coast.

One possible result: FSU scientists say coastal waters could rise as much as 112 feet around New York City, Boston and Washington, D.C., by 2100. Some parts of Manhattan are just 5 feet above sea level.

Cities such as San Francisco, Tokyo and London are less at risk due to different local ocean conditions.

VERBATIM

We are all born ignorant, but one must work hard to remain stupid.

â€” Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)

BRAIN SWEAT

What is the name of the world's largest number?

JUST ASKING

How can something be "new and improved"? If it's new, it didn't exist before, but if it's improved, it has to have existed previously.

QUIRKS OF NATURE

The first flying bovine was "Elm Farm Ollie," a Missouri cow taken aloft and milked during the International Air Exposition of 1930. During the flight, Ollie produced 24 quarts, which were immediately sealed in cartons and parachuted â€” reportedly still warm â€” to thirsty spectators on the ground in St. Louis.

BRAIN SWEAT ANSWER

There is no such name. If someone were to claim a name, you would simply add a 1 to make a larger number. The term "googol," coined in 1938 by Milton Sirotta and popularized by his mathematician uncle, Edward Krasner, is the digit 1 followed by 100 zeros. A "googolplex" is a googol to the googol power, an astoundingly large number.

In his 1975 documentary "Cosmos," the astronomer-author Carl Sagan estimated that writing a googolplex in base-10 numerals would be physically impossible, since doing so would require more space than the known universe occupies. On the other hand, Sagan noted that "a googolplex is precisely as far from infinity as the number 1."

PRIME NUMBERS

4 " Number of meteorites, in billions, that fall to Earth each day. Most are microscopic and burn up in the atmosphere.

Source: "20 Things You Didn't Know About Everything" by Discover magazine and Dean Christopher

'TRUE FACTS'

Various villains have been accused of blowing the nose off the 6,500-year-old Sphinx in Egypt, among them assorted armies of England, France, Germany and the Middle East.

Napoleon is often cited as the most likely culprit, but there are sketches of a noseless Sphinx dating back to 1737, 32 years before Napoleon was born.

The most likely causes for the nose loss, experts say, were wind and weather acting on the soft limestone.

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