

by Scott LaFee

BRAIN SWEAT

Can you find at least 18 creatures in the following narrative?

Kneel in the kayak grasping the boat, but don't wrench the bullion or scowl at the chart. Behind the taped and sealed painter is a benevolent collier. The foxglove is in the bath.

WINDS OF CHANGE

PRIME NUMBERS - By 2013, South Korea plans to have a robot in every household. CNS Photo.
WHAT IS IT? - This is a dead-leaf mantis found in Malaysia. CNS Photo. FLYING DINOSAUR - Canadian and American scientists say that, based on recovered fossils, microraptors found in China glided between treetops on stacked wings. CNS Photo. By analyzing wood samples 14,000 to 30,000 years old, Dartmouth researchers have concluded that the prevailing winds in the middle latitudes of North America have changed direction. What now blows from the west once blew from the east.

The shift from east to west, says geologist Xiaohong Feng, is a likely manifestation of previous global climate change. Thirty thousand years ago, the prevailing easterlies were the result of meteorological patterns greatly influenced by the Laurentide Ice Sheet, an enormous mass of ice that covered much of northern North America. As the ice sheet receded, the winds changed direction to reflect new global influences.

VERBATIM

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

- Larry Niven, science fiction author

PRIME NUMBERS

2013 - Year by which South Korea intends to have a robot in every household

938 million - Estimated number of gallons of extra gasoline burned each year because Americans are overweight

52 - Percentage of solved cases of identity theft in which the victim turns out to know the thief personally

Sources: Harper's Index; Korean consul general; Sheldon H. Jackson, University of Illinois; Javelin Strategy & Research

2 (plus) 2 = FLYING DINOSAUR?

Biplanes helped mark the beginning of manned flight. Pairs of wings might also have helped an early

feathered dinosaur to fly.

It's a controversial notion, but Canadian and American scientists say that, based on recovered fossils, *Microraptor gui* glided between treetops on stacked wings.

The small feathered dinosaur, whose remains were first discovered four years ago in China, was probably a dead-end experiment in flight. But if paleontologist Sankar Chatterjee of Texas Tech University and R. Jack Templin of Ottawa, Ontario, are correct, *M. gui* was nonetheless a sight to behold in its time.

Chatterjee and Templin contend that *M. gui* possessed a rear set of long feathers that extended parallel to and beneath its outstretched arms.

Others, however, are dubious. Evolutionary biologist Kenneth Dial of the University of Montana told *Scientific American* that the idea was "pure conjecture and absolutely not science ... an arm-waving evolutionary interpretation."

ANTHROPOLOGY 101

In Lithuania, the arrival of the first new potatoes of the season, or the first bread made from new wheat, was celebrated by everyone pulling each other's hair at the dining table.

'TRUE FACTS'

- Sewage effluent from the wastewater treatment plant outside Boulder, Colo., can change male fish into females in just seven days.

- Archaeologists report that at least some Neanderthals practiced cannibalism.

- NASA wants to establish a permanent moon colony by 2024.

BRAIN SWEAT ANSWER

Creatures in order: eel, yak, asp, boa, wren, bull, lion, cow, owl, char, hart, hind, ape, seal, painter, vole, collie, fox, bat. FYI: A char is a troutlike fish, a hart is a male red deer, a hind is female red deer and a painter is another name for a cougar.

WHAT IS IT? ANSWER

A dead-leaf mantis, whose name accurately captures its remarkable camouflage. The mantis, found in Malaysia, comes in a variety of colors, from mottled brown to almost black. When disturbed, it gently rocks as if caught in a breeze. When seriously threatened, it may throw itself from its perch, mimicking a leaf falling to the ground, where it will remain motionless.

Eureka! Daily discoveries for the scientifically bent by Scott LaFee