

ANTHROPOLOGY 101

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VERBATIM

BRAIN SWEAT - Would you rather a crocodile attack you or an alligator? CNS Photo.

WHAT IS IT? - This is an electron micrograph of flu virus particles, coincidentally shaped in the form of a question mark. CNS Photo.

SURELY YOU'RE JOKING - Three people were asked about the significance of a glass half filled with water. CNS Photo.

ANTHROPOLOGY 101 - In some regions of India, it was believed the fruit of a mango tree could not be eaten until the tree was married, usually to a tamarind or jasmine tree. CNS Photo.

EARTHEN JUG - The Earth's iron core contains an underground reservoir of water equivalent in volume, more or less, to the Arctic Ocean. CNS Photo.

PATENTLY ABSURD - Inventors have created and patented a clunky shark suit and helmet made of metal plates studded with spikes. CNS Photo.

This grand show is eternal. It is always sunrise somewhere; the dew is never all dried at once; a shower is forever falling; vapor is ever-rising. Eternal sunrise, eternal sunset, eternal dawn and gloaming, on sea and continents and islands, each in its turn, as the round Earth rolls.

-- John Muir, 'The Wilderness World of John Muir,' edited by Edwin Way Teale (1954)

BRAIN SWEAT

Would you rather a crocodile attack you or an alligator?

POETRY FOR SCIENTISTS

Said a pupil of Einstein,

"It's rotten

To find I'd completely forgotten

That by living so fast,

All my future's my past,

And I'm buried before I'm begotten."

-- Sam Hobbs

BRAIN SWEAT ANSWER

Unless you have a death wish, you'd rather a crocodile attack an alligator.

'TRUE FACTS'

Charles Babbage (1791-1871) is best remembered for his original notions of a programmable computer, parts of which he finished before he died. In his spare time, he also worked out the statistical probabilities of biblical marvels, including the calculation that the chances of a man rising from the dead were 1 in 1,012.

SURELY YOU'RE JOKING

Three people were asked about the significance of a glass half filled with water.

The priest observed: "It suggests that even in a reduced amount, we must be thankful for what we have, which allows us to survive albeit with sacrifice."

The environmental activist opined: "It signifies one of the worst shortages in the world - the lack of clean, drinkable water."

The engineer replied: "You just made the glass too big."

EARTHEN JUG

Using seismic wave modeling, a Washington University scientist has determined that Earth's mantle - the semi-solid layer of rock surrounding the planet's iron core - contains an underground reservoir of water equivalent in volume, more or less, to the Arctic Ocean.

Michael E. Wysession, a professor of Earth and planetary sciences, analyzed 80,000 shear waves from 600,000 earthquake measurements and found that in an area deep below eastern Asia, seismic waves were attenuating or damping out - evidence of the presence of water.

Water is "like a lubricant, constantly oiling the machine of mantle convection, which then drives plate tectonics and causes the continents to move about the Earth's surface," said Wysession.

"Look at our sister planet, Venus. It is very hot and dry inside Venus, and Venus has no plate tectonics. All the water probably boiled off, and without water, there are no plates. The system is locked up, like a rusty Tin Man with no oil."

PATENTLY ABSURD

Shark protector suit

U.S. Patent No. 4,833,729

For the person who likes swimming in shark-infested waters but has nothing to wear, inventors Nelson and Rosetta Fox conceived this clanky, clunky bit of apparel: a suit and helmet of metal plates studded with spikes. For a visual image, think human sea urchin.

Though there's no word on how the suit went over among ocean-goers, it seems quite likely that any swimmer wearing that much metal would very quickly go under.

BITING FACTS

You may want to reconsider that shark protector suit. Newly released research from the University of Florida indicates that shark attacks edged up slightly in 2006, from 61 in 2005 to 62, worldwide. Only four of the attacks, however, resulted in a fatality.

The news is worse for sharks. Despite the slight increase, an overall long-term decline in attacks continues, according to researchers, in large part due to overfishing. There just aren't as many sharks now.

WHAT IS IT? ANSWER

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Eureka! Daily discoveries for the scientifically bent by Scott_LaFee