

by Scott_LaFee

TRUE FACTS

Rhabdophis tigrinus - a venomous snake found in Asia - appears to bulk up its store of venom by eating poisonous toads. Researchers found that snakes with a steady diet of such toads boasted venom glands filled with bufadienolides, a family of toxic chemicals found in the skin secretions of poisonous toads.

VERBATIM

You could perhaps change the flavor (of eggs) or add something interesting for health.

WHAT IS IT? - This is a close-up picture of a brain coral. CNS Photo.

TRUE FACTS - Rhabdophis tigrinus - a venomous snake found in Asia - appears to bulk up on venom by eating poisonous toads. CNS Photo.

MONKEY TRIALS, PART II - In February, a Russian court resumed hearing testimony in the country's first legal challenge to the teaching of Darwin's theory of evolution. Pictured here is Charles Darwin. CNS Photo.

- Francois Pothier, a Canadian animal scientist, on news that Scottish researchers have genetically engineered hens to produce useful drugs in eggs

BRAIN SWEAT

Translate these rebuses: 1. YOU JUST ME 2. EYEE CEXCEPT 3. PICT RES

PRIME NUMBERS

98 billion - Estimated mass, in tons, of 1 square kilometer of the United Kingdom, based upon a geological evaluation of the thickness of the Earth's crust beneath Europe

78.4 billion - Estimated mass, in tons, of same-sized area in Germany

112 billion - Estimated mass of same-sized area of Austria, which, due to the Alps, is deemed to be Europe's densest country

Source: Ananova Science; Nature

ELECTRON INK

Notes and Queries

www.guardian.co.uk/notesandqueries

In 1989, the British newspaper The Guardian began a column answering readers' questions about science, nature and the world. It's one of the best of its type. Look here if you're wondering whether Adam and Eve had navels.

BRAIN SWEAT ANSWER

1. Just between you and me

2. I before E, except after C.

3. You ought to be in pictures

MONKEY TRIALS, PART II

The battle of evolution versus creationism isn't unique to the United States. In February, a Russian court resumed hearing testimony in the country's first legal challenge to the teaching of Darwinian evolution. Mariya Shraiber, a 16-year-old 11th-grader at public school No. 148 in St. Petersburg, sued the Russian Ministry of Education and Science, claiming that her school's biology textbook does not mention alternatives to evolutionary theory, such as creationism. Shraiber, whose backers have created a Web site to promote her cause (www.antidarvin.ru), also contends that the science in Charles Darwin's "The Origin of Species" is unproven and derived from Marxist-Leninist ideology. In fact, Darwin (1809-1889) (pictured) and Karl Marx (1818-1883) were contemporaries. Reportedly, Marx offered to dedicate his most famous treatise, "Das Kapital" to Darwin, whom he admired. Darwin declined. And many historians contend it's doubtful the two men ever actually met. As for Vladimir Lenin being an inspiration for Darwin, it should be noted that Darwin published "Origin" in 1859. Lenin was born 11 years later.

OUR IGNOBEL HISTORY

In 1999, Hyuk-ho Kwon of South Korea won the Ig Nobel Prize for environmental protection. Kwon's

contribution was the invention of the self-perfuming business suit - perfect for hard-working executives too pressed to, well, change clothes. Embedded in the suit fabric are millions of microcapsules of perfume: pine, lavender or peppermint. Ordinary movement causes some of these microcapsules to break open, releasing their scent. The suits are designed to remain aromatic through at least 20 dry cleanings - an estimated two to three years of typical use. Less, of course, if you never change clothes.

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