

by Scott_LaFee

BRAIN SWEAT

ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE - Press tycoon William Randolph Hearst once sent a telegram to a leading astronomer asking if there was life on Mars and to please cable back a 1,000-word reply on the subject. The astronomer sent back: 'Nobody knows,' repeated 500 times. CNS Photo. ELECTRON INK - The www.botanicus.org Web site has 200 historical botanical texts containing plant artwork, all published between 1480 and 1935. CNS Photo. JUST ASKING - What size were hailstones before golf balls were invented? CNS Photo. OUR IGNOBEL HISTORY - In 2001, Jack and Rexella Van Impe were awarded the Ig Nobel Prize in astrophysics for their discovery, proclaimed during their own television show, that black holes fulfill all of the technical requirements to be the location of hell. CNS Photo. PRIME NUMBERS - There are an estimated 10,000 cocaine users in Rome. CNS Photo. WHAT IS IT ANSWER - This is a scanning electron micrograph of normal circulating human blood, including dimpled red blood cells, several types of white blood cells and small, disc-shaped platelets. CNS Photo. Adam had none. Eve had two. Everyone nowadays has three. What are they?

ANTHROPOLOGY 101

Among the Algonquin Indians, a dog was considered man's most faithful and valuable companion. If an Algonquin was entertaining an honored guest, he might pay his visitor the highest compliment by killing a dog and serving it for dinner.

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BRAIN SWEAT ANSWER

The letter e.

VERBATIM

Most science is only high falutin' nature studies.

DONE FISHIN'

In 1938, a fisherman off the coast of South Africa pulled up a coelacanth (see-la-kanth), a fish that had been presumed extinct and hadn't evolved significantly in 300 million years.

Ever since, the still-mysterious coelacanths have occasionally turned up in fishing nets along the coasts of East Africa and Indonesia. Now, biologists fear the ancient fish may actually face extinction.

In the past three years, 32 coelacanths have been caught off the coast of Tanzania, not far from the Comoros Islands, where the main population is believed to be located. The fish, which can weigh more than 200 pounds and boast limblike fins, aren't the intended target of fishermen; sharks are. But biologists say even inadvertently killing some of the fish may be too much.

Efforts are now under way to persuade African fishermen to avoid putting their gill nets in places where coelacanths are believed to reside.

PRIME NUMBERS

10,000 - Estimated number of cocaine users in Rome

0.1 - Nanograms of cocaine found per cubic meter of air in some parts of Rome

10 - Times atmospheric cocaine levels exceeded those of dioxin, a ubiquitous pollutant, in some locations of the city

Source: Institute for Atmospheric Pollution, Italian National Research Council

OUR IGNOBEL HISTORY

In 2001, Jack and Rexella Van Impe were awarded the Ig Nobel Prize in astrophysics for their discovery, proclaimed during their own television show, that black holes fulfill all of the technical requirements to be the location of hell.

The Van Impes are Michigan-based televangelists who incorporate popular science into their programs. Beyond determining that black holes could be Satan's home base, they have also reported that based upon their research, heaven is located in the constellation Orion.

ELECTRON INK

Old plant pictures

www.botanicus.org

These days, most botanists look at photographs, but once it was drawings, which were often quite beautiful. The Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis has digitized 200 historical botanical texts containing such artwork, all published between 1480 and 1935.

WHAT IS IT?

ANSWER

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Copley News Service

Eureka! Daily discoveries for the scientifically bent by Scott_LaFee