

#MARINE

A Spectacular Migration

The **Mobula Rays** migration off Baja California Sur is a mesmerizing dance



Every year, from April to July, the crystal-clear turquoise waters off the coast of Baja California Sur become the stage for one of nature's most stunning spectacles, the annual migration of thousands of mobula rays. Recently, travel photographer and ocean enthusiast @wandering.westerneer teamed up with @bajarawtours to experience and capture this breathtaking event firsthand, immersing themselves in the natural wonder that draws visitors from across the globe.

Mobula rays, often mistaken for manta rays due to their similar shape, are remarkable for their agility and grace. During this migration season, these rays congregate in massive schools, leaping high above the water's surface and gliding in perfectly synchronized formations beneath the waves. Their aerial acrobatics and fluid underwater movements create a mesmerizing dance that has been described as an elegant, choreographed ballet of the ocean.

The spectacle is not just a visual delight but an important ecological event. The mobula rays gather in this region for mating and feeding, signaling the health and balance of the local marine ecosystem. Their presence highlights the rich biodiversity of Baja California Sur's coastal waters, which are home to a variety of marine life, including sea turtles, dolphins, and countless fish species.

@wandering.westerneer's experience with @bajarawtours was not only about photography but also about connecting deeply with the marine environment. The guided tours provide visitors with safe and respectful ways to observe the rays, ensuring minimal disturbance to these gentle creatures and their habitat. Snorkeling and boat excursions offer close-up encounters with the mobulas, allowing visitors to witness their powerful yet graceful movements in their natural environment.

Baja California Sur's unique geography and pristine waters make it an ideal location for this annual migration. The region's commitment to marine conservation helps protect these vital habitats, making it possible for the mobula rays to return year after year. Visitors are encouraged to support local eco-tourism initiatives that promote sustainable interactions with wildlife.

For travelers seeking adventure and natural beauty, timing a trip to Baja California Sur during the mobula ray migration promises an unforgettable experience. The chance to witness thousands of rays leaping and dancing together in the ocean's embrace offers a rare opportunity to connect with nature on a profound level.

Whether you are an avid diver, snorkeler, wildlife photographer, or simply a nature lover, the mobula ray migration is a spectacle that captures the imagination and celebrates the magic of the ocean.



Who's Winning The Tariff War?

● Kshema Jatuhkarna

The United States is losing important, strategic ground to China due to US President Donald Trump's withdrawal from the global stage and his transactional approach to foreign policy, a Democrat-authored report has warned. Surveying Trump's first six months in office, the report warns that his tenure has 'significantly undermined' Washington's ability to compete with China, instead of promoting it.

The report highlights major staff reductions at the US Department of State and the 'chaotic gutting' of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the US Agency for Global Media, which oversees Voice of America and Radio Free Asia, as moves that have weakened US power and influence.

The report, released last month by Democratic members of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, describes China as a 'strategic challenge distinct from any in our nation's history' with a 'long-term strategy to unsettle the United States as the world's leading superpower.'

"While President Trump retreats from every corner of the world, attacking allies, slashing America's diplomatic tools and embracing adversaries, China is building influence, expanding relationships and reshaping the global order to its advantage," US Senator Jeanne Shaheen said, in a statement.

According to the report, China has moved to fill the void created by Trump's withdrawal from global initiatives such as the World Health



Asia has long been seen as a key battleground between Washington and Beijing, and analysts say, because of tariffs, Trump may be ceding ground. For one, given how complex these deals can be, Trump may be overplaying his hand by extending the deadline again, according to some observers. "The bargaining position of the US has actually been diminished as they have revealed that their hand isn't actually as strong as they would like," said NUS Economics professor, David Jacks. And the deals, that are made, could come at the cost of reshaping trade and ties built over decades.

#GEOPOLITICAL SHENANIGANS

at the National University of Singapore. "For some, cooperation with China appears to be an attractive alternative," Chong said. "However, the lack of strong responses to the US tariffs also reflects a reality where economies in the region and beyond realise that they also cannot do without economic cooperation with the United States, however much they may dislike it."

William Yang, a senior analyst for Northeast Asia at the Brussels-based Crisis Group think tank, said that China is increasingly seen as a more reliable business partner amid the uncertainty emanating from the US.

Leaders of a host of US allies have visited China since Trump took office, including Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanya Jaishankar, both of whom met Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing. Earlier this year, Xi also received the prime ministers of Singapore, New Zealand and Spain, as well as the president of Brazil. "That, in turn, might result in a slight improvement of views on China,"

How is China responding to the tariffs?

China had responded to the first round of Trump tariffs with tit-for-tat levies on certain US imports, export controls on rare metals and an anti-monopoly investigation into US firms, including Google.

This time too, it has announced retaliatory tariffs, but it also appears to be bracing for pain with

stronger measures. It has allowed its currency, the Yuan, to weaken, which makes Chinese exports more attractive. And state-linked enterprises have been buying up shares in what appears to be a move to stabilise the market.

The prospect of negotiations between the US and Japan seemed to buoy investors who were fighting to claw back some of the losses of recent days. But the face-off between China and the US, the world's biggest exporter and its most important market, remains a major concern. "What we are seeing is a game of who can bear more pain. We've stopped talking about any sense of gain," Mary Lovely, a US-China trade expert at the Peterson Institute in Washington DC said. Despite its slowing economy, China may "very well be willing to endure the pain to avoid capitulating to what they believe is US aggression," she added.

Shaken by a prolonged property market crisis and rising unemployment, Chinese people are just not spending enough. Indebted local governments have also been struggling to increase investments or expand the social safety net. "The tariffs exacerbate this problem," said Andrew Collier, Senior Fellow at the Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Business and Government at Harvard Kennedy School.

If China's exports take a hit, that hurts a crucial revenue stream. Exports have long been a key factor in China's explosive growth. And they remain a significant driver, although the country is trying to diversify its economy with high-end tech manufacturing and greater domestic consumption. It's hard to



Save The Tigers!

The tiger is the largest of the world's big cats and this magnificent creature, with its distinctive orange and black stripes and beautifully marked face, has a day that is dedicated to it. Today is that day! Wild tiger populations have declined by around 95% since the beginning of the 20th century. International Tiger Day has been created so that people around the world can raise awareness for tiger conservation. The aim of the day is to help promote a worldwide system whereby we are dedicated to protecting tigers and their natural habitats. Celebrate the day by supporting tiger conservation issues and raising awareness!



demands to increase its military spending.

Winner: US or China?

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Trump's choice of posting the letters online, rather than through traditional diplomatic channels, could backfire, said Mr. Capri, who described it as 'political theatre.' The confusion caused is a 'great gift' to China, which is trying to portray itself as a stable alternative to Trump's unpredictability, he added.

But the US market is not easy to replace, and Beijing has its fair share of tensions with countries in this part of the world, from Vietnam to Japan. China is in the middle of its own trade negotiations with the US, although, it has longer to strike a full agreement, until 13 August.

So, who will win more friends in this trade war is hard to say, but the race is still on.

"Both parties see the need for a divorce," Prof. Jacks said, "but getting there will be tough and involve proceedings which will span years, if not decades."

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#HYGIENE

Cut Your Food On Wood Board

Wooden Cutting Boards may be safer than Plastic, studies suggest

In a revelation that challenges decades of kitchen convention, new findings suggest that wooden cutting boards may offer better protection against harmful bacteria than plastic ones. Despite common perceptions that plastic is more hygienic due to its smooth, non-porous surface, evidence now points to the self-sanitizing properties of wood as a safer alternative.

A widely circulated post by health awareness platform *endbackpain* highlights the research, stating that over 99% of bacteria on wooden cutting boards die within just three minutes, while bacteria on plastic boards can survive, and often multiply.



The Science Behind the Surprising Claim

The superior antibacterial behaviour of wood is attributed to two main factors:

1. Natural antimicrobial compounds present in wood.
2. Capillary action that draws bacteria below the surface, away from the environment where they typically thrive.

"Once bacteria are absorbed into the wood,

they're cut off from oxygen and moisture," explained Dr. Ramesh Iyer, a food safety expert. "That prevents them from multiplying, and eventually, they die."

In contrast, plastic cutting boards, while easier to wash initially, can become unsafe over time. Knife marks create micro-grooves where bacteria can hide and flourish. These scratches are difficult to clean completely, even with hot water and detergent.

A Hidden Risk in Every Kitchen?

Cutting boards are one of the most commonly used kitchen tools, yet they rarely get the scrutiny they deserve in food safety discussions. With cross-contamination remaining a major cause of foodborne illness, the material and maintenance of cutting boards are coming under the

spotlight. "Plastic boards may give the illusion of cleanliness," said Dr. Iyer, "but once damaged, they can pose a real risk."

The research has prompted many health-conscious individuals and culinary professionals to reconsider their kitchen habits.

Recommendations for Safer Cooking

Experts recommend a few simple but effective practices to reduce contamination risk.

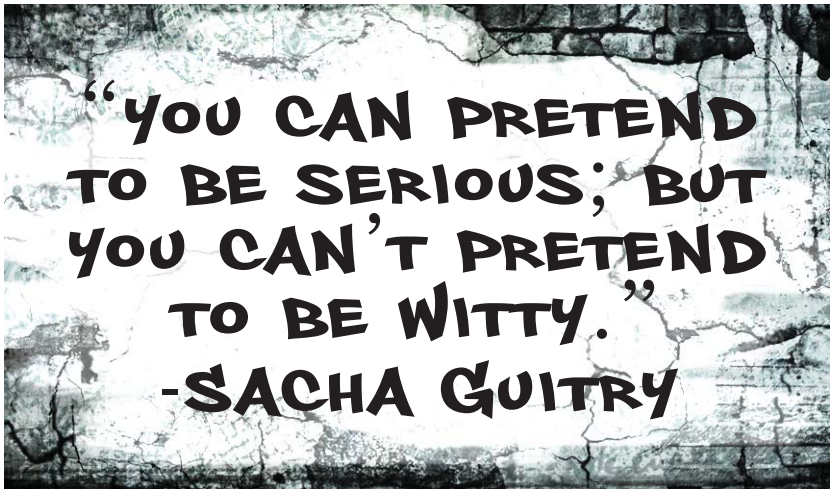
- Use high-quality wooden boards, especially end-grain wood, which is more durable and knife-friendly.
- Avoid using worn-out

plastic boards, especially for raw meat or seafood.

- Wash boards thoroughly after each use and allow them to dry completely.
- Designate separate boards for meats, vegetables, and bread to avoid cross-contamination.



THE WALL

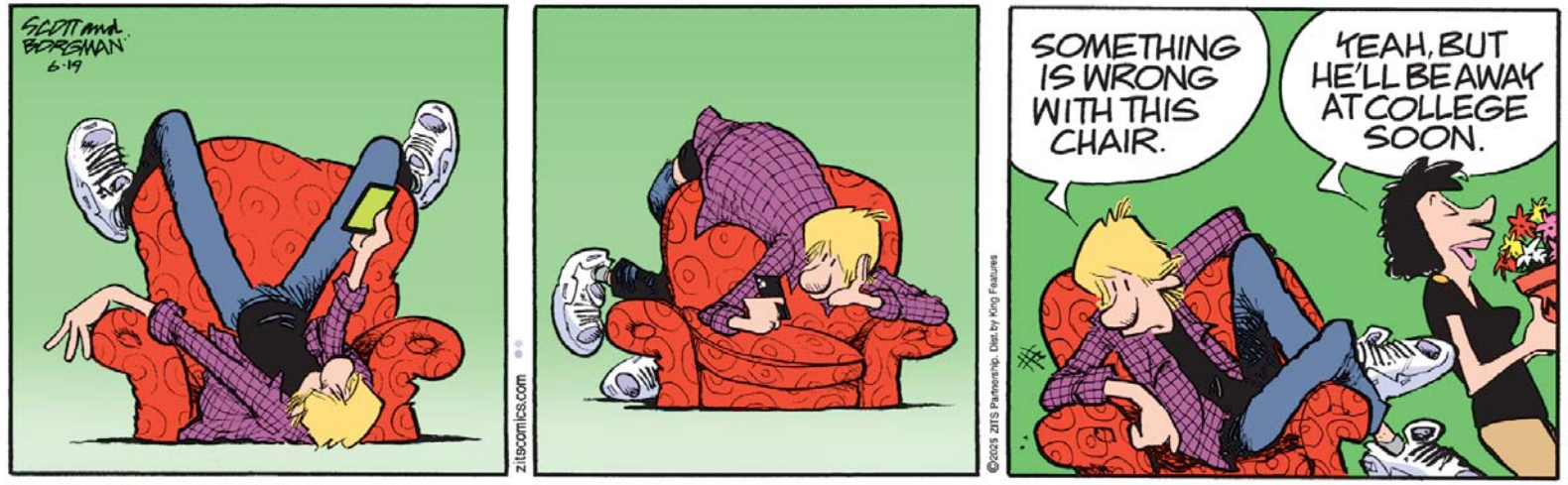


BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman