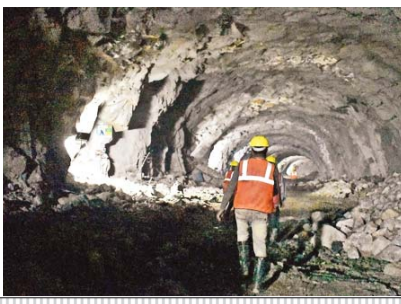


Unveiling Earth's Secrets

Today, on April 6, 2025, we celebrate World Geologists' Day, honoring the scientists who dedicate their lives to studying the Earth. Observed on the first Sunday of April, this day recognizes the invaluable contributions of geologists in uncovering the planet's mysteries and ensuring sustainable development. Geologists play a crucial role in identifying natural resources, understanding seismic activities, and mitigating environmental challenges. On this occasion, geologists and enthusiasts worldwide engage in field explorations, discussions, and awareness programs to highlight the significance of Earth sciences. With pressing environmental concerns and the need for responsible resource management, their expertise is more vital than ever.



#FESTIVITIES

Rejoicing in Righteousness: The Glory of Ram Navami

A Celebration of Devotion, Triumph, and Tradition!



As the sun rises today, ushering in the auspicious occasion of Ram Navami, the air resonates with sacred chants, the fragrance of incense, and the rhythmic chime of temple bells. Across the nation and beyond, mil-

The Divine Essence of Ram Navami

Ram Navami marks the birth of Lord Ram, the seventh incarnation of Lord Vishnu, who descended to establish dharma and vanquish evil. According to the ancient epic Ramayana, Lord

lions come together to celebrate the birth anniversary of Lord Ram, the epitome of virtue, courage, and righteousness. Observed on the ninth day of Chaitra Navratri, this festival is not just a religious occasion but a grand spectacle of devotion, faith, and cultural heritage.

Grand Celebrations Across India

From the sacred city of Ayodhya to temples across the country, Ram Navami is celebrated with grandeur and fervor. Ayodhya, believed to be Lord Ram's birthplace, becomes the epicenter of festivities, drawing thousands of devotees who take holy dips in the Sarayu River, chant hymns, and participate in multi-cent processions. In Varanasi,

Prayagraj, and Rameswaram, temples echo with bhajans, the recitation of Ramcharitmanas, and spectacular Rath Yatra featuring beautifully adorned idols of Lord Ram, Sita, Lakshman, and Hanuman. Many devotees observe fasts, visit temples, and engage in charitable activities, embodying Lord Ram's virtues of compassion and righteousness.

The Rituals and Spiritual Significance

The celebrations typically begin with an early morning puja and abhishek of Lord Ram's idol with milk, honey, and sacred water, followed by the recitation of Ramayana. Houses and temples are adorned with flowers and lights, and spiritual

discourses highlight Lord Ram's teachings. Many regions enact Ramlila, a dramatic retelling of Ramayana's key episodes, drawing huge crowds who immerse themselves in the timeless story of good triumphing over evil.

A Festival Beyond Borders

While India remains the heart of Ram Navami celebrations, the festival also resonates among Hindu communities in Nepal, Trinidad and Tobago, Fiji, Mauritius,

Guyana, and Suriname, where temples host grand processions and religious gatherings, reinforcing Lord Ram's universal appeal as *Maryada Purushottam*, the ideal man.

Ram Navami in the Modern Context

In a world striving for peace and moral righteousness, Lord Ram's life serves as an eternal guide. His values of truth, patience, and duty remain as relevant today as they were thousands of years ago. The festival is not just a day of worship but a reminder to imbibe Ram's virtues in our daily lives.

and sing in unison, Ram Navami becomes more than a festival, it transforms into a spiritual experience, a reaffirmation of faith, and a moment of profound inner peace.

So, whether you celebrate with elaborate rituals or in quiet devotion, may this Ram Navami bring blessings, harmony, and the strength to walk on the path of righteousness, just as Lord Ram did.



Bird-dropping spider



Holly Spanner

Our planet is mind-bogglingly diverse. Different environmental conditions give rise to different characteristics in weird animals of all shapes and sizes. Some evolve for the dark, gloomy depths of the oceans, while others eke out an existence in dry, seemingly inhospitable deserts. Others look seemingly 'normal,' until something triggers their weirdness to come out (a bit like humans?).

Many of nature's weirdest creations hail from the ocean, where complete darkness, sediment-rich waters, high-pressure environments, and near-freezing waters have each led to unique adaptations and some of the most bizarre-looking creatures. Scientists estimate there are anywhere between a few hundred thousand, to over ten million new species waiting to be discovered in the depths of our oceans.

But there are plenty of oddities on land, too. Here are some of the weirdest animals on the planet!

The Most Weird Animals On Earth

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#CLOSER WORLD VIEW



Sea pig



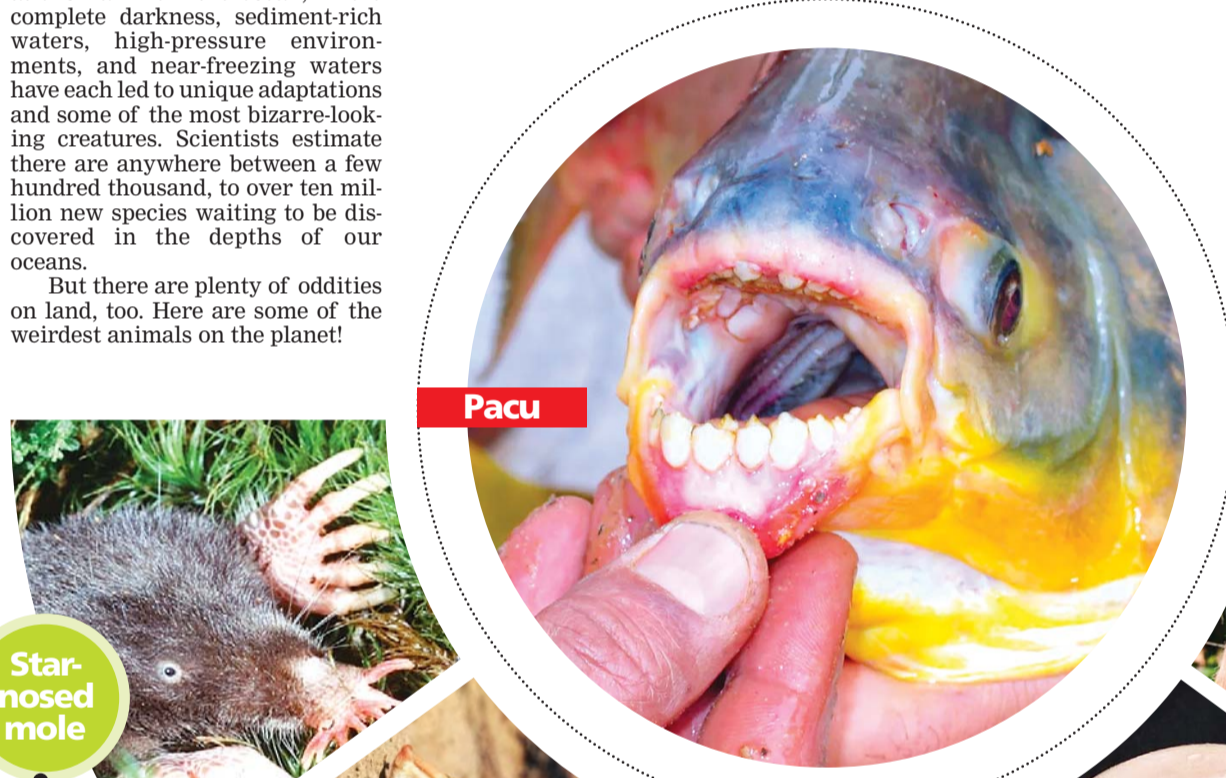
Ghost shark



Penis snake



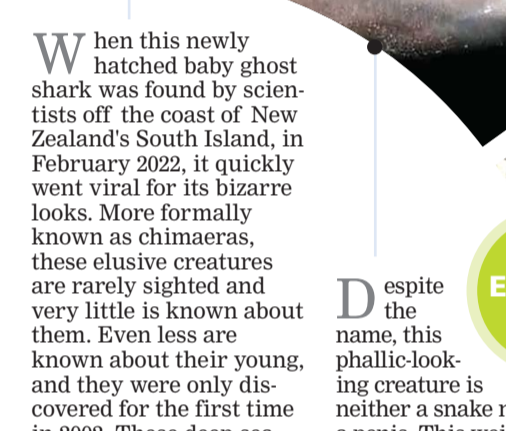
Pink river dolphin



Pacu



Jewel wasp



Echidnas



Tarsier



Star-nosed mole



Uakari



Blobfish



Pink fairy armadillo



Hoatzin



Muntjac deer

Geologists of the animal kingdom, the star-nosed mole can detect seismic waves with 25,000 sensory receptors that make up the fleshy tentacles around its nose. As the only mole to live in swamps and marshes, this weird animal may also be able to detect faint electrical signals from aquatic prey. It can also smell underwater and marshes, this weird animal may also be able to detect faint electrical signals from aquatic prey. It can also smell underwater and marshes, this weird animal may also be able to detect faint electrical signals from aquatic prey.

The pink fairy armadillo is like a fuzzy caterpillar crossed with a lobster. It's the smallest species of armadillo, and at around 13 cms in length, it's small enough to fit in your hand. Living in the sandy plains and dry scrublands of South America, it's also known as the sand swimmer, thanks to its ability to quickly navigate the subterranean sands. Their unique pink colour comes from blood being pumped into their shell for thermoregulation, which helps them maintain a steady core temperature in the hot, arid climate.

Surely, the Hoatzin is one of the weirdest Amazonian birds. As babies, the chicks have claws on their wings which they use to climb trees. Adults ferment vegetation, much like a cow, albeit in a specialised crop. It gives them a manure-like odour, hence their nickname, the stinkbird.

No, they haven't been washing with beetroot, but the healthiest males do have the reddest faces. Females seem to know this, and choose their mates based on how red the male's face is. Who says beauty isn't skin deep?

This bedazzling wasp will happily take on creatures much larger than itself. In the picture above, it's eyeing up a cockroach (for this reason, it's also known as the emerald cockroach wasp). After injecting the brains of their prey with a stupefying venom, they bury it alive and lay their eggs in the grave with the now-zombie prey. The larvae will then feed on the creature until they are fully grown. Last of us, eat your heart out. Literally.

When this newly hatched baby ghost shark was found by scientists off the coast of New Zealand's South Island, in February 2022, it quickly went viral for its bizarre looks. More formally known as chimaeras, these elusive creatures are rarely sighted and very little is known about them. Even less are known about their young, and they were only discovered for the first time in 2002. These deep-sea denizens reside at depths of between 400 and 6,500 feet (122 - 2,011 m) where water temperatures are near freezing. Their dead eyes and large wing-like fins, a characteristic better suited to flying, give rise to their ghoulish name. Despite the name, ghost sharks are not actually part of the shark family, rather they are a species of fish and have a skeleton made from cartilage, instead of bone. Having a low-density skeleton, like cartilage, is crucial for life at depth, as it won't collapse under increased pressure. That said, they do lay egg capsules (also known as mermaid purses) on the seafloor, just like sharks do. The egg capsule protects the embryo as it develops, where they feed off a yolk, until they are ready to hatch. "You can tell this ghost shark recently hatched because it has a full belly of egg yolk. It's quite astonishing. Most deep-water ghost sharks are known adult specimens, neonates (newly born) are infrequently reported, so, we know very little about them," says NIWA Fisheries Scientist, Dr. Brit Finucci, who was part of the team that made the discovery. With a retractable penis-like appendage on its head, scientists are keen to learn more about these weird animals, and get a sense of population numbers, as so little is known about these elusive fish.

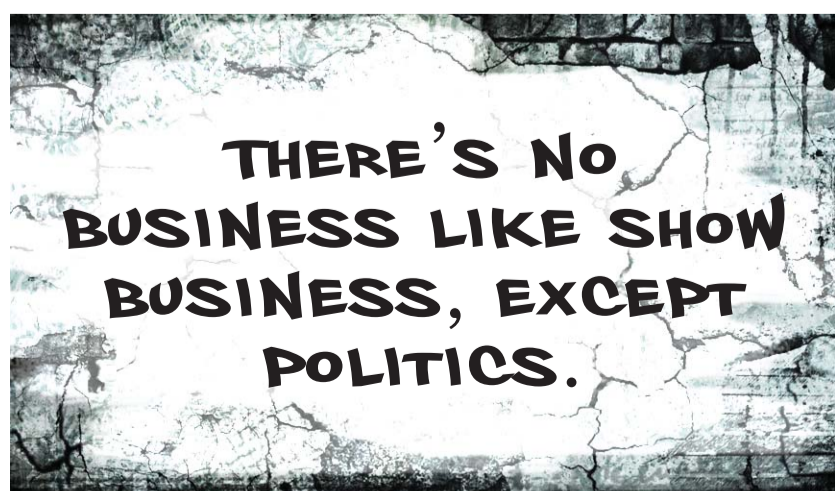
Despite the name, this phallic-looking creature is neither a snake nor a penis. This weird animal is actually a type of caecilian, a limbless amphibian that bears more than a passing resemblance to a certain part of the male anatomy. So naturally, this creature also goes by names such as the 'manaconda' or 'floppy snake,' its Latin designation is *Ambystoma eiseni*. Little is known about the species, and from its discovery in the late 1800s to its rediscovery in 2011 from the same region, there were only two preserved specimens. It's the second-largest lungless tetrapod, breathing instead through its skin, and is the largest-known caecilian, growing up to 81 cms in length. It is thought that they can live between 5 to 10 years. Unlike most caecilians, which are burrowers, most scientists agree that the penis snake is actually aquatic, like other lungless tetrapods. It has poor eyesight, their eyes are barely visible under the skin, but has a keen sense of smell, which it uses to navigate. This combination is ideal, given they tend to live in Amazonian rivers where visibility is poor.

This freshwater cetacean is the largest species of river dolphin. They are born grey and acquire their pink colour with age. The final hue is influenced by many things, including behaviour, diet and how close their capillaries are to the skin.

A master of camouflage, the great potoo is a carnivorous bird that lives mostly in tropical America. Remaining completely still, the great potoo blends in with its surroundings by mimicking a tree stump or branch as it patiently waits for unsuspecting prey. And, it doesn't even give itself away by opening its eyes. Thanks to tiny openings below their eyelids, this nocturnal bird can see even when its eyes are closed, helping them spot even the most minute amount of movement.

This awesome slime ball can spew out thick, sticky goo that will clog up the gills of any predator that dares dine on it. The hagfish is a type of agnathan, a jawless fish with an eel-like body. But if you've seen this slimy surprise doing the rounds on social media, you'll know that it produces copious amounts of thick slime as a defence mechanism when threatened, allowing it to escape predators. Hagfish are ancient, they evolved around 500 million years ago, so, these slimy scavengers are clearly doing something right. Here's to survival of the slimmest!

THE WALL

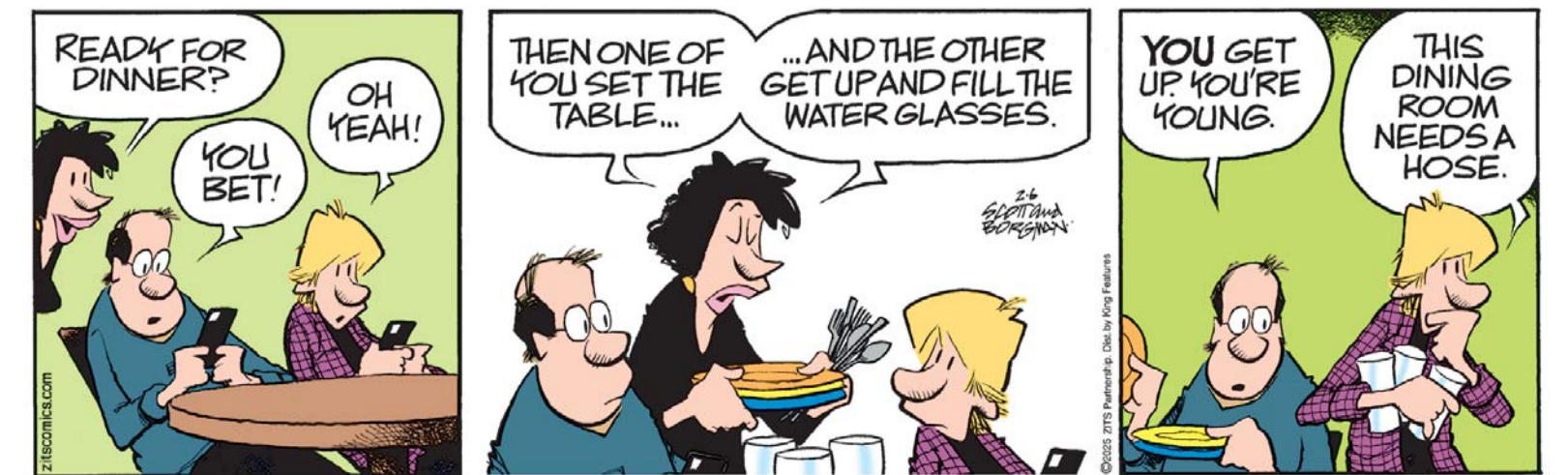


BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman