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#FESTIVITIES

Rejoicing in Righteousness: The Glory of Ram Navami

A Celebration of Devotion, Triumph, and Tradition!



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

lions come together to cele brate 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

🗅 am Navami marks the **N** birth of Lord Ram, the seventh incarnation of Lord Vishnu, who descended to establish dharma and vanquish evil. According to the

rom the sacred city

grandeur

Ram was born in Avodhva to King Dasharatha and Queen Kaushalya, bringing divine blessings to humanity. His life filled with trials, sacrifices and unwavering dharma, continues to inspire millions

ravagrai, and Rameswaram Avodhva to temples temples echo with bhajans. the across the country. Ram recitation Navami is celebrated with Ramcharitmanas, and spectacular Rath Yatras featuring and fervor. Avodhva, believed to be Lord beautifully adorned idols o Ram's birthplace, becomes the Lord Ram, Sita, Lakshman, epicenter of festivities, drawand Hanuman. Many devotees ing thousands of devotees observe fasts, visit temples, who take holy dips in the and engage in charitable activities, embodying Lord Sarayu River, chant hymns, Ram's virtues of compassion and participate in magnifi-

and righteousness.

umphing over evil.

matic

discourses highlight Lord

Ram's teachings. Many

regions enact *Ramlila*, a dra-

Ramayana's key episodes.

drawing huge crowds who

immerse themselves in the

timeless story of good tri-

Guyana, and Suriname, where

temples host grand proces-

sions and religious gather-

ings, reinforcing Lord Ram's

universal appeal as Maryada

and sing in unison, Ram

Navami becomes more than a

festival, it transforms into a

spiritual experience, a reaffir

mation of faith, and a momen

with elaborate rituals or in

quiet devotion, may this Ram

Navami bring blessings, harmony and the strength to

walk on the path of righteous

ness, just as Lord Ram did.

So, whether you celebrate

of profound inner peace.

Purushottam, the ideal man.

retelling

The Rituals and Spiritual Significance

he celebrations typically begin with an early morning *puia* 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

cent processions. In Varanasi,

A Festival Beyond Borders

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

Ram Navami in the Modern Context

n 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.

As devotees bow their heads in prayer, light diyas,



🗕 Holly Spanne



glingly 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 cre ations 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!



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 marsh es, this weird animal may also be able to detect faint electrical signals from aquatic prev. It can also smell underwater by blowing air bubbles and sucking them back into its nose, one of only two species that can do this (the other is the water shrew). It also wins the prize for one of the fastest eaters in the world taking less than a quarter of a second to slurp down a meal. Gulp

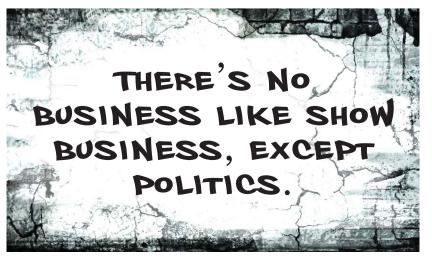
The pink fairy armadillo is like a fuzzy caterpillar crossed with a lobster. It's the smallest species of armadillo, and at around 13 cms in length, it's small enough to fit in your hand Living in the sandy plains and dry scrublands of South America, it's also known as the sand swimmer, thanks to its 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.

THE WALL



The Most Weird Animals **On Earth**





Hoatzin

C urely, the

the weirdest

Hoatzin is one of

Amazonian birds. As

babies, the chicks

wings which they

use to climb trees.

Adults ferment vege

tation, much like a

cow, albeit in a spe-

them a manure-like

odour. hence their

nickname, the

stinkbird.

cialised crop. It gives

have claws on their

enowned for its gelati-

N nous, droopy appear-

ance, the blobfish has adapt-

ed to the extreme pressures

of the deep ocean. Its pecu-

liar visage has earned if the

title of 'world's ugliest ani-

mal.' Although that's per-

haps a little unfair, given

thanks to its appearance

outside of its natural habi-

tat. But despite its seeming-

ly unusual form, the blob-

fish is a fascinating exam-

ple of how weird animals

thrive in diverse and chal-

lenging environments.

that name was derived,

n his 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 prev 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

o, they haven't

with beetroot, but the

BABY BLUES





Pin fairy Irmadi



Unveiling Earth's Secrets

oday, 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.

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.

#CLOSER WORLD VIEW

Penis

snake



L Scotoplanes globose, is a species of sea

cucumber named after its round body and pink colouring, and is certainly one of the weirdest animals. These bloated, water filled sausages can grow up to 15 cms in length, and are found in all of the vorld's oceans. There's a ot of them, too. When here's a tasty meal to be had, for example, a whale corpse that has sunk to the seafloor, sea pigs will gather in their hundreds to take advantage of the feast, using a ring of feed ing tentacles to shovel food nto their mouths. Just like a real pig, they'll eat almost anything. Like the blobfish, these deep-sea vacuum cleaners have evolved for life at depth been washing specifically on the abyssa plain in the Atlantic. nealthiest males do Pacific, and Indian Oceans have the reddest faces. The weird animals pump Females seem to know water around their bodies this, and choose their to keep themselves inflated mates based on how and bringing them too red the male's face is. | close to the surface causes Who says beauty isn't them to shrivel up and die.

skin deep? Sea pigs have a pretty effective defence, too Toxic chemicals in their skin deter predators from wanting to chow down on this forbidden sea bacon. But this doesn't seem to bother another inhabi tant of the seafloor, juvenile king crabs. In fact, they may use this toxic trait to their advantage. On the flat, muddy plains of the seafloor, where it's difficult to burrow and hide from predators, the baby king crabs hitch a ride on wondering sea pigs. Clinging to the sea pigs' 'belly,' the vulnerable baby king crabs are safe from predators, while they your heart out. Literally. shed their shell to grow.

very little is known about hem. 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 6.600 feet (122 - 2,011 m) where water temperatures are near freezing. Their dead eyes and large wing-like ins, a characteristic better suited to flying, gives rise to their ghoulish name. Despite the name. ghost sharks are not actu ally 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 embrvo as it develops, where they feed off a volk, until they are ready to hatch. "You can

hen this newly hatched baby ghost

shark was found by scien

tists off the coast of New Zealand's South Island, in

February 2022, it quickly

looks. More formally

nown as chimaeras

nese elusive creature:

are rarely sighted and

vent viral for its bizarre

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 num-

bers, as so little is known

about these elusive fish.

 ${
m D}_{
m the}^{
m espit}$ name. thi phallic-looking creature is neither a snake nor a penis. This weird animal is actually a type of caecilian, a nbless amphibia that bears more than a passing resemblance to a certain part of the male anatomy. So naturally, this crea ture also goes by names such as the manaconda' or 'flop py snake,' its Latin designation is Atretochoana eiselt 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, breath ing instead through its skin, and is the largest-known cae cilian, growing up to 81 cms in length. It is thought that they can live between 5 to 10 years. Unlike most caecilians, which are burrow ers, most scientists agree that the penis snake is actually aquatic, like other lung-less tetrapods It has poor evesight, their eves are barely visible under the skin, but has a keen sense of smell. which it uses to navigate. This combination is ideal,

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

Pink

river

dolphii

7 hich animal has the **VV** weirdest penis in the animal kingdom? Well, the echidna's penis has four heads and looks like a foot. It's also huge, measuring in at one third the length of the animal. Also known as the spiny anteater, the echidna is one of only two egg-laying mammal species alive today, the other being the platypus

ZITS

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

movement

master of camou

Muntja deer O ften referred to as the 'barking deer,' the muntjac deer is a

small, stocky mammal with fabulous glands. Native to parts of Southeast Asia but now common in the British countryside, these deer have adapted well to various habitats and are often found in woodland areas. Their petite size, robust build and impressive jumping ability allow them to navigate dense vegetation, but it's their inflating facial glands that have captured the attention of the public. These glands can open so wide that they can actually turn inside out!

Siphon- ${f M}$ eet the longest animal in the world, the siphonophore. Yes, it's even longer than the blue whale. At 45 m (150 feet), the blue whale

length of 29.9 m (98 feet) is a mere baby in comparison. This specimen, seen here arranged in a feeding spiral. was encountered in 2020 as part of Schmidt Ocean Institute's deep-sea expedition. But be warned, it's a relative of the Portuguese man o' war, and is trailing deadly, stinging tentacles through the water. Think of it a bit like a wall of death. albeit a very different type to the Butlins ride with the same name.

with a maximum confirmed



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

given they tend to

live in Amazonia

ity is poor.

rivers where visibil









By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman