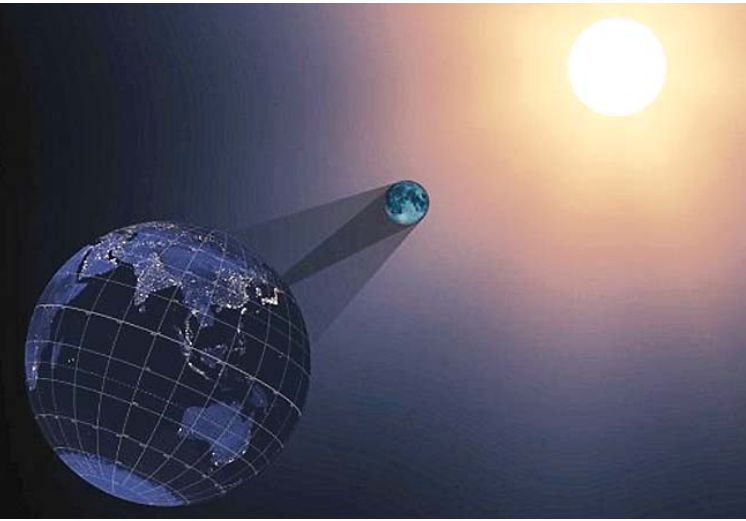


#ENVIRONMENT

BEES STOPPED BUZZING DURING ECLIPSE

Bees there ceased flying and fell nearly silent for the duration of eclipse, the scientists suspect that the bees went into ‘nighttime mode’ in response to the sudden loss of sunlight



During a solar eclipse on, bees stopped buzzing, according to new research. At 16 points along the path of the total solar eclipse, tiny microphones, each about the size of a USB flash drive, captured a unique biological phenomenon. As Earth fell into complete darkness, the bees fell silent.



“Getting dark in the middle of the day is not something that happens in a bee’s normal life,” says lead researcher Candace Galen, professor of Biological Sciences in the College of Arts and Science at the University of Missouri. “It’s a behavioural mis-cue,” Galen says. “Here darkness is a cue for night that a bee is familiar with, but it’s coming at the wrong time of the day. Did they use it as a cue or not, even if it is completely out of context? What we found is yes, they do.” Millions of Americans paused that afternoon to watch the eclipse. As it passed overhead, researchers buzzed into action assisted by approximately 400 people, scientists, volunteers, and elementary school students and teachers in Missouri, Idaho, and Oregon, including over 200 elementary school students and teachers from Columbia Public Schools in Missouri, gathering audio data on the behaviour of bees. At each of the 16 locations, these groups placed the microphones near bee-pollinated flowers and away from

human-generated traffic. Previous research conducted on bee behaviour notes that bees commonly fly slower at dusk and return to their colonies at night. In this study, researchers found that while bees completely stopped buzzing during totality, they continued to fly during the periods of reduced light that occur in the phases of a partial eclipse.

“It’s a soundscape,” Galen says. “What we have is a buzz that is longer. Either the bees were flying more slowly or making longer flights.” The study appears in the *Annals of the Entomological Society of America*. A Juliana Steinhölder Duncombe mini-grant from the American Astronomical Society supported the work. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the funding agencies. Additional researchers from the University of Missouri, Lincoln University, and Willamette University in Oregon contributed to the work.



The H-1B changed American food forever

● Vikram Doctor

Bombay Based Now US Settled Lauva Patel bay MS Computer Science (US) H-1B Visa, 27, 6 ft arriving November for marriage.” This matrimonial ad ran in *The Times of India* on October 24, 1993. It was one of the first mentions in the newspaper of the H-1B visa, which has been rolling relations between Elon Musk and Donald Trump’s MAGA maniacs since December.

The H-1B visa category was created in 1990 to allow US employers to get specialist workers because their demand for tech workers is far more than the America alone can provide. When the category was created, H-1B visas were projected as the short-term fix for this problem. They are explicitly temporary and, if terminated, holders must return to their home country.

Musk and his fellow technocrats support bringing highly skilled foreign workers to the US. But anti-immigration zealots note how huge numbers, particularly from India, have used H-1B visas to get a foothold into the citizenship process. Once in the US, these temporary workers become irreplaceable and their employers eventually sponsor their green cards for permanent residency. In this view, the H-1B category is a Trojan Horse for migrants and Trump must end it, as he promised in the past. Trump himself seems to be wavering between Musk’s view, “We need smart people,” he told a reporter, and his desire for dramatic decisions with which to kick off his presidency. As that early matrimonial ad indicates, the promise of a more permanent move was always implicit in the H-1B visa, at least to the applicants. It was not just the visa holder moving, but often the spouse as well. Right at the outset, the H-1B programme had anticipated this and its solution was to ban spouses from working. Any hint that a spouse might be looking to work in the US would be grounds to deny the visa. The H-1B visa was not gendered, but in its early years, the vast majority of applicants were men. (Some Indian women would go to work as nurses

under the parallel H-1A visa scheme). This meant that a very large number of Indian women, usually well-educated and with existing careers in India, went to the US, only to just sit at home, as mandated by the H-1B visa rules. The expectation from their families was, of course, that they would have children and rear them. Before that, they would take care of the home for their husbands and, above all, cook. It did not matter that many of these women, previously focused on education and a career, had not done much cooking back in India. Once in the US, they had a husband to feed and time on their hands, so, they were suddenly thrust back into traditional roles for Indian women. Radhika MB’s *Visa Wives* is a detailed study of their experiences, made personal by the fact that the author herself moved to the US in 2011 after her husband got a job there. The stories vary widely, ranging from wives who found the move liberating to those who could not adjust and drifted into depression and sickness, even requiring a return to India. Most fall somewhere in between, but one constant is the importance of food.

It would start with the packing. Vanitha, one of the visa wives, travelled in the pre-9/11 days. “When pickles were still allowed in hand baggage. She carried about 10 kgs of different varieties of pickle, mango, methi (fenugreek), gongura, tomato, imli (raw tamarind), among others. Masalas and chutney podis were part of her luggage too.” A pressure cooker was a must. Radhika notes that they are available in US stores “but they are nothing like the little one you use in your Indian kitchen.” Once in the US, culture shock often really hit while shopping for vegetables. Translating the prices into rupees was traumatic at first, but there was the relief at finding familiar Indian vegetables like hara chana (green chickpeas), kanda (elephant yam), dosakai (Madras cucumber) and avarakai (flat beans), even if they came in frozen form. Indians, who went to the US in the 1970s, had it much harder. My uncle, a doctor, told me how groups of Indians made joint trips every few months from the distant towns they worked in to the few stores like Kalustyans in New York City which stocked desi ingredients.



Foreign food usually travels in mainstream locals through migrant workers, working class, refugees, but Indian cuisine ran through visa wives.



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Tabu and Irfan in *The Namesake* (2006).

#FOOD

Point of entry

The H-1B wave has changed all that, making stores selling Indian food a viable proposition across the US. The Patel Brothers chain now has over 50 stores in 20 states where customers can either shop in person or order online for delivery from their nearest branch. Similar stores can be found at other locations with large Indian clusters. “The only things you can’t find at Indian stores are your mom and dad. Everything else they manage to stock,” Radhika quotes one visa wife as saying.



Though the H-1B visa was not gendered, the vast majority of applicants in early years were men. While they went to work, wives were not allowed under visa rules from working.

were staffed mostly by men, whose families came later and did not work in the restaurant (but did work in other businesses like corner shops). British Chinese restaurants were more likely to see whole families working behind the counter, wives serving customers or keeping track as cashiers, while their husbands cooked.

There are other ways in which cuisines become popular, such as corporate-led restaurants like Taco Bell (Mexican food) or Jollibee (Filipino food) or through elite groups, like royalty or hipsters, whose love for a particular style of cooking popularises and makes such food aspirational (for instance, the Italian cuisine brought by Catherine de Medici to France in the 16th century, which transformed French cuisine, or the hipster obsession with flat whites and other aspects of coffee culture). The H-1B visa facilitated a new model where visa

wives developed and perfected traditional food from their regional Indian communities and then found ways to make it more available, through potlucks, local fairs and, eventually, even restaurants. Combined with the easier availability of regional Indian ingredients, this is making a far more diverse Indian cuisine available in the US than was the case with, for example, Chinese-American or Mexican-American food. Indian restaurants in the US may still be broadly grouped into categories like South Indian, Punjabi or Gujarati (as they are in India), but there is still likely to be more diversity available, especially if you include home catering options offered by the visa wives. As a contrast, Indian food in Canada tends to be dominated by Punjabi and Caribbean Indian cuisine, both with roots in working-class immigration without H-1B style restrictions on spouses working.

Building relations

Logging about food but also childreare, crafts and other domestic subjects was transformational for many visa wives. It put them in touch with others like them, a vital connection especially for those in places where there were not many other Indian families. It also gave them a sense of self-worth, as they built their writing and photography skills, and used feedback to hone their recipes to the type of food most in demand.

Their husbands were often supportive, seeing this as a way to create potentially marketable skills, while still remaining within the not-working rules of the visa. This was not exactly a relinquishment of control, Radhika notes that this kind of domestic blogging was non-threatening: “Would they be as comfortable if she were to blog about world politics and policy? Not sure. They freak out if

she gives an interview about her life to publications. What if she says something that jeopardises their stay?” The H-1B shadow still loomed.

Bloggers started organising meetings and conventions that gave the visa wives a rare opportunity to travel for themselves, rather than with their families. It helped that some were organised by well-known personalities like chef Vikas Khanna who understood the wider importance of food media. “Cooking means freedom. It’s a freedom of thought, that you are not dependent,” he says in Radhika’s book. “For people who don’t travel much, don’t have a driver’s licence, who are stuck at home, cooking becomes one of the primary ways of spending evenings, and cooking shows that become a delight.” Indian contestants started appearing on shows like *MasterChef US*. In 2015, Hetal Vasavada became the first vegetarian contestant on the show.

Celebrating the Art of Performance



Actors’ Day honours the craft, creativity, and dedication of performers who bring stories to life on stage and screen. From theatre to cinema, television to digital platforms, actors immerse themselves in diverse roles, capturing human emotions and experiences that resonate across cultures. This day recognises not just the glamour of stardom, but also the discipline, vulnerability, and hard work behind each performance. It’s a reminder of how storytelling shapes our collective imagination, challenges perspectives, and inspires empathy. Actors’ Day celebrates both legendary icons and emerging talents who continue to redefine the art of performance.

Food habits

Indian restaurants in the US may still be grouped under categories like Punjabi, Gujarati etc.



Anita Jaisinghani always wanted to go to culinary school, but her parents steered her firmly towards sciences. Her own route to the US was a bit circuitous. An early marriage was followed by a few years in Canada, where she studied and worked in microbiology as her husband worked several jobs while hoping to land the tech gig he really wanted. Finally, when this happened, the family moved to the US with Jaisinghani, now a visa wife, having to stop working.

Jaisinghani had maintained an interest in cooking, using her husband and two kids as “unsuspecting subjects of my relentless cooking experiments,” she writes in her cookbook *Masala: Recipes from India, the Land of Spices*. This was not just Indian food, since she happily used access to ingredients and recipes from around the world as part of her experimentation. But she could see how poorly Indian food was represented in restaurants in Canada and the US, and that made her think of filling the gap.

In Houston, where her family came to live, Jaisinghani started catering from home along with a Moroccan friend. Then, she started selling fresh chutneys at local markets and followed this by taking a leap and doing a stint at a well-known restaurant to learn the ropes. Ultimately she went on to open two successful restaurants, Indika and Pondicheri. When her first place was featured in the Houston Chronicle, she showed it to her father (her mother had died earlier). “Is this really your place? Are people paying for your cooking,” he asked in amazement. He is now very proud of her success in the food world.

Krishnendu Ray, professor of Food Studies at New York University’s Department of Nutrition and Food Studies, saw this pattern many times while researching his book *The Migrant’s Table*, about food habits in Bengali-American households. “Most of the women in my sample of 126 households were (a) substantially underemployed for their education credentials due to their visa status and (b) as a result, both had a little more time and higher expectations about cooking and taking care of the family,” he said.

The food they cooked was, initially, quite conservative, traditional Bengali style ‘macher jhal, masoor er daal, rice, and a sauté of greens,

for dinner.’ But Ray notes that once when they had children and got into routines of taking their kids to school and participating in activities with other parents, the women became exposed to American foods far more than their husbands, ‘who imagined that Americans ate hamburgers, hot dogs, salads and pizzas, almost exclusively, which is all commercial lunch dishes.’

In fact, what the women were experiencing were the real dishes of everyday American home-cooking like ‘savory pot pies, cupcakes, stews, chowders, corn on the cob, pierogies, baked ziti, macaroni, casseroles, meatballs, etc. This made them improvise to feed the children, if not their husbands, more hybrid cooking with chicken fingers, corn on the cob, mashed potatoes with butter rather than mustard oil, casseroles, sandwiches, etc.’ It is likely that many of their children demanded such foods in their lunches, rather than Indian food, to help them blend in more easily with their classmates.

Ray found his subjects adopting this hybrid approach, improvisatory and ‘American’ for breakfasts and lunch, while traditional and Indian for dinner. My argument from there was: that made them quintessentially modern subjects, not outdated characters with outmoded habits as nativists imagine them to be, with a hankering for tradition and for change, through the cycle of the day, the week, and the seasons.” They were accumulating food knowledge, both of how to make their traditional Indian foods and how to adapt them to American ingredients and tastes, using salmon instead of Indian fish, or making less spicy versions for American friends.

And they started sharing this knowledge. A key difference between the H-1B migrants and earlier migrants was access to a personal computer and the internet. This helped visa wives break their isolation, connecting first to family members and then other friends they made online, often to share recipes. Radhika writes about Malini, who started putting her recipes online to help her sister-in-law, who had recently moved to Canada: “Phone calls were expensive in those days. ‘Why don’t you put your recipes on a blog? It would be easy for me to access,’ she suggested.”

makes these rules even harder, that spirit is not likely to change. Over 30 years later, the woman who answered that ad and got married may still be alive, cooking up Gujarati food in the US, and inspiring many others to follow her path.

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Professor Krishnendu Ray, while studying the food habits of Indians in the U.S., found the women were quintessentially modern, hankering for tradition and change.



#WILD

Wally The Walrus

The sea’s unlikely stowaway and boat-hopper gets his own place of rest

In recent years, a curious walrus named Wally has captured the hearts of people along the northern coasts of Europe and Canada, becoming an unexpected celebrity for his unusual habit of hopping onto boats to rest, sometimes with rather dramatic results.



Who is Wally?

Wally is a large Atlantic walrus who first gained public attention around 2019. Unlike typical walruses, who prefer resting on ice floes or rocky shores, Wally developed a quirky habit: using boats as makeshift resting spots. His friendly, inquisitive nature has endeared him to locals and tourists alike, but his unusual behaviour has also led to some unintended consequences.



Wally’s Boat-Hopping Antics

Wally’s habit is simple but impactful. He often climbs aboard small fishing boats, pleasure craft, and even large commercial vessels anchored near the shore, seeking a comfortable place to relax and nap. While this might seem harmless, Wally’s hefty size, an adult male walrus can weigh over a ton, means his sudden appearance

can cause quite a stir. In some cases, Wally’s presence on a boat has led to it taking on water or even partially sinking under his weight. His unexpected landings have caused minor damage and quite a bit of surprise among boat owners, who often find their vessels hosting an uninvited but surprisingly gentle guest.

Why Does Wally Do This?

Marine biologists believe Wally’s boat-hopping is likely a result of changing environmental conditions and habitat pressures. Walruses rely heavily on sea ice and coastal haul-outs to rest between feeding sessions. However, with climate change causing diminishing ice cover and altering the availability of traditional haul-out sites,

Wally may be adapting by seeking alternative resting places. Boats, especially in calm harbors, offer stable, flat surfaces that Wally seems to find appealing. His behaviour illustrates how wildlife can adapt to human environments in surprising ways, sometimes leading to both delightful encounters and logistical challenges.

Conservation and Care

Wally’s story highlights broader concerns about the impact of environmental changes on marine species. Walruses depend on stable, ice-covered habitats for survival, and their shifting behaviours can signal ecosystem stress. Conservationists have used

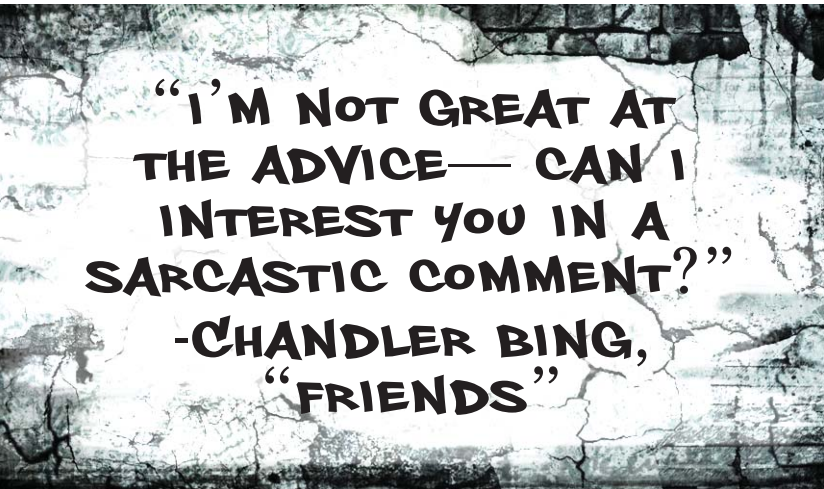
Wally’s popularity to raise awareness about climate change and the need for protecting marine environments. Some organizations have monitored Wally’s health and movements, ensuring that human interactions remain respectful and do not harm him.



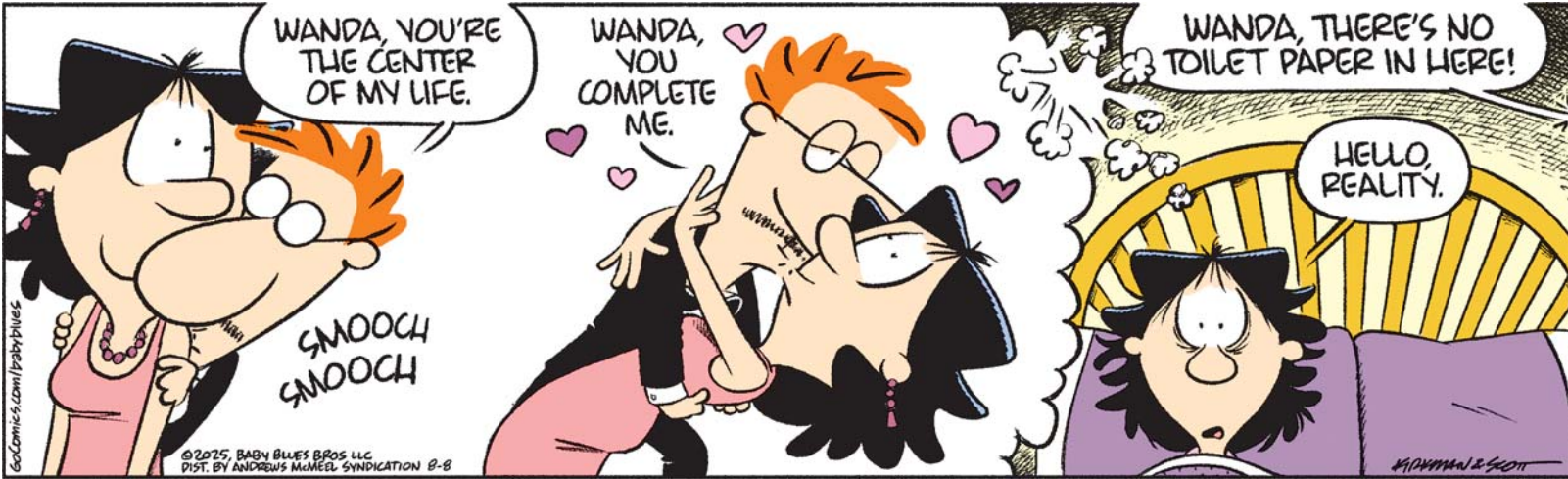
A Symbol of Adaptation and Coexistence

Wally the walrus serves as a compelling example of wildlife adapting to a rapidly changing world. His boat-hopping may cause some headaches for boat owners, but it also reminds us of the close, sometimes unexpected, ways humans and animals share coastal spaces. As climate change continues to reshape habitats, stories like Wally’s encourage us to pay attention, to adapt our behaviours, and to find ways to coexist with the remarkable creatures sharing our planet.

THE WALL



BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman