

would you believe

A mysterious shortage of female toads in English ponds has created a real crisis for the goldfish inhabiting those same ponds.

It seems that amorous male toads, thwarted in their desires, have taken to jumping on and embracing just about anything. Although twigs and water lilies will suffice, they plainly prefer goldfish.

Unfortunately, after suffering the clammy embrace of about 10 male toads, the goldfish croak, or putting it less bluntly, expire. English goldfish fanciers reportedly want somebody to see to it that the amorous amphibians restrain their lustful impulses. [Credit: *Oui Magazine*]

You've heard about truth in advertising. Well, apparently one resident of Shreveport, Louisiana really believes in it.

A small ad appeared recently in the classified section of the Shreveport Sunday Times touting a one-owner '68 Plymouth. "Never drove it over 35 miles per hour, except when drunk. Then she'd goose it up to 120". (Credit: Ken Booth, Shreveport, La. for *Earth News*)

The Indian government has given the Coca Cola Company until next April to turn over its secret formula and 60 percent of its Indian company to Indian stockholders -- or clear out. A Coca Cola spokesperson says the company will probably close down as a result.

With Coca Cola gone, those Indians wealthy enough to buy soda pop will have three choices, at least. There's Nimbula, a lemon-flavored soda, and Poop, which is pineapple flavored. There's also phony Coca Cola, which is brown, and distributed in old Coca Cola bottles. A world-traveler bold enough to drink some says it tastes like "Dr. Pepper with a bit of Tang, added and just a touch of paint remover, for zip." She says you can also tell the phony Coca Cola because the caps are rusty from lying around in the streets. When they're found, they're straightened up and put on the ersatz bottles. (Credit: Tana Tolson, in New York City, for *Earth News*)

When Pope Paul the Sixth says that abortion is murder, he is not upholding Catholic tradition. So says Majority Report, a New York Women's newspaper.

According to writer Sandra Morse, Pope Paul's stand on abortion contradicts the view held by all but nine of his predecessors, who found nothing wrong with most abortions. After studying Papal pronouncements on the subject of pregnancy termination, Morse found that 291 Pontiffs adhered to the position that a male fetus was not human until the 40th day of gestation and a female fetus was not human until the 80th day. And although none of the Papes said how one could determine the sex of the fetus, most held that it was perfectly moral to abort a fetus before it was human.

Majority Report editors claim that Catholics are being misled when they are told that the Church has always been against abortion. And writer Sarah Morse suggests that most birth control advocates "will be happy to note that while they may not have God on their side, at least they have 291 Papes." (*Earth News Service*)

Mosquitos are now doing more than giving pesky bites and bouts with malaria. They are showing promising results in spotting enemy troops in ambush and guerillas in the field.

Robert Lubow, an Israeli expert in experimental psychology says that military researchers have turned to the insect world for new weapons in jungle warfare. Writing in his new book, *The War Animals*, Lubow reports that a mosquito is silent as it plunges its proboscis into the skin in search of blood. But as the satiated insect withdraws, it makes a sound like aguitar string being plucked.

Using delicate and extremely sensitive instruments, researchers can pick up that tiny "ping" at a considerable distance. Thus, a mosquito biting an ambusher could give someone equipped with such an instrument advance warning of the attack.

Other bugs recently and unwittingly recruited are bedbugs, the Oriental rat flea, lice, ticks, and something called the conenose bug. (*Earth News*)

"Ponik", a serpent-like creature similar to the Loch Ness Monster, has been sighted and photographed by a team of divers in Lake Pohenagamook in Quebec.

There have been reports of Ponik for over 60 years. This time, the sightings followed ten days of searching with sonar equipment.

Claiming they know they didn't see a fish, one of the divers described Ponik as more than 25 feet long and almost ten feet wide, black, making a lot of noise, and swimming in the center of the lake.

Photos of Ponik, taken from a mountaintop through a telephoto lens, have been submitted for scientific evaluation. (*Earth News - Credit: Modern People*)

The cost of your average, humble home in California is \$70,000 and climbing. They tell us that the American dream of owning one's own house is now an impossible nightmare -- that young couples today can look forward to a lifetime of renting, or if they're really lucky, a lifetime of payments on a condominium.

Well, maybe not. It all depends on how flexible you are. A group of architectural students at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York have built a sturdy, attractive home for less than \$2 (dollars) a square foot. Which would make the average 1,500 square foot house cost less than \$3,000 (dollars).

How did they do it? They used garbage. Not half-eaten Big Macs and rotten cantelopes, but scrap material. The house's frame is cardboard tubes once used to hold newsprint. The tubes are held in place by scrap steel strapping and 16-ounce non-returnable bottles. The walls are made of 2,000 number 10 cans; the roof is layers of corrugated cardboard surfaced with waste rubber.

Professor Martin Pawley, who inspired and guided the building says the garbage approach to home-building has enormous potential, because people could build their own homes without home loans.

There are drawbacks, as might be expected. For example, it's difficult for the average American family to scrounge 2,000 number 10-cans and 600 cardboard tubes. And some folks might take offense at living next to a house made of garbage, no matter how attractive. But for those who want their own home but don't have \$70,000 bucks in their pockets, it's an idea worth considering. (*Earth News*)

A man in Belgium has been charged with assault after repeatedly biting a dog.

Fraçois Moulders was taking his mongrel for a walk when his dog was set upon by a setter, Monsieur Moulders, apparently very attached to his pup, pedigree or no, attempted to stop the fight by biting the setter.

He was forced to call a halt when the setter's owner hit him over the head with her handbag -- A classic move. (*Earth News*)

Contrary to current belief, the "Saturday Night Special" is not the most popular handgun used in crime.

In actuality, higher-priced, brand-name guns made by Smith & Wesson and Colt are used more often.

A study by the Police Foundation of Washington, D.C., showed that of all the guns recently seized from criminals in nine major cities, brand-name weapons accounted for nearly 23 percent, while Saturday Night Specials made up only about 9 percent.

Foundation researcher Steven Brill says that we need to "start thinking of brand names" when we hear about crimes at gunpoint, and stop the misconception "that 'good guns,' like 'nice girls,' don't do that sort of thing." (*Earth News*)

We all get irked at some of the offerings on television these days, but you may soon have more of a choice than sitting there and taking it, and kicking in the screen.

Warner Cable Corporation, a cable-tv operator in Columbus, Ohio, will be offering a pioneer two-way television service later this year. Warner will equip its subscribers with a five-button control panel and a box of electronics that will enable viewers to take part in a variety of programs. By pressing the right button, a viewer will be able to send computer signals that answer yes or no to a question, register approval or disapproval, or simply state a choice.

Warner's chairperson believes that boring guests on future talk shows might be "gonged" right off the air. During a test-run for 190 subscribers in March, viewers were asked the exciting question, "How do you like your eggs?" Almost immediately, 48 percent responded that they like their eggs scrambled. (*Earth News*)

An entomologist says that the infamous killer bees now moving slowly northward from South America are not nearly so bad as the media has made them out to be.

Gard Otis, who just spent 18 months studying the feisty little devils, says the killer bee is not a homicidal maniac after all. Otis says the bees do kill people, often in rather spectacular fashion.

But he is quick to point out that the bees usually won't sting unless disturbed. He says, "If you read the newspaper, it sounds like the bees just came out and started stinging people. But it usually can be traced back to someone swatting at the bees or accidentally hitting the nest."

If you're ever in killer bee territory, (which might be Texas, in 1988) you might want to know that although relatively non-aggressive when swarming, killer bees are most nervous and upset just before swarming, when waiting for their new queen to hatch. (*Earth News*)

When Carl Moore, head of Loyola University's chemistry department said he needed toenail clippings, people all over the U.S. decided to make the sacrifice and donate their clippings to science. The trouble is, they're going to institutions all over Chicago, instead of to Carl Moore.

Dr. Moore's curiosity was piqued by the discovery of traces of gold in people's toenails, and he is trying to find out how the gold got there. He's very gratified by the public donations to his cause, but he has two requests. First, please send them to the right address, which is 6525 North Sheridan Road, Chicago. Secondly, please don't just send in your clippings blind. Write to the same address first, for a questionnaire concerning your age, sex, and health. (*Earth News*)

Here's something new for those who are constantly fighting the battle of the bulge. The Wall Street Journal reports that a new diet fork, which comes equipped with curlique prongs, will appear on the marketplace around Christmas time. The bent fork is said to make eating difficult, if not downright impossible. It's expected to retail for about \$7.00 (dollars). (*Earth News*)

Fructose, a leading sweetener used in diet soft drinks, may pose as big a health threat as saccharin, but for totally different reasons.

In a secret letter to diet drink manufacturers made public this week, the head of the Canadian government's Health Protection Branch warned that fructose may be dangerous, especially to those who might be tempted to use it most -- diabetics and the overweight.

Dr. W.P. McKinley wrote that the Canadian government is considering restricting the use of fructose in dietary foods. He said that excess fructose in the diet raises blood levels of fatty acids known as triglycerides, a factor implicated in heart disease caused by hardened arteries.

Fat people and diabetics have a higher incidence of such heart disease and of higher than normal triglyceride levels. Thus, if they consume fructose in an attempt to avoid sugar, they might make their conditions worse instead of better. (*Earth News*)

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