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Everybody's Talking

Lightweight warmth: The eider polar duck, which lives in the far north, is the source of eiderdown. This down is very expensive because it is extremely light but has amazing insulation qualities. Therefore, it is no surprise that people "farm" for eiderdown in Iceland. The ducks congregate in sanctuaries built by the farmers, who work hard to keep natural predators away. In return, the farmers collect the eiderdown from the birds' nests, once they have been abandoned. Iceland produces a large percentage of the world's eiderdown, which is used to line quilts and coats that go for high prices. These birds are a protected species in Iceland.

Desert plant: The Namib Desert, located in Namibia and Angola on the southwestern coast of Africa, is home to a very durable plant called the Welwitschia, or in Afrikaans, the tweebblaarkanniedood. Named after Friedrich Welwitschia, a 19th-century botanist who studied it, its Afrikaans name means "two leaves that cannot die." This plant can live for hundreds of years in a seemingly barren environment with little moisture. It looks like it has many leaves, but there are only two, which become ragged and split over the plant's life. Many consider the Welwitschia to be a living fossil.

Gigantic tree: A Montezuma cypress tree on the grounds of a church in the town of Santa Maria del Tule, Mexico, is said to have the thickest trunk in the world. Called the Tule Tree, or Árbol del Tule, this specimen is likely at least 1,400 years old, possibly much older. Its trunk has a circumference of 42 meters (138 ft.). That would take about 30 people holding hands with their arms outstretched to encircle the tree. The tree is located not far from the tourist town of Oaxaca, so lots of visitors come to see it. However, a tree of this stature has to be protected: it has a fence around it so no one can climb it or take pieces of bark as souvenirs.

Steep cliff: While not the tallest mountain in the world, one mountain's claim to fame is that it has the tallest vertical cliff. The north face of Mount Thor, located in Auyuittuq National Park on Baffin Island, in Canada's far north, has the longest vertical drop in the world at 1,250 meters (4,101 ft.). Not only that, but the cliff is a 105-degree overhang, making it steeper than steep! Many climbers have tried and failed to scale this massive rock wall. In 1985, a team of four Americans finally made it to the top. They had to carry a lot of equipment and food because the climb took them 33 days! The mountain is named after Thor, the Nordic God of Thunder.

Quoteable Quotes

"Leave a log in the water as long as you like: it will never be a crocodile." —Proverb

"Feeling gratitude isn't born in us—it's something we are taught, and in turn, we teach our children." —Joyce Brothers

What's Happening

Aug 27 to Aug 28 - Wholly Handmade Come support over 120 local handmade artisans and crafters. Strathcona County Community Centre. 401 Festival Lane. 10 am to 5 pm Saturday and 11 am to 4 pm Sunday. FREE Admission.

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Trivia

1. What was the pen name of writer Samuel Clemens?
2. This is the highest mountain in Canada.
3. Taurus is the astrological sign of the goat—T/F?
4. The ancient pilgrim trail in Spain is called
5. What children's book character is an elephant who heard a sound from a speck of dust?

(Flip bottom of page for answers)

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Your Weekly Horoscope

ARIES (March 21 - April 20)
 Have you found yourself being argumentative with others recently? You may want to step back, understand how your ego is tied up in the issue, and find a compromise with others. Lucky numbers: 4, 9, 11, 18, 33, 36.

TAURUS (April 21 - May 21)
 You may find yourself in an unusually good mood and looking to relax. Try to enjoy this time, but you might also want to use it to manifest longer term, positive change. Lucky numbers: 13, 17, 25, 27, 35, 43.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)
 Right now you might find that your ability to persuade others to your viewpoint could be heightened. Be careful to ensure that any endeavours that result are a win-win for all involved. Lucky numbers: 14, 16, 17, 18, 38, 44.

CANCER (June 22 - July 22)
 This may be a good time to focus on what you are passionate about achieving in life. Are your current endeavours in line with what you want and need? Lucky numbers: 2, 3, 15, 24, 32, 34.

LEO (July 23 - Aug. 23)
 Some information you receive now could provide insight about yourself, both your positive and negative qualities. What changes do you want to initiate in your life, as a result? Lucky numbers: 10, 14, 19, 21, 24, 30.

VIRGO (Aug. 24 - Sept. 23)
 Many Virgos have a perfectionist streak. This week you may be wanting your communications with others to be very precise. But try not to pressure yourself to choose perfect wording. Lucky numbers: 5, 8, 15, 19, 25, 38.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23)
 At the beginning of this week, you may find that your heart and mind are in sync. This might be a good time to assess what you want to do next. Lucky numbers: 1, 3, 5, 24, 31, 42.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22)
 Are you feeling submerged in watery, emotional depths right now? If you can throw a life raft to someone else, that action may help you to reach shore, as well. Lucky numbers: 7, 18, 21, 27, 32, 40.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 21)
 Your natural optimism may get a good boost at the end of this week. It might provide energy for you to complete a project that recently has been behind schedule. Lucky numbers: 6, 11, 15, 20, 23, 26.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 - Jan. 20)
 Early this week, you may be given information that encourages you to change your perception of your skills and talents. Pay attention to the message. It might pertain to your leadership abilities. Lucky numbers: 15, 17, 24, 38, 41, 45.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19)
 Are you encountering obstacles to your plans? If so, thinking about what you value and how you can live more in alignment with who you truly are may be helpful. Lucky numbers: 3, 11, 17, 27, 40, 41.

PISCES (Feb. 20 - March 20)
 Right now you may be tempted to view the world through rose-coloured glasses. If so, you might want to consider how to balance your optimism with a touch of realism. Lucky numbers: 16, 24, 25, 31, 35, 37.

Lucky numbers this week: This week's odds favour Taurus winners with the luckiest number being 17.

Did You Know...

Wigged out: If King Louis XIV of France hadn't begun to lose his hair at age 17, the wig-making business might have been slow. But the king popularized the custom of wearing a wig, and almost 50 wigmakers created a wide array of hairpieces for him.

Love letters: In the Louvre Museum in Paris, Leonardo Da Vinci's famous painting, "Mona Lisa," has her own mailbox for all the love letters she receives. Millions of people go see her every year, though not everyone leaves behind a declaration of affection.

Going bananas: Bananas are curved because of a plant hormone called auxin, which triggers how they respond to sunlight. Initially, the fruit grows down in response to gravity, but then the hormone kicks in and the weighty clusters turn and curve toward the sun.

Goldfish group: Fish traveling in a group are often called a "school" of fish, but a school of goldfish alternatively might be called a "glint" or a "troubling" of goldfish.

Good for your health: People who own pets can derive health benefits from their non-human friends. Dogs and cats can reduce stress, anxiety, and depression, ease loneliness, encourage exercise, and even improve cardiovascular health in their human companions.

On the Lighter Side

How does a mouse feel after it takes a bath? Squeaky clean.
Jack: "Your dog just bit my ankle!"
Mack: "What did you expect? He's small and can't reach any higher!"

What kind of hat does Sir Lancelot wear? A knight cap.
Knock! Knock! Who's there? Xavier. Xavier who? Xavier money for a rainy day.
If you cross a hyena and a parrot, you'll have an animal that laughs and then asks itself what's so funny!

Answers

Trivia answers: 1. Mark Twain 2. Mount Logan 3. False, the Bull 4. Camino de Santiago 5. Horton

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