

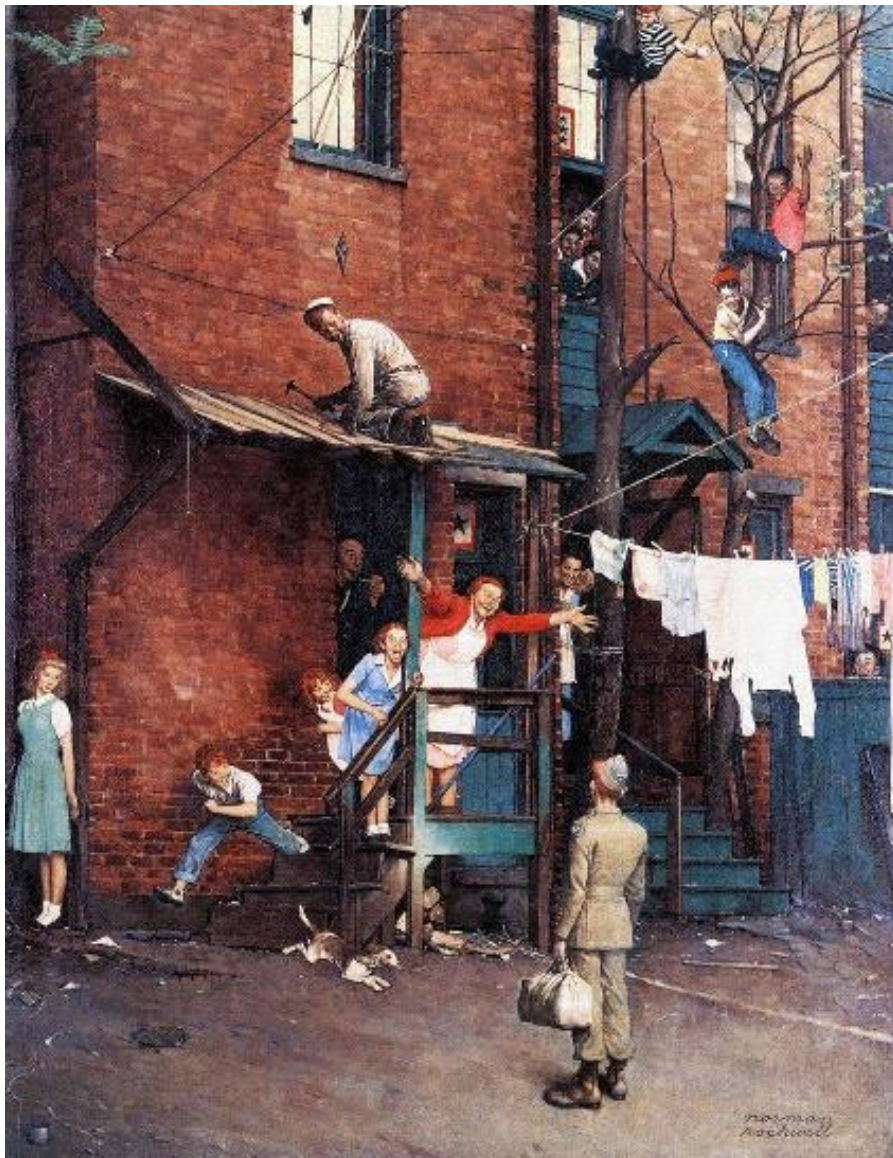
# Ode to E Pluribus Unum for Sunday October 29 2023

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## It Really Was Like This for Most Returning Veterans

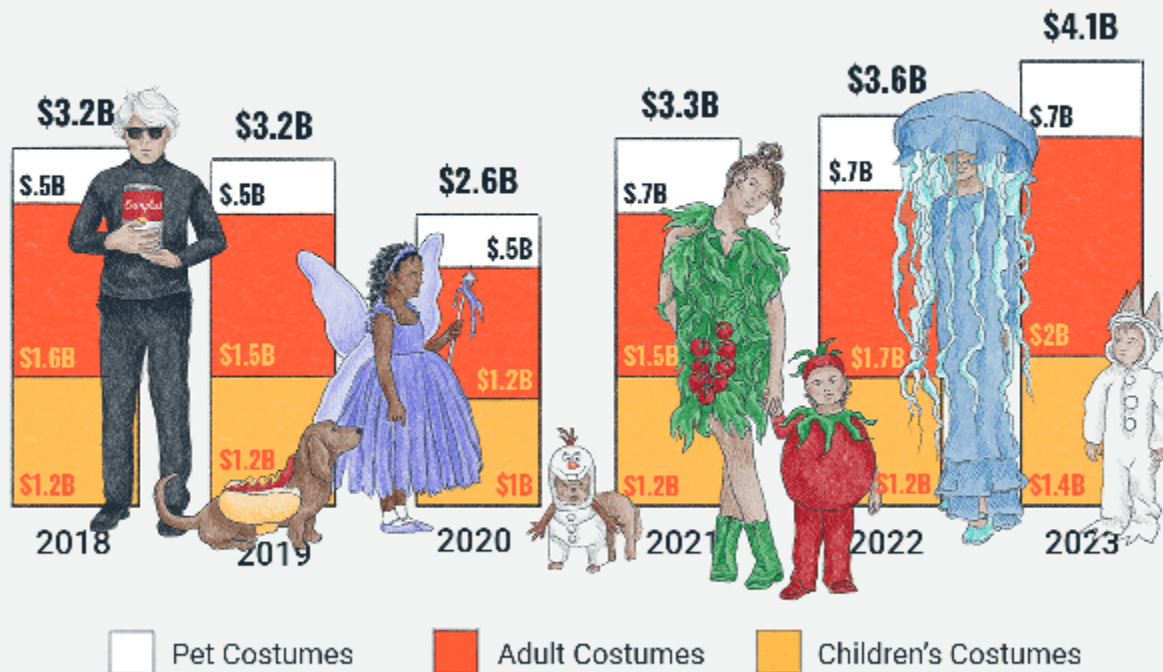


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## How Much Are You Spending on Your Halloween Costume?

### Mask appeal

This is expected to be the biggest-ever year for US Halloween costume spending.



DATA: National Retail Federation

the HUSTLE

As historians tell it, Halloween originated from Samhain, the ancient Celtic festival when people lit bonfires and doffed costumes to ward off ghosts.

As businesses tell it, who gives a damn where it came from? It's a money-making bonanza, baby!

The holiday is expected to generate \$12.2B in American spending this year, per the National Retail Federation (NRF), besting last year's record-setting \$10.6B haul.

### Where's it all going?

Average per-person Halloween spending projects at ~\$108 — and with 73% of Americans saying they'll celebrate this year, retailers are salivating as much as a trick-or-treater staring down a king-size KitKat.

Here's how the spending roughly breaks down:

**Costumes: \$4.1B**

**Decorations: \$3.9B**

**Candy: \$3.6B**

As for the balance, we'll assume that's being spent at FedEx Office by those weird fearmongers who print fliers about fentanyl and razor blades in candy, then paste them all over your neighborhood.

### **Stay strange, Halloween.**

It's not a true American holiday...

... without some corporations absolutely cashing in:

1. We already know Spirit Halloween is a \$500m+ pop-up sensation.
2. The ~\$45B Mars candy empire has so much money riding on the holiday, it plans for Halloween two years ahead.
3. Universal theme parks' Halloween Horror Nights brought in ~\$575m last fall.
4. But it wouldn't be 2023 without everyone tied to the Barbieverse — Mattel and licensed retailers Target, Walmart, and Amazon — printing money.
5. In a first, Barbie will rank among the year's most popular costumes.
6. Pink is not the new black, however: Witches remain the top adult costume by a mile — 5.8m+ witches will go out this year, more than the next three most popular costumes combined (vampire, Barbie, and Batman).

BTW: That dominance doesn't extend to kids, though — that's now Spiderman's domain. There'll be 2.6m li'l web-slingers running around all hyped up on sugar this year.

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### **Berlioz Symphonie fantastique: The Witches' Sabbath**



Symphonie fantastique, Op. 14, orchestral work by French composer Hector Berlioz, widely recognized as an early example of program music,

that attempts to portray a sequence of opium dreams inspired by a failed love affair. Witches Sabbath is the Fifth Movement.

Classical Version [https://youtu.be/G2aHglwKH\\_I?t=2](https://youtu.be/G2aHglwKH_I?t=2)

Gothic Occult Rock [https://youtu.be/5BYDZpJz\\_xM](https://youtu.be/5BYDZpJz_xM)

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## **Universal Orlando Halloween Horror Nights Flash Mob**



*tripster.com*

<https://youtu.be/7E4wsk34xPQ>

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## **'Lego Star Wars' Fun-Sized Trio of New Halloween Videos**



<https://bit.ly/3MfDMI6>

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## **The Long History of Speculation About Extraterrestrials**



*urigeller.com*

The idea that other worlds might be home to alien beings has been part of our thought for as long as we have been looking skyward.

<https://bit.ly/3M2qA9K>

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## **Why Halloween's 'Poison Candy' Myth Endures**



*This 1962 cover of Official Detective features a Halloween candy poisoner at work.  
Transcendental Graphics/ Contributor/ Getty Images*

Of all the reports of a child being killed by poisoned Halloween candy, not a single one has held up under inspection.

<https://bit.ly/4095L2b>

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## **They Lost Their Kids to Fortnite**



A group of Canadian parents say their kids are so addicted to the video game Fortnite that they've stopped eating, sleeping and showering. Now these parents want to hold its tech-giant creator accountable.

<https://bit.ly/3PCAAaF>

*Don't bother reading this if you think things in the romper room are just hunky-dory.*

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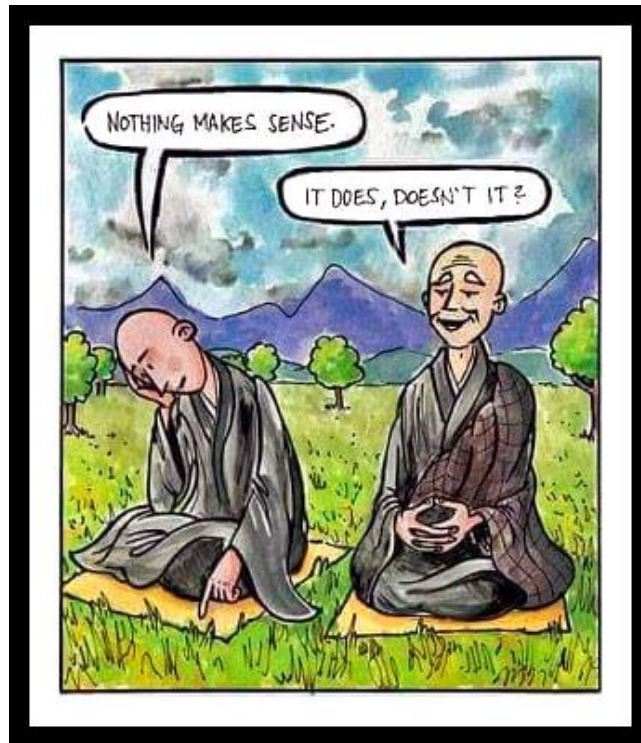
## **Vlad the Impaler**



The story is on my website, [www.aspone.net](http://www.aspone.net). Enter, then drop down to the Current Odes section and click on *Vlad the Impaler*. This is long, but fascinating.

*What the heck, he only wants to suck your blood.*

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## 6,000 Octopuses Under The Sea at an 'Octopus Garden'



*Researchers at the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute studied female octopuses that nest together off Central California at a depth of about 3,200 meters.*  
MBARI

Octopuses generally are antisocial loners that would rather fight another octopus than live in close quarters. And yet biologists had stumbled onto an enormous octopus garden, a trippy scene straight out of a Beatles song.

<https://bit.ly/3LkydIj>

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## Joshua Tree: Artists' Haven and Cool Destination



*thewillowspalmsprings.com*

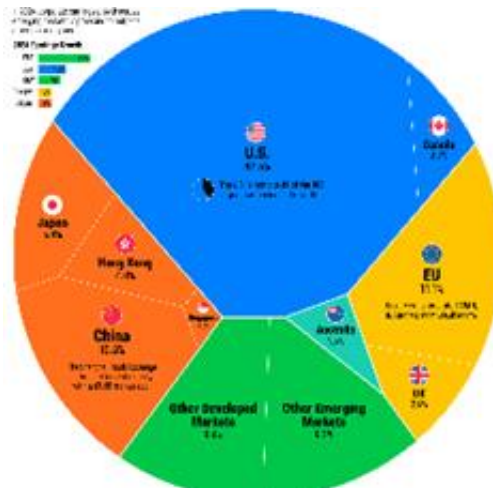
The area around California's Joshua Tree National Park has long exerted a gravitational pull on artists, seekers, and freewheelers. But this secret desert hideout isn't so secret anymore.

In 2021, Joshua Tree National Park welcomed more than 3 million sightseers, a 50 percent increase from 2015. In the town of Yucca Valley, not far from the park gates, tax revenues from hotels and vacation rentals went up sixfold in five years.

<https://bit.ly/48m521b>

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## The \$109 Trillion Global Stock Market in One Chart



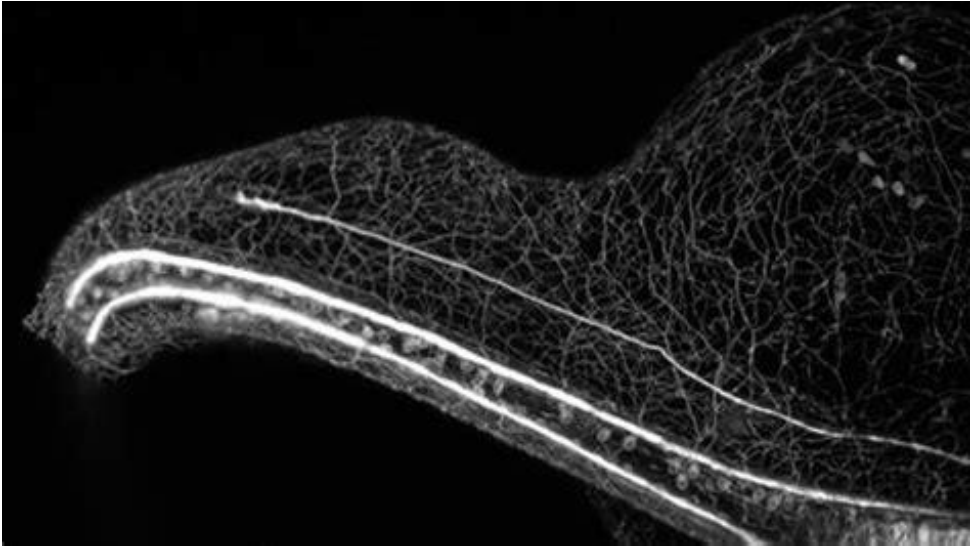


Global equity markets have nearly tripled in size since 2003, climbing to \$109 trillion in total market capitalization.

<https://bit.ly/3PXF3S>

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**2023 Small World in Motion Competition**



<https://bit.ly/3PZPARK>

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**In the Steppes of Central Asia – Alexander Borodin**



Like many Russian composers of the 19th century, Alexander Borodin (1833-1887) was an amateur musician. His main job was Professor of Chemistry at the University of St Petersburg. He had to compose in his spare time. In his music, Borodin showed Russian power and the heroic characters. His main means of expression was melody.

*In the Steppes of Central Asia* had been intended to be presented as one of several tableaux vivants to celebrate the silver anniversary of the reign of Emperor Alexander II of Russia, who had done much to expand the Russian Empire into the Caucasus, Far East and Central Asia.

The intended production never occurred, but the work has been a concert favorite since its first performance, on 20 April 1880 (8 April Old style) in St. Petersburg.

The work depicts an interaction between Russians and Asians in the steppe lands of Central Asia. A caravan of Central Asians is crossing the desert under the protection of Russian troops. The opening theme, representing the Russians, is heard first; after it, the strains of an ornamented eastern melody on English horn, representing the Asians. The melodies eventually combine contrapuntally. Amid these two ethnic melodies Borodin inserts a "traveling" theme in pizzicato that represents the plodding hoofs of the horses and camels. At the end, only the Russian theme is heard.

<https://youtu.be/Dq4bOmxKVQQ>

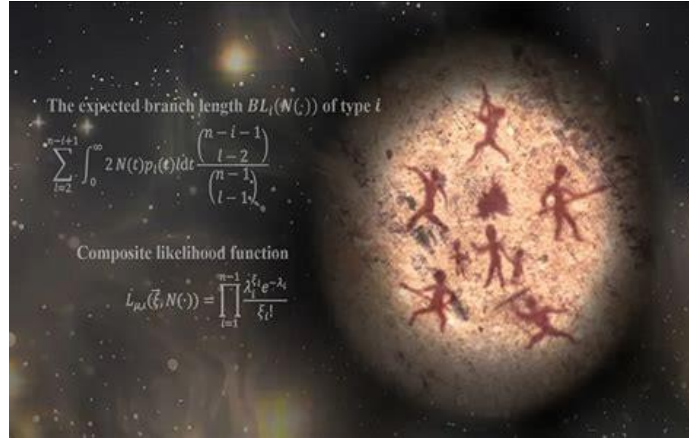
A musical journey to Mongolia. Dresden Staatskapelle conducted by Kurt Sanderling.

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# Human 'Close Call with Extinction' Nearly a Million Years Ago



*Rock art on a cliff illustrates how our human ancestors survived in the face of unknown danger. Next to it is the core formula used by researchers to infer the bottleneck that occurred close to 1 million years ago.*

*(Image credit: Shanghai Institute of Nutrition and Health, CAS)*

The human population may have lingered at about 1,300 for more than 100,000 years, and that population bottleneck could have fueled the divergence between modern humans, Neanderthals and Denisovans.

<https://bit.ly/47XWw8n>

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## How Deep is Deep?

Take a dive all the way to the Marianas Trench

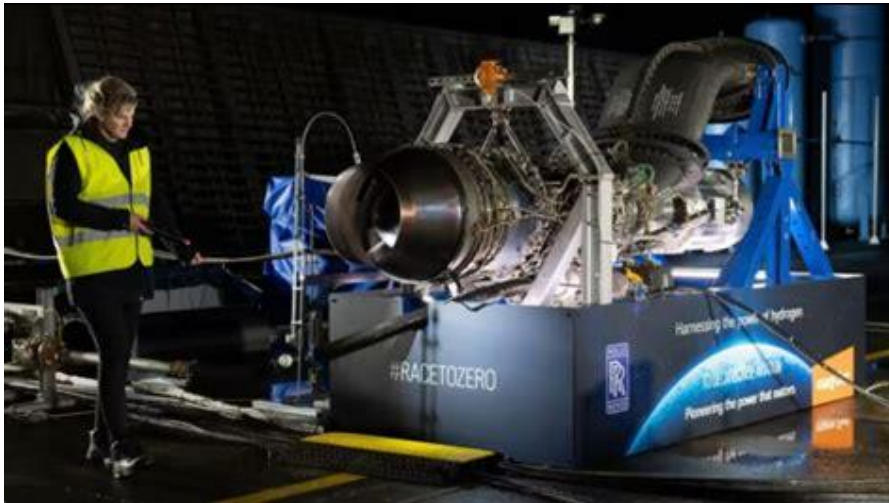


This five-minute video takes viewers to the depths of the Mariana Trench, emphasizing just how far below the bottom of the trench lies beneath our feet through comparisons to better-known objects and monuments, including the Eiffel Tower. The Statue of Liberty is 305 feet tall and appears minuscule when compared to the depths of shallower seas such as the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Even Mt. Everest is dwarfed by the depths of the trench

<https://youtu.be/Q5C7sqVe2Vg>

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## **Rolls-Royce Achieves Controlled Hydrogen Burn**



Rolls-Royce says it has run a modified version of a standard jet engine at takeoff power using hydrogen for fuel. The company said it's a key accomplishment in developing future carbon-free designs that can power future aircraft. "This involved overcoming significant engineering challenges as hydrogen burns far hotter and more rapidly than kerosene," Rolls-Royce said. The tests were carried out on a modified Pearl 700 engine.

Newly developed fuel spray nozzles mix air with the hydrogen at precise levels to control the burn rate. A full ground test of the new technology is next. The work is being carried out by a consortium of companies and academics led by easyJet and Roll-Royce called the UK Hydrogen in Aviation alliance. "This is an incredible achievement in a short space of time," said Grazia Vittadini, technology chief for Rolls-Royce. "Controlling the combustion process is one of the key technology challenges the industry faces in making hydrogen a real aviation fuel of the future. We have achieved that, and it makes us eager to keep moving forward."

*By Russ Niles for AVweb*

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## What Has the Pandemic Taught Us About Vaccines?



Should Covid-19 vaccines be judged by how well they prevent disease or how well they prevent death? Anna Durbin, a public health expert and vaccine researcher, talks with Steven Strogatz about the science behind vaccines.

<https://bit.ly/3PFqeH4>

*Covid-19 mRNA Vaccines Win Nobel Prize for Medicine 2023.*

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## The Most Perfectly Preserved Dinosaur of All Time

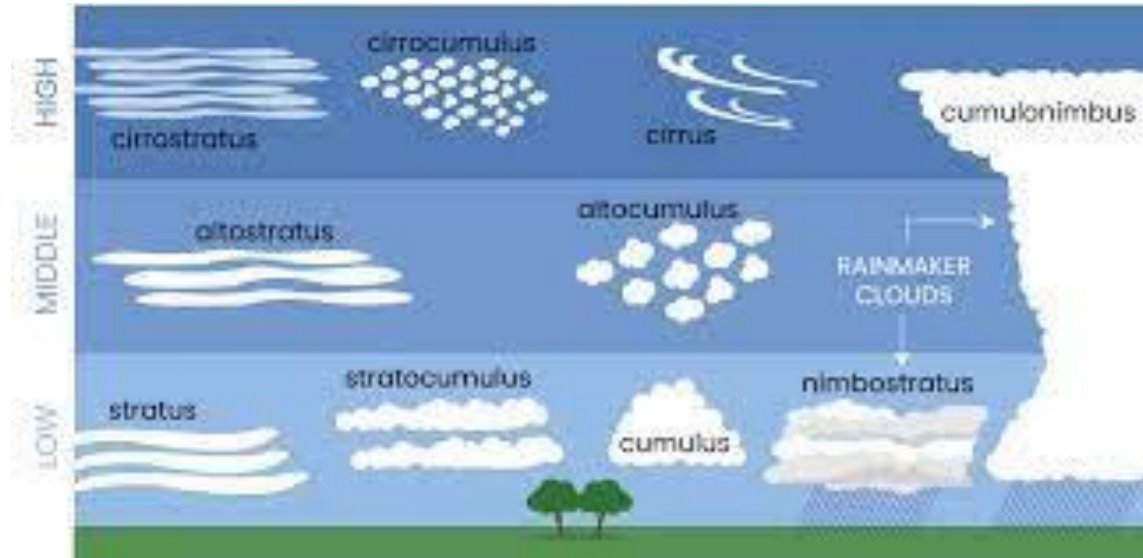


The Nodosaur was a dinosaur that roamed Earth during the late Jurassic Period, a mere 161-145 million years ago.

<https://bit.ly/3EZVhby>

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# What Are Different Types of Clouds and How Do They Form?



They may be an astronomer's worst enemy but clouds play a crucial role in making Earth habitable.

<https://bit.ly/3Sn00fx>

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## A Cavalcade of Wretched Excess

When You've nothing better to do, you could feast on this tribute to unrestricted vanity.



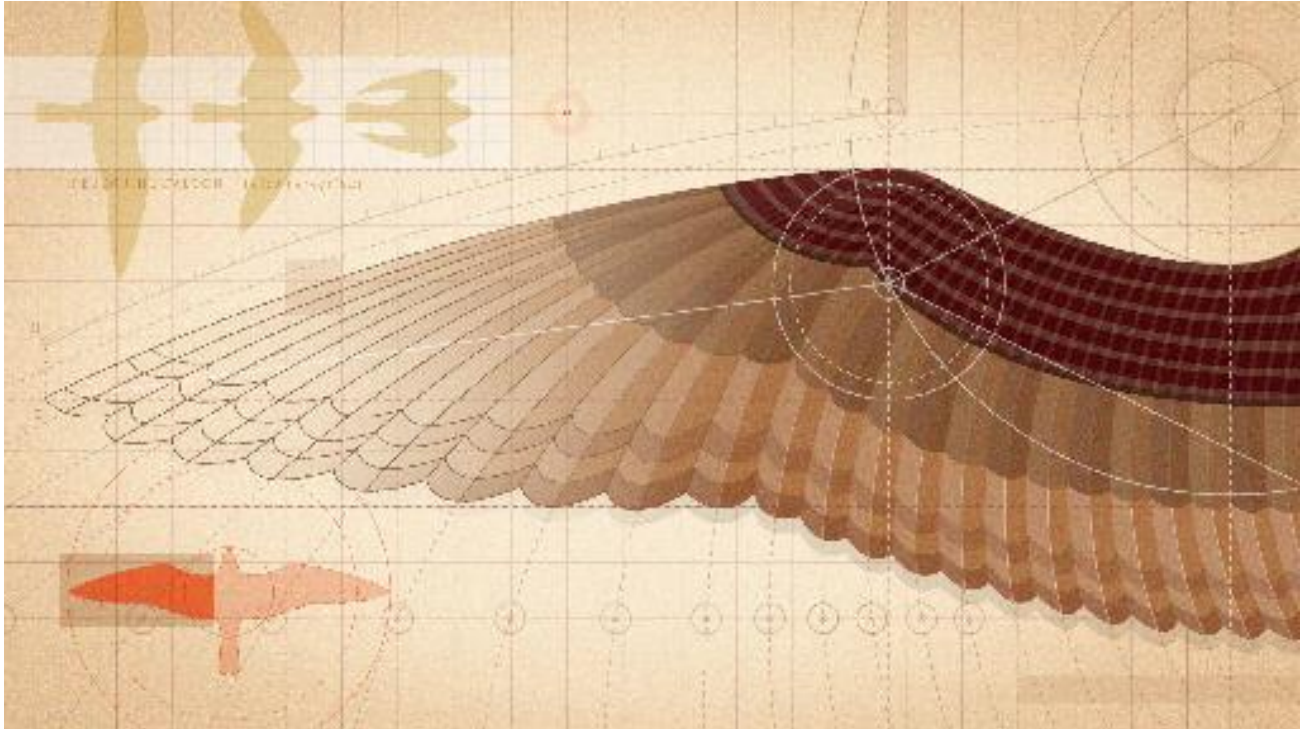
<https://bit.ly/46BRzRz>

Yikes!

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## Geometric Analysis Reveals How Birds Mastered Flight

Partnerships between engineers and biologists have begun to reveal how birds evolved their superb maneuverability.



*Researchers are finally beginning to understand how the biomechanics of a bird's wing allows a bird to fly with extraordinary maneuverability.*

*Samuel Velasco/Quanta Magazine*

For her doctoral research at the University of Michigan, Christina Harvey and her colleagues found that most birds can morph their wings mid-flight to flip back and forth between flying smoothly like a passenger plane and flying acrobatically like a fighter jet. Their work makes it clear that birds can completely alter both the aerodynamic characteristics that govern how air moves over their wings and the inertial characteristics of their bodies that determine how they tumble through the air to complete fast maneuvers.

<https://bit.ly/3FoBzX0>

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## Amazon Begins Delivering Medications by Drone in Texas



*Amazon Pharmacy customers located in College Station, Texas, can now receive certain prescription medications via drone delivery.*

Eligible customers can access more than 500 medications and have a drone drop them at their doorstep.

The medications will arrive in less than 60 minutes at no additional cost to customers, Amazon said.

Amazon announced Friday it will soon begin making drone deliveries in College Station, Texas.

Amazon Pharmacy customers located in College Station, Texas, can now receive certain prescription medications via drone delivery.

Pharmacy customers located in College Station, Texas, can now have their prescription medications delivered by drone, the company announced in a blog post Wednesday.

Eligible customers can access more than 500 medications, including treatments for common conditions such as asthma and the flu, and have a drone drop them at their doorstep. The medication will arrive in less than 60 minutes at no additional cost, Amazon said.

Amazon Pharmacy is a full-service pharmacy that patients can access online. Amazon launched the service in 2020 following its acquisition of PillPack in 2018. The company has been working to entice Amazon Pharmacy customers by offering prescription perks and savings benefits for Prime members this year.



Amazon said its drones are equipped with cameras that help them identify objects such as people and animals. The drones fly between 40 meters and 120 meters in an airspace with “minimal obstacles,” the company said.

Once a drone determines that the delivery space is clear, it will descend and release the package containing the customer’s medication. But if the drone detects obstacles in the delivery area, it will return to the Amazon fulfillment center and reattempt the delivery later.

To be eligible for drone delivery, customers in College Station, Texas, will have to sign up for Prime Air and complete a yard survey.

Amazon has worked on drone delivery for years, and its efforts have been met with mixed success. Amazon lost two executives in August who were key to its drone delivery operations, and its Prime Air unit lost a significant number of employees as part of the sweeping layoffs carried out by CEO Andy Jassy.

But despite internal changes at the company, Amazon said it has successfully delivered “hundreds of household items” to consumers in College Station since late last year.

*By Ashley Capoot*

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## **American Museum of Natural History Removes All Human Remains from Display**



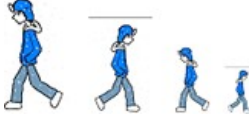
Many of the 12,000 remains in the museum's collection came from Indigenous and enslaved populations.

<https://bit.ly/3s5t3t6>

*Ahh. Another triumph of political correctness.*

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## My Walking Thoughts



**For Sunday October 29 2023**

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### **Is Older Really Better?**

Short answer? Yes.

Long answer? Hell, yes.

Why? I can't begin to count the joys that come from stopping to sniff the profusion of roses that have surrounded me from day-one. The ones that began slipping behind the veil of 'self' about the time I turned twelve so that by 30 the cornerstones of life existed pretty much inside me and my pride...maybe even arrogance.

Never mind, it's history now, replaced by vistas composed of the very large, and the increasingly minute particles of...what?. Everywhere I turn I see new mites cradled by notes I've seen forever but never really seen.

So why the change?

It's as if I no longer need to know the 'why' of everything. Eating, washing, the daily chores of life of course, but otherwise it seems enough to just let things be, without labeling them.

Over time labels flourish, tarnish, fade into oblivion, only to be replaced by new labels...perhaps all in an instant...all without form. Worse, they might persist, blinding me to other wonders, things threaded into the core of my existence...things that bind me to that little prick of light that's flicked on--perhaps off and on again—from the beginning.

No search for purpose. No end in mind. Just...well...how about the June bug that landed on my forearm just now.

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### **Some Pithy Michael Crichton (1942-2008) Quotes**

*This list of quotes was sent to me by friend, Dr. Joe Horton. There are, of course, many more gems from his supple mind worthy of our notice.*



His books have sold over 200 million copies worldwide, and over a dozen have been adapted into films. His literary works heavily feature technology and are usually within the science fiction, techno-thriller, and medical fiction genres.

Crichton's novels often explore human technological advancement and attempted dominance over nature, both with frequently catastrophic results; many of his works are cautionary tales, especially regarding themes of biotechnology. Several of his stories center specifically on themes of genetic modification, hybridization, paleontology and/or zoology. Many feature medical or scientific underpinnings, reflective of his own medical training and scientific background.

Crichton received an M.D. from Harvard Medical School in 1969 but did not practice medicine, choosing to focus on his writing instead. Initially writing under a pseudonym, he eventually wrote 26 novels, including: *The Andromeda Strain* (1969), *The Terminal Man* (1972), *The Great Train Robbery* (1975), *Congo* (1980), *Sphere* (1987), *Jurassic Park* (1990), *Rising Sun* (1992), *Disclosure* (1994), *The Lost World* (1995), *Airframe* (1996), *Timeline* (1999), *Prey* (2002), *State of Fear* (2004), and *Next* (2006). Several novels, in various states of completion, were published after his death in 2008.

**Some of his thoughts you may wish to consider—perhaps while walking.**

We all live every day in virtual environments, defined by our ideas. Historically, the claim of consensus has been the first refuge of scoundrels; it is a way to avoid debate by claiming that the matter is already settled.

They are focused on whether they can do something. They never think whether they should do something.

Human beings never think for themselves; they find it too uncomfortable. For the most part, members of our species simply repeat what they are told - and become upset if they are exposed to any different view.

The characteristic human trait is not awareness but conformity, and the characteristic result is religious warfare. Other animals fight for territory or food; but, uniquely in the animal kingdom, human beings fight for their 'beliefs.'

We are stubborn, self-destructive conformists. Any other view of our species is just a self-congratulatory delusion.

Whenever you hear the consensus of scientists agrees on something or other, reach for your wallet, because you're being had.

I want a news service that tells me what no one knows but is true nonetheless.

The belief that there are other life forms in the universe is a matter of faith. There is not a single shred of evidence for any other life forms, and in forty years of searching, none has been discovered.

The American media produce a product of very poor quality. Its information is not reliable, it has too much chrome and glitz, its doors rattle, it breaks down almost immediately, and it's sold without warranty. It's flashy, but it's basically junk.

Books aren't written - they're rewritten. Including your own. It is one of the hardest things to accept, especially after the seventh rewrite hasn't quite done it.

*I have been a fan of his writing since I first encountered his work A Case of Need while I was instructing in the Advanced Training Command between tours in Vietnam.*

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