

Ode to E Pluribus Unum for Sunday December 19 2021

Total Solar Eclipse 2020



Image Credit & Copyright: Miloslav Druckmuller, Andreas Moller, (Brno University of Technology),

Along a narrow path crossing southern South America through Chile and Argentina, the final New Moon of 2020 moved in front of the Sun on December 14 in the year's only total solar eclipse.

Within about 2 days of perigee, the closest point in its elliptical orbit, the New Moon's surface is faintly lit by earthshine in this dramatic composite view. The image is a processed composite of 55 calibrated exposures ranging from 1/640 to 3 seconds.

Covering a large range in brightness during totality, it reveals the dim lunar surface and faint background stars, along with planet-sized prominences at the Sun's edge, an enormous coronal mass ejection, and sweeping coronal structures normally hidden in the Sun's glare.

Look closely for an ill-fated sungrazing Kreutz family comet (C/2020 X3 SOHO) approaching from the lower left, at about the 7 o'clock position. In 2021 eclipse chasers will see an annular solar eclipse coming up on June 10. They'll have to wait until December 4 for the only total solar eclipse in 2021 though. That eclipse will be total along a narrow path crossing the southernmost continent of Antarctica.

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Football Season is Almost Over

Ohio State's Urban Meyer on one of his players:

"He doesn't know the meaning of the word fear. In

fact, I just saw his grades and he doesn't know the meaning of a lot of words."

Two Texas A&M football players were walking in the woods. One of them said, "*Look, a dead bird.*" ?" The other looked up in the sky and said, "*Where?*"

What do you say to a Florida State University football player dressed in a three-piece suit?
"Will the defendant please rise."

How can you tell if a Clemson football player has a girlfriend?
There's tobacco juice on both sides of the pickup truck

What do you get when you put 32 Arkansas cheerleaders in one room?
A full set of teeth.

University of Michigan Coach Jim Harbaugh is only going to dress half of his players for the game this
The other half will have to dress themselves

How is the Kansas football team like an opossum?
They play dead at home and get killed on the road.

How do you get a former University of Miami football player off your porch?
Pay him for the pizza.

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A Holiday Thang



Rudolph Thang

Rudolph the Reindeer was a unique creature
His shiny nose was a conspicuous feature
Distracting others in work and play
He was a misfit every whichy-way.
Until rising to Santa's happenstance
Rudolph led the Christmas sleigh
In a midnight prance.
We may not place 'first' at the local fair
But with other, we each have a skill to share.
Hearts and minds, eyes, ears and noses,
We can offer ourselves in varying poses.
Any day of the year is an opportunity
To give and share in our community.

Optimism and an energy shift to high gear.
The Holidays, a prelude for a
Happy New Year.

Francie Troy '21

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Goat Escapes from City-Owned Herd, Wanders Town for Four Days

By Ben Hooper



jxmartin.com

Nov. 30 (UPI) -- A goat employed by an Iowa city to clear invasive plant species escaped from the rest of the herd and went wandering for four days.

Richard Brown, director of Clive Leisure Services, said a goat named Steve escaped last week while his herd was being transferred to its winter enclosure.

Clive City Hall owns the herd of 15 goats, which are used to clear invasive plant species from the Clive Greenbelt.

<https://youtu.be/mVdWIw1IM-A>

Brown said officials believe Steve was spooked by a dog while being loaded into the enclosure and ran off.

"We had a tough time locating him for a few days," Brown told KCCI-TV.

Steve was spotted wandering all around the city for the next four days, covering a distance of several miles.

Several residents reported spotting Steve in various locations, but they were unable to capture him.

Brown said Steve was finally returned to the herd after four and one-half days on the loose.

"He was very sneaky and roaming a lot of territory, but we're happy that we got him back and he's safe," Brown said.

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Youthful Metaphysics.

- A kindergarten pupil told his teacher he'd found a cat, but it was dead.
 "How do you know that the cat was dead? she asked her pupil.
 "Because I pissed in its ear and it didn't move," answered the child innocently.
 "You did WHAT?!?" the teacher exclaimed in surprise.
 "You know, explained the boy, "I leaned over and went 'Pssst!' and it didn't move."

- A small boy is sent to bed by his father. Five minutes later.... "Da-ad"
 "What?"
 "I'm thirsty. Can you bring drink of water?"
 "No, You had your chance. Lights out."
 Five minutes later: "Da-aaaad."
 "WHAT?"
 "I'm THIRSTY. Can I have a drink of water??"
 "I told you NO! If you ask again, I'll have to spank you!!"
 Five minutes later "Daaaa-aaaad...."
 "WHAT!"
 "When you come in to spank me, can you bring a drink of water?"

- An exasperated mother, whose son was always getting into mischief, finally asked him "How do you expect to get into Heaven?"
 The boy thought it over and said, "Well, I'll run in and out and in and out and keep slamming the door until St Peter says, 'For Heaven's sake, Dylan, come in or stay out!'"

- One summer evening during a violent thunderstorm a mother was tucking her son into bed. She was about to turn off the light when he asked with a tremor in his voice, "Mommy, will you sleep with me tonight?"
 The mother smiled and gave him a reassuring hug. "I can't dear," she said. "I have to sleep in Daddy's room."
 A long silence was broken at last by his shaky little voice: "The big sissy."

- It was that time, during the Sunday morning service, for the children's sermon. All the children were invited to come forward. One little girl was wearing a particularly pretty dress and, as she sat down, the pastor leaned over and said, "That is a very pretty dress. Is it your Easter Dress?"
 The little girl replied, directly into the pastor's clip-on microphone, "Yes, and my Mom says it's a bitch to iron."

- When I was six months pregnant with my third child, my three year old came into the room when I was just getting ready to get into the shower. She said, "Mommy, you are getting fat!"

I replied, "Yes, honey, remember Mommy has a baby growing in her tummy."

"I know," she replied, "but what's growing in your butt?"

- A little boy was doing his math homework. He said to himself, "Two plus five, that son of a bitch is seven. Three plus six, that son of a bitch is nine...."

His mother heard what he was saying and gasped, "What are you doing?"

The little boy answered, "I'm doing my math homework, Mom."

"And this is how your teacher taught you to do it?" the mother asked.

"Yes," he answered.

Infuriated, the mother asked the teacher the next day, "What are you teaching my son in math?"

The teacher replied, "Right now, we are learning addition."

The mother asked, "And are you teaching them to say two plus two, that son of a bitch is four?"

After the teacher stopped laughing, she answered, "What I taught them was, two plus two, THE SUM OF WHICH, is four."

- One day the first grade teacher was reading the story of Chicken Little to her class. She came to the part of the story where Chicken Little tried to warn the farmer. She read, "... and so Chicken Little went up to the farmer and said, "The sky is falling, the sky is falling!"

The teacher paused then asked the class, "And what do you think that farmer said?"

One little girl raised her hand and said, "I think he said: 'Holy cow! A talking chicken!'"

The teacher was unable to teach for the next 10 minutes.

- A certain little girl, when asked her name, would reply, "I'm Mr. Sugarbrown's daughter." Her mother told her this was wrong, she must say, "I'm Jane Sugarbrown."

The Vicar spoke to her in Sunday School, and said, "Aren't you Mr. Sugarbrown's daughter?"

She replied, "I thought I was, but mother says I'm not."

- A little girl asked her mother, "Can I go outside and play with the boys?"

Her mother replied, "No, you can't play with the boys, they're too rough."

The little girl thought about it for a few moments and asked, "If I can find a smooth one, can I play with him?"

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Is There a Genetic Link to Being an Extremely Good Boy?

Guide dogs need the right personality, health, and training. Scientists are studying the genetics behind the traits that make a dog suited to working.



photograph: getty images

FLASH ISN'T YOUR average puppy. A yellow Labrador, named after one of the first British guide dogs from 1931, she is playful, affectionate, and loves learning new commands. Flash is enrolled in an elaborate program herself, one that takes two years and nearly \$50,000 to train her to become a guide dog for the blind and visually impaired. Her temporary caregiver Melanie will make sure she maintains a healthy routine: twice-daily walks in different environments, a train ride here, a trip to a mall there to get used to other people. But Melanie has already accomplished one of her most important tasks: When Flash was five months old, she swabbed the puppy's cheek and mailed the saliva away to a team of researchers that is trying to decipher the link between dog genetics, health, and behavior.

Around half of the dogs that are bred for guiding don't end up doing that work because of health or behavioral problems. Modern dogs suffer from many genetic diseases, a side effect of keeping breeds separate and selecting them for desirable traits. Some of these purebreds might have the right looks, but not the right temperament, to become a working dog. But what if breeders could predict what makes a good guide dog and select against undesired traits, ensuring they aren't passed on to the next generation?

More than 500 traits analogous to human genetic conditions have been described in dogs—both species can suffer from cancer, eye disease, or dysplasia of the hip, to name a few. Cheap DNA tests for canines can screen for changes, known as mutations,

in a single gene. The causes of many other conditions, however, are more complex. They can be linked to multiple genes or to environmental factors like exercise, food, dust, or mold spores. “We definitely want to get a handle on complex traits,” says Tom Lewis, head of canine genetics at Guide Dogs. The charity breeds around 1,000 puppies a year, which spend their first year in the homes of volunteers before entering formal training.

Every Dog Breed Explained (Part 1)

Before joining Guide Dogs in January, Lewis worked at the Animal Health Trust and the Kennel Club in the United Kingdom, where he studied the genetic risk of hip dysplasia in breeds registered with the club. Dysplasia is one of the hereditary conditions that can be difficult to diagnose and treat. It is a malformation of the hip joint that develops during growth, though traumatic injury, being overweight, or lacking muscle strength can worsen the condition. For example, puppies raised in homes with hardwood flooring may build less muscle mass in their legs—they can’t get traction on the floor, and slip and slide around, which is hard on their little joints. The constant pain can eventually turn into lameness and arthritis in grown dogs, making them unsuitable for guiding or assisting people with disabilities.

Good health is key for guide dogs, but temperament is just as important. They need to lead their owners around obstacles and other people while staying calm and obedient. They need to resist chasing after squirrels or getting too excited when meeting other dogs. Not every breed has what it takes. For example, the typical cocker spaniel is intelligent, affectionate, and a great option for families, but it is also too excitable. “Even if you give them the same training, you would never expect a spaniel to be a guide dog. They’re far too temperamentally unsuited, and that’s probably a genetic thing,” says Lewis.

Sixty years of breeding and research at the charity has shown that German shepherds, golden retrievers, and Labradors—especially golden retrievers crossed with Labradors—are best suited to guide blind or visually impaired people. These breeds are confident, intelligent, and eager to please; they are large enough for the harness that wraps around their torso and includes a sturdy handle for the owner; they are strong enough to pull their owners away from dangerous obstacles, and yet small enough to lie comfortably under a bus seat.

In 2019, researchers at four universities in the United States analyzed genetic information and behavior logs for more than 14,000 dogs from 101 breeds. They found some genes that contributed to 60 to 70 percent of variation among breeds for traits such as aggressiveness toward strangers or trainability, but no gene turned out to be solely responsible for any of them. This suggests that the behavioral patterns seen in dogs are an interplay of many genes and environmental influences.

This study, however, was based on existing genetic data sets and surveys with dog owners. That’s not ideal, because the genetic and behavioral data were from separate sample groups, and not from the same dogs. “The only reason we took the breed-average approach was to compile massive amounts of behavioral and genetic data from

the existing literature," says lead author Evan MacLean, director of the Arizona Canine Cognition Center at the University of Arizona, whose ongoing research involves DNA sampling and behavioral experiments with dogs.

The new Guide Dogs project aims to bridge this gap by collecting full genome sequences from 3,000 of their bred dogs, including puppies and their parents, and correlating that with their internal data to identify genes that determine patterns of disease and behavior. So far, staff and volunteers have collected DNA samples from 400 dogs, and sequencing will begin next year. But the project will take many years to complete; a team of researchers will study the guide dogs until their retirement, to watch for diseases that develop late in life.

The DNA data will be matched up with the extremely detailed and standardized information collected from guide dogs in training. "We monitor our dogs throughout their entire lives, right from the moment they're born. Actually, we monitor them from conception," says Helen Vaterlaws-Whiteside, head of research at Guide Dogs. The file of a newborn puppy details the mating behavior of its parents, its birth weight, and order in the litter. Records of diet, exercise routines, and veterinary visits will then follow. Training staff and volunteer caregivers also assess the puppy's behavior at 5, 8, and 12 months to look out for signs of distraction, anxiety, or excitability. This information is typically used to single out dogs who are not suitable for work, before they enter the costly, months-long formal training.

An international team led by the Broad Institute of Harvard and MIT sequenced the genome of the domestic dog in 2004, meaning it determined the order of the 2.8 billion base pairs that make up the species' DNA. (Despite looking so different from one another, the 354 breeds that are recognized today all belong to the same species. There is genetic variation within breeds, and even more among breeds.) The sample came from a 12-year-old purebred boxer named Tasha, which would serve as a reference for future sequencing. It was a slow process, assembling a few hundred base pairs at a time, and costly. At the time, the US National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI) provided about \$30 million so that the team could publish the first complete analysis of the genome a year later.

But sequencing technology has come a long way. The price varies depending on where the sampling is done, but it now costs around £1,000 in the UK, and only \$700 in the US, to process dog DNA. And researchers can obtain results within a day. However, the analysis of a canine genome takes much longer and costs more than that of a human genome, because there are fewer dog samples available for reference and comparison. The NHGRI has gathered genome sequences from nearly 4,200 dogs since then.

Given that guide-dogs-to-be are regularly checked by veterinarians and follow set routines when spending the first 12 months of their lives with the caregivers, the research team at Guide Dogs will be able to tweeze apart the genetics and environment, to some extent. "Getting the insights into the genetics of behavior, that will be really exciting because it's something that is quite difficult to measure in a controlled way," says Cathryn Mellersh, who leads the Kennel Club Genetics Centre at

the University of Cambridge. “They’ll probably be some of the best examples of dogs that you could study behavior in.” Of course, the researchers cannot completely rule out external influences, and pinning down the exact DNA sequences of polygenic traits such as distractibility will be difficult, if not impossible.

The researchers at Guide Dogs want to get to the bottom of what makes their dogs tick—or sick—in order to breed dogs that are more likely to pass the formal training. But it will also be about finding dogs who best fit their future owners’ needs: Some people have allergies, some have trouble balancing and need a larger dog for support, some travel or socialize often and want a confident, outgoing dog. It’s not just about screening out unwanted traits, Lewis says, but maintaining a variety of desirable ones, “because not every guide dog owner is going to be exactly the same.”

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10 New Dating Slang Words to Know in 2021

By Ashley Austrew for Dictionary.Com



kidsinthehouse.com

If you’re dating in 2021, the first step is learning how to speak the language. Thanks to the proliferation of dating apps and social media messaging services, dating now has a solid online component. And just like all the other aspects of our online life (text speak, memes, and emojis), it has its own set of rules and vocabulary. When you’re looking for love these days, it’s totally possible you might get breadcrumb and orbited on your way to the soft launch. Have no idea what we’re talking about? Keep reading as we help you make sense of 10 trending dating terms you need to know to navigate your dating apps.

1. soft launching

Soft launch originated as a web term that means launching a new website in stages. As dating slang, it means essentially the same thing, except the thing being launched is a new relationship. The term refers to the trend of posting subtle hints on social media that you're dating someone new—two glasses of wine, for instance—without revealing identifying details. It was coined by actress Rachel Sennet, who tweeted in 2020, "Congratulations on the soft launch of ur boyfriend (pic on story, elbow and side profile only)." If things work out, maybe you'll level up to sharing photos of each other on the main feed.

2. roaching

It's an unwritten rule that if you see one cockroach, there are probably more lurking in the dark. That's where the dating term roaching comes from. It's described as roaching if a person you're dating is hiding the fact that they're involved with multiple other people at the same time. Of course, there's nothing wrong with keeping it casual or seeing multiple people if that's what's been agreed upon. What makes it roaching is the fact that it's happening in secret. The person might even play it off like they're only seeing one person. Maybe it's time to exterminate that connection.

3. Fauci-ing

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, became a household name during the pandemic. He's so well known, in fact, that he inspired his own dating slang. Fauci-ing is the act of turning down a date because someone isn't taking the pandemic seriously enough. The term is believed to have been coined by the dating app Plenty of Fish, and it's gotten so popular that Axios asked Dr. Fauci about it in February 2021. He found it hilarious.

Doesn't hurt to brush up on the difference between flu and COVID-19 before your next date.

4. zombie-ing

By now, you've probably heard of ghosting, that unpleasant phenomenon in which someone abruptly ends all contact with no explanation. But what do you call it when someone who ghosted you suddenly comes back around? Zombie-ing. A zombie, in this case, is a ghoster who "rises from the dead" and contacts you like nothing ever happened. Just like in a real zombie apocalypse, there probably isn't a cure for the virus. Perhaps the best thing you can do is run away fast.

5. wokefishing

Coined by writer Serena Smith, wokefishing happens when someone portrays themselves as more progressive than they are, usually on social media, in order to impress others or simply because they aren't as well-versed on the issues as they believe themselves to be. The term is modeled after catfishing, which is when someone assumes a false identity or personality online. Online activism is a part of life in 2021, but misrepresenting your values to get dates doesn't sound very woke to us.

6. benching

Athletes get benched, or “removed from a game,” all the time. What does it mean in dating? Benching refers to the practice of keeping a potential romantic partner on hold in case others don’t work out. If you’re being benched, the person who is doing the benching might reach out just often enough to keep you on the hook, but they only really invest time in the relationship or come around when they don’t have other options. If dating had referees, there would definitely be a flag on this play.

7. orbiting

Men’s Health has referred to orbiting as “the new ghosting.” It’s when someone breaks off all contact with a person they were dating in real life, but they continue following that person on social media and interacting with their posts and content. In other words, they orbit their ex or former dating partner just like a planet might orbit another celestial body. Of course, it’s normal to stay social media friends sometimes, but if the breakup is fresh or the severing of ties was complete and the person is still reacting to your Instagram stories like nothing happened? Houston, we have a problem.

8. cuffing

Does it seem like everyone pairs up as soon as the holiday season arrives? You aren’t imagining things. The phenomenon even has a name. Cuffing is another way of saying people are committing to a relationship, and cuffing season is “the period during the fall and winter holidays, from Thanksgiving to Valentine’s Day, when people are more inclined to pair up in committed romantic relationships.” Cuffs has been short for handcuffs since the 1800s. Now, the terms getting cuffed and cuffing season are a play on handcuffing oneself to a partner (i.e., being exclusive). While these relationships may or may not go the distance once the seasons change, at least there’s someone else around to fake laugh at your uncle’s bad jokes on Thanksgiving.

9. pocketing

Normally, when people are in a new relationship, they want to shout it from the rooftops. That’s not the case with pocketing. Pocketing means keeping someone you’re dating separate, or “pocketed,” from the rest of your life, like not introducing them to your friends, inviting them to events or making mention of your relationship on social media. There are a lot of different reasons why people may pocket a new relationship. Regardless of the reason, it’s safe to say no one wants to feel like they’ve been tucked away like loose change.

10. breadcrumbing

Breadcrumbing is the new “leading someone on.” Typically, if someone is breadcrumbing you, it happens via text and social media. They engage in occasional chats and messages, and they might even flirt, but they don’t intend to actually pursue a relationship. If anything, they might just be in it for the ego boost. The metaphor of breadcrumbing might remind you of Hansel and Gretel—and the trail of crumbs they left behind—and that’s exactly what this term references. Someone is leaving just enough of a trail to string you along. Take note: breadcrumbing can happen with exes, too. They might pop up just when you’re starting to move on. Normally, we aren’t ones

to promote dating slang warfare, but if you're a victim of breadcrumbing, that might be an instance when ghosting someone is justified.

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What Do You Do When a Bear Takes Exception to Your Reindeer?



californianewstimes

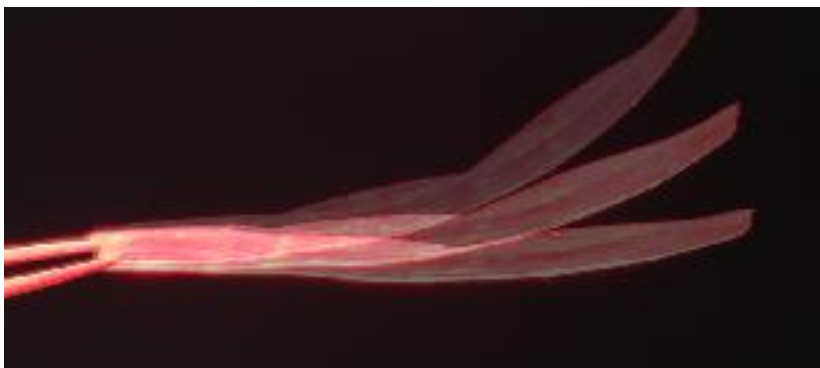
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FdZ3hXdDt7s&feature=emb_imp_woyt

Santa's no help. Neither are his elves.

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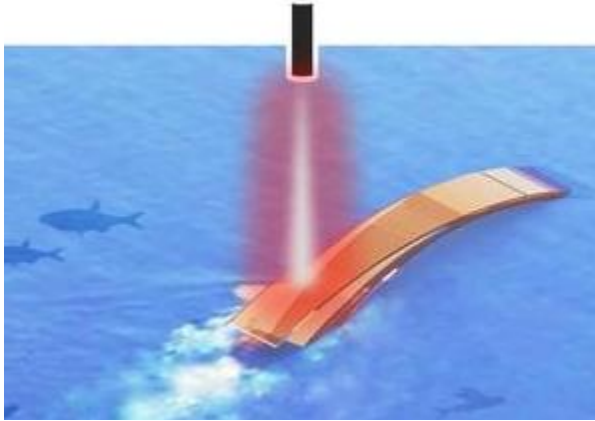
Light-Powered Soft Robots Could Suck Up Oil Spills

Water striders, steam engines inspire slicker picker-upper



Jules Bernstein

A floating, robotic film designed at UC Riverside could be trained to Hoover oil spills at sea or remove contaminants from drinking water.

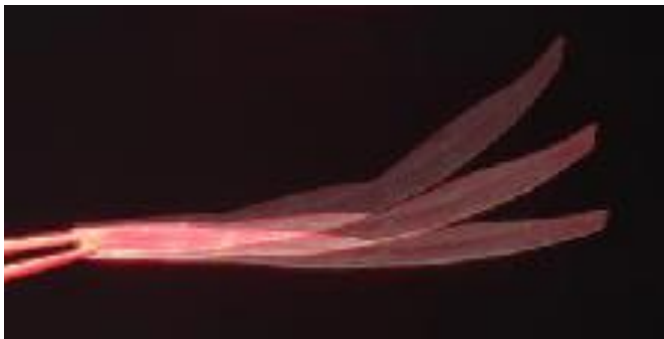


*Illustration of Neusbot on open waters, powered from above.
(Zheiwei Li/UCR)*

Powered by light and fueled by water, the film could be deployed indefinitely to clean remote areas where recharging by other means would prove difficult.

“Our motivation was to make soft robots sustainable and able to adapt on their own to changes in the environment. If sunlight is used for power, this machine is sustainable, and won’t require additional energy sources,” said UCR chemist Zhiwei Li. “The film is also re-usable.”

Researchers dubbed the film Neusbot after neustons, a category of animals that includes water striders. These insects traverse the surface of lakes and slow-moving streams with a pulsing motion, much like scientists have been able to achieve with the Neusbot, which can move on any body of water.



*Superimposed images showing Neusbot's bending process.
(Zheiwei Li/UCR)*

While other scientists have created films that bend in response to light, they have not been able to generate the adjustable, mechanical oscillation of which Neusbot is capable. This type of motion is key to controlling the robot and getting it to function where and when you want.

Technical details of this achievement are described in a new Science Robotics paper.

“There aren’t many methods to achieve this controllable movement using light. We solved the problem with a tri-layer film that behaves like a steam engine,” Li explained.

The steam from boiling water powered the motion of early trains. It is a similar principle that powers Neusbot, except with light as the power source. The middle layer of the film is porous, holding water as well as iron oxide and copper nanorods. The nanorods convert light energy into heat, vaporizing the water and powering pulsed motion across the water's surface.

Neusbot's bottom layer is hydrophobic, so even if an ocean wave overpowered the film, it would float back to the surface. Additionally, the nanomaterials can withstand high salt concentrations without damage. "I'm confident about their stability in high salt situations," Li said.

Li and UCR chemistry professor Yadong Yin specialize in making robots from nanomaterials. They controlled Neusbot's direction by changing the angle of its light source. Powered only by the sun, the robot would simply move forward. With an additional light source, they could control where Neusbot swims and cleans.

The current version of Neusbot only features three layers. The research team wants to test future versions with a fourth layer that could absorb oil, or one that absorbs other chemicals.

"Normally, people send ships to the scene of an oil spill to clean by hand. Neusbot could do this work like a robot vacuum, but on the water's surface," Li said.

They would also like to try and control its oscillation mode more precisely and give it the capability for even more complex motion.

"We want to demonstrate these robots can do many things that previous versions have not achieved," he said

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Countries by Alcohol Consumption Per Capita



Alcohol might be one of the oldest and most frequently used recreational substances in the world, but examining countries by alcohol consumption shows that usage is not equal.

Consumption levels, and types of alcohol consumed, vary widely based on location. Furthermore, the availability of fruits and grains used in alcohol production impacts which drinks are more commonly consumed, as does the predominant culture. Some

cultures see alcohol consumption as a pleasurable experience, while others see intoxication as a sin.

There's also the question of economics and availability. It's strange, but in some regions of the world, industrially mass-produced alcohol can flood markets and become cheaper than other beverages, including water.

When we map alcohol consumption by capita, and by different types of alcohol, these local and cultural stories come to light. The above maps use recorded consumption data from WHO for 2019, in liters of pure alcohol.

Europe Leads in Per Capita Alcohol Consumption

The top 10 countries by alcohol consumption highlight the prominence of alcoholic beverages in European culture.

Eight of the 10 countries with the top alcohol consumption per capita were in Europe. Primarily, they were Eastern and Central European countries, including #2 Latvia, #3 Czech Republic, #4 Lithuania, and #5 Austria.

But the crown of alcohol consumption per capita goes to the Cook Islands, which leads the world with an annual per capita consumption of 13L (3.4 gallons) of alcohol. The US slots in at #35 with an average annual consumption of 8.93 liters

At the bottom of the consumption charts? Not surprisingly, it's Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other Muslim countries where intoxication is religiously prohibited.

Regional Disparities in Alcohol Consumption

Per capita consumption of alcohol also highlights clear regional preferences in amount and type, or a lack of interest.

The biggest consumers of alcohol are countries in Central Europe, the South Pacific, and parts of the Caribbean. In Europe, beer and wine are kings, with most of the top consumers also being top producers such as France and Germany.

Spirits like rum, meanwhile, are dominant in the Cook Islands and much of the Caribbean, which has four of the 12 top spirit consumers. The others are mainly in Eastern Europe and Russia, which get most of their alcohol consumption from vodka.

The importance of local crops couldn't be overstated. Regions like Africa and Asia that struggle with the right conditions for grapes or hops saw higher consumption of "other" distilled drinks.

These include rice alcohol in South Korea and Japan, and drinks made from sugarcane, molasses, and even bananas in African countries like Tanzania.

Unlike goods like coffee or tea, alcohol can be produced from many different grains, fruits, or sources of sugar that can be fermented—so it's natural that regional differences in types, amounts, and even cultural importance would arise.

But as one of the world's most widely used recreational drugs, it's played a storied role throughout history that is certain to continue evolving.



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Tesla Announces \$1,900 Electric Quad Bike for Kids

ATV borrows the angular design of the Cybertruck.

Jonathan M. Gitlin



*The Cyberquad for Kids is a \$1,900 electric ATV.
Tesla*

The entry point for Tesla's range of electric vehicles just got a lot lower. On Thursday, the American automaker announced the Cyberquad for Kids, an angular electric all-terrain vehicle inspired by the company's 2019 Cybertruck concept. At \$1,900, the ATV costs a tiny fraction of the next-cheapest Tesla you can order online.

This isn't the first time we've seen an ATV from Tesla. When CEO Elon Musk debuted the polarizing pickup, he also showed off an ATV to go with it, albeit one that turned out to be a Yamaha Raptor with a powertrain swap. The Cyberquad for Kids is manufactured for the automaker by Radio Flyer.

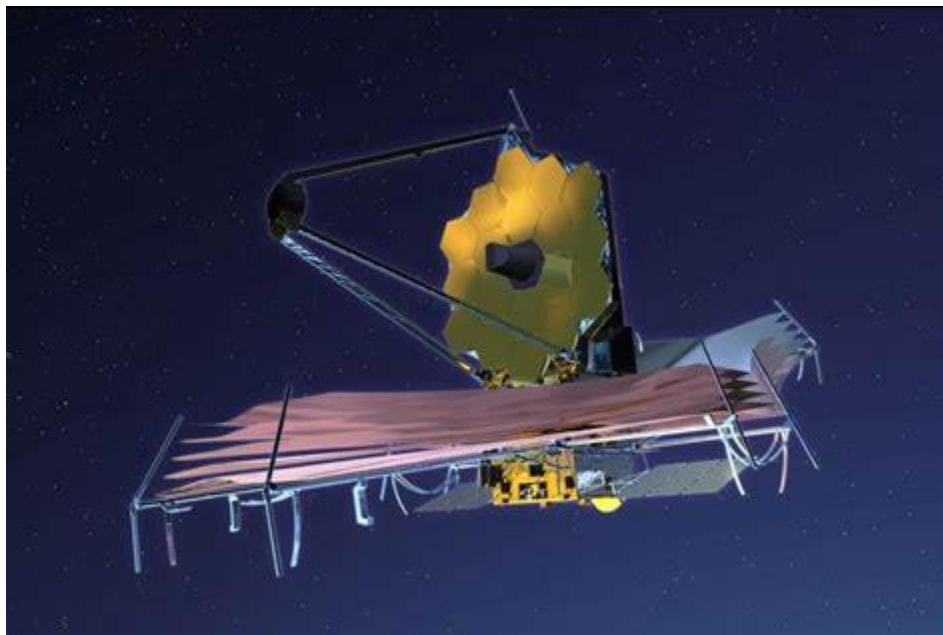
As the name suggests, this ATV is a bit smaller. Although Tesla says it's suitable for anyone ages 8 or older, the Cyberquad for Kids can only accommodate riders of up to 150 lbs (68 kg), so adults might find it too diminutive.

For those that fit, Tesla says you can expect up to 15 miles (24 km) of range and a top speed of 10 mph (16 km/h), although it can optionally be limited to 5 mph (8 km/h).

Don't try connecting the vehicle to a Supercharger, though—the removable 36 V battery pack can only be slow-charged, which takes about five hours when plugged into a wall socket. Tesla says the Cyberquad for Kids will ship in two to four weeks, but the company can't guarantee delivery before the upcoming holidays.

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Everything You Want to Know About the James Webb Telescope



<https://www.quantamagazine.org/why-nasas-james-webb-space-telescope-matters-so-much-20211203>

This Quanta Magazine article is too good and too complete not to pass on unedited. The latest launch estimate is December 24th. It remains to be seen whether that is 2021 or 2023...but fingers crossed it goes this year and more than that, *it works*.

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German Doc Morris Ad



<https://youtu.be/UAKeVB2fZic>

There are those who call this the best ad of the season. What's your thought?

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Remember these Days? Some of us Will

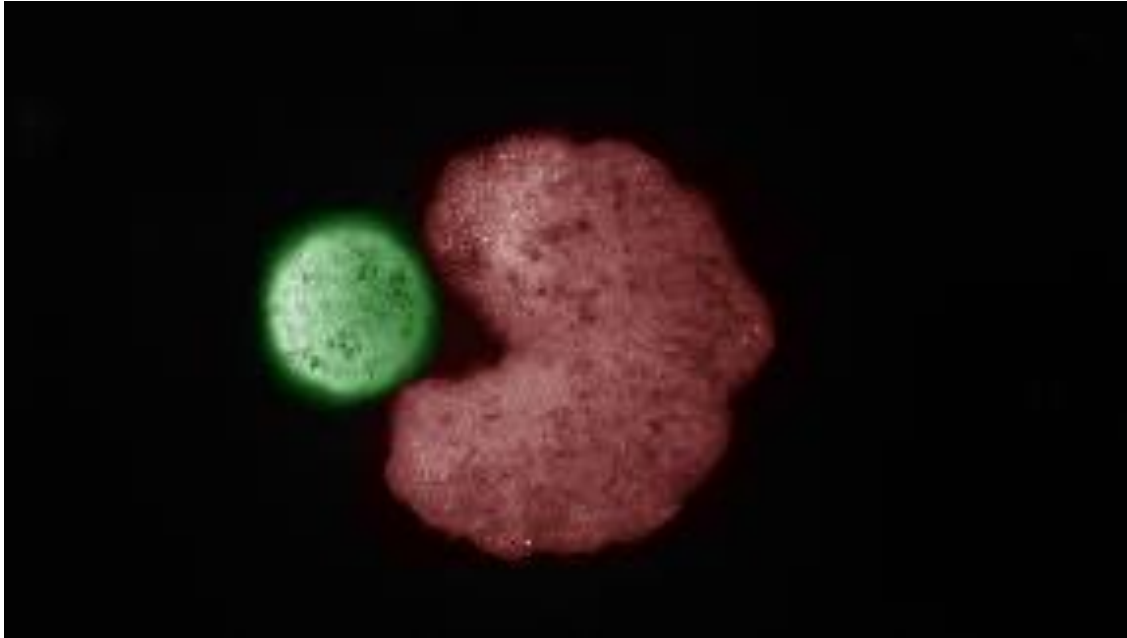


Words won't do this scene justice

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Tiny Pac-Man Xenobots Can Create Copies of Themselves

Blobs of frog cells exhibit surprising and complex behavior



A xenobot "parent," shaped like a hungry Pac-Man (shown in red false color), created an "offspring" xenobot (green sphere) by gathering loose frog cells in its opening.
douglas blackiston and sam kriegman

By Laura Sanders for Science News

Tiny "living machines" made of frog cells can replicate themselves, making copies that can then go on to do the same. This newly described form of renewal offers insights into how to design biological machines that are self-perpetuating.

"This is an incredibly exciting breakthrough," for the field of biologically based robotics, says Kirstin Petersen, an electrical and computer engineer at Cornell University who studies groups of robots. Robots that can copy themselves are an important step toward systems that don't need humans to operate, she says.

Earlier this year, researchers described the behaviors of the lab-made living robots, called xenobots (SN: 3/31/21). Plucked out of frogs' growing bodies, small clumps of skin stem cells from frog embryos knitted themselves into small spheres and began to move. Cellular extensions called cilia served as motors that powered the xenobots as they cruised around their lab dishes.

That cruising can have a bigger purpose, the researchers now report in the Dec. 7 Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. As the xenobots bumble about, they can gather loose frog cells into spheres, which then coalesce into xenobots themselves.

This type of movement-created reproduction, called kinematic self-replication by the researchers, appears to be new for living cells. Usually, reproducing organisms contribute some parental material to their offspring, says study coauthor Douglas Blackiston of Tufts University in Medford, Mass., and Harvard University. Sexual reproduction, for instance, requires parental sperm and egg cells to get started. Other types of reproduction involve cells splitting or budding off from a parent.

"Here, this is different," Blackiston says. These xenobots are "finding loose parts, sort of like robotics parts in the environment, and cobbling them together." Those collections then grow into "a second generation of xenobots that can move around like their parents," Blackiston says.

<https://youtu.be/e9krifazZA0>

Living machines called xenobots are blobs of frog stem cells that knit themselves together. Scientists have now found that the bots can self-replicate. A C-shaped xenobot was most efficient at collecting loose stem cells in its opening, a behavior that leads to more of the mobile xenobots.

Left to their own devices, spheroid xenobots could generally create only one more generation before dying out, the researchers found. But with the help of an artificial intelligence program that predicted an optimal shape for the original xenobots, the replication could be pushed to four generations.

The AI program predicted that a C shape, much like an openmouthed Pac-Man, would be a more efficient progenitor. Sure enough, when improved xenobots were let loose in a dish, they began scooping up loose cells into their gaping "mouths," forming more sphere-shaped bots. A mobile offspring took shape once about 50 cells had glommed together in a parent's opening, Blackiston says. A full-bodied xenobot consists of about 4,000 to 6,000 frog cells.

Xenobots' tiny size is an advantage, Petersen says. "The fact that they were able to do this at such a small scale just makes it even better, because you can start to imagine biomedical application areas," she says. Minuscule xenobots might be able to sculpt tissues for implantation, for instance, or go inside bodies to deliver therapeutics to specific spots.

Beyond the possible jobs for the xenobots, the research advances an important science, one that has existential importance for humans, says study coauthor Michael Levin, a developmental biologist at Tufts. That is, "the science of trying to anticipate and control the consequences of complex systems," he says.

"Originally, no one would have predicted any of this," Levin says. "These things are routinely doing things that surprise us." With xenobots, researchers can push the limits of the unexpected. "This is about a safe way to explore and advance the science of being less surprised by things," Levin says.

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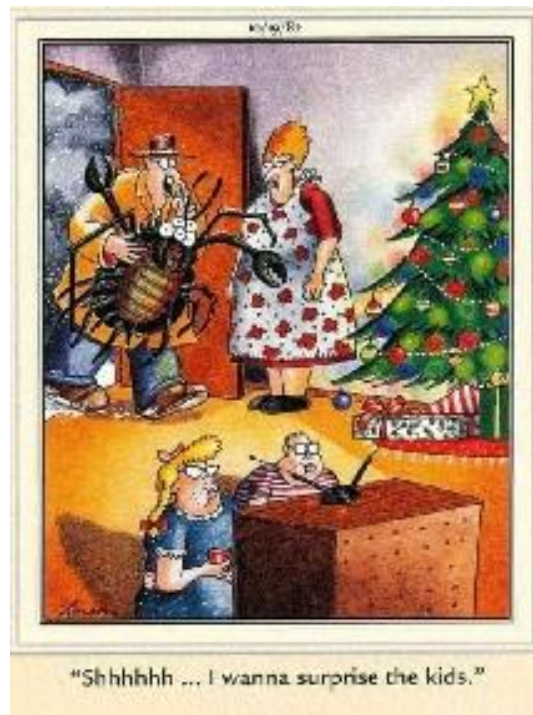
The Life of Brian Reemerges 43-Years Later



<https://youtu.be/sFBOQzSk14c>

The this prescient satire from the Monty Python British comedy troop was filmed 40 years ago. You may have the suspicion the boys had a pipeline into today's American culture.

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Sir Arnold Edward Trevor Bax, (1883 –1953)



While Bax created a great number of songs, choral music, chamber pieces, and solo piano works, he is best known for his orchestral music. In addition to a series of symphonic poems he wrote seven symphonies. His symphonic poem Tintagel, is his best-known work.

In the 1930s, Bax composed the last four of his seven symphonies. Other works from the decade include the popular Overture to a Picaresque Comedy (1930), several works for chamber groups, including a nonet (1930), a string quintet (1933), an octet for horn, piano, and strings (1934) and his third and last string quartet (1936).

Tintagel <https://youtu.be/ixF5f2cqIKo>

November Woods <https://youtu.be/JuZJWkXk89k>

On the Seashore <https://youtu.be/hG5hbPeIO3Y>

Symphonic Poems

<https://youtu.be/BL7Qx3LmBIA?list=PLjfSxN3YNgY3LlijB4KPwa83a7EojEgdi&t=4>

Interestingly, in the middle of his career, Bax was generally regarded as Britain's leading symphonist.

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W.B. Yeats (1839-19220)



A pillar of the Irish literary establishment, Yeats helped to found the Abbey Theatre, and in his later years served two terms as a Senator of the Irish Free State. He was a driving force behind the Irish Literary Revival along with Lady Gregory, Edward Martyn and others.

His earliest volume of verse was published in 1889, and its slow-paced and lyrical poems display debts to Edmund Spenser, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and the poets of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. From 1900, his poetry grew more physical and realistic. He largely renounced the transcendental beliefs of his youth, though he remained preoccupied with physical and spiritual masks, as well as with cyclical theories of life. In 1923, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Poems

Byzantium

The unpurged images of day recede;
The Emperor's drunken soldiery are abed;
Night resonance recedes, night walkers' song
After great cathedral gong;
A starlit or a moonlit dome disdains
All that man is,
All mere complexities,
The fury and the mire of human veins.
Before me floats an image, man or shade,
Shade more than man, more image than a shade;
For Hades' bobbin bound in mummy-cloth

May unwind the winding path;
A mouth that has no moisture and no breath
Breathless mouths may summon;
I hail the superhuman;
I call it death-in-life and life-in-death.
Miracle, bird or golden handiwork,
More miracle than bird or handiwork,
Planted on the star-lit golden bough,
Can like the cocks of Hades crow,
Or, by the moon embittered, scorn aloud
In glory of changeless metal
Common bird or petal
And all complexities of mire or blood.
At midnight on the Emperor's pavement flit
Flames that no faggot feeds, nor steel has lit,
Nor storm disturbs, flames begotten of flame,
Where blood-begotten spirits come
And all complexities of fury leave,
Dying into a dance,
An agony of trance,
An agony of flame that cannot singe a sleeve.
Astraddle on the dolphin's mire and blood,
Spirit after Spirit! The smithies break the flood.
The golden smithies of the Emperor!
Marbles of the dancing floor
Break bitter furies of complexity,
Those images that yet
Fresh images beget,
That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea.

The Sorrow of Love

THE brawling of a sparrow in the eaves,
The brilliant moon and all the milky sky,
And all that famous harmony of leaves,
Had blotted out man's image and his cry.
A girl arose that had red mournful lips
And seemed the greatness of the world in tears,
Doomed like Odysseus and the labouring ships
And proud as Priam murdered with his peers;
Arose, and on the instant clamorous eaves,
A climbing moon upon an empty sky,
And all that lamentation of the leaves,
Could but compose man's image and his cry.

Love Song

My love, we will go, we will go, I and you,
And away in the woods we will scatter the dew;
And the salmon behold, and the ousel too,
My love, we will hear, I and you, we will hear,
The calling afar of the doe and the deer.
And the bird in the branches will cry for us clear,
And the cuckoo unseen in his festival mood;
And death, oh my fair one, will never come near
In the bosom afar of the fragrant wood.

He Wishes His Beloved Were Dead

Were you but lying cold and dead,
And lights were paling out of the West,
You would come hither, and bend your head,
And I would lay my head on your breast;
And you would murmur tender words,
Forgiving me, because you were dead:
Nor would you rise and hasten away,
Though you have the will of the wild birds,
But know your hair was bound and wound
About the stars and moon and sun:
O would, beloved, that you lay
Under the dock-leaves in the ground,
While lights were paling one by one.

Drinking Song

Wine comes in at the mouth
And love comes in at the eye;
That's all we shall know for truth
Before we grow old and die.
I lift the glass to my mouth,
I look at you, and I sigh.

Tom the Lunatic

Sang old Tom the lunatic
That sleeps under the canopy:
'What change has put my thoughts astray
And eyes that had so keen a sight?

What has turned to smoking wick
Nature's pure unchanging light?

'Huddon and Duddon and Daniel O'Leary.
Holy Joe, the beggar-man,
Wenching, drinking, still remain
Or sing a penance on the road;
Something made these eyeballs weary
That blinked and saw them in a shroud.

'Whatever stands in field or flood,
Bird, beast, fish or man,
Mare or stallion, cock or hen,
Stands in God's unchanging eye
In all the vigour of its blood;
In that faith I live or die.'

*For some reason I had forgotten about Yeats...a true misdeed. He was prolific, so I'll
have a chance to return to him many times in the future.*

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T.rex gets Christmas jumper at Natural History Museum in London



The T.rex has had a festive but fearsome makeover

A giant Christmas jumper has been created for a Tyrannosaurus Rex at London's Natural History Museum.

The animatronic T.rex is sporting the festive knit, which has been made by a family-run firm in Leicester.

British Christmas Jumpers has previously produced sweaters for Ed Sheeran and the Houses of Parliament.

Director Snahal Patel said the latest design was the company's biggest job yet and took staff 100 hours to complete.

"We've never done anything like this. My dad's never done anything like this and he's been in this business for 35 to 40 years," Mr Patel said.

"It's probably the biggest thing we've made and going forward into the future there are other big projects planned."

The jumper is 12 times heavier than a regular jumper and human-sized versions are also available to buy from the museum shop to help fund the venue's work.

Carla Treasure, from the attraction, said they wanted to do something fun to encourage people back after a tough year.

"I think he looks absolutely fabulous," she said.

"It's been a really, really challenging year for heritage and visitor attractions and we really wanted to do something which would generate interest.

"All the proceeds from the sale of these jumpers goes back to supporting the museum, not only for its pioneering research but also caring for its 80m specimens."

She said they chose the Leicester firm because the jumpers were made in the UK and manufactured using recycled yarn and plastic bottles.

Next, they'll probably humiliate him further with a snood.

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How Professional Santas are Trained



<https://youtu.be/cXmU4oxslvE>

Professional Santas from all around the world travel to the Charles W. Howard Santa Claus School in Midland, Michigan, to learn about all things Santa Claus before the start of the holiday season. Referred to as the "Harvard of Santa institutions," it's been in operation since 1937, making it the oldest Santa school in the United States.

During the three-day course, Santas learn how to sound like Santa, use American Sign Language to communicate Santa-related phrases, and answer questions from children. Insider visited the 84th running of the Charles W. Howard Santa Claus School to find out what it takes to be a professional Santa Claus.

...and they don't even have to bring their own beards.

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Donnie Iris and the Cruisers



Donnie Iris wrote the #2 Billboard hit, "The Rapper", with the Jaggerz in 1970 and was a member of Wild Cherry after the group had a #1 hit with "Play That Funky Music." He also achieved fame as a solo artist in the early 1980s with the #29 hit "Ah! Leah!" and the #37 hit "Love Is Like a Rock."

Ah Leah <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YH5Arbm47IQ>

Play that Funky Music <https://youtu.be/CINCbuOAiDs>

Love is Like a Rock <https://youtu.be/WFmPEgNuELM>

Iris with his solo band has released eleven studio albums, one EP, two live albums, and two compilation albums.

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Beware the Vegetable Thief



https://www.reddit.com/r/aww/comments/ra2ibr/heres_a_bever_carrying_a_carrot_and_a_head_of/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=web2x&context=3

If not a beaver, whom can you trust?

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Why We Don't Do Fireworks for Christmas



youtube

<https://youtu.be/ycviJ-421Z8>

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It's for Sale for a Measly Six-Digit Figure



<https://silodrome.com/douglas-a-4-skyhawk/>

I've got a stocking in terrible need of stuffing.

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My Walking Thoughts November 14, 2021

If Christmas is Dead, No One Told my Hamlet

Oak View is something of an anachronism in in comparison with contemporary California hamlets—perhaps the entire US—for all I know.

Part of the mismatch with what we see on the tube lies in the until recent residential property price gap between my area and the rest of coastal Southern California, making it possible for young family people with children to purchase homes. True, there are no beachside properties available--you have to go nine miles for that--but that puts a walk in the sand close enough to enjoy the sound of surf on a regular basis and the availability of decent employment practically on the doorstep.

So, in my walks, I get a better look at Oak View's population situation than what the 2020 census stats portray. My short analysis...things are pretty nice in this neck of the woods and regardless of efforts in other climes, Santa, his elves, sleigh, and reindeer; Christmas trees, creches, and Hanukkah lights appear to have escaped scuttling for at least another year.

The approaching winter—something of a laughable concept when it's a rare day that the thermometer doesn't wend its way up into the 70s—offers the opportunity for families with youngsters at home to trot out decorations for Halloween, Thanksgiving,

and Christmas, and increasingly I see blow-up giant plastic figures rooted where lawns used to grow before the current drought. But best of all in my mind are the simple homemade decorations representative of the particular season.

It's a nice place for kids of all ages—me included—to live, walk, ride bicycles and skateboards (not me), and play in the streets. As I said in the beginning, it's a trip into the past that I suspect the network folks barely remember and probably will never see again.

My thoughts...it's a place where the Season's Blessings flow in happy profusion.

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Root 66



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