

## Ode to E Pluribus Unum for Sunday May 26 2024

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### Aurora Dome Sky



*Image Credit & Copyright: Xuecheng Liu & Yuxuan Liu*

It seemed like night, but part of the sky glowed purple. It was the now famous night of May 10, 2024, when people over much of the world reported beautiful aurora-filled skies.

The featured image was captured this night during early morning hours from Arlington, Wisconsin, USA. The panorama is a composite of several 6-second exposures covering

two thirds of the visible sky, with north in the center, and processed to heighten the colors and remove electrical wires.

The photographer (in the foreground) reported that the aurora appeared to flow from a point overhead but illuminated the sky only toward the north. The aurora's energetic particles originated from CMEs ejected from our Sun over sunspot AR 3664 a few days before. This large active region rotated to the far side of the Sun last week, but may well survive to rotate back toward the Earth next week.

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## Medal of Honor History & Timeline



*military.com*

The Medal of Honor has achieved prominence in American history like few other awards have. It's a symbol for the very values its recipients displayed in the moments that mattered, an honor bestowed upon only the most honorable.

<https://bit.ly/44Zzux2>

*Tomorrow, we honor the memory of those who have given  
their lives in service to the nation*

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## AI Pinpoints Where Psychosis Originates in the Brain



*A new study used brain scans and machine learning to pinpoint the two key brain regions involved in psychosis.*

*(Image credit: Monty Rakusen via Getty Images)*

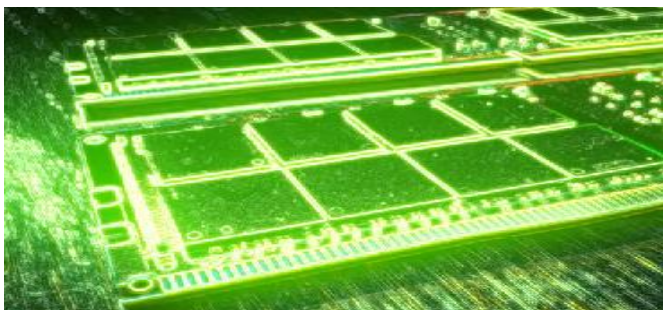
Scientists have moved a step closer to understanding the basis of the hallucinations and delusions that characterize schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

New brain scans from people with psychosis may confirm a long-standing theory that in psychosis brain networks in charge of directing a person's attention malfunction. This causes a person to experience hallucinations, or sensations of things that aren't actually happening; and delusions, or unshakable false beliefs. Psychosis is a feature of serious mental disorders such as schizophrenia, but its symptoms exist on a continuum and can also occur independently of any defined mental disorder.

<https://bit.ly/4aTguSm>

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## Laser-Powered 'Magnetic RAM' Discovered



*The scientists formulated a new equation that describes the link between the amplitude of the magnetic field of light, its frequency and the energy absorption properties of a magnetic material.*

*(Image credit: AdrianHancu via Getty Images)*

Researchers have found an elemental physical interaction between light and magnetism that might lead to the next generation of computing memory.

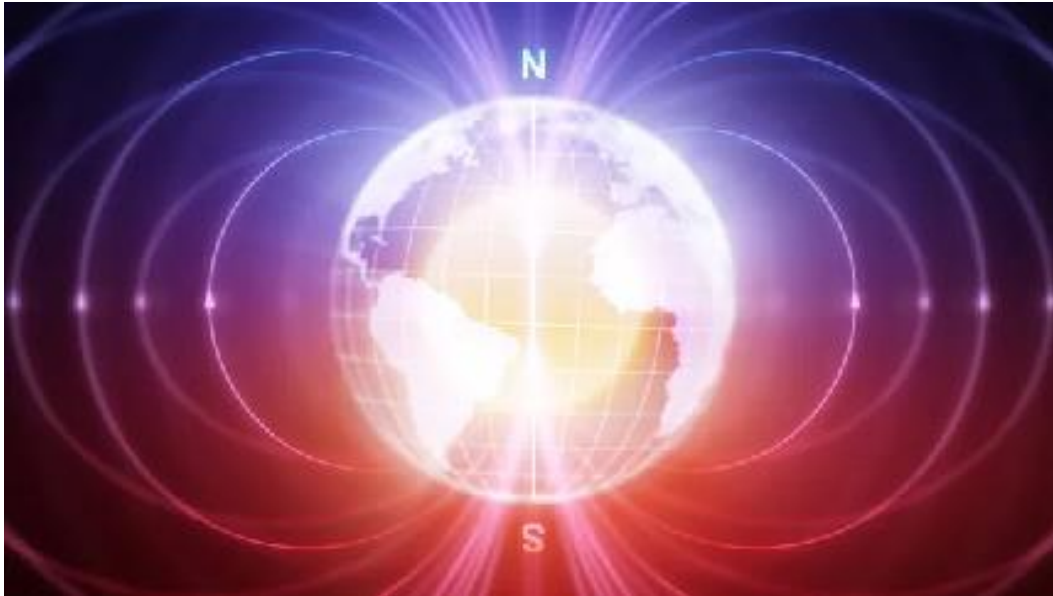
The scientists formulated a new equation that describes the link between the amplitude of the magnetic field of light, its frequency and the energy absorption properties of a magnetic material. The scientists published their findings in a study on Jan. 3 in the journal [Physical Review Research](#).

<https://bit.ly/3w69CIN>

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## **Did Earth's Magnetic Field Form Before the Planet's Core**

A recent study says it did.



*(Image credit: Petrovich9 via Getty Images)*

The oldest [firm age yet](#) for Earth's magnetic field suggests that it developed before a solid planetary core, 3.7 billion years ago.

The new study suggests that at that time, the planet had a protective magnetic bubble around it that deflected cosmic radiation and damaging charged particles from the sun.

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

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## **The Cloud Under the Sea**

The invisible seafaring industry that keeps the internet afloat





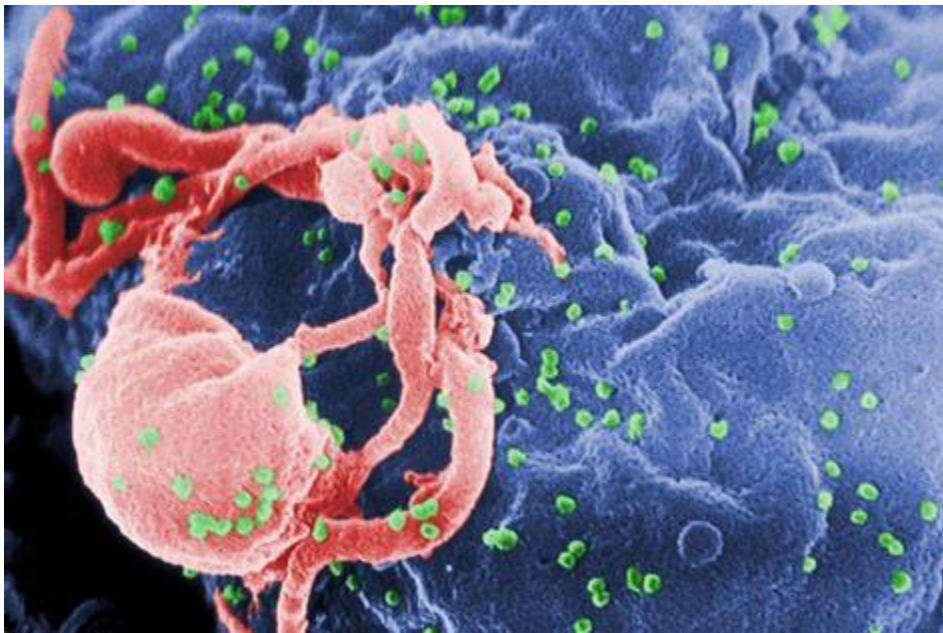
*This giant robot fixes undersea broadband cables*  
*wired.co.uk*

In the family tree of professions, submarine cable work occupies a lonely branch somewhere between heavy construction and neurosurgery. It's precision engineering on a shifting sea using heavy metal hooks and high-tension lines that, if they snap, can cut a person in half.

<https://bit.ly/4d9BGWI>

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## **Vitamin D Aids Some Gut Microbes in the Fight Against Cancer**



*wustl.edu*

Plenty of sunshine and a fortified diet can boost your body's stores of vitamin D, allowing your cells to effectively absorb calcium and keep your skeleton strong and

healthy. But for patients receiving immunotherapy treatment for cancer, vitamin D may provide even greater benefits.

In addition to its well-known impacts on bone health, this essential nutrient also plays an important role in regulating the immune system. Now, new experiments in mice have revealed that the substance can alter the composition of the gut microbiome in favor of a bacterium called *Bacteroides fragilis*, which may help the body mount a more robust immune response against certain types of cancer. This week in [Science](#), researchers report that rodents with increased *B. fragilis* responded better to immune checkpoint inhibitor (ICI) treatment—a type of immunotherapy that “releases the brakes” on immune cells and allows them to destroy tumors. The scientists also discovered that this enhanced immunity can be transferred to other mice by way of a simple fecal transplant, or by feeding them a diet rich in vitamin D.

“Future investigations will help delineate how microbes can be harnessed in conjunction with dietary interventions to unleash the full potential of ICI therapy,” immunologists Fabien Franco and Kathy McCoy write in a related *Science Perspective*. Since increased vitamin D has also been linked to better outcomes in human cancer patients, they add, dietary supplements may one day represent a promising addition to immunotherapy.

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## The EXE181, Not Your Grandfather’s MG



*moss&fogg*



*momentcar.com*

Great if all you want to do is drive it around Bonneville Salt Flats, but personally I still think the 1949 MG-TC is the cat’s meow. The TC was first delivered in 1945 but it reached its full glory in 1949 then was replaced by the MG-TD which was in my estimation a step backwards. China bought the company in 2011 and nothing of value has appeared yet.

<https://mossandfogg.com/the-exe181-not-your-grandfathers-mg/>

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## FDA Approves Pfizer’s First Gene Therapy for Rare Inherited Bleeding Disorder



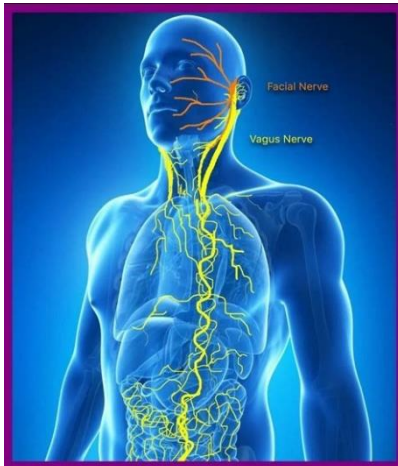
drugs.com

The agency greenlighted the drug, which will be marketed as Beqvez, for adults with moderate to severe hemophilia B available by prescription to eligible patients this quarter and has a hefty \$3.5 million price tag before insurance and other rebates.

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

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## The Vagus Nerve Can Play Havoc with the Immune System



The vagus nerve, which takes a meandering path from the base of your brain to your internal organs and back again, plays a vital—and somewhat mysterious—role in the so-called “gut-brain connection.” The twisting branches of this 100,000-fiber network are known to influence digestion, blood pressure, and even memory and mood —offering a tantalizing target for the treatment of conditions like obesity and depression.

Now, new experiments in mice demonstrate that chronic stimulation of the vagus nerve can impair the function of “boot camps” known as germinal centers, which temporarily form in the lymph nodes and spleen during infection.

<https://bit.ly/3QINlr2>

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## How Long Does it Take a Hacker to Crack Your Password

Number of Characters	Numbers Only	Lowercase Letters	Upper and Lowercase Letters	Numbers, Upper and Lowercase Letters	Numbers, Upper and Lowercase Letters, Symbols
4	Instantly	Instantly	3 secs	6 secs	9 secs
5	Instantly	4 secs	2 mins	6 mins	10 mins
6	Instantly	2 mins	2 hours	6 hours	12 hours
7	4 secs	50 mins	4 days	2 weeks	1 month
8	37 secs	22 hours	8 months	3 years	7 years
9	6 mins	3 weeks	33 years	161 years	479 years
10	1 hour	2 years	1k years	9k years	33k years
11	10 hours	44 years	89k years	618k years	2m years
12	4 days	1k years	4m years	38m years	164m years
13	1 month	29k years	241m years	2bn years	11bn years
14	1 year	766k years	12bn years	147bn years	805bn years
15	12 years	19m years	652bn years	9tn years	56tn years
16	119 years	517m years	33tn years	566tn years	3qd years
17	1k years	13bn years	1qd years	35qd years	276qd years
18	11k years	350bn years	91qd years	2qn years	19qn years

*digg.com*

There's a good chance that the password you've been using since middle school can be cracked in seconds.

Every year, Virginia-based cybersecurity company Hive Systems releases a new table of estimates showing how long it would take for a hacker to brute force passwords of various lengths and complexities. If you're still hanging onto simple passwords like "nsync99" or "bsb4eva," these stats will definitely freak you out.

Just like last year, they're throwing the processing power of twelve RTX 4090 graphics cards against a wide variety of passwords ranging from a plain four-digit password to an 18-character password with numbers, uppercase, lowercase and symbols. However, they have moved away from assuming passwords are hashed with MD5 to bcrypt using a Blowfish cypher. As such, the average time it takes to brute force passwords has increased.

Even so, pretty much any six-character password is cracked within a day. To reach the optimal "green" level of security, you need a password with at least 13 characters made up of numbers, uppercase, lowercase and symbols.

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## **Navy Flying Boat Headed to Arizona's Pima Air Museum**





*Coulson Group*

One of the world's largest flying boats is being retired—to the desert. The Philippine Mars, one of two remaining Martin Mars Second World War Navy transports, has been acquired by the Pima Air and Space Museum near Tucson. The aircraft is owned by the Coulson Group in Port Alberni, British Columbia, and spent decades fighting wildfires up and down the west coast of North America. An earlier deal to send the aircraft to the National Naval Aviation Museum in Pensacola, Florida, fell through but the plane was painted in Navy blue in anticipation of that move.

"We are pleased to have the Philippine Mars join our museum where we will preserve this World War II-era aircraft for decades to come," said Scott Marchand, CEO, Pima Air and Space Museum. A sister ship, Hawaii Mars, which fought fires up until 2015, will be sent to the B.C. Aviation Museum in Sidney, B.C., near Victoria. "As a fitting tribute to their years of service and years of hard work by many people in BC and the U.S., we are pleased to see both Mars aircraft landing to rest at world class institutions in 2024," said Coulson Group CEO Wayne Coulson.

What's not clear is how the massive flying boat will get to Tucson. It has no landing gear and operates only from water. It needs a relatively big body of water to take off and land, and there is no such open water in the immediate area of the museum.

*By Russ Niles -for AVWeb*

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**What's the Big Deal with 6G? Well, it's 500 Times Faster than 5G**



*A consortium of companies in Japan has built the world's first high-speed 6G wireless device.  
(Image credit: fhm via Getty Images)*

Scientists in Japan have transferred data at 100 gigabits per second in high-frequency wavelength bands over a distance of 330 feet for the first time.

The main differences between 5G and 6G lie in the frequency bands of the electromagnetic spectrum in which they operate. Operating in higher bands generally means much higher speeds.

<https://bit.ly/4a8MqBs>

*Whoopie. With 6G you can transfer three movies per second.*

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## **No Lost Bags at Kansai Airport After 29 Years of Operations**



*TungCheung / Shutterstock*

Kansai International Airport (KIX) near Osaka, Japan has reported a feat that other international airports can only dream of. The airport has not lost a single piece of passenger luggage since it first opened in September 1994, earning itself an unrivaled international reputation for reliability and operational efficiency.

<https://bit.ly/3xUAvd1>

*Clearly, they aren't trying hard enough.*

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## **DARPA Releases First Images of Manta Ray Underwater Drone**



*An image of the Manta Ray during in-water testing off the coast of Southern California. This image shows, for the first time, the rear section of the UUV partly submerged (Photos: Northrop Grumman)*

Described as a new class of uncrewed underwater vehicle (UUV), the Manta Ray is an extra-large glider designed to undertake extended-duration, long-range, and payload-capable undersea missions independently, without requiring on-site human logistics.

The first image of the Manta Ray UUV strategically showcased the tail section of the vehicle in darkness to conceal certain intriguing details—similar to the approach taken by Northrop Grumman and the U.S. Air Force with the highly anticipated B-21 Raider bomber.



The Manta Ray prototype, recently underwent comprehensive full-scale testing off the coast of Southern California during February and March 2024. According to DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency), this testing phase focused on evaluating the vehicle's hydrodynamic performance in real-world conditions, including submerged operations utilizing all modes of propulsion and steering: buoyancy, propellers, and control surfaces.

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## Pie Chart Shows Actual Costs to Build A Single-Family Home



*[Photo: Dakota Roos/Unsplash]*

Among the homebuilders surveyed, the average sales price of their single-family homes in 2022 was \$644,750 and includes costs for construction, the finished lot, financing, overhead and general expenses, marketing, sales commission, and profit. Total construction costs for the average single-family home included in the survey was \$392,241.

"A home permit can contain 20- to 30-plus lines of impact fees, not including those paid by the land developer or fees and costs moved into bond districts. In California, permits and impact fees often exceed \$100,000 per home," Jeff Grenz, a custom homebuilder in Sacramento, tells ResiClub.

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

*CA's novel approach to low cost housing.*

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## Why 'Phantom Debt' Is Haunting the Economy



*Debt ghost Scooby-Doo  
Warner Bros. via Giphy*



The golden age of the infomercial might be over but the phrase “just four easy payments of \$29.99” is as relevant as ever. Most online shopping now comes with a buy now, pay later button allowing you to break up a payment into four installments with (almost) no strings attached.

While buy now, pay later (BNPL) reduces friction when purchasing, it’s giving some economy watchers the same uneasy feeling you get from putting off a chore for too long. As Americans’ budgets buckle under the weight of inflation and higher interest payments, some worry BNPL is more of an invisible burden than a boon, Bloomberg reports.

Beware the “phantom debt,” a Wells Fargo economist recently warned, referring to the BNPL industry’s short-term loans, which go largely unaccounted for by those tracking Americans’ debt load. That’s because, unlike credit cards and auto loan providers, Afterpay, Affirm, Klarna, and other BNPL providers don’t usually report transactions to credit scoring agencies.

Since consumers must keep their debt under control for the US economy to chug along, let’s unpack what’s going on with BNPL now, instead of putting it off for later.

### **The pluses of payment procrastination**

A descendant of layaway loans, BNPL exploded during the pandemic as everyone went on an online shopping spree, and the practice is still popular.

The top five BNPL providers in the US loaned out over \$24 billion in 2021, a 1,000% increase from 2019, according to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

Americans took out a record amount of BNPL loans over the holidays last year, representing 7.5% of all online spending during the merry season, per Adobe Analytics.

BNPL providers charge businesses for enabling customers to spend more than they would if they had to pay upfront. But they insist it’s a win-win since users get loans that usually come with no interest or fees, in contrast to the exorbitant APRs on credit cards.

They say that they’re often spotting cash to people with low credit scores and no fancy piece of titanium to swipe. Plus, their customers aren’t typically saddled with jaw-dropping levels of debt: Average outstanding balances ranged from \$150 for Klarna to \$641 for Affirm, Bloomberg reported, compared with an average credit card debt of \$6,501, per Experian.

### **The strings attached**

Many people are struggling with BNPL loans, with 43% of users saying they were behind on payments, according to a Harris Poll conducted for Bloomberg. That’s consistent with the fact that credit card delinquencies are also rising.

While often advertised as fee-free, BNPL loans incur late fees and other penalties for missed payments, which can be painful for shoppers already in dire straits.

Almost three-quarters of BNPL customers have a household income below \$75k, according to the Philadelphia Fed. And a third of people who used BNPL did so because their credit cards were maxed out, according to a survey by C+R Research.

For others, BNPL purchases can get them closer to reaching their limit, as many shoppers end up making their payments with a credit card.

Unlike credit cards, BNPL doesn't have the advantage of helping users build credit.

Regulators also warn that some BNPL users are "loan stacking," or borrowing from multiple BNPL providers, which makes it more difficult for them to keep track of overall debt and manage payments. They've warned traditional banks entering the BNPL space to tread cautiously, since borrowers might have no credit history and be more prone to taking on excess debt.

Despite the debt's elusiveness, the threat may not be alarming. Wells Fargo notes that BNPL is still a small part of Americans' overall debt. Meanwhile, BNPL's growth has slowed, Sherwood reports, citing the Bank of America Institute.—SK

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## **Why Companies List Fake Jobs**



*The Hustle*

A thing that's not fun: endlessly applying for job after job, navigating a flurry of application portals and cover letters. A thing that's even less fun: doing all that while dealing with "ghost jobs."

Boo?

Ghost jobs are postings for jobs that do not exist and plenty of companies are engaging in the practice, per a survey of 1k+ hiring managers from Clarify Capital.

Some are old listings that someone forgot to remove. OK, annoying, but we get it. However, managers also provided a variety of other reasons a company might post a role it doesn't intend to fill:

- To maintain a pool of potential candidates
- To give the appearance of growth
- To "placate" overworked employees
- To motivate current employees

And still others are just scams, meant to collect personal data or trick people into sending money under the guise of training or equipment, per ExpressVPN.

### **What this means for job seekers**

Well, Ontario, Canada, is moving to get rid of ghost jobs by requiring companies to:

- Disclose whether a listing is for an open position or to collect future candidates.
- Actually respond to applicants they've interviewed.

### **But if you're not in Ontario:**

- Check companies' social media and websites to ensure hiring announcements match job postings.
- Check the posting date. Per Clarify Capital, 40% of managers plan to fill open roles in two to three months. Older postings may be inactive or bogus.
- Be wary of vague postings that could apply to any candidate or jobs that offer suspiciously high compensation or excessive perks.

BTW: If you're looking for an actual ghost job, may we suggest a side hustle as a paranormal tour guide?

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## **Can We Decipher A Newly Discovered Sperm Whale 'Alphabet'>**



*Clicking sounds made by sperm whales, such as this pod near Dominica in the Caribbean Sea,*

*are a more complex system of communication than previously known.*  
*Franco Banfi/Npl/Minden*

Discovery of potentially complex communication could reveal way to interpret what these marine mammals are saying—but not everyone is convinced.

For years, scientists have classified these noises into roughly two dozen distinct phrases, or codas, making the communications seem about as complicated as two novice trumpeters trading notes.

But the interactions might be better compared to a duet between veteran jazz musicians, researchers report today in [Nature Communications](#). Various features of the clicks, including subtle alterations in pacing and rhythm, suggest sperm whales have the capacity to convey a much richer amount of information than previously known. The work also hints at the tantalizing—and controversial—idea that humans might one day understand these interactions well enough to decipher or even take part in them.

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

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## **Sperm Whale “Phonetic Alphabet” Similar to Human Language**



*Sometimes the whales take turns to communicate, or all "talk" at once with many overlapping clicks.*

*Image Credit: Amanda Cotton*

For the first time, scientists have described some of the basic elements of how they may be "talking" to each other.

Cetaceans have long been famous for their communication abilities. From the impressive clicks and whistles of dolphins to the magical sound of humpback whale song. Sperm whales (*Physeter macrocephalus*) have been known to communicate too,

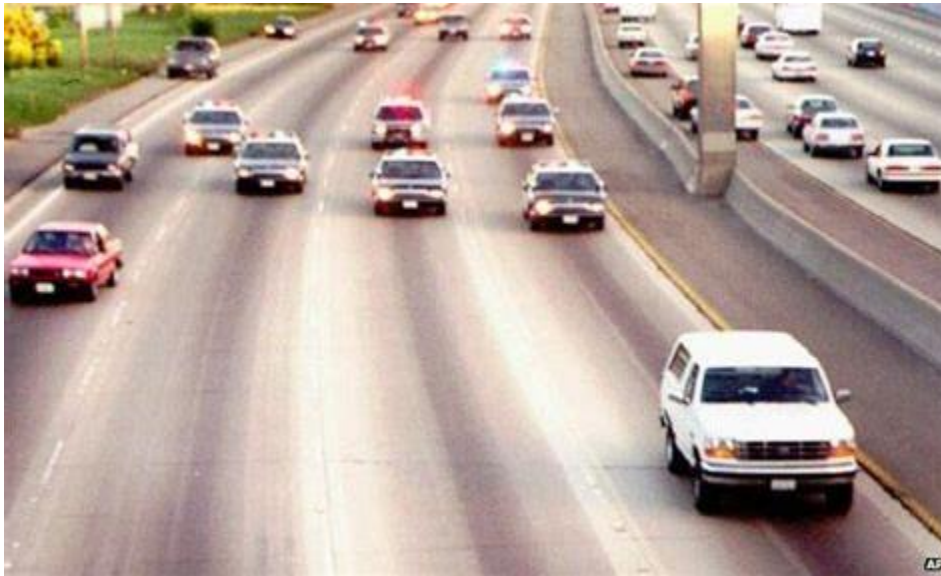


and new research has made a big leap forward in understanding the structure of their vocalizations.

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

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## How to Fix Car Commercials



*bbcnews*

[https://www.youtube.com/shorts/Y\\_ozism9JoM?t=1&feature=share](https://www.youtube.com/shorts/Y_ozism9JoM?t=1&feature=share)

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## Why Writing by Hand Beats Typing for Thinking and Learning



*Ivan-balvan/Getty Images/iStockphoto*

To keep up, many schools are introducing computers as early as preschool, meaning some kids may learn the basics of typing before writing by hand.

But giving up this slower, more tactile way of expressing ourselves may come at a significant cost, according to a growing body of research that's uncovering the surprising cognitive benefits of taking pen to paper, or even stylus to iPad — for both children and adults.

Gripping a pen nimbly enough to write is a complicated task, as it requires your brain to continuously monitor the pressure that each finger exerts on the pen. Then, your motor system has to delicately modify that pressure to re-create each letter of the words in your head on the page.

<https://bit.ly/3JZA83Q>

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## **End of an Era: MCAS Cherry Point Hosts Final USMC AV-8B Harrier II Demo**



*Howard German*

Over the weekend of May 11 and 12, at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina, a huge number of airshow enthusiasts gathered to watch a truly spectacular airshow and to view, for the final time, the Marine AV-8B Harrier II airpower demonstration.

In the more than forty year history, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing Harriers have supported a lengthy list of operations around the globe, including, Operation Desert Storm, Operation Allied Force in the former Yugoslavia, fighting the Global War on Terrorism in Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom and in present times with Operation Prosperity Guardian in the Red Sea.

<https://theaviationist.com/2024/05/16/final-usmc-av-8b-harrier-ii-demo/>

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## Chords & Riffs

### George Shearing (1919-2011)



*the guardian*

The British jazz pianist who for many years led a popular jazz group that recorded for Discovery Records, MGM Records and Capitol Records, Shearing was the composer of over 300 songs, including the jazz standards "Lullaby of Birdland" and "Conception", and had multiple albums on the Billboard charts during the 1950s, 1960s, 1980s and 1990s.

The youngest of nine children, Shearing was born blind to working-class parents: his father delivered coal and his mother cleaned trains in the evening. He started to learn piano at the age of three.

Around 1942 he was recruited by Stéphane Grappelli (domiciled in London during World War II) to join his band, which appeared at Hatchets Restaurant in Piccadilly in the early years of the war, and subsequently toured as "the Grappelli Swingtette" from 1943 onward.

Shearing immigrated to the United States, where his harmonically complex style mixing swing, bop and modern classical influences gained popularity. In 1949, he formed the first George Shearing Quintet, a band with Margie Hyams (vibraphone), Chuck Wayne (guitar), later replaced by Toots Thielemans (listed as John Tillman), John Levy (bass), and Denzil Best (drums).

Shearing's interest in classical music resulted in some performances with concert orchestras in the 1950s and 1960s, and his solos frequently drew upon the music of Satie, Delius, and Debussy for inspiration. He became known for a piano technique known as "The Shearing Sound", or "Shearing voicing", a type of double melody block chord, with an additional fifth part that doubles the melody an octave lower.

In 2004, he released his memoirs, *Lullaby of Birdland*, which was accompanied by a double-album "musical autobiography", *Lullabies of Birdland*. Shortly afterwards,

however, he had a fall at his home and retired from regular performing. On 14 February 2011, Shearing died from heart failure at 91.

Lullaby of Birdland <https://youtu.be/8acv4YLsLvE?t=1>

Mel Torme & George Shearing - I'll Be Seeing You <https://youtu.be/PpryiqMQHuU?t=1>

Donna Lee <https://youtu.be/9dEIJ1OgXw0?t=2>

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## Poetry Corner





FLYING SQUIRREL THANG

Although the flying squirrel  
Can be found in Indo China  
He is also a forest inhabitant  
In Western Carolina.  
Like the bats, these small critters'  
Mode of travel is to fly  
As often seen between the trees  
Against a darkening sky.  
But there are no wings to carry him  
To where he wants to go.  
A furry membrane is his parachute  
For the squirrely air show.  
His arms and legs direct his steering  
And his tail provides the brakes.  
He is easily identified  
By the chirping that he makes.  
Large eyes are night effective  
When he glides from tree to tree  
And he sleeps through daylight hours  
When it is hard for him to see.  
How others see us often  
is a simple misconception  
And not necessarily  
An intended deception.  
We don't have membranes for flying,  
Nor brakes in our tails.  
Most important for us is  
The wind in our sails.

Francie Troy



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## Why the Shooter Kneels Next to a Plane Prior to the Cat Shot



*Pinterest.com*

Ever wonder about all the hand signals on the flight deck?

<https://youtu.be/VeZy2ERjdM4?t=1>

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## Launch of Boeing's Starliner Capsule Now Targeted for June 1



*Boeing's Starliner spacecraft and its Atlas V rocket roll off the launch pad and toward an*

assembly facility on May 8, 2024.  
(Image credit: NASA via X)

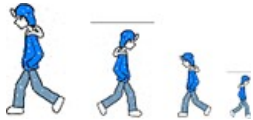
Additional opportunities are available on June 2, June 5 and June 6.

<https://bit.ly/44SeMyK>

*Fingers crossed the event finally and safely happens*

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## My Walking Thoughts



## For Sunday May 26 2024

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### Onward and Upward: Whiting Field, Milton FL

Whiting Field was an hour's drive from Mainside Pensacola but nearly half a century removed from the starched linen and polished privilege of what the latter's denizens referred to as "the cradle of Naval Aviation."

The first of many happy examples to which I would be treated over the next three months was the slightly sloppy salute rendered by a gate guard not pestered by braided festooned brass hats...reminder of the what makes duty removed from the observation of senior commanders so much more comfortable for us lesser folk.

Next on the agenda of delights was my first visit to the BOQ mess where I was greeted at the entryway by Chief Petty Officer (CPO) Ramirez, who, taking note of the nametag above my left breast pocket said in a loud and welcoming voice, "Good afternoon, Lieutenant Trotti. It's good to have you here."

While I basked in this faux promotion from brown bar second lieutenant to railroad tracked navy lieutenant, CPO Ramirez deposed me of my favorite dishes—grits, bacon, and eggs for breakfast and anything besides liver, peanut butter, and squishy squash for other meals—before assuring me I was going to like today's cheddar cheese sandwich and potato salad and..."Oh yes—don't miss tonight's genuine southern fried chicken, collards, and peach pie."

From that day on, he remembered my name and preferences, queried me on recent meals, and on one occasion suggested I plan on grabbing a burger at the local bowling alley since liver was on the evening's menu. In short, no matter what else was going on

elsewhere, I knew I could count on the Chief to add pleasure to my life three times a day.

My BOQ roommate turned out to be an ensign from Nebraska who was two or three hops from completing his time at Whiting, but (and it was a big *But*) he found himself faced with a terrible dilemma—whether to finish up at Whiting and get on to the next stage of training or drop from the program and marry a winsome debutante from nearby Loxley, AL.

When I arrived, 'Skinny' (in honor of his boxcar shaped 210 pound frame) was sprawled on his bunk, a photo on his night table showed him in wrestling tights receiving a huge trophy. This was enough to caution me into keeping my sometimes-caustic tongue in check lest he do to me what another wrestler—not even a champion—had done at Quantico in lifting me over his head and slamming me to the mat. So much for that sport.

As I unpacked my sparse belongings, Skinny apprised me of his quandary, asking for my opinion. My immediate thought was harikari but good sense prevailed and I asked if he had discussed this with his parents, which led to a 10 minute tirade on the unfairness of being born into a Nebraska farm family, enumerating features I could never have imagined.

I spent the rest of my afternoon checking in and getting my schedules prior to when my classes were scheduled to start. Returning to my room, I found that 'Skinny' had embarked on his nightly speed run across the state line for a night of...oh hell, why go there?

Instead, for the first of many evenings I enjoyed a meal of genuine southern fried chicken (far better than rattlesnake I have to say) before turning my attention to the T-28 B/C training syllabus manual, which I'll get to next time

*[As it turned out, 'Skinny' dropped from the program at his own request (DOR'd) and was shipped off to somewhere—perhaps a garbage scow in the Indian Ocean—only after being told by his beloved that she wasn't interested in sailors, only aviators. There has to be a lesson in this somewhere, but I managed to stow it in my Sic Transit Gloria goody locker.]*