

CURIOUS TIMES WEEKLY

Age Appropriate Content

School Curriculum Aligned News

Non-Sensational News

Catch the rare comet NEOWISE in the night sky this July

Image Credit : Wikimedia Commons



This July, turn to the night sky and make sure to observe the rare comet, NEOWISE.

The next time this comet will be visible from Earth will be the year 8786. That is almost 6,600 years in the future.

The Comet C/2020 F3 NEOWISE was discovered by NASA's Near-Earth Object Wide-field Infrared Survey Explorer (NEOWISE) telescope on 27 March.

It will be visible from India starting 14 July. It will be visible after sunset for around 20 minutes for the next 20 days. You can observe it with naked eyes in dark skies with little or no light pollution. However, you need binoculars to see its tail. The comet will come the closest to Earth on 22-23 July. It will start fading away when it starts entering the outer parts of the solar system in August.

Comets are cosmic snowballs of frozen gases, rock and dust that orbit the Sun. According to NASA, Comet NEOWISE's nucleus is about 5 km. It is covered with sooty particles leftover from its formation near the birth of our solar system 4.6 billion years ago.

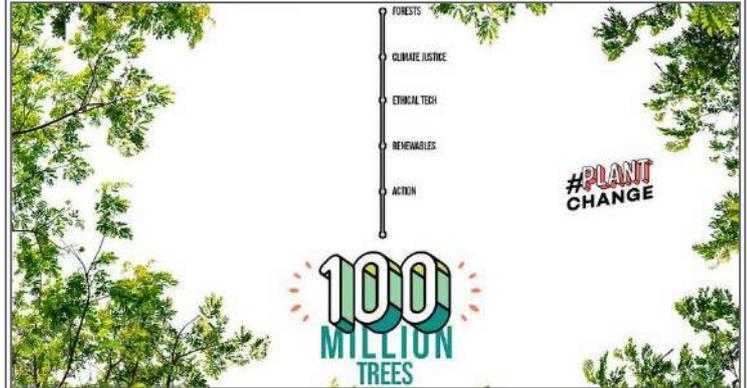
Astronauts from the International Space Station (ISS) also managed to catch a stunning natural light show from the comet.

Watch the video below of the comet as seen from ISS:

https://youtu.be/Yh1_wHdUx3Y

Internet search engine Ecosia celebrates planting 100 million trees

Image Credit : Twitter@Ecosia



When we go online to use the internet, we often use a search engine, such as Google.

Ecosia is a search engine too, similar to Google or Microsoft's Bing. However, Ecosia is also an eco-friendly search engine. It uses 80% of its profits (made from advertising) to support tree-planting projects around the world.

Recently, Ecosia planted its 100 millionth tree! This is equal to 1,771 tonnes of carbon dioxide being removed from the atmosphere every day.

Ecosia was started in 2009 and is based in Germany. It powers its search through Microsoft's Bing (search engine). It is available in many languages and has over 15 million active users around the world.

Ecosia plants trees. These trees are native (local) to the region and Ecosia has over 9000 planting sites. It focuses largely on countries that are the most biodiverse (where there is a large variety of unique animals and nature). This includes countries like Nicaragua and Peru in South America, Burkina Faso and Malawi in Africa as well as Indonesia and Australia.

Ecosia also built a solar plant two years ago. The solar plant produces 200% of the energy that it needs.

Here is a video of an Ecosia project in Madagascar: <https://youtu.be/8f0lzl6KLec>

Quote of the day!



"If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart."

— Nelson Mandela, Former President of South Africa
(18 Jul 1918 - 5 Dec 2013)

Word to know



Huddle

Verb | huhd-l

to come close together in a group, or to hold your arms and legs close to your body, especially because of cold or fear

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A latest report says 32,000 species may become extinct

Image Credit : Pixabay



We have read that many animals, plants and birds have gone extinct (disappeared from nature). There are still thousands more which are highly endangered (very few in number). The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) releases a list. This is called the Red List of Threatened Species.

The list divides species into nine categories – Not Evaluated (not studied), Data Deficient (not enough information), Least Concern, Near Threatened, Vulnerable, Endangered, Critically Endangered, Extinct in the Wild and Extinct.

The latest list shows that 32,000 species are threatened with extinction. 33 lemur species are critically endangered while the rest are also in danger. Lemurs are unique monkey-like mammals that live only in Madagascar, Africa. Species such as the Bonin pipistrelle bat, splendid poison frog, Jalpa false brook salamander and spined dwarf mantis have been declared extinct.

However, there has been some good news. The Walia ibex (a kind of goat found in Ethiopia), the Turks and Caicos rock iguana and the Yunnan Asian frog of China have increased in number.

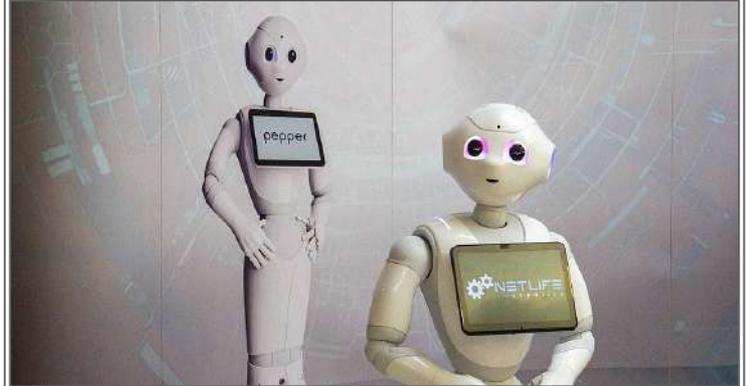
Many plants and animals face great danger mainly due to human activities like pollution, hunting and cutting of forests.

Here is a video on endangered animals:

<https://youtu.be/7k8CcAU2Lt0>

Robots, Spot and Pepper, cheer and dance at a baseball game in Japan

Image Credit : Wikimedia Commons



Due to the COVID-19 crisis, many sports around the world are being played with no crowds. Sports leagues are instead filling stadiums with stuffed toys and cardboard cutouts to stand in for fans.

In Japan, a company called Softbank brought in robots to cheer at its team's baseball game!

You may have read a while ago, about a "robot dog" called Spot. Spot is being used in different ways to help fight the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, in Singapore, Spot is 'patrolling' a local park to encourage social distancing in public.

So, Spot and another robot called Pepper cheered a baseball game between the Fukuoko SoftBank Hawks and the Rakuten Eagles on 7 July.

There were around 20 of them to cheer at the game, which the Hawks won. SoftBank even built a special stage where the robots danced together!

Baseball is one of the most popular sports in Japan. It is followed by millions of people.

See a video of the robots dancing to the team's theme song: <https://youtu.be/G9p9jdmJQQQ>

Did you know?



A report by Hawaii's University estimates that a total of 8.7 million species live on the planet. To date, a total of 1.3 million species have been identified and described.

JokePokes



Q. When does it rain money?

A. When there is "change" in the weather.

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Rheanna's Viral Run Board Game!



Amazing things happen when we wear our creative hat, add some fun and solve the most pressing problem at hand! Rheanna Ann Jikku created a Family Board Game. Rheanna's Viral Run is a 4 player Monopoly-style board game that depicts the daily survival mode during the Corona Epidemic. Players fight it out to stay out of Quarantine and live life during this "New Normal".

Game Rules:

1. The players choose one of the player tokens from the 8 available characters.
2. As the game starts each player gets:
 - Rs. 15000,
 - 20 masks,
 - 20 hand sanitizers, 20 food tokens.
 Each mask, hand sanitizer and food token is worth Rs. 100
3. Players follow the instructions on the blocks – they start after rolling a dice.
 - Eg: Buy food- Give 5 food tokens
 - Tested positive for COVID, Move directly to Quarantine
 - Exercised to a home video- get 5 masks
 - Give to charity- masks, tokens, etc
4. On landing in Quarantine, they miss a turn. Disobeying Quarantine orders leads to missing two turns.
5. On passing GO each time after the start of the game, each player collects Rs. 10,000 INR and 15 food tokens. More masks and sanitizers have to be earned within the game.
6. The game ends when players run out of resources. The player with the most resources at the end of the game wins.

#rheannasviralrun. The right game that beats every professional board game for the 'New Normal'.



Rheanna Ann Jikku
Grade 5, The Choice School, Kochi, Kerala

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Wild bison returns to England's woodlands for the first time in 6,000 years

Image Credit : Wikimedia Commons



A herd of wild European bison will be released in southern England for the first time in 6,000 years. This project aims to help restore an ancient habitat and its surrounding wildlife.

The bison is a large animal belonging to the same family as cows and buffaloes. The European bison can weigh about 610 kg and stand almost 7 feet tall. It is the largest land animal of Europe.

Bison are considered a keystone species. Keystone species are creatures that can greatly affect a particular ecosystem, compared to its population. Bison can create conditions for other animals and plants to thrive (grow in a healthy way).

One male and three female bison will be released in Blean Woods in 2022. The animals are being brought from Poland and the Netherlands.

The European bison is the closest living relative to the ancient steppe bison. This animal existed in the UK 6,000 years ago before it was killed off due to hunting.

Here is a video of the bison:
<https://youtu.be/jFZSVUZ4C-g>

Polynesians and Native Americans were relatives 800 years ago

Image Credit : Wikimedia Commons



During ancient times, there were no cars or planes or telephones. So, it is hard to imagine that people living thousands of km apart would have been in contact with each other.

However, people continue to surprise us. A new study has shown that indigenous (native) Americans were in contact with Polynesians, 800 years ago! They are separated by thousands of km of ocean.

Indigenous Americans are the original inhabitants of America (before European people came). Polynesians live in Polynesia, a group of islands located in the Pacific Ocean near Australia. (If you have seen the animated film Moana, Moana and her people are Polynesians).

Here is an example of the distance: Samoa is an island country in Polynesia, while Los Angeles is a city in the US. The distance between the two is 7780 km. A flight between these two places today would take around 10 hours!

Scientists studied the DNA of more than 800 individuals. They found that people from several eastern Polynesian islands, are genetically linked to indigenous South Americans. In particular, they showed a strong connection to the Zenu, an indigenous group from Colombia (Canada).

Here is a video on how Polynesians navigated the Pacific Ocean: <https://youtu.be/m8bDCaPhOek>

Tongue Twister



So, is he the sushi chef?

JokePokes



Q. Did you hear about the two guys who stole a calendar?

A. They each got six months.

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Llama blood to play an important role in fighting COVID-19

Image Credit : Pixabay



The llama is a South American relative of the camel. Unlike camel, it does not have a hump. It is a domestic animal that is used to carry heavy loads. It can stand up to almost 4 feet and weighs more than 100 kg.

In a laboratory test, scientists in the UK have found that antibodies derived from llamas' blood can fight coronavirus.

Antibodies (also known as immunoglobulins) are proteins that are produced by the immune system to help stop intruders or foreign bodies, from harming the body. Llama antibodies are simpler in structure (than humans) and so, can be modified into nanobodies (smaller sizes). Camels and alpacas also produce similar nanobodies.

Scientists have used the llama's blood to make nanobodies to fight COVID-19. These nanobodies bind (stick) tightly to the spike protein of the SARS-CoV-2 virus (the virus that causes COVID-19). This blocks the virus from entering human cells and stops the infection.

There is currently no cure or vaccine for COVID-19. However, seriously ill patients are treated with a transfusion of serum from recovered patients. These recovered patients' immune system contains human antibodies which work against COVID-19.

Scientists are hopeful that they can try this new treatment on humans soon, in a few months.

India's 2018 tiger census creates a Guinness World Record

Image Credit : Pixabay



India's 2018 tiger census has entered the Guinness Book of World Record. The survey called the "All India Tiger Estimation" created a record of the largest ever camera trap wildlife survey. The tiger census is an official count of the tiger population. Tigers are endangered. This census is conducted every four years to keep a check on the number of tigers.

This census was carried out between 2018-19. It showed that India's tiger population had increased – from 2,226 in 2014 to 2,927 in 2018.

Camera trap wildlife survey

The 2018 survey was carried out in three phases using camera traps. Camera traps are outdoor cameras fitted with motion sensors. They start recording when an animal passes by.

For the 2018 census, camera traps were placed in 26,838 locations across 141 different sites. They surveyed an effective area of 121,337 square kilometres. The cameras captured around 34,858,623 photographs of wildlife. These included 76,651 photos of tigers, 51,777 photos of leopards and other animals.

It's estimated that the total area of forest studied (including by foot) was 381,200 square km. The whole exercise was done over 620 to 795 labour-days.

Here is a video on tigers: <https://youtu.be/FK3dav4bA4s>

Tongue Twister



A big black bear sat on a big black rug.

JokePokes



Q. When is it bad luck to meet a black cat?

A. When you're a mouse.

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Nimrit Pasricha

Grade 6, Naval Children School, Goa

Zoom, zoom!, In the sky,
Faster than an aeroplane, Flying high,
Who is this? Who could it be?
The world's fastest rocket, could it be?

If it's her, will she come here?
I said, watching with glee,
seeing a rocket in the movie.
"Wonderful moments " my friend said to me,
Flying in space with no gravity,
I want to meet her, I want to fly,
discovering new galaxies, in the sky!

I wish Kalpana Chawla were alive!



Image Credit: Wikimedia Commons

Shreya Rajput

10, Venkateshwar Global School, New Delhi, Delhi

Kalpana was born in Karnal, Haryana, India. As a child, she liked to draw airplanes. Her dreams led her to study Aeronautical Engineering at Punjab Engineering College (PEC). She did her masters and Ph.D. in aerospace engineering in the US. And then she joined NASA.

Her first space mission was in 1996, with 6 other astronauts. In the year 2000 she was selected for her second mission. It was postponed for 2 years due to technical problems.

In January 2003, she again went to space. Unfortunately, on February 1, 2003, the space shuttle crashed when it was returning back into the earth's atmosphere. All the seven crew members including Kalpana Chawla died.

During her first mission, she said: "You are just your intelligence." She completed 30 days, 14 hours, and 54 minutes in space in all.

The first satellite of the series, "MetSat-1", launched by India, was renamed "Kalpana" after the sad incident. She received the many memorial awards.

So the historic person, who I wish were alive, is Kalpana Chawla. She should have been around to inspire hundreds of Indian girls to live their dreams. We can learn from here, how to select the subjects of our choice. Then work hard and become what we really want to be.

Dr.APJ Abdul Kalam Sir

Art By: K.Aaliya Khanum

Grade 2, Green Valley School, Pernambut, Tamil Nadu



Kalam Sir, please come back. India needs you!

Aditya Sreepasad

Grade 4, The Choice School, Thripunithura, Cochin, Kerala

Yes, I would like to bring back Dr. A.P.J Abdul Kalam Sir, the father of Indian Missile Technology. He was people's president to the world.

He had left us in between while fulfilling the dream of making our country technologically and spiritually strong. His life and thoughts have changed a lot of people by igniting the fire of innovations, hard work and progress in their minds. He was a great inspiration to everyone by his lifestyle and noble qualities.

I strongly believe that his presence among us will create a positive force. It will help us to react and adapt to failure, learn from them and work harder for the betterment of society and technology for the betterment of India.

He inspired and motivated millions of people to dream big and achieve great goals in life.

He left us while doing what we loved the most, spending time with the students. His presence once again will guide us to invent, travel the unexplored path, discover the impossible, conquer the problems and succeed.
"DREAM is not what you see in sleep, DREAM is something which doesn't let you sleep."

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Famous 'Jurassic Park' dinosaur was much bigger than seen in the movie

Image Credit : Wikimedia Commons



Have you ever watched the movie Jurassic Park? In it, you may have noticed a dinosaur called Dilophosaurus. In the movie, it is a human-sized venom-spitting beast with a rattling frill around its neck. It also has two crests (headgear) on its head.

A new study shows us that the Dilophosaurus is actually quite different than what is seen in the movie and games!

It turns out that the dinosaur was much larger than seen in the movie. It reached up to 20 feet in length.

There is also no proof to show that it spat venom (poison) nor had a neck frill. But the crests (as seen in the movie) is shown to be correct.

The Dilophosaurus roamed the Earth 183 million years ago and was the largest land animal at that time.

This dinosaur also had more in common with birds than dinosaurs. Its bones had air pockets (like bubble wrap). These air pockets make the bones lighter, making their heavy bodyweight easier to manage.

Its fossil was discovered about 80 years ago. However, it has not been studied properly even though it is very famous.

Here is a short video on dinosaurs:
<https://youtu.be/e5BFR-E-ae0>

Perfectly preserved newspapers from 1966 found from glacier melt

Image Credit : Pixabay



The Bossons Glacier is located in southeastern France. It comes from the top of Mont Blanc, the tallest mountain in Western Europe. Due to its melt, the glacier has been bringing items from the top of Mont Blanc. It has led to the discovery of some surprising items over the years.

The latest discovery is a bunch of preserved newspapers from 1966! The newspapers date from 20 and 21 January 1966. Café-owner Timothée Mottin made the discovery. He owns a café near the glacier. Timothée says the newspapers are a bit torn but they are actually in pretty good condition. You can even unfold and read them.

One of the newspapers is the 20 January 1966 edition of India's National Herald newspaper. It announces the election of Indira Gandhi as the country's first female prime minister.

How did the newspapers land up on Mount Blanc?

They may have been on board an Air India aeroplane named Kanchenjunga. This plane had crashed on Mont Blanc on 24 January 1966. Another possibility could be another Indian plane called the Malabar Princess. It crashed in the area in 1950.

The pieces of these planes have emerged during glacier melt over the years. In 2013, a climber even found a box of emeralds, rubies and sapphires marked "Made in India" on the mountain.

Did you know?



In the movie 'Jurassic Park', it took many different animals to create the T. Rex's roar. The sound design of the T. rex's roar was reportedly a combination of tiger, alligator, and baby elephant sounds.

Word to know



Immigrate

Verb | im-i-greyt

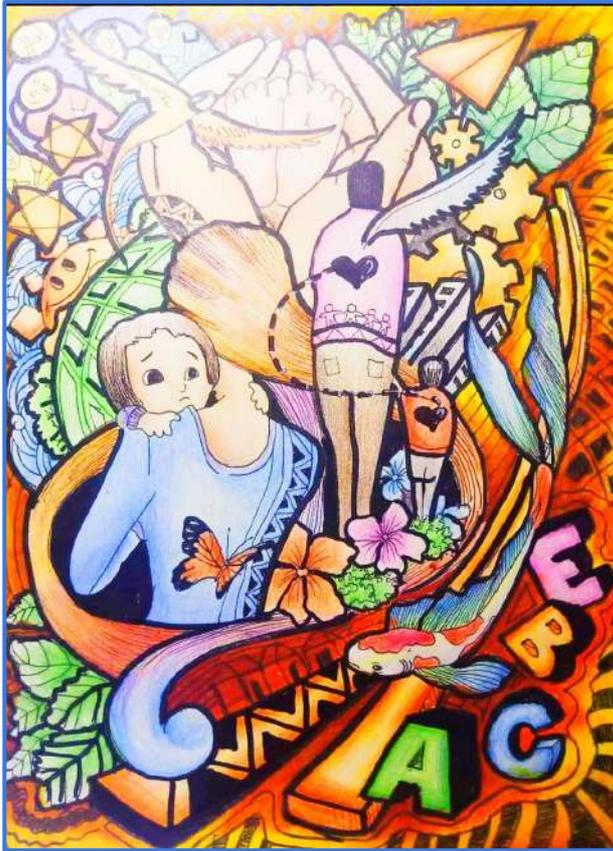
to come to a country of which one is not a native, usually for permanent residence

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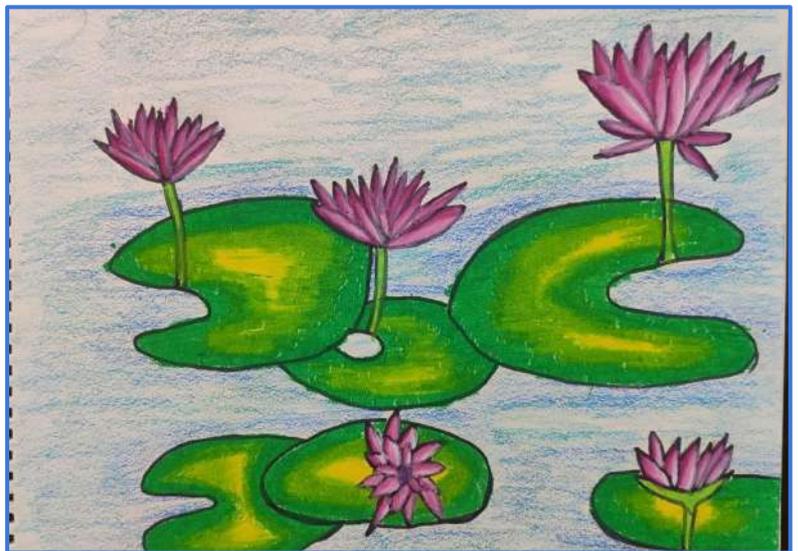
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Vanshika Singhal, Grade 8,
DLDAV MODEL SCHOOL , Shalimar Bagh, New Delhi



Abhimanyu Gupta
Grade 4, Spring Dales School, Dhaula Kuan, New Delhi



Sanaa Celly
Grade 5, Scottish High International School, Gurgaon



Laxmi Khanna, Grade 12,
Cambridge School, Srinivaspuri, New Delhi



Kumud Bhalla
Grade 2, Delhi Public School , Rohini, New Delhi

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Anne Frank: An extraordinary girl!

Anshuman Nagpal
Grade 5, Pathways World School, Aravali, Gurgaon, Haryana

"It's hard to forget someone who gave you so much to remember".

I deeply relate to this quote as the person I cannot forget all my life (out of all the people I have read about so far) and so would want to bring back from the annals of history if given an opportunity, is none other than Annelies Marie Frank.

More commonly known as Anne Frank, she was a young Jewish girl born on 12th June 1929 in Germany to parents Edith and Otto Frank and was the younger sister to Margot Frank. Anne did not get along well with her mother and sister, but she had a deep relationship with her father. As life became difficult for the Jews in Germany due to the rise of the Nazi Party under Adolf Hitler, the Frank Family decided to migrate to Holland in the Netherlands in 1933.



Otto Frank started a jam-making company there and Anne spent time with her two best friends: Hanneli Goslar and Jacqueline Van Maarsen. When Germany conquered Holland, Otto Frank, with some of his friends, decided and managed to build a place for himself, his family and later accommodated some of his Jewish workers so that they could hide from the Nazis and their terrifying methods to exterminate Jews.

On Anne's 13th birthday, she was given a diary. Since she had no friend to talk to or any connection with the outside world, she made the diary her friend, named her as 'Kitty' and wrote her thoughts and feelings in it. The life for two years in the Secret Annex was full of austerity. They could not even afford to look out of the windows for fear of being seen and caught. Even living under such circumstances, she did not lose hope. She kept going and always dreamt of having a great future ahead. Unfortunately, they were found out by the German Secret State Police and were taken into mass concentration camps. Anne could not survive there and so she died of typhus along with her sister.

Reading about Anne Frank had left me completely dumbfounded as there are not many people on this earth who had led that kind of life and at that age at what Anne was, and despite going through everything, she remained positive. I have come to admire her for all that she stood for i.e. optimism, patience, steadfastness, and someone who was always hopeful. She taught me to be resilient, optimistic, and never lose hope even in the darkest of times. These traits that Anne Frank possessed will always inspire me to go through tough times with optimism and with a smile on my face. Someone has rightly remarked, "Happiness can be found even in the darkest of times, but only if one remembers to turn on the light."

It is only when we read about the lives of people like her, we can draw lessons to never feel disheartened, disappointed no matter what is thrown to us.

"Remember, young man, the experience is not the best teacher. Other people's experience is the best teacher. By reading about the lives of great people, you can unlock the secrets to what made them great."

Andy Andrews

