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Tekstboekje

How Rudolph keeps cool



Reindeer grow a very thick winter coat because their bodies have to adapt to annual temperature changes of 80°C. The fur is very effective at keeping the animals warm, but scientists were puzzled as to how reindeer cool down when they run for long periods.

Now, scientists in Norway have shown that reindeer have three ways of cooling down when they start to overheat. The first is to pant with their mouths closed. This evaporates water from inside the nose, causing a small cooling effect.

As the animals get hotter, they move on to their second tactic, panting with their mouths open. During exercise, reindeer can take up to 300 breaths every minute and their large, wet tongues allow a lot of water to evaporate.

As the reindeers' brains reach a temperature of around 39°C, the third way of cooling begins. Instead of travelling round the body, cooled blood from the nose is diverted directly to the brain.

First News, 2012

Post Box Closed



A POST BOX in North London has been closed. Post office bosses decided to close the Hampstead post box – which is about two feet lower than average – after a series of postmen complained about it. At least three workers had injured their backs stooping to pick up mail at the post box in Hampstead High Street. One of the postmen took four months off sick after hurting his back from constantly picking up the mail from this letter box. A sign on the post box, which has now been sealed, today read: “This pillar box has been closed due to health issues.”

The real life angry birds

By Suzannah Hills

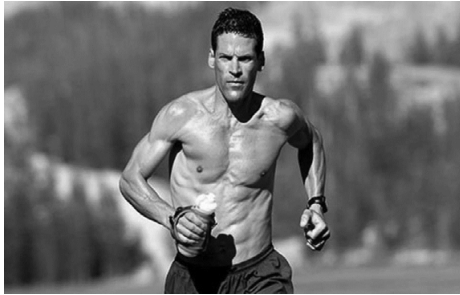


- 1 Royal Mail has suspended its postal deliveries to Liskey Hill Crescent in Perranporth, Cornwall. Postal workers are refusing to deliver to a seaside lane because dive-bombing seagulls keep attacking them. The gulls are launching their aerial attacks to protect their nests. Officials at Royal Mail said petrified postal workers have been injured by the birds swooping down from the rooftops and pecking at their heads. It is believed the birds are being enraged by their brightly-coloured uniforms.
- 2 Royal Mail declared the street off-limits after a female postal worker came under repeated attack from the birds. The gulls have pecked parents, children, dog walkers and builders. Royal Mail has now ruled the gulls are a health and safety risk and asked residents at Liskey Hill Crescent, Perranporth, Cornwall, to collect their letters from a nearby post office.
- 3 But homeowners claim they have had to put up with the aggressive seagulls during their nesting season for years and argue postal workers should 'man up' and start delivering again. Jackie Bray, 67, who has lived on the crescent for 35 years, said: "I'm waiting for a hip operation and now I have to go to the post office every day to collect my mail. It's a service that we pay for, a service we are not getting. We have to put up with the seagulls so why can't they? They should man up, buy a hard helmet and deal with it." Long-time resident Eric Hardinge, 67, said: "In the past five years the seagulls have become more aggressive. Their chicks will disappear but it is an on-going problem. The birds need to be put down."
- 4 Royal Mail apologised to customers but said the seagull attacks mean postal workers were facing a serious risk of injury. Spokeswoman Val Bodden said: "The safety of our people is paramount and these swooping attacks have made it difficult for them to continue to do their job. These kinds of attacks do occur at this time of year across the country, as gulls are nesting. We apologise to those customers affected and we will resume deliveries as soon as it is safe for us to do so. We are continuing to monitor the situation."

- 5 Last year Royal Mail suspended deliveries to one suburban lane in Chippenham, Wiltshire, because of a flea infestation. Also, postal workers went on strike in Bournemouth, Dorset. They 7 to deliver after complaining the area was overrun with midges from a water treatment plant. And just last week postal workers were told not to deliver to homes in Market Drayton, Shropshire, because of fears they could injure themselves on an 'aggressive' raspberry bush.

dailymail.co.uk, 2013

Dean Karnazes, ultrarunner, what is his secret?



- 1 From club runners to Olympians, every athlete has a limit. We've all experienced that burning feeling – heart pounding, lungs gasping for air – as your muscles begin to fatigue, eventually locking up altogether as your body shuts down. However, there is one man whose physiological performance is completely different from everyone else's: Dean Karnazes is an ultra-runner from California and, at times, it seems as if he can run forever. Karnazes has completed some of the toughest endurance events on the planet, from a marathon to the South Pole in temperatures of -25°C to the legendary Marathon des Sables, but in his entire life he has never experienced any form of muscle burn or cramp, even during runs exceeding 100 miles. "I just will myself to keep going," says Karnazes.
- 2 While supreme willpower is a common trait among ultrarunners, Karnazes first realised that he was actually biologically different when preparing to run 50 marathons in 50 days across the US back in 2006. "I was sent to a testing center in Colorado," he recalls. "First, they performed an aerobic capacity test in which they found my results consistent with those of other highly trained athletes, but nothing extraordinary. Next, they performed a lactate threshold test. They said the test would take 15 minutes, tops. Finally, after an hour, they stopped the test. They said they'd never seen anything like this before."
- 3 Karnazes fell in love with running from an early age, and at high school he began to show endurance capabilities which far surpassed those of his peers. At one charity fundraiser, while his fellow runners were able to manage 15 laps of the track at most, Karnazes completed 105. But in his mid-teens he stopped altogether. On his 30th birthday he was suddenly gripped by a powerful desire to run once more and he set off into the night.

- 4 After 15 years of no training, most of us would not have been physically capable of getting too far, but Karnazes did not stop until 30 miles later. Although the blisters were extremely painful, his muscles showed little sign of fatigue. “Many elite distance runners will show some improvements in their ability to clear lactic acid from the system due to the ‘training effect’, but that only goes so far,” he says. “Actually, as I am told, it is left up to heredity. They say the best thing you can do as a long-distance runner is to choose your parents well!”

theguardian.co.uk, 2013

Dad's Tattoos

adapted from an article by Nell Frizzell

- 1 There are some superficial differences between my father Bill and me. Just surface stuff. Skin deep. While my pink, freckled body is blank and pictureless, my father's is an ink-splattered historical document. It is a living, stretching archive. I can use my father's map of tattoos to navigate continents, relationships, families, journeys and marriages.



- 2 He got his first tattoo, a butterfly, in Melbourne after several sweaty months of building railways in the outback. After saving enough money, he headed to Melbourne: "I checked myself into a hotel and in one day I bought my first motorbike and got my first tattoo to show I had turned the page. I can vaguely remember thumbing through the book. I didn't want anything with words or symbolism. It just felt like a classic stamp."
- 3 He did what he loved most in his life: 14. From building telephone boxes in a Sydney factory, he earned enough money to hit the hippy trail. He flew to Bali and from there boarded a train through Indonesia, took a boat from Jakarta to Singapore, and then went by buses, hitchhiking and trains up and down Thailand. He flew to Kathmandu, met a "hippy freak" and drove in a van all the way down through India to Goa. Which brings us to the second tattoo.
- 4 Like so many dropouts before him, my father spent his time in Goa running a hamburger bar. I know what you're thinking – who runs a burger bar in a Hindu country? Presumably the same sort of person who gets their ankle tattooed by a stranger, in the middle of a dusty market with a needle hitched up to a car battery and no common language. "The tattooist had a book, and I chose this sort of sun thing, with another pattern in the middle. Now it just looks like a franking stamp on my ankle. You could see it because I was walking around with no shoes." He still walks around with no shoes. And it does look like a passport stamp.

- 5 There is a 20-year pause until his next tattoo: during which time he met my mother, had me, became a surveyor, got made redundant, drove taxis and finally became a bicycle-riding barefoot builder. After 25 years away from his homeland, Bill went on a trip back to New Zealand. With me, my mum and sister in tow, he stopped over on Auckland's Ponsonby Road to get a pseudo-Celtic armband tattooed by my cousin Otis. I watched and can still remember his grimace of discomfort as the needle tore into the soft, unmarked skin beside his armpit.
- 6 My parents were staggeringly incompatible. Plate-smashingly incompatible. Long, screaming arguments into the night incompatible. "It's sort of funny telling you this, but it was part of leaving your mum," he says of the black-and-white spiral on his shoulder. "It was a burst out, somehow."
- 7 My father and I are back in touch, but years of barely speaking, of disappointment, disaffection, distrust and distance have damaged, perhaps forever, the playful relationship we once had. Yet when I look in the mirror at my prominent collarbones, swelling biceps and flat, gravel-hardened feet, I am looking at my father's body. I can see him, there in my own frame. As he softens into a desk-bound middle age, I am running towards a Bill-shaped future.
- 8 Now, I am heading to New Zealand to cycle around a foreign country full of people who share my surname and strange nose. I'm off to have an adventure. And I know that makes him very proud. Maybe I'll even catch a butterfly.

theguardian.com, 2014

Pick of the day

Golden Oldies, 11.35 PM, BBC1

With more of us expected to live to a ripe old age, for many people, the grim reality of existing on a state pension during their twilight years looms ahead. With half of all over 75-year-olds living alone, they face a daily battle to maintain their independence and avoid isolation. Ranging in age between 72 and 84, Doris, Francis and Kitty are all struggling to get by in the face of health/housing issues and minimal income, but determined to stay out of a care home. They're also eloquent, characterful, and full of astute insights and humorous stories. Charming, touching and at times, I'm sorry to say, shocking, this affectionate documentary explores being old and alone in Britain.

Daily Mail, 2012

What's lurking in your tap water?

LEAD. New city analysis pinpoints neighbourhoods with high levels of this dangerous metal.

- 1 Thirteen per cent of household water tests conducted in Toronto over the past six years showed unsafe levels of lead, according to city data obtained by Torstar News Service. The data, drawn from the 15,000 samples, were collected by Torontonians from their water taps and submitted to the city for analysis between 2008 and 2014. This first ever detailed analysis of the test results by neighbourhood places the vast majority of failures in aging residential areas of the city where the infrastructure is old and real estate values are typically high.
- 2 Lead in tap water comes from one of two sources: aging pipes on city property or aging pipes on a homeowner's side of the property line. The largest concentration of dangerously high lead levels are in High Park, the Lawrence Park neighbourhood centred on Lawrence Avenue and Yonge Street, the downtown south Annex and sections of East York.
- 3 "We've let this happen since 2008 when we knew the health impacts of lead in water," says councilwoman Janet Davis, whose district has a failure rate of 16 per cent in more than 1,000 tests. "That's unacceptable."
- 4 An estimated 40,000 houses in Toronto still have lead pipe water service from the city, but even that is a guess, say city officials. While failed tests prompted the city to replace lead pipes when the program began in 2008, it has since stepped back from that and now relies on homeowners to initiate pipe replacement by committing to upgrade the pipes on their property before the city does its portion of the water line. The results of the tests, obtained under freedom of information, show maximum acceptable lead concentrations – 10 parts per billion – were exceeded, sometimes dramatically, more than 2,000 times.

Torstar News Service / Metro Canada

An interview with Jennifer Saunders, patron of the charity Chicks



- 1 At first glance, it's just a load of kids having fun: riding horses or trampolining or simply mucking around. Then you hear their stories, and honestly you want to cry. Back home many of them are caring for disabled siblings or parents, or they have suffered a loss. Most have never been on holiday or had a proper Christmas. *Chicks* was set up to give these children a few days away from their families or foster parents, in a beautiful setting where they can try new activities and just enjoy being children.
- 2 You probably haven't come across the type of kids selected to go on a *Chicks* retreat, 25 they're everywhere. *Chicks* was started in 1992 by two teachers from Dartmoor who saw in their own classes children who could do with some time out from their difficult home lives. From helping just 25 children in the first year, the charity now provides free breaks to more than 1,150 kids from all over Britain.
- 3 Some of the children won't speak for the first day or so. They don't trust adults or refuse to mingle with the other kids. But when they let go, relax and start having fun themselves, they get so much out of it. Suddenly they see it as an adventure: they might never have come across a sheep or ridden a horse, or been to the seaside and tasted ice cream – and now they're doing all these things and making friends at the same time. The whole idea is that by taking them away from their difficult home lives they get a sense of who they really are and a chance to relate to adults they can trust.
- 4 Britain seems to have developed a phobia of young people. We don't want them to do anything risky and we're scared of being kind to them. I watched a programme the other day which was all about stopping kids riding mini motorbikes around a bit of wasteland. Then parents complain that their children sit inside on the sofa and watch TV or play computer games – what else are they supposed to do? Many youngsters simply don't have the money to join clubs. So they become like little caged animals and all we do is put them on drugs to stop them being hyperactive.
- 5 *Chicks* retreats take a maximum of 16 children, either aged 8 to 10, 11 to 12, or 13 to 15. It's astounding how much it costs – 735 pounds per child – and demand is growing as social services become aware of the benefits to the children. There's nothing else like it; the Government isn't doing anything to help these kids. It would be so easy to ignore these kids, as they don't always rebel, instead, many of them just slowly sink away into unemployment or drugs. But I'm determined that we don't leave them on the rubbish heap.

6 When the children return home from a *Chicks* retreat, they feel different about themselves. After five days away, they are more confident and know another world. They have a new skill, whether it's trampolining or riding a pony, and a clutch of memories that can never be taken away from them. For many of the children, a five-day holiday doesn't seem nearly long enough. But if they were away any longer it would become even more difficult to return to cope with their reality.

7 Think about the holidays you take. Isn't it amazing what a difference a few days away from home makes? For these children it's so much more than just a breath of fresh air and a couple of ice creams. Being sent on holiday is proof that someone cares and I truly believe this gives them hope. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy.

As told to Anna Tyzack.

Mizz, 2014

Christmas in our family

By Jennifer O'Hagan



- 1 We go to church around 7.30pm on Christmas Eve (that's the 24th of December). Well, we try to. The problem is that there are three girls in our family and only one and a half bathrooms. This means that the hour before church is extremely hectic – every plug socket is busy with straighteners, hair-dryers, chargers (you have to look extra nice on Christmas Eve). We usually manage to leave the house at about 7.25pm, so we get to church at 7.35pm. Any other time of the year, this wouldn't be a problem. But Christmas is the busiest time of the year for churches in the UK, so those 5 minutes do make a difference. There are never any free seats when we arrive, so we often have to stand up for the mass. In high heels. It's not as bad as it sounds – as soon as you start singing the Christmas hymns, you don't notice the pain!
- 2 After church, we all go to the pub. When we were children, we went to bed as early as possible (it made Christmas come faster) but 32, Christmas Eve is a great chance to catch up with old friends. When we get home, though, we still are strictly forbidden from going into the living room. We have to go straight to our rooms so we won't disturb Santa.
- 3 We usually wake up around 10am on Christmas Day. The rule is that we have to enter the living room at the same time, so we all have to wait outside the living room door until everyone's there (mum, dad, sisters, brother-in-law, and the cat). Sometimes we have small-ish arguments at this stage because someone wants a cup of tea and everyone else just wants to open their presents.
- 4 Then it's the jackpot moment: the door opens and we get to see all the presents. Me and my sisters sit on the floor and go through them. Our parents (or Santa) always put the presents out in a chaotic mess on the floor, so we have to really search for our own presents. When we were little, this led to problems. Often, you would see a huge present, get ready

to open it, and then realise you had to pass it to another member of the family. But now that we're older, we can handle the disappointment. (Also, when you're older, the best presents tend to be smaller.)

- 5 After we have opened our presents, we sit and admire them for a while, and mum usually makes bacon sandwiches. So breakfast on Christmas Day is bacon sandwiches followed by whatever chocolate you can find near the tree. Once the eating has started, it never really stops. We go from breakfast to sweets, and before you know it, Christmas dinner is ready.
- 6 Christmas dinner is funny. We all wear our new Christmas presents (posh socks, clothes which still have the labels in, glittery things), we have paper crowns on our heads (you get them inside Christmas crackers), and no one is really hungry. Despite this, we manage to eat most of what's on the table: turkey, beef (dad doesn't like turkey), garlic bread (not Christmassy but everyone likes it), many, many vegetables, sauces, drinks...
- 7 After dinner, we relax (or recover) in front of the TV for a while. Christmas TV is great. There's usually a new film on, followed by Christmas favourites like 'Home Alone' and 'Miracle on 34th Street'. Then we go and visit other members of our family for the evening. As you have probably guessed, this means more eating and drinking... The week after Christmas is spent trying to finish all of the leftovers. Which is good because turkey and ketchup sandwiches are delicious.

learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org, 2012

Philips tuning in

DUTCH electronics giant Philips yesterday saw profits soar. The company reported third-quarter profits of 138 million pounds – up from 60 million pounds in the same period last year. This is a result of the company offloading its loss-making television business. Chief executive Frans van Houten said Philips faced ‘three headwinds simultaneously’ which could hold back the business – the debt crisis in Europe, slowing growth in China and uncertainty in the US. Since taking the helm last year, Van Houten has cut thousands of jobs and replaced his entire top executive team in an effort to overturn losses of 1 billion pounds last year.

Daily Mail, 2012

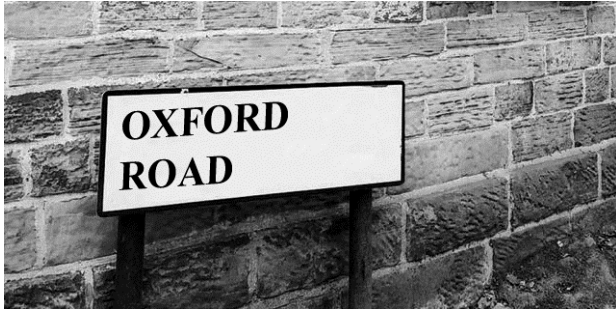
Whitsun Cheese Rolling Cancelled



For nearly two centuries, runners and spectators have gathered on a steep cotswolds hill to chase a wheel of double Gloucester cheese down the 200-yard steep hill.

- 1 The organisers have been forced to cancel this year's event: there are dozens of injuries every year among the men and women who hurl themselves down the hill in a bid to catch the cheese, but these are mainly minor. Still, Richard Jefferies, of the event's organising committee, said: "Last year 15,000 spectators tried to come to the event, by far the most we have ever seen, and we just could not cope." Last year roads for miles around were blocked by traffic trying to get to the event and finding nowhere to park.
- 2 Regular competitors reacted with disappointment to the cancellation. Inspector Stephen Norris said police and the county council had been advising the organisers on how to create a safer event, but added that they had taken a vote and decided to postpone this year's event. Organisers say the cheese rolling will return in a revised form next year.

Uneven surface ahead



Oxford – There was no earthquake, just a lot of rain. Subsidence under Oxford Road, south of the town, split the road surface and gave residents and drivers a nasty shock. The repairs will take months, Oxfordshire County Council says. The road, from Oxford to Abingdon, was shut as a precaution when cracks appeared just before Christmas. As the rain continued the cracks became rifts 2ft wide in places. Owen Morten, a spokesman for the county council, said: “It’s going to take some fixing. It’s fair to say the road will be closed for months rather than weeks. Thankfully there hasn’t been a huge amount of disruption so far because it’s not a particularly well-used road.”

Times, 2014