

WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE

Humans and animals occupying the same space at the same time...with memorable results.

YOU HAVE OCTOPUS ON YOUR FACE

Did you know that octopuses are venomous? Neither did Jamie Bisceglia. Nor did she know that octopuses have sharp beaks that they use to deliver that venom. In August 2019, the Fox Island, Washington, woman was on a boat during a fishing derby when a friend on a neighboring boat suggested she put an octopus (caught by another angler) on her face so that he could take a picture for a photo contest. Bisceglia agreed. Bad move. At first the octopus felt “squishy” and “fun” on her face. But then came the beak and the venom and the suckers on the tentacles that wouldn’t let go. Knowing she couldn’t just yank the barbed beak away, Bisceglia waited for several agonizing minutes until the octopus loosened its grip enough for her to fling it onto the deck. Her face bled for a half hour, and as the days went by, her symptoms got worse: “My eyes were swollen, I couldn’t see very well,” she explained. “Underneath my chin was a large pus pocket, and then the left side of my face was completely paralyzed.” Next thing she knew, Bisceglia was in the hospital receiving a heavy dose of antibiotics. Doctors told her it could take months to fully recover, and she’ll have a scar for life. No word on whether her friend won the photo contest, but Bisceglia said the octopus, which she took home and cooked, was delicious.

A SURFER WALKS INTO A BAR

In July 2019, a professional surfer named Frank O’Rourke was riding the waves in Jacksonville Beach, Florida, when a shark took a bite out of his arm and knocked him off his board. Lifeguards administered first aid, and then told the wounded surfer to go to the hospital to get his arm stitched up. But O’Rourke had other ideas. “He immediately went to the bar,” his friend RJ Berger told local news station News4JAX, “because he was like, ‘Hey, I got bit by a shark!’ And people were like, ‘Hey, I’ll buy you drinks!’”

HITCHCOCKIAN

A pair of herring gulls built a nest on the roof of Roy and Brenda Pickard’s home on the English coast in May 2019. A few weeks later, two of the chicks fell out and landed in the canopy over the elderly couple’s front door. The gulls left the chicks there, and then refused to allow Roy or Brenda to get anywhere near them. Roy

How do poison dart frogs “make” their poison? By eating poisonous insects.

discovered that the hard way when one of the angry birds attacked him and punctured his skull, requiring a trip to the hospital. “If that bird had hit me in the face instead of the back of the head,” he said, “I dread to think how seriously injured I would have been.” They tried calling several animal organizations to remove the birds, only to be told it’s against the law to disturb a protected species during nesting season. Result: neither of the Pickards could go in or out their front door for six days.

IN THE KNOW

Recent studies have concluded that increased human activity is turning some diurnal (daytime active) animals into night owls. One of the most affected went from spending 19 percent of its time awake at night to 95 percent. Native to Indonesia, this now-nocturnal species is *Helarctos malayanus*, commonly known as the sun bear.

KARMA?

A squirrel met an untimely end in 2016 when it darted across a path and jammed itself into the spokes of a bicycle being ridden by Howard Brookins Jr., alderman for Chicago’s 21st Ward. Brookins went flying over the handlebars and landed on his head, fracturing his skull and losing a few teeth. The politician later told the *Chicago Tribune* that this was more than a freak accident: “I can think of no other reason for this squirrel’s actions than that it was like a suicide bomber, getting revenge.” Revenge for what? The alderman had recently been complaining about “aggressive squirrels” at city council meetings: “We are spending too much money on replacing garbage carts because the squirrels continue to eat through them!” Does that mean the animal was actually trying to send Brookins a message? No, of course not; that would be crazy. And yet...

HOOVED

Here are three interesting facts about the wild horses that live on Maryland’s Assateague Island: 1) they most likely arrived there three centuries ago via a shipwreck; 2) there are about 300 of them on the island; and 3) you should never try to pet one. An unidentified tourist did just that when one of the horses wandered onto a crowded beach in 2019. The horse responded with a swift kick to the man’s Speedo. Only one of them walked away.

BAD KITTY!

Dee Gallant was hiking with her dog in a forest outside of Duncan, British Columbia, when she saw a mountain lion staring her down from about 50 feet away. Murphy (the dog) didn’t even notice it. Gallant, apparently believing the big cat was just checking her out from a safe distance, started recording the encounter on her



The Coca-Cola recipe isn’t patented. Why not?
To do so would require revealing the formula. (And patents expire.)

phone. But then the predator lowered its shoulders and slowly started approaching her. “Bad kitty!” she yelled. “Get out of here!” The mountain lion ignored her and kept advancing. And Murphy *still* didn’t know the cat was there. Thinking quickly, Gallant scrolled through her music library, looking for the “noisiest thing on my phone,” hoping it would scare away the cat. The song she chose: “Don’t Tread on Me” by Metallica. “As soon as the first notes blared out, it ran into the bush,” and Gallant and Murphy (who finally noticed the predator) quickly hightailed it out of there.

Bonus: Gallant told her story to the press, and it made its way to Metallica front man James Hetfield, who was so amused that he gave Gallant a call. “He was just an absolutely wonderful guy,” she beamed, “very down to earth.”

GRAB AND GO

In May 2017, a group of tourists in Richmond, British Columbia, were gathered on a dock watching a sea lion swimming in the calm water. At one point, a little girl in a white dress (name not released) stood up. The large animal sprung out of the water, startling everyone, before sinking below the surface again. A moment later, the girl sat back down on the edge of the dock. Bad idea. The sea lion poked out its head, grabbed the girl’s dress in its mouth, and yanked her into the water at an alarming speed. It let her go soon after, and she was rescued by one of the adults in the group. The girl was later treated with antibiotics as a precaution, but she was otherwise okay (physically, anyway). Explaining the animal’s behavior, Andrew Trites of the Marine Mammal Research Unit at the University of British Columbia told *Live Science* that the tourists were “unintentionally teasing” the sea lion by extending their hands but not offering anything. “The animal was expecting food,” Trites said. Once it realized she wasn’t a snack, it let her go.

SOLE SURVIVOR

An English fishing tradition says that when you catch a Dover sole, you give it a kiss. In 2017, Sam Quilliam, a 28-year-old fisherman from Bournemouth, caught a six-inch-long Dover and attempted to follow the tradition, but just as he was about to kiss the fish on the mouth, it wiggled out of his hands and leapt right down his throat. The fisherman started choking, and his panicked friends were unable to dislodge the fish from his windpipe. By the time an ambulance arrived, Quilliam was in cardiac arrest. With time running out, a paramedic was able to remove the Dover with a pair of forceps. Quilliam made a full recovery; the fish did not.

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“A fish may love a bird, but where would they live?”

—Drew Barrymore

Eew! What’s a *fetiform teratoma*? A tumor that looks like a human fetus.