

COOL NEWS

Inspiring stories from around the globe...



Saigas live in southeast Russia, Mongolia and Kazakhstan

Super news for saigas!



Hip, hip, hooray – saiga antelopes have made an incredible **comeback** in Central Asia. After **disease** and **poaching** cut the **goat-sized** mammal's numbers to just **48,000** in **2005**, conservationists stepped in to **protect the species** and its habitat. Thanks to their efforts, over **1.9 million** saigas now roam across **Kazakhstan** – and they're no longer considered **Critically Endangered**. Yay!

These mammals have been around since the **Ice Age**, when they lived alongside **woolly rhinos** and **mammoths**. Millions of them would **migrate** up to **1,000km** across Central Asia to breed and feed. It's hoped that this **spectacle** may one day return if their numbers continue to rise. We'll be seeing you, saigas!

New hedgehog species!



Not one, not two, but **FIVE** new species of **soft-furred hedgehogs** have been discovered in **Southeast Asia**! Two are **entirely new to science**, while the other three were known as **subspecies** but are now recognised as **species** in their own right. Cool!

Also called **moon rats** and **gymnures**, these **mouse-sized furry mammals** live in **rainforests**, gobbling up **insects** and **fruits**. The new species were found by scientists from the **Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, USA**.

"It might be surprising to hear that there are still **undiscovered mammals** out there," says researcher **Melissa Hawkins**. "But there's a **lot we don't know**, especially about **nocturnal animals**." How exciting!



Unlike spiky European hedgehogs, species like the **Hylomys maxi** are **soft and furry!**



Scientist **Arlo Hinckley** checks on a research trap

3 FAST FACTS!

SEAGRASS

It's **World Seagrass Day** on **1 March**, so let's find out about this **planet-saving super-plant**...

1 Found in **shallow waters** all over the world, **seagrasses** form **meadows** that look a bit like the **grasslands** you see on dry land! This habitat provides **food** and **shelter** to thousands of species such as **fish**, **turtles** and **seahorses**.

2 The **20cm-tall grasses** have big benefits for life on land, too. They **reduce flooding**, improve **water quality** and absorb **climate-change**-causing carbon dioxide. But sadly, they're **in decline** due to **pollution** and physical **disturbances**.

3 Conservationists are working hard to **restore** seagrass meadows. In **2023**, the **Ocean Conservation Trust** planted **4,000** seagrass plants in **Plymouth Sound, England**, to create a **3.5 hectare** meadow – and provide a lush, **green home** for our sealife. Yay!

A **football-pitch-sized** seagrass meadow can support over **40,000 fish** and **50 million invertebrates**. Wow!



Our tongues are unique!



No two tongues are the same!



Have a good look in the mirror and you'll see that your **tongue** is covered in **ridges, wrinkles and bumps!** These are your **papillae** – tiny buds that detect **taste, texture, touch and lubrication** – and researchers from the **Universities of Edinburgh and Leeds** have discovered that they're as **unique** as our **fingerprints!**

The scientists made **silicone moulds** of **15** people's **tongues**, **mapping** the **size, features and location** of their papillae. Early research suggests the **gender and age** of a person can be predicted by looking at **just one** of these teeny fleshy buds – some **individuals** could even be **identified**. They also think our unique **tongue print** explains why certain people **like particular tastes** more than others. How tongue-twisted is that?!

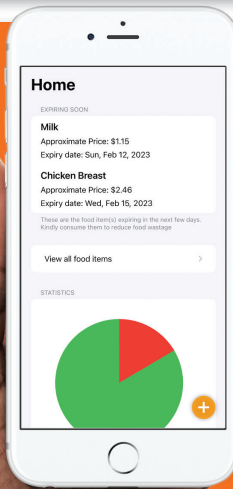
Food waste app!



Have you ever had to **chuck away** milk that's gone **sour**, or **bin mouldy bread**? Well, to stop that kind of **common food waste**, a techy teen from **Melbourne, Australia** has come up with an amazing solution – an **app** that reminds you when grub needs to be gobbled up by!

By scanning **shopping receipts** with the app, called **Bhojan**, users can keep track of **expiry dates**, get **reminders** to eat food, and even find **recipes** to use up ingredients nearing their use-by date!

The app, designed by **15-year-old Sricharan Karthikeyan** and his friends, has the support of his local council, while tech giants **Microsoft** are helping develop it with **AI technology**. Just think – no more **soft, squishy bananas** in your lunchbox!



Sricharan's tasty app in action!

Susie Dent's HAPPY WORD of the month!

MELLIFLUOUS

Say "muh-li-floo-uhs"

Certain **noises, sounds, voices and words** are particularly lovely and **satisfying to hear**.

Try saying...

"Sunshine"

"Hush"

"Lollipop"

"Bumblebee"



There is a word to describe such sweet and **soothing sounds**: 'mellifluous'. At the heart of this word is pure sweetness, for the Latin 'mel' means 'honey', and 'fluere' means 'flow'. So 'mellifluous' describes sounds and words that are so mellow they **flow like honey**.



MAKE IT A DATE

Key events for your diary!



FEB

13

Shrove Tuesday

Pancake pans at the ready!



FEB

14

Valentine's Day

Send a card to someone you think is wonderful!



MAR

1

St. David's Day

It's the **Welsh saint's** special day!



MAR

3

World Wildlife Day

Discover awesome **animal facts** at natgeokids.com/uk/animals



MAR

8

MAR

-17

British Science Week

Try out some **cool science experiments** on page 48!

Saiga © Eugeny Polonsky; Hedgehog © David Awcock; Scientist © Daniel Hinckley; App © STEM Incubators Inc.; All others © Getty Images UK.