

FIBL – APRIL PREDICTION 7

#165 Cavemen

You might picture Neanderthals as cavemen gnawing on bones around a campfire. Which wouldn't be But Neanderthals may have also dined on roasted vegetables and known a bit about medicinal plants too. So says a study in the journal *Naturwissenschaften* (The Science of Nature). Researchers hardened dental plaque from five Neanderthals found in El Sidrón cave, in northern Spain. Yes, 50,000-year-old dental plaque. And they found a lot lurking between the teeth. Like evidence of nuts, grasses and green veggies, traces of wood smoke, and tiny, intact starch granules, proof Neanderthals ate their carbs. And in one individual, they detected compounds found in the herbs chamomile and yarrow. The herbs have no nutritional value, and since Neanderthals did have the gene to detect the herbs' bitter taste, the researchers that the cave dwellers were munching on them not as food—but to self-medicate. Not too far-fetched, they say, because primates like chimps also use medicinal plants. Luckily for the scientists doing this work, Neanderthals may have known a thing or two about medicine, but they didn't get regular check-ups at the dentist.

#164 Dogs

Dogs are not just man's best friend. Previous studies have shown that kids with dogs are less likely to develop asthma. Now a new study may show how—if results from mice apply to us. The work was presented at a meeting of the American Society for Microbiology. The study tests what's called the hypothesis. The idea is that extreme cleanliness may actually promote disease later on. Researchers collected dust from homes that had a dog. They fed that house dust to mice. They then infected the mice with a common infection called syncytial virus—or RSV.

#162 Jack Nicholson

Jack Nicholson, playing the crazed caretaker in *The Shining*, makes me reach for a blanket. Now a study finds that people we find, well, creepy can actually make us feel colder. The research will be published in the journal *Science*.

Researchers interviewed 40 college undergraduates. During each interaction , the experimenter was either chummy with the student or very stiff and The investigator also alternated between mimicking students' posture – a signal of rapport – and not doing anything at all. Participants then completed a questionnaire designed to find out how hot or cold they felt. The results showed that the subjects actually felt colder when the investigator acted inappropriately or sent mixed signals. The researchers conjecture that because the brain tries to interpret social cues and purely physical ones people unconsciously associate icy stares and chilly interactions with actual physical coldness. So the next time you have to visit your doctor with the creepy, bring a sweater.

#151 Reptilian Fossil

Some interesting facts about the great reptilian fossils recently discovered in Wyoming and Colorado have come to light. The bones represent reptiles of many sizes, from that of a cat up to one sixty feet high. The latter, found at Como, Wyoming, belonged to the crocodile order; but the remains give that the animal stood up on its hind legs, like a kangaroo. Another found in Colorado is estimated to have been 100 feet long. A great many remains of the same general class, but belonging to different species, have been collected and sent East. Among them from three to four hundred specimens of the dinosaur, and about a thousand pterodactyls, have been shipped from Colorado, Wyoming, and Kansas. The wings of one of the latter were from thirty to feet from tip to tip. Seventeen different species of these flying dragons have been found in the chalk of western Kansas. There have also been found six species of toothed birds. Comparatively little has been done toward classifying the late finds, and the task is such an one. Great importance is attached to them, however, since nothing of the kind had been found in America until a little over a year ago and great had been laid by certain geologists on their absence. Another remarkable feature of the discovery was that the fossils which had been reported as not existing in this country had hardly been brought to light in one locality before thousands of tons of them were discovered in half a dozen different