Flying Snakes

Some countries, mainly in southeast Asia, have the majority of the world's flying snakes, but how do snakes fly? Technically, they're not really flying. They glide by stretching their bodies into a flattened strip using their ribs. They flatten out their bodies and parachute or glide from high spots to lower spots, and flying squirrels do the same thing. They can cover a horizontal distance of about 100 meters in a glide from the top of a tree.

Unlike flying squirrels, which extend all four feet to create two stable wing-like structures, snakes use their ribs to become flat, and then they whip their bodies in a fast, rhythmic S-shape to stay airborne.

Why would snakes decide they needed to fly? Probably because jumping from one tree to another is faster than slithering between them, though these snakes do slither.

They're not actually all that dangerous, because their fangs are very small and located in the back of their mouths. Sometimes they land on people, but even then, their bites aren't very damaging. They're mildly venomous but not deadly to humans. In fact, they're classified as harmless, unless you're allergic to them.

Flying snakes grow to be three to four feet long, but smaller snakes are better flyers.

The Herald

Questions

1) Most flying snakes are found in

- A) South Africa.
- B) Southeast Asia.
- C) South America.

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2) When flying, these snakes

- A) have to stay very still.
- B) have to spin.
- C) have to move very fast in a special shape.

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3) The snakes fly

- A) to escape from other animals that want to eat them.
- B) to move faster from tree to tree.

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- C) because they prefer this to slithering.

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4) Flying snakes

- A) can only harm humans who are allergic to them.
- B) are deadly for all humans.
- C) land on people and kill them with one bite.

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5) The smaller the snake,

- A) the bigger the bite.
- B) the longer the fangs.
- C) the faster it flies.

Fainting Goats

There is a kind of goat that's called a fainting goat because when something surprises or frightens them, their muscles go stiff for a short time, and they fall over. They're also known as wooden-leg goats, stiff-leg goats, scare goats, and other funny nicknames.

The reaction doesn't hurt, and it's not really fainting. Usually the animal stays awake and just bounces back up once the stiffness goes away.

Fainting goats first appeared in the U.S. in the 1880's, but no one is sure how the breed got started. Some people keep fainting goats for meat and milk, but some people keep them as pets. They're less likely to escape than other goats, not necessarily because of the fainting, but because they aren't good at jumping or climbing.

They are smaller and somewhat easier to care for and maintain than larger meat goat breeds, which makes the fainting goat desirable for smaller farms. They are also raised as pets or show animals as they can be friendly, intelligent, easy to keep, and amusing.

The Herald

Questions

1) Fainting goats faint when

- A) they are frightened.

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- B) they are hungry.
- C) they are thirsty.

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2) Fainting goats are

- A) similar to stiff-leg goats.
- B) exactly the same as stiff-leg goats.
- C) very different from stiff-leg goats.

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3) This fainting

- A) can be quite painful.
- B) is a little painful.
- C) is not painful at all.

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4) These goats

- A) can escape easily if they are not watched carefully.
- B) faint so often that they can never run away.
- C) can't jump or climb very easily.

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5) They are

- A) easier to keep than other goats.
- B) harder to look after than other goats.
- C) not good goats to keep as pets.

Hybrid Plants

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Because tomatoes and potatoes are members of the same plant family, gardeners have long talked about combining them into one plant. Now it's a reality because you can buy a TomTato, which is a plant that grows tomatoes above the ground and potatoes below the ground.

A clever gardener managed to combine the plants by grafting, or physically attaching, two separate plants to one another. You buy the hybrid plant, put it in the ground or a pot in the spring, and start harvesting its cherry tomatoes starting in mid-summer. When the tomatoes stop growing, you can dig up the roots and harvest white potatoes.

If you save seeds from these hybrids and grow them the next year, you'll just get regular cherry tomato plants. The hybrid effect only works on the grafted plant.

You couldn't graft together a carrot-orange tree, or a pineapple-banana tree, because plants in different families cannot be grafted successfully.

The Herald

Questions

1) Tomatoes and potatoes

- A) are not related.
- B) are very closely related.
- C) have a distant relationship.

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2) The potatoes grow

- A) above the ground.
- B) below and above the ground.
- C) under the ground.

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3) The special potato and tomato plant

- A) is made by using three plants.
- B) is grown from a seed.
- C) is made by combining two separate plants.

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4) You can begin to collect the fruits and vegetables from this plant

- A) in the spring.
- B) from the middle of summer onwards.
- C) in winter, when the potatoes have grown.

5) Hybrid plants

- A) can be grown from any combination of fruits.
- B) produce the same crops every year.
- C) can only grow when they are from the same family.

Flying Cars

Companies are racing to make flying cars a real choice for people to get around. The machines will fly themselves, and experts say that will make them safer than regular cars.

Dubai is a city in the Middle East where people could soon be flying to work in air taxis. The Ehang 184 can fly for 30 minutes, hold one person, and runs on battery power.

Air-taxi riders use an app on their phone to ask for a flight. The Ehang 184 is one of several new flying machines. Such machines are known as vertical takeoff and landing. They lift into the air with the help of electric fans, and are quieter and cleaner than helicopters.

The authorities in the US have approved the testing of a similar vehicle called the Transition. It runs on gas and travels on the ground and in the air. The wings fold up when the vehicle is on the ground, and they spread out for flight.

Unfortunately, it won't be ready for at least 10 years, so, for now, the world is watching to see how soon Dubai's flying taxis get off the ground.

The Herald

Questions

1) These flying cars will

- A) need special drivers.
- B) only need normal drivers.
- C) not need drivers.

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2) There will be just enough space for

- A) a passenger and the driver.
- B) a single passenger.
- C) an adult and a child.

3) Passengers will

- A) need to call to be picked up.
- B) get picked up by using a special program.
- C) have to wait in line to be picked up.

4) The Ehang 184 will

- A) make less noise than a helicopter.
- B) sound just like a helicopter.
- C) be completely silent.

5) A flying car called the Transition

- A) can be tested in the US.
- B) has been denied approval for testing in the US.
- C) doesn't need approval for testing in the US.

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