

Message in a Bottle!

An Australian man walking along his local beach in Peterborough, in the southeastern state of Victoria in Australia, was very surprised to find a real message in a bottle! The bottle had been sent by an American man, named Joe Johnson, whilst on a cruise ship holiday in Brazil in November 2008. The bottle took 16 years to travel across the southern hemisphere! Mr Johnson said he had sent 'about a hundred' messages in bottles in his life, and that he had launched this one into the Atlantic Ocean, somewhere between Rio and Salvador.



Pictured: Message in a bottle found on beach!
Source: Canva.

Mr Johnson's letter, inside the bottle, promised the finder a reward of \$20 for their trouble of contacting him, to let him know it had been found and where its final location was! One of the funniest parts of this story is that Mr Johnson had thrown many bottles into the ocean on his holidays to Australia, but it was the one he sent from Brazil (approx. 15,000km/10,000m away!) that had made the incredible journey all the way there!

If you were to send a message in a bottle, what would you write?

Mammal Migration

An incredible and unusual natural phenomenon has captured scientists' awe, wonder and interest in Zambia, Africa. Kasanka National Park is currently seeing millions of fruit bats from all over the world flock to its evergreen forests. Scientists aren't exactly sure why the nocturnal mammals are choosing this particular habitat as their home for just three months, but they have said it could be for the delicious fruits that are found there. Whilst there, they play an important role in helping preserve the ecosystem, by

spreading and dispersing fruit seeds when they fly at night. One bat, dropping one seed, in a colony of a million, equals a lot of seed spreading! Like many creatures, they are at risk from habitat loss and hunting, which could affect both animals and humans who rely on the seeds they disperse, once they have grown into plants.

Can you name any other nocturnal animals?



Pictured: Flying fruit bats!
Source: Canva.

Should you be allowed to build homes anywhere?



I think if people have paid for the land they should be able to build their homes on that land.

Jasper

Planetary Parade

It is an exciting time for skywatchers, as throughout January and February, six planets of our solar system will align in the sky. Saturn, Venus, Jupiter, Mars, Uranus and Neptune will form a planetary parade. During this period, you may be able to see Venus, Jupiter, Mars and Saturn with the naked eye in the northern hemisphere! You will need a telescope to see Uranus and Neptune. The celestial event doesn't occur every



Pictured: The solar system. **Source:** Canva.

year - the next one won't happen until 2040! The planets will appear to be in a line. They are always on the ecliptic plane (an imaginary line in the solar system on which the planets orbit around the sun), though we typically can't see them! Famous astronaut, Buzz Aldrin, posted on social media, 'We may be in the depths of winter, but the coming planetary alignment is something to look forward to at the end of January. We should be able to start seeing things on the 18th and moving into February. I know it's great when the "stars align" but it's something else when the planets get in order!'

Are you interested in planets?

Would you like to see the planets align?



Pictured: Looking through a telescope. **Source:** Canva.

Endangered 'Dancing' Bird Thriving in Captivity

The Angkor Centre for Conservation of Biodiversity (ACCB), in Cambodia, has announced their Bengal florican population is 'thriving in captivity'. The birds are being reared in a special facility, where they can develop their wild instincts. The critically endangered birds are ground-dwelling and the largest member of the bustard family. Their numbers are decreasing as the grasslands they live in come under threat. The species are well known for the male birds' elegant courtship displays. Described as an 'aerial dance', they hum, strut, fluff their necks, and can jump up to 2.4 metres in the air to strike impressive poses! Bengal florican eggs laid in the wild are being carefully hatched and then

raised at a conservation centre, as the subspecies was predicted to be extinct by 2023. It is hoped that the semi-captive birds will be able to be reintroduced to the wild.

Do you know any facts about Bengal floricans?

Have you seen the birds' 'aerial dance'?



Pictured: Bengal Florican Management Programme. **Source:** Angkor Centre for Conservation of Biodiversity on Facebook.

Should you be allowed to build homes anywhere?



No, because some people are building homes in deserts, beaches and forests and taking animals home!

Ella May

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