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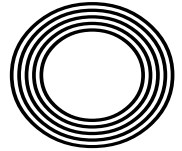
**FIVE
TV SETS
YOU CAN
VISIT**

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BEN STOKES OBE

Legendary cricketer sets his sights on World Cup victory



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Editor's notes...

OCTOBER 2023



Nik Allen, Editor

Hello and welcome to this month's edition of **VISION** Maldon Burnham.

I'm excited to share my recent customer service encounters that have left an indelible mark on me. As the saying goes: "You don't truly appreciate good customer service until you've experienced the opposite."

On the brighter side, a recent visit to a local bookstore demonstrated the magic of outstanding service. The staff's knowledge, willingness to assist and genuine enthusiasm made my visit not just enjoyable but also memorable. It's a powerful reminder of how good service can elevate a mundane task into a delightful experience.

However, not all tales are as sunny. A frustrating experience with a telecom provider left me grappling with automated phone systems and impersonal support. It's a stark reminder that poor customer service not only erodes trust but also tests our patience.

Customer service is the cornerstone of our consumer experience. It's our privilege to bring you stories that shed light on the importance of striving for excellence. As we navigate the customer service spectrum, let's remember the impact it has on our daily lives and the potential for change it holds.

We at **VISION** strive for excellent customer service when working with local businesses.

Nik Allen

This is your town's hyperlocal magazine, delivering to homes and businesses every month.

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Sooty™

Turns Seventy-Five

In an era where a fad is lucky to last a full five minutes, the enduring magic of hand puppet Sooty must be something of a mystery to young audiences. And yet, when faced with his snuggly yellow fur, button eyes and sweet, shy demeanour, they inevitably melt with adoration as generation upon generation of children before them have done.

Discovered by Harry Corbett OBE in a joke shop on Blackpool North Pier on July 19, 1948, 'Teddy' – as he was then known – was purchased for seven shillings and six pence.

Having long harboured ambitions for the stage, Bradford native Corbett first appeared with the silent bear in a 1952 BBC TV show, *Talent Night*. The act was an instant success and Sooty soon became the star of his very own show featuring magic tricks, slapstick comedy and songs – a nod to Corbett's former ambitions as a concert pianist which were thwarted by his being deaf in one ear. Soon afterwards, he was joined by his pals: there was Sweep, a grey male dog who communicated with a squeak, and Soo, a female panda with a human voice.

After suffering a heart attack in 1975, Corbett's son Peter (stage name Matthew) took over as Sooty's friend and keeper. In the ensuing years, and with the character now a mainstay on *Rainbow*, Corbett Senior would make occasional guest appearances on spin-off *Sooty Show* (by this point now airing on ITV) until his death in 1989.

Under Matthew Corbett, Sooty and co. would enjoy enormous success. He changed the format of the show to one of a sitcom but kept the integral elements. Namely, Sooty's wand, the catchphrase 'izzy, wizzy, let's get busy', and the silent bear's enduring love of water pistols and mayhem in general.

In 1998, Corbett was succeeded by Richard Cadell. Only a few weeks into his new role, he found himself at 10 Downing Street for a special awards ceremony honouring brave children, hosted by then Prime Minister Sir Tony Blair and his wife Cherie – who Sooty dutifully squirted with his water pistol.

Sooty and Sweep were also guests at the birthday party of His Majesty Prince Charles, as he was then, in 2018 (Sooty actually being a few months older than our now King). The pair have courted numerous other politicians, musicians and celebrities and even – on the hand of Harry Corbett – shared a giggle with Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

So how is it, then, that a premise so simple remains so beloved in an age of CGI and swanky animation?

"I think the great thing with Sooty – and this is a famous Harry Corbett quote – is that he's never really been in fashion, so he's never really been out," laughs Cadell.

"It's not like one of these children's things that spike and then disappear," explains the 54 year old, who will embark on *75th Birthday Spectacular* – a special UK national tour that kicks off on October 21 at Bradford's Alhambra Theatre and runs through until April 2024.

He adds: "Sometimes the things we cherish most as children, and adults, are based in simple entertainment, and I am delighted that fact has held true despite so much else around us changing."



Photo credit: Moviestore/Shutterstock

BEHIND *the scenes*

Are you a complete TV addict? What would you say if we told you that there are iconic sets all across the UK that you can visit? From *Coronation Street* to *Only Fools and Horses* to *Downtown Abbey*, here are some locations from popular shows that are open for visitors today.

Coronation Street – ITV Studios, Manchester

This walking tour of *Coronation Street*, the UK's longest-running soap, is a must for any Corrie fan. Complete with an expert guide, you can take a closer look at all the iconic shops and businesses on the street, including The Rovers Return, Roy's Rolls café and Webster's Auto Centre.

Only Fools and Horses – Bristol Temple Meads Train Station

One of Britain's most-loved comedies, who wouldn't want to take a closer look behind the scenes at this legendary sitcom? The *Only Fools and Horses* three-and-a-half-hour coach tour takes you to filming spots of more than 10 episodes and includes a look at Nelson Mandela House, Sid's Café and the road where the iconic Batman and Robin scene took place.

Peaky Blinders – Central Liverpool

A gritty masterpiece, *Peaky Blinders* was filmed in Liverpool even though it is set in Birmingham, owing to this city's well-preserved Victorian industrial architecture. Hop on either the half-day or full-day guided coach tour and see the homes of Polly and Field Marshal Russell, Garrison Lane and so much more.

Downtown Abbey – Bampton, Oxfordshire

Become Lord or Lady of Grantham for the day, with the *Downtown Abbey* and Village group tour. Visit the charming village of Bampton, which fans will know as Downtown Village. Then head to Highclere Castle, where you will be able to explore the estate and the rooms within and enjoy a spot of lunch.

Bridgerton – The Abbey Hotel, Bath

Channel your inner Daphne or Duke of Hastings with a guided *Bridgerton* tour. Explore many of this popular show's filming locations during this two-hour tour, including Lady Danbury's mansion, Gunter's Tea Shop and the modiste dress shop.



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Home Office/Studies

Laura Hammett is an award-winning design house, run by Laura and her husband Aaron since 2008. With more than 25 years of experience between them, they are known for creating contemporary interiors with classic touches, resulting in stunning elegance.

Laura Hammett's work spans the globe and even includes a private jet. You can also enjoy the Laura Hammett look with a creative approach.

A CLASSIC STYLE FOR THE MODERN ERA

When you examine Laura Hammett's style, you're instantly transported to modern London. The designs are full of light and detail, creating beautiful looks that would be right at home in any design coffee table book.

Colour palettes include lighter shades of grey and taupe, paired with darker details to add contrast. Light upholstery, rich walnut and subtle marble are some of the styles that have been used in the Laura Hammett portfolio, adding character and elegance to all kinds of homes.

CREATING THE LOOK

With these simple tips, you can transform your home with a modern luxe look the Laura Hammett way.

- > Enhance the natural light in your home by keeping walls light. Think greige, off-white and white to draw the light in.
- > Adding details such as cushions and throws in rich fabrics can make your interior look more upmarket, without designer price tags.
- > Statement light fittings and abstract wall art in your colour scheme can complete your space, helping you create some interest without filling the room with clutter.
- > Search antique shops and second-hand stores to find high-quality furniture items you can restore to their former glory.

Laura Hammett's style is on trend and attainable, a look that can you can adapt to your own home to create subtle modern elegance.



Photo credit: laurahammett.com, @laurahammettinteriors via Instagram



Let's get ready to TUMBLE!

Did you know that there are many more uses for tumble dryer sheets than just to reduce static and make your clothes smell nice? Discover five surprising uses for the humble dryer sheet below.

TO REMOVE FOOD RESIDUE FROM POTS AND PANS

If you have forgone the washing up in favour of more enjoyable activities, then you are likely to be left with food residue that simply won't budge. To remove this with minimal effort, simply place a dryer sheet in the middle of the pot or pan, add warm water and some washing-up liquid and allow it to soak. After an hour, remove the sheet, drain the water and wipe away the stains with a sponge.

TO PICK UP PET HAIR FROM CLOTHES AND UPHOLSTERY

Does your pet leave dander all over your clothes and upholstery? When it comes to removing stubborn pet hair, nothing beats a tumble dryer sheet. More effective than a lint roller, all you need to do is rub a fresh sheet against the item and watch the dander disappear.

TO CLEAN YOUR TV AND COMPUTER SCREENS

Out of screen-cleaning wipes? Don't panic, as you can use a tumble dryer sheet with equally impressive results. Designed to reduce static cling, a dryer sheet can effectively remove dust and prevent it from resettling.

TO REMOVE RESIDUE FROM YOUR IRON

Over time, residue will start to build up on your iron, which will make it less effective at removing creases. To clean this appliance, turn it on to a low heat setting and carefully rub a tumble dryer sheet over the surface, making sure not to touch the iron plate with your bare fingers. The heat will soften the residue and make it easy to remove.

TO SHARPEN SCISSORS

About to start a new craft project or wrap a present and realise your trusty scissors are blunt? Carefully run a tumble dryer sheet against the dull blade and enjoy restored sharpness in an instant. Be sure not to touch your finger directly to the blade!



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Following the closure of Barclays Bank in Tiptree Curtain Call Interiors have taken over the former bank building and transformed the space into an inspirational home interiors showroom and new workroom.

The new space showcases a wide range of designer fabrics, curtain displays as well as home accessories including, a beautiful home fragrance range, cushions, lamps, furniture and tableware.

Curtain Call specialise in making hand finished bespoke curtains, Roman blinds and soft furnishings all made by their experienced team of curtain makers. With their new workroom located adjacent to the Showroom, it allows



owner Natalie and her team of makers and designers to assist customers in finding the right fabric and style for their decoration projects.



Offering a free estimating and consulting service, using the vast library of fabric samples and pattern books, they can help bring your ideas to life with advice in choosing the right fabric and style for your space.

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HOME & DIY

Have you TWIGGED?

If you love the current rustic vibe but not the hefty price tags, check out these easy twig projects.

SUNBURST TWIG MIRROR YOU'LL NEED:

- > Lots of straight twigs of roughly the same size
- > A 25cm round frameless mirror
- > A 35cm circle of corrugated cardboard
- > A hot glue gun

HOW TO MAKE:

- > Glue the mirror in place in the centre of the cardboard circle.
- > Glue the twigs on the cardboard so that one end is right against the mirror edge and the other is sticking straight out, overlapping the cardboard. Layer on enough twigs so that the cardboard is completely covered.

For safety reasons, we recommend you prop your mirror on a shelf rather than hang it up.

TWIGGY PHOTO FRAME YOU'LL NEED:

For a 10cm x 15cm (6in x 4in) photo frame:

- > 2x 15cm twigs
- > 2x 20cm twigs
- > Twine
- > PVA glue
- > A piece of baking paper slightly larger than the photo
- > Scissors

HOW TO MAKE:

- > To form the first corner, lay a longer twig on top of a shorter twig, allowing 2.5cm of each twig to stick out where they overlap.

- > Wrap the two together so the twine forms a cross shape on top. Tie to secure.

- > Complete this step on all corners in the same way to create a rectangle.

- > Glue the photo onto the baking paper. Then glue the edges of the baking paper to the back of the frame, with the picture facing out.

JEWELLERY TREE YOU'LL NEED:

- > A strong hardwood branch – approx. 25-30cm tall
- > A log slice about 5cm thick and 13-15cm in diameter
- > Epoxy glue (e.g. Araldite)
- > A drill and drill bits suitable for wood

HOW TO MAKE:

- > Drill a hole in the log slice, the same width as the main stem of the branch.

- > Fasten the branch in the hole with the glue and leave it to dry.

- > Hang up your jewellery!

Happy twigging!

Photo credit: [sallygirlandherdog.com](https://www.instagram.com/sallygirlandherdog), [coolcrafterblog.com](https://www.instagram.com/coolcrafterblog)



FROM YOUR AREA

LOCAL NEWS

New housing for former homeless individuals



Photo credit: Google Maps

A building in Maldon will be repurposed to provide accommodation for people transitioning out of homelessness.

The Salvation Army Housing Association (saha) has partnered with Maldon District Council (MDC) to convert Cecil Mary House.

Residents will be able to enjoy refurbished and furnished homes, including some with full wet rooms on the ground floor for those with accessibility needs.

Residents can live in the property for up to two years as they prepare to transition into permanent housing and continue progress toward independent living.

Lynne Shea, chief executive of saha, said: "We are delighted to open the doors of Cecil Mary House and give residents in Maldon the services and housing stability they need to move forward."

Councillor Richard Siddall, Leader of MDC, said; "This scheme shows great partnership working between saha and MDC. The new homes will provide both affordable accommodation and support to meet the needs of some of our most vulnerable residents."

Council faces legal costs following planning appeal

Maldon District Council (MDC) may have to pay legal costs after refusing plans for travellers' pitches with "no evidence" to back up their concerns.

The initial hearing took place in June this year, where the applicant said the council had "behaved unreasonably in refusing the application".

In a decision published last month, the appeal was found to be successful. This means that land and buildings lying to the south of Maldon Road will now

potentially be used for two traveller pitches with one mobile home and one touring caravan per pitch.

The final comments from the appeal said: "Unreasonable behaviour resulting in unnecessary or wasted expense has occurred and a partial award of costs is therefore warranted in respect of the costs arising from providing a defence to the council's third reason for refusal relating to undue harm to residential amenity of the neighbouring occupiers, by reason of both noise and outlook."

A spokesperson for MDC said: "MDC can confirm it is in receipt of a partial award of costs through a Costs Decision from the Planning Inspectorate dated August 21, 2023. This relates to a planning appeal in Woodham Mortimer reference APP/X1545/W/22/3308046. The council is engaging with the appellant to reach an agreement on the amount to pay."

Rock legend unveils tribute train at railway museum

A rock legend paid a visit to a Burnham-on-Crouch museum earlier this month.

Rick Wakeman CBE (pictured below right), former YES keyboardist, world-renowned solo artist and avid railway enthusiast, unveiled the recently restored 1959 Class 31 locomotive at Mangapps Railway Museum.

Rick revealed this tribute to former pirate radio station Radio Caroline in its striking livery, then drove the train down the track on its inaugural run.

The 126-ton diesel locomotive was built in 1959 and is painted in original British Rail colours. It worked out of London Liverpool Street Station and may well have hauled the trains that took the likes of Radio Caroline presenters Johnnie Walker MBE and Tony Blackburn to Harwich in the Sixties to make their way out to Radio Caroline's pirate radio ship off the coast of Essex.



Photo credit: Radio Caroline

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SIR JOHN WHITTINGDALE MP

Conservative MP for Maldon



LOCAL NEWS



Photo credit: Maldon Community Hub

As the population of our district grows, I am aware of the increasing pressure that this is putting on our local health services. This is bound to increase during the winter months as more people become ill with colds, flu and other respiratory infections.

Recently, plans to relocate some of the inpatient services from St Peter's Hospital (pictured) this winter have been announced by NHS clinicians and managers. I understand that this has raised concerns about its future. However, I am assured that these changes reflect the immediate needs of the service, are necessarily temporary in nature and affect only inpatient provision.

A decision has been taken to relocate the birthing unit to the WJC in Braintree, which offers purpose-built facilities for midwife-led births. I know that St Peter's maternity unit has a long history of serving the population of Maldon – indeed, I led a campaign against its closure many years ago. However, it now only sees an average of six births a month.

St Peter's was built as a workhouse in 1872 and

the building has deteriorated badly in recent years. Having recently visited a friend in one of the wards, I know that the care offered by the staff is superb, but the conditions mean that it will become impossible to sustain a safe and high-quality service. Before any permanent decisions are taken about these and other services, there has to be a full public consultation.

At the same time, plans for new facilities are underway. A new GP health centre in Heybridge will provide considerable extra space for existing practices, and Longfield Medical Centre will also be expanded on its present site.

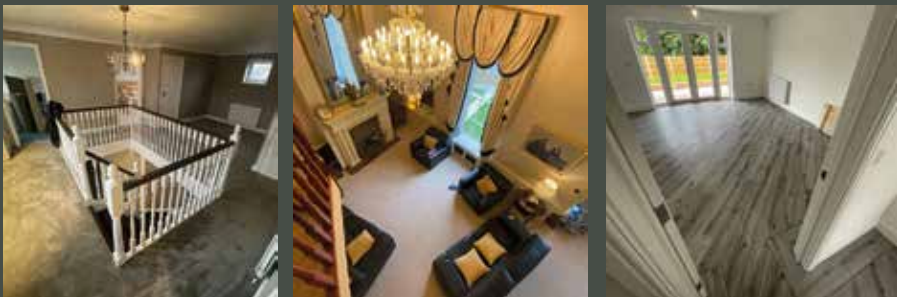
I will also continue to work with the local NHS, Essex County Council and Maldon District Council to bring about a new health hub to which Blackwater Medical Centre can relocate and which will provide the range of services for the local population currently provided from St Peter's.

I am determined that these developments should give the people of Maldon district the modern and high-quality health facilities they so badly need.

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From rural surroundings to entertainment icon



LOCAL FEATURE



You wouldn't expect to find a buoyant behemoth of modern primetime entertainment lingering in the leafy, rural, countryside surrounds of Stanford, yet Rylan Clark-Neal's life in Essex is indeed the epitome of serenity, and a world away from the flashbulbs and entertainment excesses that pattern his day job.

Born Ross Clark and raised in Stepney, East London, the presenter we now know as Rylan got his big break when he auditioned for the ninth series of *The X Factor* in 2012. Though his singing skills may not have been the strongest among the contestants, his magnetic personality quickly captured the hearts of both the audience and assembled judges. Finishing in fifth place, his time on *The X Factor* provided a solid foundation for his future career in television.

Celebrity Big Brother followed, with audiences won over by the star's vibrant personality and natural charm. Presenting duties proved an obvious route for someone who, while never turning his back on his reality TV roots, was keen to explore other areas. These have included *Big Brother* spin-offs, plus daytime TV (*This Morning*), game shows (*Supermarket Sweep*), panel shows (*Celebrity Juice* and *Would I Lie to You?*) and *Eurovision*.

Rylan is openly gay, and while he uses his influence to good effect in terms of fundraising and providing exposure to minority groups – such as the LGBTQ+ community – the 34-year-old remains grounded and sincere.

The current voice of car retailer Cinch, the presenter is set to embark on a busy schedule of work in the coming months, including a rumoured *Big Brother* return.

Clark-Neal recently swapped Stanford for Brentwood, where his mother Linda lives, and remains loyal to his Essex image. As he says: "There is no better place on Earth – the people, the places, the vibe. It's always Essex."



YOUR LOCAL EVENTS

WHAT'S ON

CARLTON COLE IN MALDON
Maldon & Tiptree Football Club, Park Drive, Maldon, CM9 5JQ
Friday, October 20, 7.30pm



Photo credit: Fred Duval/Shutterstock.com

Hosted by Hammers legend Mark Ward, whose personality on the mic brings even more fun to the proceedings, Carlton Cole gives many hilarious insights into life at West Ham, along with memorable moments both on and off the pitch.

Tickets start at £22.38 and can be purchased at www.shorturl.at/kqDU1

CABLE STREET BLUES

Plume Academy Hall, Fambridge Road, Maldon, CM9 6AB
Friday, October 20, and Saturday, October 21, 7.30pm

A musical drama about the joys and sorrows of life in London's East End, lived during extraordinary times.

An exciting collaboration between Maldon Drama Group and Maldon Orchestra, written by Pride of Maldon award winner Neil Fisher, in support of local charity the David Randall Foundation.

Tickets are £10 and on sale at www.ticketsource.co.uk/mdg

AUTHOR EVENT: KATHERINE RUNDRELL

Maldon United Reformed Church, Market Hill, Maldon, CM9 4PZ
Saturday, October 21, 2pm

Prepare to be swept away to a land beyond your wildest imagination in *Impossible Creatures*, the epic new fantasy series from master storyteller Katherine Rundell.

Tickets start at £5. Visit www.maldonbooks.com/author-event-katherine-rundell to find out more.

SCARY HALLOWEEN MAZE

Chigborough Farm, Chigborough Road, Maldon, CM9 4RE
Friday, October 27 and Saturday, October 28, 2pm – 9pm

What better way to get into the Halloween spirit than a scary Halloween maze? Chigborough Farm will be asking brave members of the public to aid them in containing the deadly zombie virus that has plagued the farm. To do this, you will need to locate all four quarantine zones hidden within the maze while trying to avoid the horrors within.

Tickets cost £15, and you can find out more via www.shorturl.at/brQ03

HALLOWEEN HISTORY TOUR

Creeksea Place Manor House, Ferry Road, Burnham-on-Crouch, CM0 8PJ
Saturday, October 28, 12pm – 1pm

Join Creeksea Place Manor House for a fascinating tour of Creeksea Manor and its grounds with the delightful guide, Geoff.

Tickets cost £10 and can be purchased by calling 01621 784535.

THE FLYING HORNETS CHARITY GIG

Creeksea Place Manor House, Ferry Road, Burnham-on-Crouch, CM0 8PJ
Saturday, November 4, 7pm – 11pm

Join this fantastic evening of toe-tapping live entertainment, with the fabulous band The Flying Hornets, and support Essex Deaf Children's Society.

Tickets cost £20 and includes a welcome drink. Call 01621 784535 to book your tickets.



Photo credit: Creeksea Place Manor

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BIG BEN

BEN STOKES OBE'S INCLUSION IN THE WORLD CUP SQUAD IS GREAT NEWS FOR ENGLAND CRICKET... LESS SO FOR OUR OPPONENTS!

When Durham and England all-rounder Ben Stokes OBE decided that the gruelling cricketing schedule was too much for him and his body to take, a collective sigh of relief from those who cherish the clack of leather on willow must have been heard all around the world in the sport.

It was July 2022. Stokes had spent the previous three months leading his country in Test cricket after succeeding Joe Root MBE as captain, and things in that regard had started perfectly, with four wins in a row.

However, after commenting that he felt playing all three of cricket's formats – Test, ODI and T20 – was “unsustainable”, Stokes' last 50-over tussle came against South Africa at his home ground, Durham's Riverside.

Yet a year is a long time in sport, and even longer in the seesaw nature of the Christchurch-born all-rounder's career. So roll on 12 months, and despite a huge summer Ashes series ahead, Stokes began speaking to his limited overs captain Jos Buttler MBE and coach Matthew Mott about a quickfire return to the ODI circuit.

Stokes says: “The closer this World Cup got, the more I was becoming interested in having those discussions. And when you consider that we are the defending champions, it almost feels right to want to ensure you defend that crown.

“At the same time, I had to remind myself of the original reason for choosing to retire from this format of the game.”

Return he has, with a pledge from the 32-year-old to listen to his body, perhaps better than he has in the past when the almost constant demands of the game have had an impact on not just physical abilities, but the star's mental wellbeing too.

“Let's see how this World Cup goes,” he adds, “and I'll decide then if it's my last hurrah.”

Had Stokes not chosen to return to the fold, we would have been denied his record-breaking knock against New Zealand in the third ODI at The Kia Oval in September. Coming into bat alongside Dawid Malan with England compromised on 13/2, Stokes was about to rev it up against the Kiwis.

His 15 fours and nine sixes contributed to an almost unimaginable personal total of 182, beating Jason Roy's 180 against Australia in Melbourne in 2018. His efforts saw England reach a mammoth 368 off 48.1 overs. New Zealand could only muster 187 all out and Stokes took a further leap into the echelons of iconic status.

“I need more time to get used to its rhythm, but I think I managed well this time,” he said, referencing that spectacular knock. “The announcer mentioned my record just before I was done. I didn't even know about it until then. Jason congratulated me, and I apologised to him,” he laughs.

Does Stokes feel that England can become world champions again, and in the process become only the third side to defend the title since its inception in 1975?

“Everyone recognises our team's strength, and it's not boastful to admit we have a talented line-up. We're optimistic about our chances, but in World Cup matches, it's all about handling pressure.”

Photo credit: Kieran McManus/Shutterstock

HALLOWEEN PUMPKIN LANTERNS

An Illuminating and Spooky Tale

The origins of Halloween go back around 2,000 years to a Celtic festival called Samhain (pronounced 'sow-in'). The Celts believed that when the harvest ended and winter took hold, the barrier between our world and the spirit world became blurred – and this meant that dead spirits could come back to haunt us. But why pumpkins?

AN ENCHANTING STORY FROM IRELAND
Stingy Jack is a character from Irish folk tales who liked playing pranks, even on the devil. One day, Jack tricked the devil into turning into a coin, so he could pay for their drinks. Jack then pocketed the coin, and the devil was trapped. Eventually, he set the devil free but made him promise not to claim his soul. So when Jack died, he couldn't go to hell or to heaven. He was stuck roaming the world with a glowing coal inside a turnip to light his way.

LANTERNS FROM TURNIPS
As time passed, Samhain mixed with Christian traditions such as All Saints' Day (or All Hallows' Day)

on November 1 – and All Souls' Day, the day after. By the 16th century, the festival was already known as Halloween, taking its name from All Hallows' Eve. And as part of their Halloween celebrations, people in Ireland carved turnips into lanterns to ward off spooky spirits.

PUMPKINS WORK BETTER
When Irish people moved to America in the 1800s, they took their Halloween tradition with them. But they soon discovered that pumpkins were much easier to carve than turnips. In honour of Stingy Jack, the carved pumpkins became known as Jack-o'-lanterns.

Today, as we carve our pumpkins to light up the night, we continue to honour customs that have journeyed through time, from our Irish neighbours to America – and, in the 1990s, back over the seas to Britain.




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Keeping your dog SAFE IN AUTUMN

Autumn is one of the best times of year for long walks with your dog, when the leaves are falling from the trees and the weather has cooled. That being said, there are lots of lurking dangers that you need to be aware of.

ACORNS: Acorns contain a toxic ingredient called tannic acid which can cause damage to your dog's liver and kidneys. When ingested, they can also lead to vomiting, diarrhoea, lethargy and abdominal pain.

CONKERS: Conker seeds boast a spiky green shell that can injure your dog's mouth if picked up and carried around. The shiny brown conker inside can be a choking hazard and, if ingested, can cause vomiting, diarrhoea and sometimes an intestinal blockage.

FALLEN FRUIT: If you take your dog on long country walks, they are highly likely to encounter fallen fruit such as apples and plums. When these fruits fall on the ground, they start to ferment and produce a natural alcoholic substance. If eaten in large quantities, this can cause vomiting and diarrhoea.

HARVEST MITES: Harvest mites are tiny red mites that tend to appear at the end of summer and into autumn. They are often found on a dog's coat, in between their toes and in their ear folds. These mites can cause extreme itching and trauma to the skin.

WILD MUSHROOMS: Wild mushrooms come in all sorts of shapes, colours and sizes, which makes it very hard to distinguish between the edible ones and those that are poisonous. If your dog eats an unknown fungus, it may cause a mild stomach upset, or it could be deadly.

SPRING BULBS: Many people plant spring bulbs in autumn, such as daffodil, tulip and spring crocus bulbs. These are all toxic to dogs and can make them very unwell if ingested.



Get BALANCED!

Did you know that National Work/Life Balance Week takes place this month, with the aim of generating awareness of the importance of a healthy balance between your professional and personal life?

If you struggle to switch off after leaving work or you find the lines between your work and home life have blurred, then we are here to help you.

Why is a good work/life balance important?

A good work/life balance involves finding a harmonious relationship between your home life and your working life. This is vital to your overall wellbeing as people need to engage in a wide range of activities, as well as rest, in order to thrive. If you work too hard or work very long hours, you are more likely to experience high levels of stress and suffer from insomnia, depression and/or anxiety.

What is an unhealthy work/life balance?

The most common signs of an unhealthy work/life balance are:

- > Regularly working long hours, including evenings, weekends and holidays
- > Neglecting your personal/family life owing to excessive work demands
- > Experiencing burnout, which causes physical, emotional and mental exhaustion
- > A lack of time for self-care, including sleep and leisure activities
- > Strained relationships owing to work commitments

How to achieve the right balance between work and home life

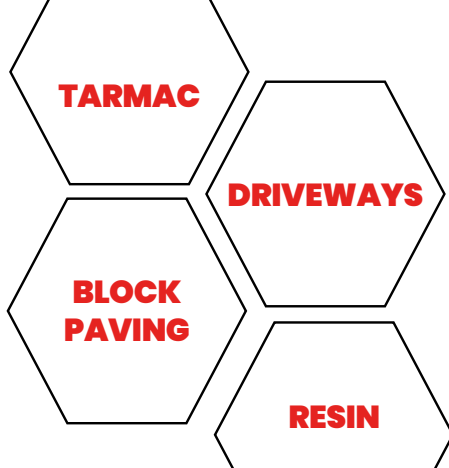
- 1. SET BOUNDARIES:** Make sure that you establish clear boundaries between your work and personal life by defining specific working hours and sticking to them.
- 2. FOCUS ON TIME MANAGEMENT:** Sometimes people are guilty of working hard rather than smart, which can mean they have to spend longer at the office and less time at home. Instead, prioritise the most important tasks both at home and at work.
- 3. BE FLEXIBLE:** At times, you will need to have to adjust your work schedule to accommodate unforeseen personal circumstances or emergencies, so don't feel guilty about doing this.



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How to grow SNOWDROPS

Snowdrops are one of the first signs of spring and can make a wonderful addition to any garden. Instantly recognisable by their small, white, bell-shaped flowers, snowdrops are easy to grow and will come back year after year.

WHERE TO PLANT SNOWDROPS

Snowdrops thrive in moist but well-drained soil and in partial shade. If you plant snowdrops in soil that is too dry, you risk the bulbs drying out and failing to flower. Choose to grow snowdrops beneath deciduous shrubs or along the front of borders where herbaceous plants can provide ground cover when these flowers are dormant. They also do well planted in grass, in spring border displays and in rock gardens.

HOW TO PLANT SNOWDROPS

Dry snowdrop bulbs can be planted in autumn, but these are often hard to establish. Instead, opt to plant snowdrops in the green in January or February. Simply lift snowdrop plants just after flowering and before the foliage has turned yellow, and replant somewhere else. You can buy snowdrops in the green from your local garden centre or online.

HOW TO CARE FOR SNOWDROPS

Once snowdrops are established, they require no maintenance. Allow the foliage to die back naturally as this will help to ensure that the nutrients from the leaves are returned to the bulbs. Once every two years, divide any established clumps to avoid overcrowding.

HOW TO PROPAGATE SNOWDROPS

To propagate snowdrops, lift and divide established clumps after flowering in either March or April. Using a fork, carefully lift the bulb with the roots intact and the foliage still in place. Replant in the garden immediately and water well. The foliage may appear a little sorry, but it should look healthy by next winter.

TOP SNOWDROP VARIETIES:

Galanthus nivalis | Galanthus elwesii | Galanthus woronowii | Galanthus Armine | Galanthus Cordelia.



WILD WEAR

THE ESSENTIAL WARDROBE FOR THE DEVOTED GARDENER

While gardening is a careful curation of your outdoor space, it's important not to forget the importance of maintaining your own green-fingered style.

TROUSERS

A pair of dedicated garden workwear trousers or dungarees will suit you much better than a simple pair of old jeans.

If you've gardened before, you'll know the perils of pinching waistbands, seams riding up, back-of-the-knee fatigue and general ripping or snagging; so investing in a pair of trousers that is waterproof, strong, flexible and with ample pockets on the front and sides, plus has all-essential knee pads, is a great idea.

HEADWEAR

Hats are a must when the sun comes out, and will also keep you warm when temperatures drop. Most gardeners will showcase a variety of headwear – from a nice woolly beanie hat in winter to a brimmed hat for summertime. Mix it up and keep your head in a good place.

FOOTWEAR

Footwear should be comfortable, as long hours on location can bring about foot pain and sores. From classic Crocs to garden sandals, sturdy boots to full-length wellies, your footwear will most likely match weather conditions.

Don't forget to invest in a few good pairs of socks too – in the winter, they will excel at keeping the cold out, while breathable varieties for the summer will minimise the threat of fungal infections.

GLOVES

While most gardeners are more than happy to get their hands dirty, gloves are essential for protecting your skin from sharp matter, such as rocks, stones and thorns. Switch between thicker and lighter varieties for seasonal versatility.

JACKET

Finally, as the weather changes, keep the cold out if you're committing long hours to the soil with a jacket that's breathable, a hood for sudden inclement weather, and plenty of pockets for essentials.




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Signs you are **ADDICTED** to **CAFFEINE**

Do you love an energy drink? Can't get out of bed without your morning cup of coffee? If the answer is yes, then you are far from alone. It is suspected that as many as three out of four regular caffeine consumers are addicted to the substance.

1 You get headaches if you miss your caffeine fix: Caffeine is a vasoconstrictor, which means it makes the blood vessels narrower and restricts blood flow. This in turn relieves headaches, so if you miss your morning fix, you may develop a pounding head as a result.

2 You're bad-tempered before you get your first dose: Not a morning person? This could be because you are too reliant on caffeine. Caffeine stimulates the dopamine receptors in the brain, which makes you feel good. Therefore, if you don't get your morning hit, you are much more likely to experience a bad mood.

3 You struggle to concentrate without being caffeinated: Caffeine is known for helping you feel more alert and focused. However, if you are used to getting that boost every day, you may struggle to concentrate without the help of this popular stimulant.

4 You've built up a tolerance: Do you feel like you need more and more caffeine to enjoy the same effects? This is likely because your body has started to become immune to the effects of this substance.

5 You feel constantly on edge: Do you often get the jitters? High doses of caffeine can cause you to feel jumpy and can even cause anxiety and panic attacks.

How to reduce your caffeine intake:

- ☛ Keep a caffeine diary
- ☛ Switch to herbal teas
- ☛ Check labels for other sources of caffeine, such as fizzy drinks and chocolate
- ☛ Gradually cut down your daily intake rather than going cold turkey.



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VEGGIE vision



BEAUTY

Most people know that fruits and vegetables are good for your complexion when eaten regularly, but not everyone knows that they can also be applied to the skin and hair to achieve amazing results. Here are four of our favourite veggie-based beauty treatments.

PUMPKIN FOOT MASK – Best for dry, cracked heels

You will need: ½ cup of pumpkin purée | 1 whole egg | 1 tsp honey

How to apply: Combine all of the above ingredients in a bowl | Massage into the feet and ankles | Cover with cling film or put on a pair of old socks | Leave for 15 minutes and then rinse with warm water

BUTTERNUT SQUASH HAIR MASK – Best for dull or dry hair

You will need: ½ large butternut squash | 3 tbsp honey | ¼ cup of plain yogurt

How to make: Peel and cook the squash until soft enough to remove the inner contents | Mash the squash | Combine with the honey and yogurt | Apply the mixture to damp hair and put on a plastic shower cap | Leave on for 20 minutes and then rinse with warm water

BETROOT FACE MASK – Best for ageing skin

You will need: 2 tsp beetroot juice | 1 tsp yogurt | 1 tsp lime juice | 2 tsp gram flour

How to make: Mix the beetroot juice with the flour and then add the yogurt and lime juice | Mix until you have a smooth paste | Spread the mixture evenly over the face and leave for 15 minutes | Rinse off with warm water | Pat your face dry

POTATO CLEANSER – Best for acne-prone skin

You will need: 1 potato | 1 cucumber | 1 tsp baking soda | 1 tsp water

How to apply: Peel and chop the potato and the cucumber | Blend in a food processor or blender for 20 seconds | Add the water and baking soda | Apply to the face daily to cleanse and remove make-up, dirt and impurities.



TRAVEL

The GLOBAL ZOO

Animals unique to one place and how to see them

The ability of animals to explore the world is only bettered by the wanderlust of humans, yet there is still a clutch of species who have never ventured from their home continents and, in some cases, countries. While the Galápagos Islands typically take credit for the planet's most unique array of life, here are some others worth celebrating.

GELADA, ETHIOPIA

A monkey that looks like it's wearing a tuxedo, the gelada is native to the highlands of Ethiopia and has rarely strayed. While other monkey species are known for swinging from trees with reckless abandon, these are happiest on the desert floor, eating grass, seeds, roots and insects.

INACCESSIBLE ISLAND RAIL, INACCESSIBLE ISLAND

Yes, there is a place called Inaccessible Island – it's in the South Atlantic – and it requires little description. To describe the world's smallest flightless bird (which also takes the 'Inaccessible' name) is undoubtedly to make a straightforward link

to how this little creature has never made it to the mainland.

THORNY DEVIL, AUSTRALIA

This lizard looks like something out of a Marvel comic, albeit it's never been exported any further than the Aussie outback. It can drink water through its skin, which is just as well, as there is precious little of the stuff about in the summer heat of the Southern Hemisphere.

TEXAS BLIND SALAMANDER, USA

Without eyes or skin colour, this peculiar amphibian detects prey by virtue of vibrations around it. It has never made it out of US waters and you're highly unlikely to ever see one in the flesh, since it lives deep underwater in cave networks.

MANX CAT, ISLE OF MAN

Lastly, there's the famous Manx cat. Although these have been brought across to the mainland, they stand apart from other cat species owing to a rare genetic mutation that means they are born with no tails.



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Incy wincy spider

Halloween provides the perfect opportunity for you to get crafty with your kids, and this spooky spiderweb doesn't disappoint. Suitable for little ones and older children alike, discover how to make your very own salt and glue spiderweb craft below.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

- Black paper or card | A pencil | A ruler | PVC or Elmer's glue | Table salt | Watercolour paints | A soft brush

HOW TO MAKE:

1 Draw your spiderweb design: Your child can do this by hand themselves, depending on their age and ability, using a pencil or ruler, or you can help them with this step. Alternatively, you could print out a spiderweb template to use.

2 Trace the shape with glue: The next step is to trace glue along each line of your spiderweb. Again, young children may need help with this if they want to achieve a good spiderweb shape. To make the glue lines as smooth as possible, do not allow the tip of the glue bottle to touch the paper but instead, hover slightly above it.

3 Cover the spiderweb with salt: Fill a ramekin or small bowl with table salt and then use two fingers to pinch the salt and sprinkle it over the glue. Make sure that you cover each line and curve with enough salt. Leave the glue to fully dry, ideally overnight, before moving on to the next step.

4 Paint your spiderweb: Now comes the really exciting part: adding colour to your spiderweb. Watercolour paints are perfect for this as they spread well on dried glue and salt. Using a soft brush, plenty of water and your chosen watercolours, add a drop or two of colour to a salt line. Use a light touch and do not scrub as this may dissolve your spiderweb.

MAKE A HANGING SPIDERWEB

Take your craft to the next level by applying the glue and the paint, minus the salt, to a thin plastic sheet, gently peel it off and then fix it to your preferred surface using sticky glue dots or hang around the room with string. Make sure you allow the glue to fully dry before peeling.



AUTUMN COCKTAILS

Just because summer now seems like a distant memory, doesn't mean that you can't still enjoy a delicious cocktail or two after work or when the kids are tucked up in bed. Why not have a go at making one of these recipes below, and warm your cockles on a chilly night?

PUMPKIN WHITE RUSSIAN

You will need: 25ml pumpkin spice Kahlua | 50ml vodka | 25ml double cream
How to make: Pour the ingredients into a glass over ice | Stir lightly and serve.

CARAMEL APPLE MULE

You will need: 50ml vodka | 15ml caramel | 30ml apple cider vinegar | Ginger beer to top | 1 apple | 1 cinnamon stick
How to make: Shake the vodka, caramel and apple cider vinegar with ice | Strain into a mule mug over ice | Top with ginger beer | Garnish with an apple fan and cinnamon stick.

SLOE GIN FIZZ

You will need: 50ml sloe gin | 25ml lemon juice | 2 tsp sugar syrup | Sparkling water | Lemon slice | Fresh or frozen blackberry
How to make: Pour the sloe gin, lemon juice and sugar syrup into a cocktail shaker and top with ice | Shake well | Strain into a tall glass with more ice | Top with sparkling water and stir gently | Garnish with a lemon slice and a blackberry.

CAMPFIRE SLING

You will need: 50ml rye whisky | 7ml maple syrup | 3 dashes of chocolate bitters | Orange peel twist
How to make: Add all the ingredients to an old-fashioned glass with one piece of ice | Stir thoroughly | Scorch a piece of orange peel over the glass to release the oils.

MULLED APPLE JUICE

You will need: 1 litre apple juice | 1 cinnamon stick | 3 cloves | Orange slices | Sugar or honey to taste
How to make: Simmer the apple juice with the orange peel, cinnamon and cloves for 5-10 minutes | Sweeten with sugar or honey | Serve with some orange slices and a cinnamon stick.



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HOW TO BUILD YOUR own soup

Soup is cheap, filling and the perfect antidote to the cold weather. Sadly, supermarket offerings can be both costly and underwhelming. So we thought we'd share with you our foolproof method for prepping the perfect soup every time.

1. **CHOOSE A FAT:** Butter | Olive oil | Palm oil | Sunflower oil
2. **SELECT A BASE LIQUID (1 OR 2):** Beef/chicken stock | Vegetable stock | Cream | Tomato purée
3. **PICK A PROTEIN:** Chicken | Fish | Tofu | Lentils | Beans
4. **DECIDE ON A GRAIN:** Rice | Noodles | Pasta | Barley
5. **CHOOSE YOUR VEGGIES (UP TO 3):** Carrots | Onion | Peppers | Sweet potatoes | Parsnips | Spinach | Broccoli | Mushrooms
6. **ADD SOME FLAVOUR:** Garlic salt | Cayenne pepper | Cumin | Basil | Thyme | Chilli powder

How to make your soup

- STEP 1:** Heat your fat and sauté your aromatic veggies, such as onion and garlic, for 3-5 minutes.
- STEP 2:** Add your chosen protein and cook until browned or softened.
- STEP 3:** Add any other vegetables and allow them to soften for 5-10 minutes.
- STEP 4:** Pour in your base (unless using a cream base; if so save this until step 6), your grain and your selected spices and mix well.
- STEP 5:** Bring to the boil, reduce the heat and allow to simmer for around an hour.
- STEP 6:** Add cream if you are making a cream-based soup.
- STEP 7:** Allow to cool, and blend if you want a fully puréed soup.
- STEP 8:** Garnish with croutons, cheese or a herb-infused oil.

Freezing your soup

You can freeze your soup, ideally on the same day you make it, in an airtight container or freezer bag for 2-3 months. Most soups freeze well, with the exception of cream- or milk-based soups, which tend to separate. Add any fresh herbs or starchy elements such as rice or pasta once thawed and reheated, not before freezing, for optimum results.



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Get BALANCED!

Did you know that National Work/Life Balance Week takes place this month,

with the aim of generating awareness of the importance of a healthy balance between your professional and personal life?

If you struggle to switch off after leaving work or you find the lines between your work and home life have blurred, then we are here to help you.

Why is a good work/life balance important?

A good work/life balance involves finding a harmonious relationship between your home life and your working life. This is vital

What is an unhealthy work/life balance?

The most common signs of an unhealthy work/life balance are:

- > Regularly working long hours, including evenings, weekends and holidays
- > Neglecting your personal/family life owing to excessive work demands
- > Experiencing burnout, which causes physical, emotional and mental exhaustion
- > A lack of time for self-care, including sleep and leisure activities
- > Strained relationships owing to work commitments

How to achieve the right balance between work and home life

1. SET BOUNDARIES: Make sure that you establish clear boundaries between your work and personal life by defining specific working hours and sticking to them.

2. FOCUS ON TIME MANAGEMENT: Sometimes people are guilty of working hard rather than smart, which can mean they have to spend longer at the office and less time at home. Instead, prioritise the most important tasks both at home and at work.

3. BE FLEXIBLE: At times, you will need to have to adjust your work schedule to accommodate unforeseen personal circumstances or emergencies, so don't feel guilty about doing this.



WORK CAREER FAMILY LIFE



GOOD CARS

for ULEZ 2023 EXPANSION



Regardless of your thoughts on the controversial expansion of London's Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ), there is a wide selection of cars out there ready to help you bypass this expensive charge.

The extension of ULEZ to encompass the whole of Greater London became operational at the end of August, and not without considerable objection.

Now, petrol vehicles must meet Euro 4 standards, with even tighter Euro 6 requirements for their diesel cousins.

Entering the ULEZ with a non-conforming vehicle invites a daily charge of £12.50, so Mayor of London Sadiq Khan's £2,000 grant for Greater London residents looking to change to a ULEZ-compliant motor is appealing, as are some of the cars that fit the criteria.

For instance, for those desiring a premium touch, the Mercedes-Benz A-Class hatchback is a worthy contender, boasting advanced technology and a luxurious interior. Models from 2013 hover around the £10,000 mark.

The widely admired Ford Focus has numerous ULEZ-compliant variants. One with fewer than 50,000 miles could be yours for less than £6,000.

Or what about the iconic Mazda MX-5? The Japanese brand is revered for superb driving experience and affordability. However, look out for some older versions, as these may not meet ULEZ requirements.

Lastly, the VW Polo, particularly the 1.2 TDI BlueMotion edition of the Mk5, is famously fuel-efficient, boasting up to 91.1mpg on motorways and 67.3mpg in urban settings. With no emission zone charges and some high-mileage models available at under £4,000, it's a sound option.

While virtually all petrol cars sold after 2005 are ULEZ compliant – along with petrol vans after 2006 and motorbikes registered after July 2007 – it ultimately pays to check your vehicle, as well as the status of a potential new one, online at tfl.gov.uk/modes/driving/check-your-vehicle

Photo credit: mercedes-benz.co.uk, ford.co.uk, mazda.co.uk, volkswagen.co.uk

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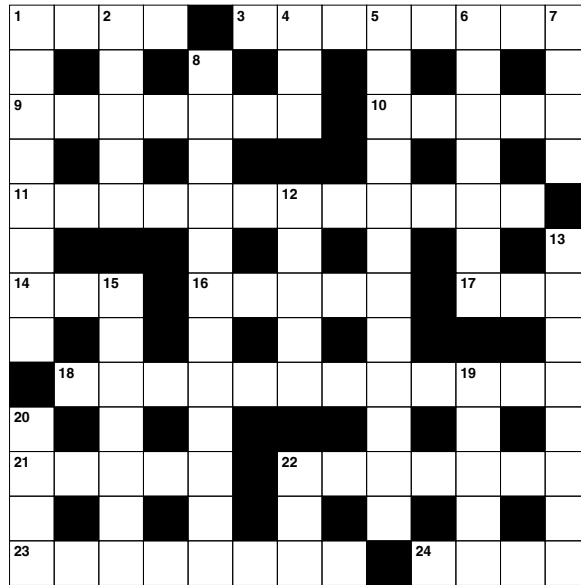
Answers: see end of The VISION Listings

ACROSS

- 1. Light blast of wind (4)
- 3. Fast runner (8)
- 9. Not tense (7)
- 10. Written agreements (5)
- 11. Opposite of amateur (12)
- 14. Decay (3)
- 16. Lacking meaning (5)
- 17. Wonder (3)
- 18. Incessantly (12)
- 21. Concerning (5)
- 22. Mound made by insects (7)
- 23. Shows (8)
- 24. Snake-like fish (pl.) (4)

DOWN

- 1. Sweat (8)
- 2. Leaf of parchment (5)
- 4. Collection of many sheets of paper (3)
- 5. Enhancements (12)
- 6. Musical composition (7)
- 7. Repose (4)
- 8. Based on untested ideas (12)
- 12. Set out (5)



- 13. Uses again (8)
- 15. Slight earthquakes (7)
- 19. Part of a church tower (5)
- 20. Edible fat (4)
- 22. Nay (anag) (3)

DID YOU KNOW?

- ▶ A hummingbird beats its wings up to 70 times per second.
- ▶ Hummingbirds are the only birds that can fly backwards.
- ▶ There are reportedly more than 350 known species of hummingbird, from the giant hummingbird weighing around 20g, to the bee hummingbird which measures less than three inches.
- ▶ Hummingbirds use their long, thin tongues like straws to drink nectar from flowers.
- ▶ Rufous hummingbirds migrate 4,000 miles from Mexico to Alaska every spring.
- ▶ Female hummingbirds use spider silk to weave together twigs and leaves for their nests.
- ▶ Hummingbirds have no sense of smell.

SUDOKU

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	2		5		1		
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			9				5

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