



INTRODUCING Olinguito, a tiny new carnivore

The first carnivore to be discovered in the Western Hemisphere in 35 years rarely leaves its home in the treetops of Andean cloud forests. Smithsonian researchers stumbled upon the olinguito, *Bassaricyon neblina*, while riffling through museum specimens and old field notes in search of information about other members of the *Bassaricyon* genus—commonly known as olingos. A team then tracked down the elusive species along the slopes of the Western Andes in Ecuador. Described August 15 in *ZooKeys*, the olinguito weighs just two pounds and resides 5,000 to 9,000 feet above sea level, making the orange-and-brown animal the smallest and highest-venturing olingo. Misidentified until now, olinguito specimens have existed in museums for 100 years, and at least one olinguito lived in several U.S. zoos during the 1960s and 1970s. —Jessica Shugart

SAY WHAT?

Brûlé \BR00-lay\ n.

A vegetation-free zone that forms around a tree sharing a symbiotic relationship with certain species of truffle. Brûlés get their name from the burnt appearance of the ground that develops as the truffle wages biochemical warfare against plants and other fungi growing near the tree. The compounds released by the truffle may even have an impact on bacteria lurking in the soil. An international team of scientists analyzing the dirt around four French brûlés produced by the black truffle *Tuber melanosporum* (left) found different microbial communities living inside and outside the dead zone. While some types of bacteria may thrive on compounds produced by the truffle, others retreat, the team suggests April 30 in *PLOS ONE*. —Allison Bohac



Need iPad rights for truffles



50 YEARS AGO August 24, 1963

FDA Says Enovid 'Safe'— the birth control pill Enovid is safe enough to stay on the market, but its use by women over 35 is risky, the Food and Drug Administration reported in Washington, D.C.... Enovid, first oral contraceptive approved by the FDA for sale in the U.S., came again to FDA's notice through reports that women taking the pills had developed serious or fatal blood clots.... After a thorough review of the available evidence on Enovid and after conducting studies and surveys of their own, the committee found that women under 35 taking Enovid face no greater risk of death from blood-clotting than non-pregnant women in the general population, but that Enovid users ages 35-44 face a greater risk of death from the thromboembolism than non-users. Enovid is currently recommended for short term use only (two to four years), and primarily in cases where pregnancy is not advised.

UPDATE: The FDA approved Enovid as birth control in 1960, and it was first sold containing 0.15 milligrams of estrogen and nearly 10 milligrams of progesterone. Further research confirmed a link between the pill and blood clots, and hormone doses were lowered to reduce that risk. Today's pills typically contain 50 micrograms or less of estrogen and 1 milligram or less of progesterone.



FOR DAILY USE Man's empathetic best friend

Here's something for dog owners to try: Offer a big yawn and see if Fido yawns back. In humans, contagious yawning activates neural circuits involved in social skills and empathy. Domestic dogs, known for their ability to pick up on human social cues, seem to pick up on human yawns as well. Researchers at the University of Tokyo found that dogs often yawn after a human yawns. What's more, dogs were more likely to yawn in response to their owner's yawn than to a stranger's. This bias toward familiar people suggests that a rudimentary form of empathy may be at work in dog brains, the researchers conclude August 7 in *PLOS ONE*. —Allison Bohac

SCIENCE SURFING

Be a virtual veterinarian

Who didn't have "veterinarian" in their list of childhood fantasy jobs? In [AVMA Animal Hospital](#), a new app by the American Veterinary Medical Association, users step into the shoes of a first-year veterinarian to diagnose and treat little friends. Developed for users as young as 4, the game introduces would-be vets to the basics of veterinary medicine by having players match symptoms to common pet illnesses such as mange or infections and then recommend the appropriate treatment. Perfect for kids aspiring to be vets or adults who missed their true calling, the app can be downloaded free through Apple's AppStore, Google Play, and AVMA's website. —Aaron Helmbrecht

