

Bon Voyage, Boo Boo

After a fun weekend, I just found out that one of my very good friends is leaving to make a new home for herself Down Under.

It has been some time since I have seen Britt but I do think about her often. We met when she was in junior high and sat from time to time with my cousin. In high school, she worked at the grocery store and I came home on the weekend from school to work and we often were scheduled the same shift.

"Boo Boo" spent her senior year in Australia as an exchange student something she wanted to do since she was in elementary school but took her that long to make her dream a reality... ironically, she was among the first to welcome in the millennium. While she was gone for the year, we wrote back and forth and I got to hear about her cool experiences... kangaroo hunting, going to the beach in January, and all the rest.

She is also a relative. My uncle and her mother married several years ago. Last summer, Britt returned to Australia and Lu went along for the ride. Shortly after her return (or even before), Boo Boo decided that she wanted to move there!

WOW! Talk about shooting for the stars and going after your dream! Some others could learn from that example.

She is also a very staunch supporter of your truly! One who saw me as Rooster as well as some beyond. Teaching and coaching at a school in a city school a hour or so away kind of makes it difficult to make it to a lot of shows when you are in as many as you can.

Godspeed my friend. You will be missed!

A Living Breathing Hoax

A while ago, I decided to write a series within my blog about animals, my favorite things. I just can't find enough time to learn about animals, and I love sharing knowledge about their incredible attributes. Here is chapter two in my Interesting Animals series. To read chapter one about a scaly mammal called the pangolin, [click here](#).

For chapter two, I chose to focus on the duck-billed platypus; an animal who is so strange looking that people thought it to be a hoax when it was first discovered in 1798.

The platypus is one of 3-5 species (depending on the source – animal knowledge is very differential) of monotremes or egg-laying mammals. I know, at one point we were all taught that one of the characteristics of mammals is that they give birth to live young, but that is not the case. Monotremes lay eggs, and the platypus join echidnas (spiny anteaters) in this animal order. The platypus is found in Australia – seems like they have all the cool animals, doesn't it? I just wish they weren't so stingy with their animals. I know they stopped loaning out the Tasmanian Devil years ago, and now that the last one died (it resided in Fort Wayne Indiana until its death – I could kick myself for not making the less than hour trip over there to see it while it was alive), the only place to see them is in Australia. The same goes for the platypus. I've visited many zoos, and I've never seen a live platypus. A quick check on the internet reveals that they are only found in Australian zoos.

But anyway, aside from being an aquatic (with water-repellent fur), egg-laying mammal, another cool thing about the platypus is that the males are actually poisonous. Both genders have a spur on their left foot, but the males' spur produces enough venom to really hurt a human being. Here is a picture of the duck-billed platypus – note the soft, leathery duck-bill which

is actually used by the animal to sense the electric fields caused by its moving prey (feeds on shrimp, fish eggs, small fish, and aquatic invertebrates found in streams and lakes).



Easy to see how this duck-billed, beaver-tailed, otter-footed, egg-laying mammal was once thought to be an elaborate man-made fraud, huh?

These Are A Few Of My Favorite Things...

animals. Animals are my favorite things. If I'm bored – yeah, right, with 4 kids, when does that happen? Ok, if I

were ever bored, my activity of choice would be to visit a zoo, wildlife park, pet store, or anyplace I could see animals. Without leaving the house, I can also research animals on the internet. One of my favorite animal sites is the [University of Michigan's Animal Diversity Web](#). It's amazing how much they've changed the taxonomy (classification of animals) from when I first started doing research on the subject not more than 10 years ago, but it's true – this field is one that's ever-changing.

Every now and then, I think I'll choose an animal to share on my blog. Today's animal is the pangolin. What is a pangolin, you ask? Well, it's a mammal, and it's not a marsupial, a group which contains some of the lesser known species. See, in the classification of mammals, you begin by separating them into placental mammals (live birth) and marsupials (young live in the mother's pouch – all but one type live in Australia). Of course, there is also a third category – egg-laying mammals, but we won't go there because I don't want to lose people's interest by getting too complicated.

So anyway, the pangolin is a placental mammal, yet it's scaly. The scales are actually made of a hair-like material, thereby preserving its status as mammal. Check this out – does this thing look prehistoric or what?



But they're not prehistoric; they still exist today – I wonder how come I've never seen one at a zoo? I guess it's because some animals do better in captivity than others, and I applaud

the zoo community for recognizing this.

Interesting tidbits about pangolins, as stated on the Animal Diversity Web:

Pangolins are a small group (seven living species placed in one genus and one family, Manidae) of mammals that feed mostly on ants. They are found in the tropical regions of Africa and Asia. Pangolins are conspicuous and remarkable because their backs are covered with large, overlapping scales made up of agglutinated hairs. But they are strange in other ways as well. Their tongue is extraordinarily long and muscular, arising from the pelvis and the last pair of ribs deep in the animal's chest. As a result, the tongue and associated muscles are longer than the animal's head and body, allowing the tongue to be extruded to an astonishing degree. Pangolins lack teeth. Instead, the the pyloric part of their stomach is thickened and muscular, with odd keratinous spines projecting into its interior. It usually contains pebbles and seems to be used for "chewing" in much the same way as a bird's gizzard. Pangolins have the ability to close their ears and nostrils as well as eyes, presumably to keep ants out.

In short, pangolins are fascinating animals that are closer to you and me on the taxonomy tree than most people would guess – they are mammals, after all. Yet they are a mammal that most people have not heard of, and surprisingly, there are more than a few mammalian species that have this in common – I will try to share little known facts about little known mammals in my blog.

And oh yeah, since there was a complaint in the comments of another tangents.org blog about this – the song I quoted in my title is "My Favorite Things" from The Sound of Music.

Coollest Coaster

I got an email today called "What do you remember?" – it's a list of tv shows that aren't on anymore. You add your name and a show you used to watch to the list and send it on. It made me think of a kids' show I used to love called, "The Roller Coaster Gang". I wasn't totally positive that was the name of the show, however, so I did a google search – and that's how I found what sounds like the coolest roller coaster ever!

It's called The Scooby-Doo Spooky Coaster, but unfortunately for me, it's on the other side of the world at the Warner Bros. Movie World theme park in Australia. It's a haunted house / roller coaster combined, and here is the press release about it that so intrigued me:

November 30, 2002

Guests will be treated to a hair-raising journey complete with laser lighting and sound effects, animatronics and a kaleidoscope of colour, depth, height and trickery of dimension this holiday season thanks to the Scooby-Doo Spooky Coaster Ride.

A \$13 million indoor rollercoaster ride inspired by the first feature film shot at Warner Roadshow Movie World Studios on the Gold Coast starring Sarah Michelle Gellar, Freddie Prinze Jr., Matthew Lillard, Linda Cardellini and Rowan Atkinson, the Scooby-Doo Spooky Coaster Ride is not a ride for the faint hearted.

Featuring carefully replicated coaster cars from Scooby-Doo the film, guests enter the creepy dimly lit courtyard and move into the heart of Spooky Castle, where ghouls, gargoyles and the odd talking suit of armour may appear!

Housed in a 25 metre high building, the Scooby-Doo Spooky Coaster Ride features two distinctive experience zones,

thrilling guests with different aspects of laser lighting.

While the laser lighting embraces and creates the entire illusion, maintaining it throughout the experience and simultaneously performing for multiple audiences moving through three dimensional space at high speed, the ride continuously alters direction, velocity, elevation and trajectories.

Warner Village Theme Park Chief Executive John Menzies explains that Scooby-Doo Spooky Coaster is a world first and is a unique combination of two different types of entertainment experiences.

"Scooby-Doo Spooky Coaster is completely innovative, no other ride in the world can be compared to this combination of experiences – the classic haunted house utilising the latest technological advances and lighting and sound effects and the adrenalin pumping thrills of an indoor rollercoaster," said Chief Executive John Menzies.

The first experience zone further develops the Spooky Castle theme into a ghost train ride featuring the best in traditional movie inspired theming and amusing animatronics.

Just as guests begin to think their journey is nearing conclusion, they find themselves drawn up over 17 metres into the castle's creepy tower. This unsettling experience heralds their reversed entry into the ride's second zone as guests are then pushed into a darkened void.

Disoriented in the dark, riders are now subject to the will and influence of the ghouls and gargoyles that Scooby-Doo warned of earlier.

Then, it's time to be afraid....be kind of afraid!

Perched precariously on an elevated turntable the car is turned 180 degrees to face the fate awaiting its anxious

passengers.

Transfixed by an apparently infinite tunnel of emerald green laser light the riders are lurched forward into the shimmering abyss as the Scooby-Doo Spooky Coaster Ride propels riders through infinite voids, passing ghost-like through shimmering walls, floors and ceilings of light and speeding into tunnels of green swirling mist.

Finally, plunging over seven meters on the adrenalin-pumping journey, guests are hurtled towards a grotesque creature and the 'ring of life'.

The Scooby-Doo Spooky Coaster Ride with its ever-changing web of penetrating green laser beams, bumps, breathtaking drops and special effects thrills and excites every rider.

The multi-million dollar blockbuster, Scooby-Doo, was filmed at Warner Roadshow Movie World Studios on the Gold Coast in 2000/2001 and is the highest budget production ever filmed in Queensland to date.

Join Scooby-Doo and the Mystery Gang for the scariest, spookiest, spine-tingling rollercoaster ever created – Scooby-Doo Spooky Coaster Ride.

Visit Warner Bros. Movie World on Australia's Gold Coast – where movie magic happens everyday!

I've never heard of Warner Bros. Movie World, but it sounds pretty neat. Too bad I didn't make it over there a few years ago – I also found out they used to have a Marvin the Martian 3-D movie, but they replaced it with Shrek 4D. That stinks; I would have liked to see that; I'm a big fan of Marvin the Martian. Oh well, hopefully by the time I get to Australia they'll still have the Scooby-Doo coaster. If only we could increase the budget we have for the haunted attraction we're building by a few million so we could add a coaster...

And I didn't end up using "The Roller Coaster Gang" as my show to put on the list. By the time I was done being distracted with looking up Australian thrill rides, I thought of another show I put instead – one whose title I was sure about. Belle and Sebastian was a Nickodeon cartoon that was about an orphaned boy named Sebastian and his big white dog, Belle. Each episode would follow the pair (along with a small dog named Poochie who would fit into Sebastian's pocket) as they ventured through the mountains looking for Sebastian's mother. People would always mistake Belle for a ferocious dog or sometimes even some kind of snow monster. I loved that show – wonder if Sebastian ever found his mother?

Poor "Little" Colin

When I saw the news story the other day about an orphaned baby humpback whale, I was tempted to put it in my blog, but I didn't because I had a feeling it wouldn't end well. I'm sorry to say that I was right, and I'm only writing about it now because the saga is over.

There was a baby humpback whale off the coast of Australia who was trying to suckle from yachts; they estimated him to be about 1 or 2 months old. For some reason, he had been abandoned by his mother, even though he was obviously still nursing. They tried to help him; they tried leading him out to sea, integrating him into another pod of whales, and they speculated about what to feed him. But because he was still nursing, they didn't know how to take care of a 12 foot orphaned whale. Throughout his plight, Australians following the story grew attached to the "little" guy, and they affectionately named him Colin. They watched as Colin grew weak with hunger as the days went by until sadly, the decision

was made to euthanize him. Suddenly, he was nowhere to be found... but I guess it was just the darkness cloaking him because they did find him the next day, and they pulled him ashore and administered a lethal injection.

As an animal lover, this story was very sad for me to read, but mostly, I just don't get it. Why did humans have to take it upon themselves to euthanize the whale? Why couldn't they have at least *tried* to feed him? It's not that I think any animal should suffer, but this was nature... it wasn't humans who injured the baby whale, so why not let nature continue taking its course and just leave him alone? Who knows, maybe he would have found a pod of whales to nurse him back to health before it was too late. But no, the humans just had to intervene – they had to drag a baby whale out of the water, his natural habitat, and kill him. They didn't want him to suffer starving to death in the ocean, but what about the terror he felt when he was captured and dragged out of the water? And let's not even talk about how much all this costs. Seems like they could have fed a few starving people, put a roof over someone's head for a few nights, or provided medical care to the sick if they had extra money laying around to execute a whale. After all, every little bit helps, right? But what's done is done; the saga of Colin the whale is over. Maybe humans will eventually realize that their constant meddling with nature sometimes brings more harm than good.

Hello to the people in the

background

You know who you are. The people who pop in look and never say Hi. In other words lurkers. Hello and welcome. Reason I mentioned this is I was looking at the new back end, and again hit the site statistics area. I don't go there much, because I thought I knew who was visiting. I was wrong.

There are people from the US, Canada, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Australia, and others. People using PC's or Macs or other. People using IE, Firefox, or other. Seems like a lot of Others here, but they only make up a small percentage.

It is also interesting to see what other people find interesting here. Not always what I consider the most interesting, but it was at one time, because I wrote it.

So if you like, leave a comment. Unless you're on the already approved list (made one comment), your post will be moderated. If you don't want anyone else to see your hello, let me know. It will be our little secret.

Just having fun with all of you. For those who do post comments, thanks. For those that don't, I hope you found something interesting in my Random Thoughts. This is probably as random as it gets.

Oh yes, the main page is the most popular by far, but the post visited the most right now list on the bottom right of the page.

Hello world...

Put A Dime In the Jukebox

It may cost more nowadays to play a song on a jukebox (think the last time I played one it cost a quarter). Which brings me to another trend in musical theatre of the past few years: the jukebox musical. These are shows which include songs from artists from other genres: country, pop, rock and roll, etc. Music from artists such as Elvis Presley, Billy Joel, Patsy Cline, Frankie Valli and the 4 Seasons, the Beach Boys, and Johnny Cash have each had their music be the focal point of stage shows. [*Smokey Joe's Cafe*](#) was a Broadway hit which brought the Mike Stoller and Jerry Lieber songbook to the stage. Songs such as "Jailhouse Rock," "Yakety Yak," "Charlie Brown," and 36 others are the focal point of the musical revue.

An attempt was made to set the tunes of Elvis Presley to an original story. *All Shook Up* probably would have done better if it had something to do with the king of rock and roll or at least staged one of his better movies (many of which are better left forgotten).

Perhaps the best known jukebox musical is *Jersey Boys*. The turbulent history of the 1960s pop music group Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons is told through many of its greatest hits ("Big Girls Don't Cry," "Sherry," "Walk Like A Man," and several others. *Jersey Boys* was the recipient of four 2006 Tony Awards; is still playing strong at the August Wilson Theatre on Broadway; and has touring companies throughout the U.S. and other countries, including Australia.

So.... the next time you are playing a game and the question is asked; "What kind of music makes you want to get up and sing?" be careful. Broadway music may now have more than one meaning.