

Crossword Puzzles Made Me Do It

By Bob Ross

I complete two or three crossword puzzles every day. It is fun, informative and a good set of exercises for my brain-power each day. Every once in a while I will come across a word, be it noun, pronoun, verb, etc., that I am not aware of who it is or its meaning. On a couple of occasions, I have been challenged by a five letter word with the clue being "Roman naturalist." I have always gotten the correct answer, but it was because I had completed all the other words around the five letter Roman naturalist. The answer is: Pliny.

Having no idea who or what Pliny was, I decided to do some research and I discovered many fascinating things. He was known as Pliny the Elder (23-79 AD) and was born into a wealthy family. As a young man, Pliny's father sent him to Rome to study law. Pliny's first career job was in the army. He rose to the rank of cavalry commander, then he semi-retired and returned to Rome. It was during this time that Pliny wrote extensively on subjects, such as grammar, the history of Rome, and military skills and history.

His most famous work was a 37 book encyclopedia of *Historia Naturalis* (Natural History) that served as the basis for scientific knowledge for centuries. Pliny wrote in Latin, using mostly Greek sources and his own observations and vivid imagination. In this work, he describes in detail the physical nature of the world. Volumes were written about geography, anthropology, zoology, botany and the medicinal uses of plants. Much of *Historia Naturalis* importance lies in the way Pliny organized previously random facts and spotted important details which had been ignored by others. The work was a success and was kept in libraries for centuries to come. For many, *Historia Naturalis* formed the basis of their education. It shaped scientific and medical theories until the Middle Ages, over a 1,000 years later. Only in 1492 did his conclusions begin to be challenged and, although most of his observations are now rejected, the work still gives a window into the mind set of Romans in the first century.

Pliny's military friend from the German legions, Vespasian, had become Emperor of the Roman Empire. He convinced Pliny to come out of semi-retirement and become the commander of the fleet in the Bay of Naples to specifically stamp out piracy. While there, Pliny heard of a strange cloud formation and was keen to go see for himself what was happening. The clouds had been caused by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius. Pliny wanted to help the people of Pompeii and his friends to safety. Leaving his nephew, Pliny the Younger, at home to record what was happening, Pliny the Elder sailed across to the base of the volcano to a friend's house. Once there, Pliny the Elder was overcome by the volcano's ash and died of asphyxiation, along with thousands of other people from Pompeii and its surrounding towns.

I found it very interesting that Pliny's work was accepted for many centuries and he was "The Man" when it came to natural history. First by Romans, then by countless numbers of people from many different nations were influenced by Pliny the Elder. The education of these people were based on *Historia Naturalis* for many centuries. As stated earlier, only around 1492 did people begin to question Pliny's theories. Humans were learning the World was not flat. In 1492 there was a group of folks who sailed the ocean blue. Brave explorers began to seek out the truth by traveling in many different directions in the world. It became less and less acceptable to believe the theories of only one man.

Are we guilty of some of the same things today? Do we question things about natural history today? Are we accepting of a present day group of scientists who claim we are not undergoing climate change? Do any of us really understand the significance of a hole in our ozone layer? As master naturalists, do we need to learn more about smog, red tides, the loss of the polar caps, the loss of wildlife habitats, the environmental damage caused by oil and gas drilling, and the loss of many species? Just asking. What do you think?

In closing, I would like to remind everyone that we will be celebrating Memorial Day on the 25th. I ask that you not get caught up in the hype of mattress sales, car sales, or barbecues in the back yard. Respect the day for what it is. Memorial Day has been set aside to remember all our veterans who gave the "ultimate sacrifice" – their lives for our country during wartime.

In Flanders Field by John McCrae, May 1915

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place, and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*

*We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.*

*Take up our quarrel with the foe
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch, be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.*



Poppies in Normandy

www.britishlegion.org.uk/about-us/photo-galleries/poppy-images

Field Notes in Focus



Spiderwort from the gallery of Dorothy Thetford

May 2015

Naturalist News Announcements

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3	4	5	6	7	8 ●	9
10	11 ●	12 ●	13 ●	14 ●	15	16 ●
17	18	19	20	21 ● ●	22 ●	23
24	25 ●	26 ●	27	28	29	30
31						



- 8-12 JMN Basic Training Camp
- 13 Deadline for submissions to NN
- 16 LLELA's Big Sit
- 21 Chapter regular meeting
- 21 Tex. Riparian & Stream Ecosystem Workshop
- 22-26 JMN Creepy Crawley Camp

Science With Attitude: Teacher In-service

This hands-on, interactive 4 day training program is geared towards elementary teachers to learn how to incorporate nature and horticulture into their curriculum to enhance learning opportunities.

August 4-7, 2015



Meeting May 21, 2015 — Dr. George Diggs, Health Implications of Modern World: What Biology Has to do With It

Timeline for Naturalist News distribution:

1. **Submissions deadline:** Wednesday immediately before monthly Board Meeting which falls on the second Thursday of each month;
2. **Proofreading:**
On or before Friday a.m., Naturalist News is finalized and sent to proofreader (Judi Elliott);
3. **Distribution:**
By Friday p.m., as soon as proofreading is completed, Naturalist News is sent to either Donna Wolfe or Mary Morrow for distribution to Chapter; and will be sent out in accordance to either of their schedules.



ALL BIRDERS WELCOME!

LLELA is sponsoring their first ever Big Sit Fundraiser!

Saturday May 16th 6:30 AM 'til Noon

So what is a Big Sit, you ask? Well, if you've ever wanted to bird while kicking back in a comfortable lawn chair and have the cooler within arm's reach, the Big Sit is for you!

Participants, individuals or teams of up to five, will be directed to a 17 foot diameter circle somewhere on LLELA's 2000 acres of natural habitat. Set up shop. Settle into your circle. Relax, sit back and for 5 hours Saturday morning ID each species that comes within sight or earshot of your spot... just think, no slogging along muddy trails tripping on hidden roots and no warbler-neck! All levels of birder, spotting scopes, bird guides etc. welcome. Potty breaks and short jaunts outside the circle to confirm an ID allowed.

Then enjoy lunch at the Cicada Pavilion, hotdogs with all the trimmings, chips, soft drinks and s'mores, provided by the Friends of LLELA. After lunch feel free to wander LLELA'S trails, explore the Elm Fork's riparian corridor, the adjacent bottomland forests or our blackland prairie.

All participants, individuals or teams, are requested to solicit at least one donor or as an alternative make a minimum \$25.00 donation. Donor contributions are on a per species identified basis, i.e. thirty species ID'ed at a buck a bird = \$30.00 donation. All funds raised will be used to refurbish and expand LLELA's nest box programs and to recondition the low blind on Bittern Marsh.

For more information and/or a registration packet, email: llelabigsit@gmail.com

LLELA's Big Sit

Birding's most Sedentary Event



May 16, 2015 6:30 AM 'til Noon

Info at LLELAFriends.org



The videos of the April monthly meeting are now available on our YouTube channel.

You can access them directly by clicking on the links below.

We now have 20 videos in our YouTube library including general meetings, presentations, education and chapter projects.

Elm Fork Chapter General Meeting April 2015

<https://youtu.be/NfBuymHb-Do>

Leopard Frogs Presentation by Scott Keister

<https://youtu.be/EPgZtXrnGOc>



By Frits Ahlefeldt