

Awareness Quiz by Tamarack Song

I never intended this to be a humor column, but several of you decided to have some fun this time around. Maybe it's spring giddiness after being cooped up for a long winter. Whatever the reason, I sure enjoyed the laughs, so I'm going to pass a couple of them on to you.

Along with that, a warning: if you have no sense of humor and a high regard for either dogs or politicians, you may want to skip questions 4 and 5. This is not for your sake, but mine, because I hate hate mail. Ah, read them anyway--my dad always said I needed a kick in the ribs now and then to toughen me up.

1. What is stronger than steel and light as a feather?

Spider silk, according to James Kupper and most of the rest of you. Tim Johnson says it is five times stronger than steel, and Hazel Beeler adds: "Too bad we can't cultivate spiders for their silk, like we do silkworms, but they eat each other!" I like Nick Klemm's answer--*the spirit of a warrior*.

2. Does heartwood or sapwood generally make the best bow?

Eric Slagle and Ron Hughes, along with two thirds of the respondents, say *sapwood*. This is because of its flexibility, states Darcy Cresswell. Some trees have heartwood that yields greater energy and shoots farther than sapwood, points out Tim Johnson. However, as Hazel Beeler states, "heartwood is more fully lignified than sapwood, so would be more brittle." Bowmakers compensate by leaving a layer of the more supple sapwood on the back of the bow to keep it from fracturing.

3. What common Spider has a deadly-poisonous bite but not the mouth parts to bite humans?

Daddy Longlegs, as Adam Frye, Zachary Cogle, Ben Upton, and many others state. However, as Tim Johnson notes, this may be just a myth. To add further doubt to this commonly held belief, there is question as to whether the daddy longlegs is even a legitimate Spider. Is nothing sacred anymore?

4. Who has the largest brain, a Dog or a Wolf?

"Depends how big your Dog is," says Ann Howlett. I didn't catch that loophole, but several of you did. Fortunately, Josh Powell went easy on me and gave me a straight answer--*Wolf*. Tim Johnson adds that "a Wolf brain can be as much as 30% larger than that of a Dog (same-sized animals, of course)." What does this mean? That "Wolves are much smarter than dogs," says Hazel Beeler. She adds: "Researchers studying Wolves have seen them figure out how to escape by watching humans work their cage latches. Dogs in the same study never figured out how to do it." Why is this the case? Hannibal Johnson's explanation: "They breed Dogs for stupidity--they would rather have a pet whose loyalty is automatic than a friend whose friendship they have to earn." (Even though I agree with Hannibal, I think he should get the hate mail, don't you?)

5. Members of what animal family eat their own excrement?

Here we go again--it turns out a lot of you folks have Dogs who clean up after themselves. "I have observed canines do this all my life," says Erick Lashley. Darton Greist's doesn't stop at his own doo-doo--"He would probably prefer Deer droppings to his Dog food if I put him to the test!" Bryan Bramblett and a number of others say its *Hogs*, and Michael Hinton adds that they even sleep in it. (True, but in all fairness, Hogs are quite tidy if given enough space and uncrowded conditions.) According to Tex, *Koala Bears* and *Sloths* also have no need for an

outhouse. Nick Klemm adds another species -- politicians of all affiliations --who, "before eating their own excrement, prefer to bury their constituents in it."

And now for the answer I was after, and which many of you got--*lagomorphs*, which includes Hares and Rabbits. Jeff Gottlieb explains that the scat we usually find is fibrous and dry, where what they eat is dark and moist, which is re-ingested for the same reason a Cow chews her cud: to recycle enzymes and further break down partially digested plant material.

Thanks to all of you who participated--it was big fun! Following are some questions to herald this new season of exploding life.

New Questions:

1. What is the predominant color of the first spring woodland flowers?
2. What are the most common colors of summer flowers?
3. Do male or female birds usually arrive first on their breeding grounds?
4. How many gallons of maple sap does it take to make a gallon of syrup?
5. Who breeds first: toads or frogs?

Send your answers to tamarack@teachingdrum.org or Quiz, c/o Teaching Drum Outdoor School, 7124 Military Rd, Three Lakes, WI 54562).