



**MENSA**  
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# MENSA WORLD JOURNAL



*Beautiful New Zealand where the Asian Mensa Gathering 2019 took place recently.  
More about the event in the August issue...*

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from the editor...



Hello, All,

*Congratulations to Rudi Challupner our new Treasurer! Rudi was elected unopposed and brings us his reflections on his two-year role as Director of Development on p03. The August issue will herald the new Executive Committee, with a message from the new Chairman.*

*Have you written any good books lately? If you have - or know another member who has - send your book for review to Hal Swindall at [mwjreviews@gmail.com](mailto:mwjreviews@gmail.com). You must be a member in good standing, and please include your membership number and national Mensa in all correspondence.*

*On p05, you'll meet member Amanda Milne and her successful Board Games business; John Blinke's Supplementally is on p10, and, Therese's Teasers are on p12 as usual.*

*Happy reading!  
Kate*

## Widespread brain connections enable face recognition

**Connectivity between 'face network,' social, visual, and auditory circuits, predicts memory of a familiar face**

Remembering a familiar face engages a wider network of brain regions than previously thought, according to a study of healthy men and women published in *JNeurosci*.

First described in *JNeurosci* more than 20 years ago, the fusiform face area is a major component of a group of brain regions specialized for face perception known as the face network. The ability to recognize familiar faces varies, from individuals who are "face blind" to those with above-average facial recognition.

Michal Ramot and colleagues at the National Institute of Mental Health found that strength of

connections within the face network were not associated with memory for faces. By taking a broader view of the brain, the researchers demonstrate connectivity between the face network and other circuits involved in memory and processing of social, visual, and auditory information predicted participants' performance on a facial memory task. These findings suggest face recognition involves the integration of facial features with the social and multisensory context in which they appear in everyday life.

ScienceDaily, 29 April 2019



Learn more about this year's International Board of Directors' Meeting from the Chair of Mensa Malaysia, Tan Kee Aun, on p07

Cover photo: courtesy of Amanda Milne

# from the Excomm...

## Director of Development

### *Rudi Challupner*

Rudi Challupner



#### Dear Members of Mensa,

Right now I am in my second year as International Director of Development. The time passes very quickly - too quickly, I would even say!

Development is a very big task, in every respect. It consumes a lot of time, a lot of money – and it needs a lot more travelling. These requirements are limited, as unfortunately, neither the quantity of time nor amount of funds were available to pursue the big steps I was dreaming of.

This means that one Director of Development would need a huge Department of Development, and the funding of it. A bigger involvement of many officers, for example of the Executive Director will be necessary in the next working period, and additionally it will be necessary to focus on creating a pool of motivated volunteers.

I am not a candidate in the International Elections for another period as Director of Development – but if I had been, I would request from the next IBD to allow the realisation of a worldwide Gathering of Development. All these wonderful

members with excellent ideas for developing and spreading the Mensa mind over the globe should come together, get to know each other, co-ordinate their initiatives and lay the basis for a big step forward. It's a good time for it!

But enough of dreaming, let's turn to the focus of development at present. We, and by "we" I mean the International Board of Directors, and many other members supporting development activities have made progress. Steps, some big, some small, were set in Algeria, Andorra, Baltic Countries, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, China, Chinese Taipei, Colombia, Cyprus, Ecuador, Iceland, India, Israel, Jordan, Luxembourg, Mexico, Moldova, Montenegro, Peru, Portugal, Russia, Senegal, Taiwan, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and Uruguay.

Remarkably successful, and always with the energy and the almost unlimited commitment of the local

leaders, we were in Montenegro, which could be recognized as a Full National Mensa soon, and recently in Taiwan, where we officially have an Emerging Mensa now. Many Mensas in South America (Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru) are well on the way to receiving official recognition within the next year.

Another important matter we always should keep in focus: also existing National Mensas should develop. Our theoretical maximum of members is 2% of the population! Everywhere there is a lot to do. Let's make some more steps forward!

Floreat Mensa,

**Rudi**

what's on...



**EMAG IN GHENT  
BELGIUM  
| 07 - 11 AUGUST**

**MENSA SOUTH AFRICA AG (STANFORD)  
SOUTH AFRICA  
| 09 - 11 AUGUST**

**MENSA AT CAMBRIDGE UK  
| 05 - 08 SEPTEMBER**

**MENSA INDIA AGM  
INDIA  
| 08 SEPTEMBER**

**IBD MEETING (KUALA LUMPUR)  
MALAYSIA  
| 10 - 13 OCTOBER**

## Big Black Holes

john blinke

In the 2014 movie, *Interstellar*, a hero enters the gravitational well of a massive black hole to gather data about the manipulation of gravity. It is an extreme portrayal of the way theory and measurements interact in science. You come up with a reasonable hypothesis to explain an observation. It will not be perfect, so you have to compare it with real measurements as the characters in *Interstellar* did. Then, you can use the refined idea to make further predictions that also need to be checked. The process goes on, and in the end you have pretty good information.

Kip Thorne, the real life physicist who worked on the movie effects, thought the producers had a pretty good model of what the hole would look like. But he couldn't be certain at the time the movie was made in. We finally got a picture of a black hole this year, in 2019. It was pretty close to the simulation. But it wasn't easy, because the nearest supermassive black hole is in the dusty, crowded center of our galaxy, 26,000 light years away. The most viewable supermassive hole is M87\* (that's M87 star) which is 53 million light years away but much bigger than our local hole. Both of these objects are incredibly tiny in the sky: according to Astronomer, Pamela Gay, the apparent width of M87\* is only about 2% the size of a single pixel in a Hubble Space Telescope image!

In astronomy, size matters a lot. The angular resolution of a telescope is determined by its aperture, which

is usually the diameter of its objective lens. With radio telescopes, it is the diameter of the dish antenna or the distance between dishes in a multiple antenna array. A reasonably good consumer grade reflector telescope might have an eight inch objective. The Event Horizon Telescope (EHT) has an effective aperture of about 8,000 miles. So, of course, the EHT can see more details than you!

With the historic observation of a black hole, scientists are understandably eager to do even better. They want clearer images of M87\* and they would like to take a really good image of Sagittarius A\*. But better resolution requires more and bigger telescopes. How can they have an aperture bigger than Earth's 8,000 mile diameter? Well, there is a proposal for an array of three space-based telescopes called the Event Horizon Imager. There isn't much news about that yet. But, stay tuned!

Speaking of black holes ... Do you really think a black hole is a point with zero size and infinite density hidden inside an immaterial event horizon? Feel free to shoot holes in this idea, but I think that the event horizon marks a solid surface onto which in-falling matter builds up. There are no infinities in the real world. So there must be a physical state short of infinite density that matter can achieve without being squashed out of existence. When you drop stuff into a black hole, the hole just gets bigger because matter inside it cannot be compressed any more.

## modern board games

**A former Chairman of New Zealand Mensa, Amanda Milne is founder and owner of SchilMil Games (Auckland, NZ). Since 2012 she has published six games, the most recent being AUZTRALIA, which has had a first print run of 20,000 units in seven languages.**

“Whenever I tell people what I do,” she says, “the usual response is “You mean like Monopoly?” That’s a fair guess because pre-1990s, most games were either War games or children’s games with a few well known exceptions such as Monopoly, Scrabble, Cluedo and the classic abstract games such as Chess and Backgammon. Modern games are sometimes known as Designer Games because they feature the designer’s name on the game box.

“Popular genres of games today include...

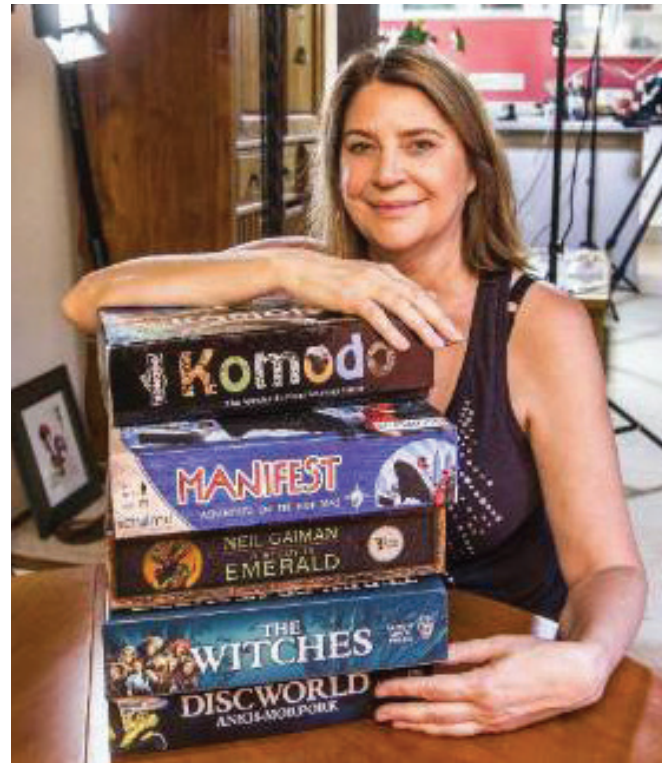
- **EURO GAMES** which tend to keep all players involved to the end and offer multiple paths to victory. They shy away from direct player conflict and playing time typically lasts 60-120 minutes with a built in timer such as a deck of cards or point threshold to bring it to an end.
- **AMERITRASH** which emphasize a highly developed theme, often fantasy/horror based, have direct player to player conflict, and quite a lot of luck
- **SOCIAL DEDUCTION** involves players having hidden information

or role that other players try and determine. Bluffing, lying and concealment are required, eg, Secret Hitler, One Night Werewolf, Code Names.

- **CO-OP GAMES** where everyone works as a team. Essentially, you win together or not at all. Some games, like Auztralia are Semi-co-op in that either the game wins or one or all of the human players win, so there are elements of cooperation needed. Examples of Fully Co-op : Pandemic, Mysterium, Forbidden Island.

- **LEGACY GAMES** - a serialized board game that changes each time it is played. Player decisions lead to new rules being unlocked, cards being permanently destroyed and the board altered. Actions have consequences, which carry over into future games, giving every decision added weight. I’ve enjoyed: Pandemic Series 1 and 2, Charterstone.

“According to LeBlanc’s taxonomy of game pleasures, gamers are motivated to play games because of one or more of the following:  
**SENSATION:** Sensory-Tactile-Aesthetics  
**FANTASY:** Imaginary Worlds  
**NARRATIVE:** Story unfolding  
**CHALLENGE:** Solving puzzles /



problems

**FELLOWSHIP:** Shared fun with friends

**DISCOVERY:** Exploring new systems

**EXPRESSION:** Creating, building

**SUBMISSION:** Suspending disbelief, submitting to a new set of rules

“I’ve had a Love of games, since childhood, and caught onto modern board games like Carcassonne and Ticket to Ride. I had been working as a Transport Planner in London, and as a Clinical Trial Database Manager here in Auckland – office work where systems and processes with rules were vital. Experimentation in designing games led to Komodo and Raid the Pantry – SchilMil’s first two games, published in 2012.

“The first dilemma was to PITCH or to PUBLISH? When you have created a game that you believe in, you have, essentially, two routes to go down: one is to pitch the

*(continued on p07)*

## new research on how the brain works

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*After a series of studies, researchers at Lund University in Sweden, together with colleagues in Italy, have shown that not only one part, but most parts of the brain can be involved in processing the signals that arise from touch. The results open the way for a new approach to how the brain's network of neurons processes information, and thereby the mechanisms by which the brain works.*

The researchers conducted in-depth analyses of how touch signals are transferred and processed in neurons of various parts of the brain and the latest studies have been published in Cell Reports and Frontiers in Cellular Neuroscience. The experiments were conducted on anaesthetised rats.

“We immediately realised that our findings deviated strongly from the accepted view that different parts of the brain are responsible for different specific functions,” says Henrik Jörntell, one of the researchers behind the study.

The studies shed new light on how the brain processes signals about our experiences of the surrounding world.

“According to a prevailing view of the brain, known as functional localisation, the brain works like a set of switches: different parts of the brain are responsible for different functions. This theory is certainly easy to comprehend, but when we measure the activity

levels in individual neurons, we get a different picture, which indicates that functions are in fact processed more globally by the whole brain,” says Henrik Jörntell.

Knowledge of how the brain manages information down to the individual neuron level is important to understand how neurological diseases occur, as they often comprise a disruption in the transfer of information between neurons.

### **The imprint of touch signals in the brain**

The researchers used methods that enabled them to observe very precisely which touch signals were sent between various neurons in the brain's network. Among other things, they generated touch signals through a finger prosthesis with synthetic skin sensitivity, a method which enabled them to send exactly the same signals in each experiment. Thanks to this new approach, the researchers were able to analyse how the touch signals were processed by individual neurons in various parts of the brain with a significantly higher resolution than was previously possible.

“The experiments showed that all parts of the brain we investigated were involved and processed the signals generated by touch, and that the differences in information between different neurons mean that they complement one another to create a rich picture, or percep-

tion,” says Jörntell.

### **One neuron, several functions and a single network**

The researchers' explanatory model is that all information processing is conducted as though through a single network and that the neurons in the brain, in practice, have partially different functions from one situation to another.

“Each individual neuron is involved in a large number of different functions. As it is closely tied to a very large number of other neurons, the function that one neuron has in a specific situation will be determined by what the other neurons with which it is connected are doing at the time,” says Jörntell.

He thinks this could explain the previously baffling observation that minor brain injuries or loss of neurons often go unnoticed.

“The brain's network learns to solve the same tasks by creating partly new collaborative groups of neurons, which enables it to bypass damaged neural tissue with no measurable loss of function. I believe that these findings could mean a new world of promising treatment potential for many different conditions. As there is often an extensive latent brain capacity left in cases of major brain injury, one can imagine that a greater recovery could be achieved if we could teach the brain to form new collaborative groups of neurons,” says Jörntell.

**Science Daily**

from p05

game idea to existing publishers, the other to start a publishing business. In the former model you are at the mercy of the publisher who may sign a contract and never publish the game, so you need a 'kill clause' in the contract that says if it's not brought to market within, say, two years that they lose the rights to it. You also lose all influence over what they do with your idea in terms of re-theming it, artwork and so on.

"We researched the options and started a business to self-publish. For 12 months we developed, tested, refined the game, hired artists and graphic designers, learned about printing in China, selected a factory and printed 1,000 units of each game. We worked out the logistics of how to ship and import them. We had no real game plan about what to do with them once they arrived in New Zealand. This was a classic newbie mistake. But it was exciting!

"Crowd funding has changed the industry: now anyone can publish a game if they get a crowd interested enough. After self-funding the first three games we went this route:

2013 – *Granny Wars* funded on PledgeMe – raised \$2,600  
 2014 - *Manifest* funded on Kickstarter – raised \$32,650  
 2018 - *AuZtralia* funded on Kickstarter/BackerKit - raised \$400,000

More at [www.auztralia.net](http://www.auztralia.net)"

**Amanda Milne**  
[www.schilmilgames.com](http://www.schilmilgames.com)

# IBD Meeting, 2019

**From 10th - 13th Oct 2019,** Malaysian Mensa has been chosen to host the International Board of Directors (IBD) meeting, the most important International Mensa Meeting in the world. Hosted at the prestigious Hilton Hotel Kuala Lumpur, it is a meeting that will bring together more than 50 National Mensa chairpersons from around the world who make up the International Board of Directors (IBD).

At this annual meeting, decisions will be made on how the society around the world is run. These include governance decisions including global growth efforts, trademark protection, presentations on Mensa projects around the world, sharing of ideas, and much more.

It is the single most important Mensa meeting that ensures we as a society continue to grow and achieve the vision that our founders set out to achieve through this society and we as members want through our elected office bearers. The fostering and nurturing of intelligence through the various programs run by Mensa International and Mensas around the world, the research and development of methods to investigate and understand human intelligence and the socially stimulating environment

that is so essentially Mensan.

One of the biggest highlights of the IBD meeting is the opportunity to get to know Mensans from all around the world. Besides the Chairpersons, members from other countries will also come and take part in the various events held around the IBD. Dinners, tours and other exciting activities are usually lined up alongside the meeting for members to interact and foster new friendships that make Mensa so special and meaningful.

One of the key events that make this IBD 2019 special is that it is also the Malaysian Mensa's 35th Anniversary and we will have the opportunity to celebrate it at the Gala Dinner scheduled for the 12th October 2019 at Carcosa Seri Negara, one of the most prestigious and historical venues in all of Malaysia. It is the place where the Constitution of Malaysia was drafted and has had the honour of hosting many eminent guests such as Queen Elizabeth II and King Bhumibol.

The organising committee for the 2019 IBD has been working hard since Dec 2017 to prepare for this incredible event. Many great experiences are lined up and will be open for registration very soon. All the latest information will be uploaded at:

**[www.ibd2019.mensa.my](http://www.ibd2019.mensa.my)**

**Facebook: [www.facebook.com/groups/ibd2019](https://www.facebook.com/groups/ibd2019)**

**Tan Kee Aun, Chair, Mensa Malaysia**

## What you eat could impact your brain and memory...

***You may be familiar with the saying, “You are what you eat,” but did you know the food you eat could impact your memory?***

Auriel Willette, assistant professor, and his team of researchers in Iowa State University’s Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition discovered a satiety hormone that, at higher levels, could decrease a person’s likelihood of developing Alzheimer’s disease. A paper outlining the results of their study recently was accepted for publication in *Neurobiology of Aging*.

Using data from the Alzheimer’s Disease Neuroimaging Initiative (ADNI), the researchers looked at the satiety hormone, Cholecystokinin (CCK), in 287 people. CCK is found in both the small intestines and the brain. In the small intestines, CCK allows for the absorption of fats and proteins. In the brain, CCK is located in the hippocampus, which is the memory-forming region of the brain, Willette said.

The researchers found for individuals who have higher CCK levels, their chance of having mild cognitive impairment, a precursor state to Alzheimer’s disease, or Alzheimer’s disease decreased by 65 percent.

“It will hopefully help to shed further light on how satiety hormones in the blood and brain affect brain function,” Willette said.

### **Why CCK?**

Alexandra Plagman, lead author and graduate student in nutritional science, said they chose to focus on CCK because it is highly expressed in memory formation. The researchers wanted to see if there was any significance between levels of CCK and levels of memory and grey matter in the hippocampus and other important areas.

They also looked at p-tau and tau proteins, which are thought to be toxic to the brain, to see how these might impact CCK and memory. They found that as tau levels increased, higher CCK was no longer related to less memory decline.

The researchers hope this study will encourage others to look into the nutritional aspect of diets, versus just looking at caloric intake. Plagman already is looking at how diet impacts an individual’s CCK levels through researching fasting glucose and ketone bodies.

“By looking at the nutritional aspect, we can tell if a certain diet could prevent Alzheimer’s disease or prevent progression of the disease,” Plagman said.

“The regulation of when and how much we eat can have some association with how good our memory is,” Willette added. “Bottom line: what we eat and what our body does with it affects our brain.”

**Science Daily**

## **Writing for the MWJ**

The Mensa World Journal is your magazine and it would be wonderful if you were to share your thoughts with the rest of the Mensa world. By and large, most of the articles are written by Mensans - for Mensans - and the opportunity is there for you to be one of these authors.

Topics can cover reports of Mensa events you’ve attended, your achievements, unusual hobbies and interests, or your successes.

You can also write about recent research into intelligence or any other topic that would be of general interest to our members.

Please limit your article length to 600 words and send it to the Editor, Kate Nacard: [mwjeditor@mensa.org](mailto:mwjeditor@mensa.org). Please also include your National Mensa and your membership number.

**Log into the  
International website at  
[www.mensa.org](http://www.mensa.org)  
for the calendar of national  
events**



# words...

kate nacard



## honest crooks...

An oxymoron is a set of words, phrases, or even sentences, whose meanings are contradictory. The word itself comes from the Greek 'oxy' (sharp and pointy) and 'moros, moron' (dull, foolish) - in other words, pointedly foolish - and it's often used for literary effect. When it's not a silly mistake!

One of the most famous oxymoron used for literary effect is Shakespeare's "parting is such sweet sorrow", while 'honest politician' and 'chaste whore' often form part of the satirist's everyday vernacular.

www.wordfocus.com brings us some beauties: *Hell's Angels, silent scream, hot ice, random order, negative growth, initial conclusion, objective opinion, natural synthetic, near miss, invisible ink, non-stick glue, and, open secret.*

Alfred Lord Tennyson's "His honour rooted in dishonour stood, and faith unfaithful kept him falsely true" is a masterpiece of the oxymoron used to poetic effect.

William Safire's rules for writing as seen in *The New York Times* finishes with a doubler: *Last, but not least, avoid cliches like the plague*, whilst Samuel Goldwyn, the film-maker, is quoted as saying (amongst many other things), *If I*

*could drop dead right now, I'd be happiest man alive! If you fall and break your legs, don't come running to me, and, I never put on a pair of shoes until I've worn them for five years.*

Akin (or opposite) to the oxymoron is the **pleonasm** which is the unnecessary repetition - or redundancy - of words, such as *new recruit, PIN number, SAM missile, join together, climb up, and anonymous stranger*. Again coming from the Greek ('pleon' meaning more), a pleonasm is understood to mean a word or phrase which is repetitive. As with the oxymoron, it can be used for literary effect and can also serve as emphasis and clarification of what has been said or written.

As Caesar said of Brutus, "This was the most unkindest cut of all", while the Lord Chancellor at the time (1864), Lord Westbury, in the English case of *ex parte* Gorely, described a phrase in an Act as "redundant and pleonastic"!

Advertisements often carry "Receive a free gift with every purchase," and "I ate a tuna fish sandwich," is so common that it is accepted without the "blink of an eyelid".

Now, personally, I think it's time for me to get some cold, bubbly champagne out of the fridge!

## anyone for battology?

*Bellibone* (a woman excelling in both goodness and beauty), *biggin* (a silver coffeepot with separate heater which holds the coffee as it's heated), *bumlepuppy* (a game played with a tennis ball tied to a post) and *battology* (the continuous repetition of words or phrases in speech or writing) - just a few of the unusual words in one of my favourite little books, Peter Bowler's *The Superior Person's Little Book of Words\**.

Where else would you find such exotic words for the more commonplace 'foolish or empty chatter' (*bavardage*), 'to grow dull or stupid' (*hebetate*), or to bruise (*suggilate*)? And how fabulous to be able to say, in apparent admiration, to the pompous bloke next door as you enter the new mansion he is inordinately proud of, "My goodness, Mr Pemberton-Smythe, your home is perfectly *nosopoetic*!" And how useful for your teenager to be able to say, "Sorry, Mum, I will **not** clean Justin's room! It's *automomy* hell in there! There's hairs and skin all over the carpet!"

Wish I'd thought of that one when I needed it!

*Pleonasm* information courtesy of Wikipedia

*Nosopoetic*: producing disease, unhygienic, infected;

*Automomy*: the spontaneous shedding by a living organism of part of itself (such as crabs and salamanders)

\* Methuen Australia, Victoria, 1982

**Kate Nacard**

# supplementally...

by john blinke

## Dark Shadows

Science, April 19, 2019. "Shadowy First Image of Black Hole Revealed." (Astrophysical Journal Letters) Using an array of eight widely separated radio telescopes, 200 scientists from universities around the world have created the first-ever picture of a black hole. The target is M87\* in the M87 elliptical galaxy, 53 million light years away. You can argue that we can't really see a black hole because it eats all the light that touches it. But astronomers have a nice image of a round black shadow against a disk of hot glowing material. The disk is fatter and brighter on one side because it is rotating at a mad pace: the brighter part is rotating toward us. It took astronomers hours to gather hundreds of petabytes of data from the eight radio telescopes and it took two years to process the data into a picture. The information was stored on dozens of hard drives and then was trucked to central locations at the MIT Haystack observatory in Massachusetts and the Max Planck Institute for Radio Astronomy in Bonn, Germany, because there was too much to send over the internet. The team also imaged our personal supermassive black hole in the center of the Milky Way galaxy. They will process that data, too but they worked on M87\* first because it was more likely to succeed.

## Holes Behaving Badly

ScienceDaily, April 29, 2019. "Spinning Black Hole Sprays Light-Speed Plasma Clouds Into Space." (Nature) <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/04/190429111755.htm> The stellar mass black hole known as V404 Cygni is being absolutely rowdy. Instead of spouting tidy axial jets like most of its dark brethren, it is jetting off in all directions on a time scale of hours or minutes. Astronomers at the International Centre for Radio Astronomy Research (ICRAR) suspect the hole is slowly eating a companion star and pulling the stolen material into an accretion disk around itself. But the disk is misaligned to the spin of the black hole. As a result, the inner part of the disk is precessing like a toy gyroscope and the jets are flailing like loose fire hoses. Observations of this strange and exciting object were made by the Very Long Baseline Array, a group of ten radio dishes spaced across the United States. The astronomers made a 103-frame movie showing the detailed behavior of the black hole. This was necessary because still images only showed a blur.

## Weighing Holes

Science News, April 22, 2019. "The M87 Black Hole Image Showed the Best Way to Measure Black Hole Masses." <https://bit.ly/2Dtqkx2>

Astronomers have tried a couple of different ways to measure the mass of supermassive black holes. One way was to see how long it takes nearby stars to whiz around the monster objects. Another is to clock the speed of gas clouds orbiting close by. For M87\*, the first method gave a mass of 6.6 billion solar masses. The second way produced a different number: 3.5 billion solar masses. Which is correct? The event horizon telescope (EHT) provides a mass estimate of 6.5 billion solar masses, which pretty much matches the number derived from orbiting stars. This comes from the diameter of the shadow the black hole casts upon the bright accretion disk: 38 billion kilometers, if you are wondering.

## Top Cat

Science News Kindle Edition, March 30, 2019. "The Baddest Cat of All." At the tar pits in Southern California, there are plenty of ancient bones to examine. Many are from unfortunate animals that became stuck in the tar while seeking a sip of water. Others are from predators and scavengers that tried to prey on them. Exquisite preservation has enabled scientists to learn what the animals looked like. More subtle clues might reveal how they behaved. Was the saber-toothed smilodon a solitary hunter like modern tigers, or a pack hunter like the wolf? The remains

of crippled smilodons suggest pack behavior, because an animal with, say, a broken pelvis could not survive for very long without help. Modern cats do not run in packs, so this is unfamiliar behavior for felines.

### Gould Finch Mystery

Eurekalert, April 23, 2019. "Study: Why Unique Finches Keep Their Heads of Many Colors."

[https://www.eurekalert.org/pub\\_releases/2019-04/cu-swu042319](https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2019-04/cu-swu042319).

Gouldian Finches are those little multicolored birds that look like they were designed in a paint-by-numbers book. They have contrasting patches of colors on their bodies — especially the faces. Gouldian finches can have red, black, or yellow faces, but scientists have

been hard put to figure out why all three colors persist. Red faces are preferred by the ladies over black faces. But red faces are actually less common than black. So, why weren't all non-red colors bred out of the species? The answer is that the genes that create red faces also cause extra stress hormones in competitive situations. Maybe the poor guys wear themselves out with anxiety and can't produce chicks. Yellow faces also persist, and are only one percent of the population.

### Salty Clues

Eurekalert, April 17, 2019. "Switch From Hunting to Herding Recorded in Ancient Pee." (Science Advances) [https://www.eurekalert.org/pub\\_releases/2019-04/eiac-sfh041219](https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2019-04/eiac-sfh041219).

Around 10,000 years ago, people discovered they could live better if they cultivated animals. The pace of development increased at that time, but scientists would like to know how quickly it happened. At a site in Turkey, researchers are using an unusual clue to attack the issue: urine salts that humans and animals left in the ground. They reasoned that, in a dry environment, salts would not be washed away or redistributed, so they could track cultural development by the amount of salt left in archaeological layers. They found that the total amount of urine, and therefore the level of human and cattle habitation, started slowly but then increased greatly until 9,700 years ago, when it levelled off.

**John Blinke**

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