THE WEEK Junior







REAL OR RUBBISH?



Can YOU tell true stories from fake news?





BLOOMSBURY

Were gulls trained to steal chips?

Seagulls are a familiar seaside sight, but they're not always welcome – especially if they steal your lunch. In 2022, scientists at the University of Exeter in Devon, UK, tried to find out how seagulls become so good at swooping for snacks.

The team trained the birds in different weather conditions, and the gulls quickly worked out how to change the shape of their wings depending on wind direction, to get maximum speed. After the study, scientists noticed that local gulls were using the skills they'd learned and were stealing even more chips.

Real or rubbish?

Is this real, or are we flying in the face of the truth?

SPEEDY SWOOP

Earth's fastest animal movement is a swoop. Peregrine falcons can dive down to catch prey at up to 320 km/h.

GRASPING GULLS

Keep an eye on more than just your chips at the beach. Gulls have been known to snatch wallets, hairbrushes and even full coffee mugs!

ANSWER

Rubbish! Seagulls have evolved the ability to change their wing shape, which just happens to make them very good at stealing chips. Scientists studying this technique are now using it to build better aircraft, including drones.

Did hamsters make a great escape?

A plane was delayed when 132 hamsters broke loose from their boxes in the cargo hold.

The busy flight was travelling from Lisbon, in Portugal, to the island of São Miguel on 13 November 2024. On board were lots of passengers, as well as hamsters, ferrets and birds on their way to a pet shop.

On arrival at the island's airport, staff began unloading the pet crates and realised that all the hamster containers were empty. The hamsters had managed to escape and started scurrying around the plane. It took airport staff several days to find all the rodents on board.



Real or rubbish?

Is this story real, or have you nibbled your way into a lie?



CUTE CARRY-ON LUGGAGE

Hamsters can store things in little pouches in their cheeks, which can hold up to half the hamster's body weight.

NO TICKET TO HAWAII!

Hamsters are banned from Hawaii. In the past, escaped hamsters bred so quickly that they disrupted natural food chains and endangered other wildlife.

ANSWER

Real Airport staff finally rounded up the last 16 hamsters four days after the plane landed.

Could rugby take a plunge?

A London rugby team has started dressing up in snorkels, flippers and masks and diving to the bottom of a pool to score their tries. This game is underwater rugby.

The aim is to plop the ball into a sunken basket. Part of the game's tactics, says the coach, is deciding when to come up for air. The game is as much about being able to hold your breath as it is about strength and speed.

The team joins the ranks of several other underwater rugby groups across the UK, where the sport was introduced in 2013. It has existed since the 1960s, starting as part of a fitness programme in Germany.

Real or rubbish?

Is this a real sport or a tale awash with lies?



NAMING THE GAME

Rugby was invented at Rugby School in 1823, when a football (soccer) player cheated by picking up the ball and running with it!

ANSWER

Real! The sport is more popular in other countries, including Colombia and in northern Europe, and an international Underwater Rugby World Championships is held every few years.