

# CrossTalk

CROSSROADS Language Studio's Newsletter November, 2020



## PLATYPUS

Along with the kangaroo and the koala, just about everyone knows this guy. The platypus is one of Australia's best known icons, but there is so much more to this strange little critter than first meets the eye.

Okay, we all agree that they look pretty weird, like a cross between a duck (a beak at the front end), and a beaver (the tail at the rear). But looking weird is only part of the story. Like ducks, and other birds and reptiles, they are one of only two animal species in the world that actually lay eggs (the other, also found in Australia, is the echidna). After laying her eggs, mother platypus incubates them for about 10 days keeping them warm with her own body-heat (again like birds). However, after they hatch, she feeds her babies milk just like other mammals. But even in this, she has her own way of doing things. Female platypuses do not have nipples so mom "sweats" milk through the pores in her skin on her belly and her babies lap this up like a dog or cat laps up water.

To add to the weirdness, platypuses are carnivorous, but they do not have any teeth. Their "beak" is made of a soft rubbery material which they use to sift through loose silt and pebbles on the bottom of streams, rivers and lakes when hunting for food. When they dive in search for prey, they close their eyes, ears and nostrils. So, how do they find their dinner? It's all in the beak. They have "electro-receptors" in their beaks which pick up tiny electrical fields produced by the muscular contractions of the crustaceans, worms and mollusks they prey on as these critters burrow into the silt to escape.

Platypuses are nocturnal and solitary creatures by nature and usually only get together when it's mating time. The male does not lend a helping hand to raising his babies. That's all left to mom. Yet, to find a mate he's prepared to fight for love. This is where another of this animal's unique traits comes in. The males have a very venomous and sharp spike on their hind ankles and they use these to duel with. It's probable that this is also a defensive mechanism against other animals that may try to attack them. Scientists have recently found that the venom – capable of killing a dog if used in defense – has a substance that could be used to treat or even cure diabetes in humans!

And there is still more! Also discovered recently, if their fur is exposed to ultraviolet light (UV), it glows! It has been theorized that, as they are nocturnal animals, this may be a way for them to adapt to low-light conditions and to identify each other at night.



And finally, there is the matter of "platypus dreams." All mammals enter a state of REM ("Rapid Eye Movement") when asleep. Nerve cells in the brain fire-up, face, eyes and limbs twitch,



and we dream (at least humans do). Our platypus friends?

They experience 8 hours of REM when they're asleep!

## Net News

**NET LESSONS:** Too busy to come to CROSSROADS?

.... Try our *lessons on the net!*

Get some more info on platypuses here (with a video too):  
<https://www.thecut.com/2020/05/do-platypuses-sweat-milk.html>

# Some Thoughts for the Month



**Joshua Says:** “Wisdom grows from 10% of what you see and read, and 90% from what you do with the knowledge you gain.” This is a quote that could be applied to studying English... The point being that you can gain much more from your lessons if you find ways to use the English you have learnt in class. If conversation in English is limited, you could still write in English more often (and have it corrected by your teacher in a later class, of course).

**Junko Says:** Recently I read an article titled, “A wandering mind is an unhappy mind.” There was a study involving several thousand Americans that looked at the effects distractions have on the brain. The result showed that 47% of the time, the subjects could not focus on what they were doing, and when they were not paying attention, they were not happy. Psychologists say that our brain’s wiring is adaptable and not fixed. And the neuroplasticity of our brains opens up the chance to train and improve our minds.



**Marek Says:** A dramatic US election has finally come to a conclusion, not without controversy and allegations of fraud and not abiding the electoral laws. Let’s hope that the new president elect will restore the reputation of the country and address many pressing issues plaguing the American nation over the recent years. Even though all eyes are on Joe Biden, President Trump is still in power until January 20<sup>th</sup>, and I am sure we haven’t heard the last of him.

**Mandey dit:** Cette année, les élections américaines étaient une vraie aventure. Encore mieux qu’une série télé. Et j’ai bien peur que ce ne soit pas fini. J’ai hâte de voir la suite. L’Amérique va-t-elle enfin avoir un président ? Cette année, je suis triste, car il n’y a pas de onsen de beaujolais nouveau à cause du coronavirus! Toutefois, je vous souhaite une bonne dégustation à tous. Je vais au moins en acheter 2 ou 3 bouteilles.



## ACROSS

- 6 people or things that are very well-known
- 7 another name for creature
- 9 to fight
- 10 using the tongue to drink
- 11 make suitable for
- 12 very poisonous
- 14 small round stones
- 17 active at night
- 18 back or behind
- 19 to sort and separate carefully

## DOWN

- 1 characteristic features
- 2 odd or unusual
- 3 nerve endings that respond to stimulation
- 4 emerge from an egg
- 5 supporting growth and development
- 8 feeding on animal life
- 13 mud, clay, small stones in a river or lake
- 14 small openings in the skin
- 15 to dig
- 16 located at or near the back

## Play A Game!

Find the answers on P1



(print version [here](#))



## About Horse Racing with S(a)3's Koki:

Are you enjoying horse racing? Of course! I also enjoy it every weekend even though I often lose a moderate amount of money by doing so. These days horse racing is being held but no spectators have been allowed to enter racetracks since February 29<sup>th</sup> due to Covid-19. As a result, I have not been able to go and watch the beautiful horses directly this year. SO frustrating!! Instead, I bet through the internet and watch the races on TV.

But here, I'd like to suggest how to learn foreign languages from horse racing. As you know, all horses have individual names. According to Japanese horse racing regulations, horse names should not have more than 18 letters from the alphabet or more than 9 katakana characters. With some exceptions, a horse owner should not use the same name for his horse as already in use by another horse. If you happen to be a horse owner, you will struggle to decide your horse's name because of these limitations. Generally, the meaning of a horse's name reflects, for example, a human, a flower, a machine, a scene or a concept. In addition, various languages, Japanese, English, Spanish, Italian, and so on, are made use of.

I sometimes ponder the meaning of strong or interesting horse names, and I have learned foreign words through these names. Below are some examples with some information about the horses so named:

**DEEP IMPACT:** Self-explanatory meaning. He won the Japan Triple Crown of classic races (Satsuki Sho, Japan Derby, Kikuka Sho) in 2005 as well as some G1 races. He was considered the strongest Japanese horse by most Japanese "recaholics."

**OLFEVRE:** Meaning "Goldsmith" in French. He won the Japan Triple Crown in 2011. He tried the Prix de L'Arc de Triomphe (a traditional official French G1 race) in 2012 and 2013. He came in 2<sup>nd</sup> twice. In 2013 I visited France on my honeymoon to cheer him on.

**BUENA VISTA:** Meaning "a splendid Scene" in Spanish. She won a lot of Japanese G1 races. When I started to bet in 2008, I was impressed by her ability to repeatedly beat stallions. A café named after Buena Vista is in Baishinji-town in Matsuyama.

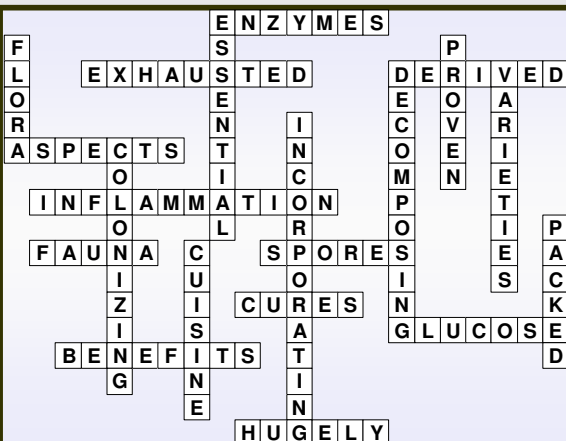
**TRANSCEND:** Meaning to go beyond the usual limits. He had success on dirt tracks between 2009 and 2012

**CONTRAIL:** Meaning a streak of white in the sky made by a plane. He now has the right to challenge the Japan Triple Crown.

**DARING TACT:** Meaning tactics involving a lot of risk. She also now has the right to challenge the Japan Triple Crown.

In addition, we can get a glimpse of the owner's sense of humor from their horses' names. From the point of view of the message, my favorite names are "To the Glory," "Stay Foolish" and "One and Only." On the other hand, from the point of view of fun, my favorite name is "Sleepless Night." He had success as a sprinter between 2007 and 2009. He was named from a passage in a satirical tanka from the Edo period. "Sleepless Night's" means "the black ship." The name comes from US navy commander Matthew Perry's 4 famous black-steamships that came to the Uruga Coast (in Kanagawa prefecture) in 1853 and demanded the opening of Japan to the world. From that sensational event, a Japanese poet wrote a poem, and in that poem, the expression "sleepless night" was used. The owner has understood the event deeply and named one of Kurofune's foals "Sleepless Night." It's an interesting relationship to me.

I think that these points of view encourage us to start watching horse racing. So, why don't you watch horse racing too? (But you have to be over 20 if you want to bet!)



## Last Month's puzzle Solution

### ACROSS

- 1 proteins produced by cells
- 4 drained of energy
- 5 coming or developed from
- 8 characteristics to be considered
- 10 swelling in the body
- 12 animal life
- 14 small single-cell reproductive bodies
- 15 makes healthy again
- 16 a type of sugar
- 17 adding to well-being
- 18 greatly

### DOWN

- 1 absolutely necessary
- 2 plant life
- 3 established beyond doubt
- 5 breaking down, decaying
- 6 differences within the group
- 7 including
- 9 moving to a new area to live
- 11 filled to capacity
- 13 the preparation of food



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See our notice board, or ask Junko in our office, for the details.