

Entertainment Outlook

First bathroom boas, now frenzied fish

Is this just my own paranoia, or has anyone else begun to suspect something is going terribly wrong with the natural order of things?

This dark thought began to dawn several months back, when the newspapers informed us of the apartment-dweller in Hamilton who discovered a boa constrictor in her toilet.

This was not, you will admit, a particularly cheerful piece of news. In fact, it was the sort of news that badly undermines your faith in any sort of harmony and balance in nature.

I mean, there had always been an unspoken trade-off between you and the boa constrictors. You stayed out of the Equatorial swamps. In return, the snakes stayed out of your potty. Everyone knew where he stood — or sat, as the case may be.

And now, just as we're learning to live with the thought that the next trip to the john will be the one that results in an unspeakable end, there is news of still another perversion of nature: swimmers are terrified to venture into a lake in California because the fish have started attacking them.

Good lord. First the ozone layer began to break down. Next the polar ice-caps started to melt. Then boa constrictors moved to the suburbs and took up residence in the plumbing. And now we're confronted by Killer Trout.

It seems Lake Mendocino was a popular tourist spot until two weeks ago, when there were half a dozen reports of fish attacking swimmers and boaters.

One Weldon Jones, a biologist with the State Department of Fish and Game, is quoted as saying: "By golly, there's something unusual going on

here. Generally, fish don't attack people."

Clearly, Mr. Jones is a perceptive man. In two sentences, he has cut right through to the heart of the issue. By golly.



Weir's View

By Ian Weir
Thomson News Service

Of course, this still leaves one fairly large question unanswered: why are the fish doing this?

Have the fish of Lake Mendocino resolved to avenge the generations of friends and forebears who met with bad ends, and are thus holding every swimmer morally responsible for the pan-frying of Uncle Fred? Are the attacks being perpetrated by a younger and nastier generation of cutthroat trout?

Apparently, many of the locals subscribe to the theory that someone has released piranhas into the lake as a practical joke. If so, everyone concerned can probably relax and have a good laugh.

Piranhas, as we know, are among the world's most endearing fishes. A friend of mine once bought a pair of piranha — if memory serves, he named them something like Igor and Boris,

rather than something like Muffy and Buffy — and kept them in a tank in his living room.

They co-existed in sullen silence for two or three months, until Igor (or Muffy) grew slightly larger than Boris (or Buffy). One morning shortly thereafter, my friend woke up to discover Igor (or Muffy) inexplicably alone in the tank.

This taught us everything we ever wanted to know about piranhas: do not go swimming with fish who have sharp teeth, large appetites, and the instincts

of rival multinationals.

However, Mr. Jones discounts the piranha theory, arguing that piranha are accustomed to the much warmer South American waters, and could not survive so far from their natural habitat. (This is reassuring, to a point. On the other hand, try telling this to the next boa constrictor you meet in the john.)

Unfortunately, Mr. Jones' own theory is even more unsettling — he suspects the attacks result from biologists' efforts to breed larger, more aggressive fish in the lake in order to maintain

a balance and to provide anglers with a good catch.

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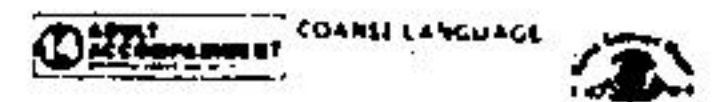


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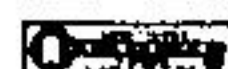


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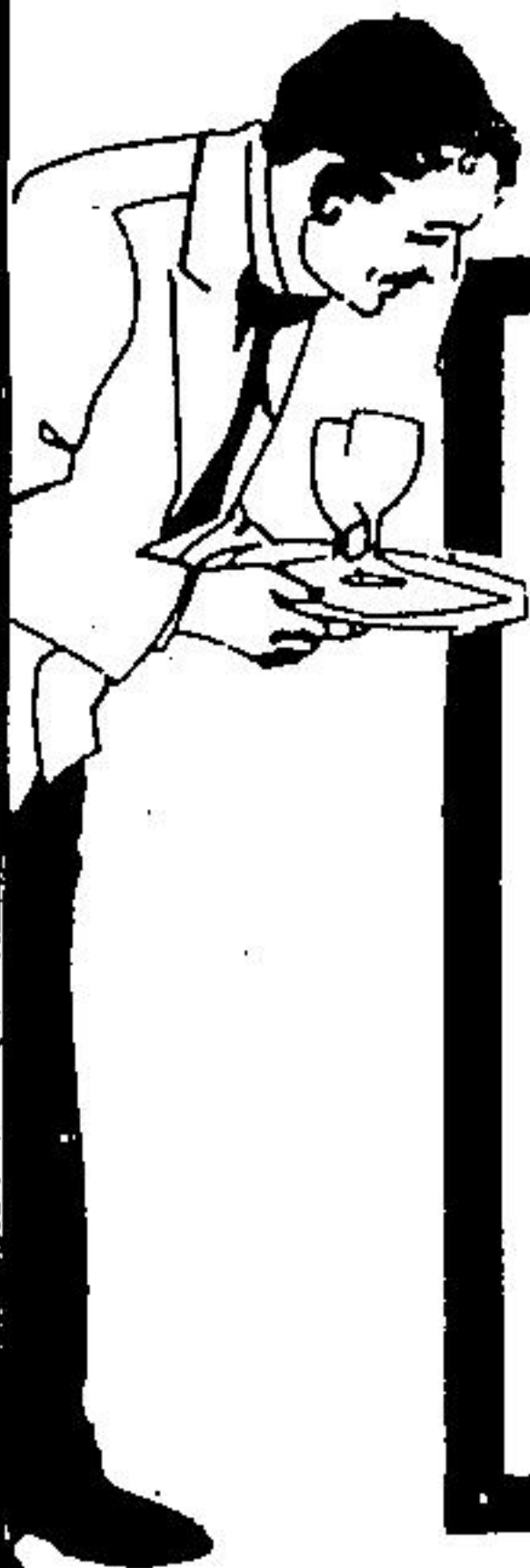
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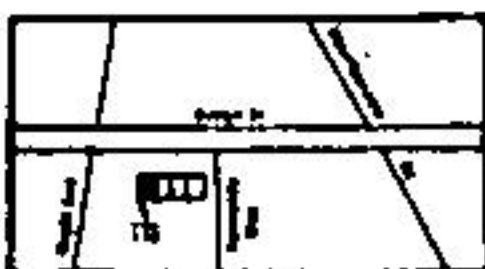
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