

Amorous little peepers

It was Monday night that we first heard it. I think that's gotta be the earliest I've ever heard it in my 60 years

I will now keep my ears cocked, to hear the second, then the third time.

I'm referring of course to the frogs—well, at least one frog.

My grandfather used to maintain that the frogs in the nearby marsh had to be silenced by cold weather (frost) at least three times before we were certain spring was here for good.

With the recent incredibly unseasonable weather we've had all winter, I guess it was bound to happen early this year.

Monday night, The Sidekick and I were taking our evening stroll and heard him.

Yup, one solitary little peeper in the marsh below the house.

Now as I understand it, frogs start peeping in the spring to attract a mate. I guess one might assume that our solitary peeper Monday night was a bit randy—he felt he was 'due', perhaps in a 'mood', so to speak.

And nobody's set up computer dating for frogs yet.

After checking my back files, I found I'd written about the peepers and the 'silence them three times' rule back in 2003—April 18, 2003 to be exact.

This one amphibian is more than a month early this year!

Now he still has to be silenced two more times to signal the start of spring—at least according to my grandfather's rule.

My grandfather had all sorts of little 'rules' about the weather, like talking about the little patch of snow in the shade of one corner of the barn. It'd take forever to melt.

I've seen that little patch of snow bravely hold out until the first of May in a cool spring.

My grandfather said it was pointless to plant any spring grains until that patch of snow was gone—the ground was simply too cold for the seed to germinate.

It makes sense to me. (And for the record there's still a smidgen of ice there.)

It was one of those many little gems of weather wisdom passed down through

Ted Brown



the generations about the crops, the weather and the changing seasons, based on observation, and common sense—not a whack of high-priced meteorological equipment.

I think it went with the times. I've often written how my great aunt Agnes could forecast when it was gonna rain by whether the pigeons were lined up on the peak of the barn roof, or scattered down the lower parts of the roof.

On the peak—get out your umbrella. For years my dad and I watched the barn swallows for our short-term weather forecasts. If they swooped close to the ground catching their bugs, (as opposed to 20 feet in the air;) it was gonna rain in an hour or two.

There is a scientific explanation for that one—the incoming low pressure system prior to the rain drives the flying insects lower to the ground, so the barn swallows have to fly lower to catch 'em.

Observations of the changing seasons have been prevalent in my life, being raised with sayings like "Sow in the dust and the granary will bust," (a field of grain planted in a wet spring won't produce a good yield.)

And we always paid heed to them. Countless generations of Browns have adhered to the old saying, "Red sky at night, sailor's delight, red sky in morning, sailor take warning."

So, back to the frogs, I'll have to keep ya posted. If that peeper is simply one downright amorous frog, and not necessarily expressing the collective opinion of the frog community around him, then we'll have to accept that spring won't be here for a bit.

But if that little guy is 'on the money'—then raking the yard won't be too far away.

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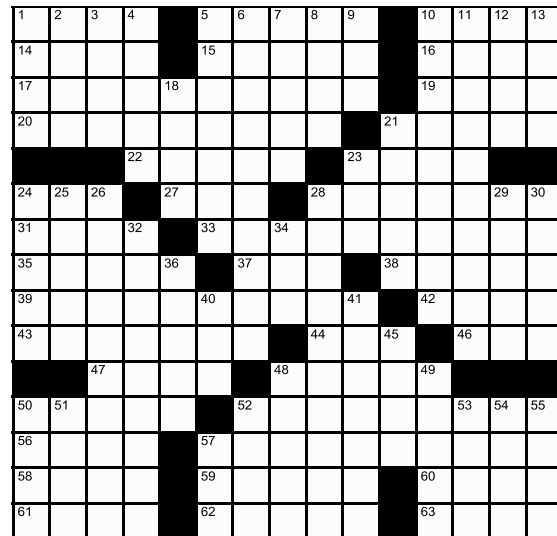
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PUZZLE of the week



Across

- Cat's scratcher
- Seventh zodiac sign
- Fishing, perhaps
- Halo, e.g.
- Companion of Artemis
- Bolted
- Group of journalists covering the same topics
- Justice Black
- Aircrafts that can land on water
- Evita
- Chip dip
- Chinese dynasty
- Master's Voice
- "Wanna ___?"
- Sub-Saharan scourge
- A chorus line
- 365 days (pl., 2 wds)
- ___ list
- Cashew, e.g.
- Insects between larva and adult stages
- Start too soon (3 wds)
- Allocate, with "out"
- Confines, as in jail
- Pistol, slangily
- Undertake, with "out"
- "-zoic" things
- Assail
- Shrewish women
- Paid post with minimal duties (pl.)
- Sundae topper, perhaps
- Writer whose characters symbolize a deeper moral meaning
- "Dear" ones
- City on the Arkansas River
- 100 centavos
- "___ on Down the Road"
- Chaotic
- Knocked off, in a way

Down

- Beans
- Artificial bait
- Length x width, for a rectangle
- Aristophanes comedy, with "The"
- Scene of any event
- Rocks containing Fe
- Kentucky college
- Criticizes
- Infomercials, e.g.
- Literary club, e.g.
- Start of a quip (2 wds)
- "Cogito ___ sum"
- Long, long time
- Concrete section
- Tumors on mucous membranes
- Toni Morrison's "___ Baby"
- Pilgrim to Mecca
- Terminal portion of small intestine
- Those who involuntarily repeat and hesitate when speaking
- Full development
- About to explode
- Money in the bank, say
- Intentionally (2 wds)
- Big galoot
- Digress
- For ___ a jolly ..." (2 wds)
- Bouquet
- Art ___
- Paper money
- Paint thinner, British
- Cheat, slangily
- "Mi chiamano Mimi," e.g.
- Pivot
- Cambodian currency
- "___ quam videri" (North Carolina's motto)
- House
- Money dispenser (acronym)

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