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## April Fool's Day pranks

April Fool's Day is a day when people play pranks on unsuspecting friends, coworkers and family members.

The history of April Fool's Day, or All Fools' Day, dates back to sixteenth century France and the reform of the calendar under Charles IX, when the Gregorian Calendar was introduced and New Year's Day was moved from April 1 to January 1. Back then, word did not spread nearly as quickly as it does now, and some people didn't find out about the date change until several years after it was initiated. As a result, some were still celebrating the New Year on April 1, and the rest of the population ridiculed those people who were not in the know. And they were sent on pranks called "fool errands." These pranks were also known as "poisson d'avril," which means April fish, because a young fish is easily caught. Eventually the April pranks spread outside of France into other areas of Europe, and different countries developed their own names and variations of pranks.

In present day North America, April Fool's Day is celebrated with jokes and pranks, some of which have actually fooled the masses. Over the years, certain pranks have stood out as monumental April Fool's Day hoaxes. Here's a look at some of those more memorable pranks.

- In 1976, British astronomer Patrick Moore announced on BBC radio that, at 9:47 a.m., a once-in-a-lifetime event was going to happen. He said that Pluto was going to pass behind Jupiter and create a momentary decrease in the Earth's gravity. It would result in a strange floating sensation on Earth. The BBC began to receive hundreds of phone calls from people having said they felt the gravitational effects.

- Discover magazine reported in 1995 that a new species of animal was found in Antarctica. It was called the hot headed naked ice borer. These animals were purported to have bony plates on their heads that would become burning hot from numerous blood vessels underneath. The animal could bore through ice at high speeds. The magazine received more mail for this story than any story in the history of the publication.

- In 1998, Burger King printed a full-page advertisement introducing the "Left-Handed Whopper," which was specially designed for all of the lefties. The condiments were rotated 180 degrees for the benefit of left-handed customers. Thousands of customers headed into Burger King to get the special burger.

- It was reported in 1998 that the Alabama state legislature had voted to change the mathematical value of pi from 3.14159 to the "Biblical value" of 3.0. News spread quickly over e-mail, and the Alabama legislature began receiving hundreds of calls from angry protestors.

- In 1992, comedian Rich Little impersonated the voice of Richard Nixon to announce Nixon's new candidacy for president. The announcement included audio clips of Nixon delivering a candidacy speech. Listeners flooded National Public Radio's telephone lines to express outrage.

- In 1977, British newspaper The Guardian published a seven-page supplement on San Serriffe, supposed to be a small republic consisting of several semi-colon-shaped islands in the Indian Ocean. The two main islands were called Upper Caisse and Lower Caisse. Phones rang with eager people trying to find out more information about the idyllic spot. Only a few realized everything about the republic was named after printer's terminology.

- In 1996, the Taco Bell Corporation announced they had purchased the Liberty Bell and were renaming it the Taco Liberty Bell. Protesters called the historic park in Philadelphia where the bell was located. Taco Bell revealed the joke a few hours later. White House press secretary Mike McCurry added to the prank by announcing the Lincoln Memorial had also been sold. It would be known as the Ford Lincoln Mercury Memorial.

- In 1957, the BBC news show "Panorama" featured a story that a mild winter and elimination of the spaghetti weevil enabled a bumper spaghetti crop by Swiss farmers. Footage of Swiss peasants pulling spaghetti off of trees was released, and hundreds were taken in by the prank. Many called the BBC asking how they could grow a spaghetti tree for themselves.

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