

Mysteries

By George Underhill

Sometimes we think the simple things in life hold no secrets for us. I read a book recently where that axiom was thrown in doubt. One question asked was, "How many leaves grow on a tree?" Well, we don't seem to know. Counting the leaves on a single full grown tree is possible I suppose, but it appears no one has ever done it. In any case, you couldn't generalize because you'd have to know something about the specific tree: what species, how mature it was, how healthy, whether it was open grown or in a dense thicket stretching for the sun, lots of things. So we can't answer that question.

How many hours does a whale sleep? Seems easy, but think of humans. As I get older, it seems like I could sleep all the time. Sometimes in short bursts, sometime for long periods. If I didn't have to arise to pee, I might sleep all the time. Is it the same for whales other than not having to get up which, incidentally, I envy?

How much food does an elephant eat? Again, not a simple answer. Maybe as much as there is or as much as it wants to.

Is it OK for your dog to drink out of the toilet? Lots of dogs do it if you will let them. I always thought it was OK because they have a really robust digestive system. After all, they eat rotting stuff off the ground, lick their paws and nether parts, and it doesn't seem to bother them. It seems that after you flush the toilet, a bio film remains. This is a one molecule thick film which is usually the same stuff of which pond scum is comprised. This is probably not good for people, but mostly OK for dogs. I'm really not sure that it's not good for humans, but I'm not drinking out of the toilet to test the theory. This will have to remain a mystery.

There are many things that are relatively complex, which some people understand, but the preponderance of people does not: electricity, for example. I have no idea how or why it works. It's like magnetism. There are physicists who understand it, but I don't. Maybe with the right education I could, but then again I might be just too stupid.

How come the oceans are salty and the Great Lakes are not? I looked it up on the internet and still have questions. I think I should be pleased that the things that concern me now are simple things, like what's for dinner or did I pay the telephone bill.

See, aren't you happy I write these articles to fill in knowledge gaps you might have about subjects of no value?



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