

The stuff they don't mention about nature

How's the summer going? Are we having a good time? Are we getting out in the fresh air and sunshine? Are we spending time getting close to nature? Probably. Hmmm . . . Getting close to nature — that seems to be a controversial subject. We have discussed today's topic before, but apparently not enough. We should have been more thorough.



You can't beat a system you can't understand

By Sam Bari

Getting close to nature does not necessarily mean getting close to animals in the wild. They can be testy. Some of them are found very close to civilization, not in the "wild" at all. You know where. Try down by the beach, in the water, just below the surface, where you cannot easily see them. Some of them lurk there. And . . . surprise surprise; your travel agent will conveniently neglect to mention so much as a hint about their existence. Do you know why? Because they are dangerous, and that is not good for tourism. Do not listen to travel agents; they are bad people who will not tell you about the perils of communing too closely with nature.

For instance, last week I was down in sunny Florida. Ft. Lauderdale, to be exact. In one of the beach hotel lobbies, a man in swimming trunks was in a confrontation with a clerk at the check-in counter. The man in trunks was dripping wet. He had obviously been swimming in the ocean.

It was easy to tell he had been in the ocean because a 4-foot shark was firmly attached to his gluteus maximus.

"Your brochure said you have safe beaches," the man said to the desk clerk.

"We do," said the desk clerk.

"Then how do you explain this appendage that has attached itself to my backside?" the man inquired.

"Very simply, sir," the desk clerk replied. "You went in the water. We only said the beaches are safe."

This is not an isolated incident. Florida's urban areas are often inhabited by some of nature's most

formidable creatures. Take for instance, the alligator.

For some reason, Florida residents do not take the alligator seriously. They see them swimming up and down the canals, floating in ponds on golf courses, and even taking in a little sun on the docks behind their houses. Oddly, the homeowners think nothing of it.

They shoo them away as if they were a minor annoyance when they board their boats in the many canals and waterways in the Venice of the West. I wonder if it ever occurred to these people that one of these really ugly animals could swallow them whole. Wearing an alligator over your entire body while it is still alive and walking around is not considered a fashion statement in most circles.

Although most are not aware of it, an alligator can move as fast as a horse when it has the need. You know — like when it's hungry. Mind you, it doesn't turn on a dime, but it is dangerous at both ends. Gators have tails that are strong enough to tenderize you, and generous mouths with razor sharp teeth that can cut you up into bite-sized pieces.

They are one of the oldest living species in the world. Gators were around when dinosaurs roamed the earth. The difference is, the gators survived. The dinosaurs did not. They are not intellectual. Gators cannot be tamed to be house pets. If they are in the mood, they will eat you. They should be treated with utmost caution. Are these people who take them for granted, nuts? They must be. Don't they realize they are flirting with certain death if said gator is even mildly provoked?

Florida has another creature that

might be even more fearsome than the alligator. This creature was introduced to the Sunshine State in the last few years. Now they are well established in the Florida Everglades to the point that scientists are doing studies to find ways of eradicating them or at least controlling their population. I am talking about the Burmese python — the largest snake in the world.

Apparently, a few pet owners bought Burmese pythons when they were small, and did not realize that the snake could grow to well over 15-feet, or more. When they grew to an unmanageable size, the owners let them go, and they gathered in the Everglades. They are carnivores. They are the most dangerous boa constrictors on the planet. Burmese pythons have been known to swallow five-foot alligators whole.

The best way to avoid any confrontation with any of the aforementioned critters, sharks, gators, or giant-sized snakes is to stay inside. Do not even think of venturing out into non-air-conditioned areas. Stay inside where there are rooms with doors that can be locked. To the best of my knowledge, critters cannot turn doorknobs.

When you are indoors in Florida, the worst thing that could possibly happen is that you will be confronted with a Palmetto Bug. These are roaches on steroids. They are the size of Volkswagens. Having one in the house is akin to giving a two year-old a small car that can fly. However, they will not eat you. They are just another annoyance in this system that we can't understand.

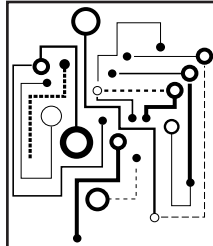


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History

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replaced an existing deteriorated wooden bulkhead with a stone riprap barrier.

10 years ago
From the Jamestown Press, August 6, 1998

The Town Council wants the state Department of Environmental Management to scale down the size of the fisheries laboratory it proposes to build next to the boat basin at Ft. Wetherill State Park.

Even before the first of the nearly 300 swimmers rounded Taylor's Point on the last leg of the 1.7 mile cross-bay swim, the beach at Potter Cove was a sea of activity as hundreds of volunteers and onlookers prepared for their arrival.

Town Planner Lisa Bryer has just reported to the Planning Commission that 33 percent of the community surveys sent out to Jamestown homes this spring were returned.

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