

Perspectives

A scenic view of a rocky coastline. In the foreground, a dark, jagged rock formation juts out into the sea, with white foam from the waves crashing against its base. The water is a deep, vibrant blue. In the middle ground, a large, green, rounded headland or island rises from the sea, its top covered in lush vegetation. The sky is a clear, bright blue with scattered white clouds. The overall scene is a beautiful coastal landscape.

Year 9
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WHAT A SCAM!

Every year lots of Australians get scammed by schemes they think sound pretty good. Make sure you're not one of them.

What is a scam?

A scam is an attempt to deprive you of money. Scams are usually promoted as a really fabulous deal in return for a 'relatively' small investment on your part. Sounds great, doesn't it? Scammers put a lot of effort into making their scams appear realistic and they certainly know what people want – whether it's instant wealth, good health, weight loss or love.

Types of scams

You're a winner!

If you are told that you've won a great prize in a competition you don't remember entering – ask yourself, 'What's the catch?' You'll probably be asked to pay a 'fee' to access your winnings, or told to call an expensive 1900 phone number. Chances are the cost of the fee or phone call will be a lot more than the value of any prize. If you really are a winner, you shouldn't have to pay anything.

Email scams

Email has opened up scamming opportunities across the globe. Scammers contact you via email, encouraging you to provide your bank details and other personal information. Watch out for emails claiming to be from your bank, asking you to send your account details and/or your PIN to them by return email or through a website. When you click on a hyperlink thinking you are being sent to the bank's site, you may be sent to a fake one instead. Keep your bank's official website amongst your website 'favourites' and enter the site that way.

YOU'RE A WINNER!



Computer predictions software

Would you like to be able to predict the share market, lottery numbers, or the outcome of horse races? Scammers are offering computer software they claim can do just that. Of course, it is a scam. If these fraudsters could confidently predict these events, do you think they would be in the business of trying to sell you cheap software?

A brief history of **TEA**

Once the drink of emperors and kings, tea is today the most egalitarian of beverages. This delightful drink is second only to water in worldwide popularity, consumed at a rate of over fifty billion servings a year.

Its flavour derives from volatile oils, its astringency from tannin, and its reviving charm from caffeine. Made from the leaves of an evergreen bush that is related to the camellia family, tea provides the body with only four calories, a few B-complex vitamins, and trace minerals.

Of the three thousand varieties of tea most are named in the manner of fine wines, after the region in which they are produced (Assam, Darjeeling etc.). Once the tea reaches the market-place, however, the regional name is often abandoned in favour of names deriving from leaf size, method of preparation, the person who introduced a particular blend – and sometimes combinations of the above. Green, oolong or black teas, for instance, are not different varieties of tea leaves but rather different processing techniques: green tea is dried without fermenting; oolong is a semi-fermented tea; and black tea is fully fermented.

Orange Pekoe, despite its exotic name, only describes a particular grade of tea – and one of the lowest grades at that. The most popular tea in the United States, it is comprised of small and broken leaf particles.

If the tea drinker is not confused enough, other teas have been given somewhat fanciful names that tell us nothing about flavour or strength.

The most misleading of these is Gunpowder tea, the name of which derives from the fact that the leaves are rolled into pellet-like balls that resemble buckshot. Contrary to the expectation inspired by its dramatic name, Gunpowder is a light-hued green tea with a shy, understated taste and the lowest caffeine of all teas.



The River Kings

Cap'n Elijah came aboard one morning from the river port where the *Lazy Jane* was tied up waiting for a cargo. He smiled like a cat who has seen a bowl of cream.

'Angus,' he said, 'get steam up. Shawn,' he called to Shawn, who was taking advantage of the lull to do a little fishing, 'hurry up the street and round up the lads. Do it quietly, boy, do it quietly. We don't want them' – indicating the *Lady Mabel* moored just upstream – 'we don't want *them* to get wind of it.'

'Get wind of what, Elijah?' asked Angus.

'Big cargo of wool waiting at one of the stations,' said Cap'n Elijah, with huge satisfaction. 'I knew it was due but they're ready sooner than I expected. I heard a whisper through my spies.'

Cap'n Elijah had spies everywhere, it seemed. News came to him by means only known to himself. There were shearers, fishermen, settlers and bargehands in his unique river espionage system. Praying Jack said that even the pelicans were in his pay. 'Now hurry, Shawn,' said Cap'n Elijah, and Shawn sprinted for the street.



Bamboo extinction warning

*Reuters News Agency
May 11 2004*

Deforestation is endangering about a third of the world's 1200 bamboo species and threatening rare animals such as giant pandas and mountain gorillas that depend on the plants for food and protection.

A joint report released today by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR) warned that it would also harm a US\$2 billion (A\$2.86 billion) a year bamboo industry and the millions of people who use the plants for food, housing, furniture and handicrafts.

"There are about 1200 species of bamboo in the world and we think about a third of those may be threatened by the reduction of forest habitat within their ranges," Valerie Kapos, co-author of the study and ecologist at the UNEP World Monitoring Centre in Cambridge, eastern England, told Reuters.

The report called "Bamboo Diversity" is the most comprehensive analysis to date of the impact of deforestation on bamboo species.



The fates of Asia's giant pandas, which eat only bamboo, Africa's mountain gorillas, Madagascar's golden lemurs and the mountain tapir in South America, as well as other animal and bird species, are linked to bamboo.

Bamboo, which is a giant, woody grass, is called the "wood of the poor" in India and the "friend of the people" in China because of its diverse use in everything from food and cooking to furniture, paper, musical instruments, boats and houses.

"Now we need to look much more closely at the dynamics of what is going on. We need to look more closely at the processes that are threatening the species of bamboo, determine which species are the most threatened and take conservation action in the areas where those species are concentrated," Kapos said.

Exploring our seas

New exhibition at Melbourne Museum

Victoria's marine world has it all — dramatic underwater cliffs, colourful sponge gardens, tall kelp forests, vibrant seagrass beds, vast rich sand plains, surging waves and tranquil coves. Over 12,000 marine animals and plants are estimated to live in Victorian waters. Melbourne Museum's latest blockbuster exhibition takes visitors on a journey through our unique underwater world. Here is a sneak preview of just a few of the marine animals featuring in the new exhibition.

Southern Dumpling Squid

(Euprymna tasmanica)

Like many animals that live on sand plains, the Southern Dumpling Squid spends all day buried in the sand and only comes out under the cover of darkness. During the night, this tiny squid feeds amongst seagrass and rocky reefs using its camouflage skills to sneak up on unsuspecting prey. To hide from predators lurking below, they use a special light filled organ that cancels out their silhouette against the moonlit sky.



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Prickly Anglerfish

(*Echinophryne crassispina*)

The best masters of deception are the shallow water anglerfishes. With the shape and colour of a rock or sponge or bit of seaweed-covered reef, they remain forever still, as the world moves about them. The first few spines of their dorsal fin are separated from the rest. The first spine, held above the mouth like a fishing rod, is tipped with a thin lure. A deft flick of the spine and the lure dances like a prawn or worm, enticing potential prey to venture closer for a better look. At lightning speed the curious become a meal.



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Spider Crab

(*Leptomithrax gaimardii*)

This crab has a large knobby body, long thin legs and two sturdy claws. At times, tens of thousands of Spider Crabs gather in tight masses on the sand plains of Port Phillip Bay. This species belongs to the decorator crab family. These crabs

use their claws to attach seaweeds, sponges and other marine life to hooked hairs that cover their backs. With a small garden on their backs, they are well hidden from predators.



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The Writer

Two weeks of thinking, and still no idea for my next book. I'd tried everything. Meditation. Self-hypnosis. Vacuuming my scalp to stimulate my brain.

Then a letter arrived from a kid in Western Australia. 'Your books are pretty good,' she wrote, 'except for the total lack of motorbikes.'

I fell to my knees, partly in gratitude and partly because the vacuum cleaner was still on my head. At last, a story idea. A kid travelling across the Great Sandy Desert on a motorbike. Not bad.

I'd just finished chapter one when the next letter came.

'Reasonably okay books,' wrote a kid in Adelaide, 'but why so few exotic fish?'

Good point. I rewrote chapter one. It ended up longer, mostly because the bike couldn't travel so fast with the aquarium on the back.

'Your stories would be more interesting,' said a letter from Bristol, 'if they included more elderly people.'

I had to agree. I rewrote chapter one and it certainly was more interesting. Particularly when one of the kid's grandparents, parched from running to keep up with the bike, drank the aquarium and swallowed a coral trout.

'Shouldn't you be thinking up your own ideas, Dad?' asked the kids.

'Why?' I replied.

'Oh, no reason,' they shrugged, handing me SIX letters.

'Waterskiing,' said one. 'Clydesdale horses,' said another.

'Self-reticulating irrigation systems,' said the other four.

This morning when the postman came I hid under my desk. He found me. I was sobbing.

'Must be tough, being a writer,' he said, bending down and handing me a bundle of letters. 'I wouldn't know where to get the ideas from.'



Seeking more, reaping less

Source: *Festival News: Newsletter of the Sydney Writers' Festival*
Issue 4, 2006, page 2.

The erosion of a sense of self is a condition of modern society so dominated by consumerism that our attempts to cure it are only fuelling our decline into rampant materialism.

This was the message of Clive Hamilton, the co-author of *Affluenza*, who gave a disturbing talk titled *Against the Pursuit of Happiness* yesterday.

"An escalating desire for more is the defining characteristic of our age in affluent countries like Australia," he said.

"Despite living in one of the wealthiest countries in the world, 62 per cent of Australians felt they did not have enough money to buy everything they needed."

"Australians spent \$10.8 billion every year – or an average of \$1250 per household – on things not even consumed," he said.

His talk explored Australia's increasing consumption as a remedy for the stress and isolation of modern life.

"Children now grow up in a thick fog of commercial messages which conditions their understanding of the world and themselves," he said.

Such is the penetration of market values into "tweens" – the 8–14 year-old demographic – that "by the time they finish their teens most young people have become so saturated with the messages of consumerism that they are incapable – without a determined act of will, at least – of understanding what their needs and preferences are," he said.

"They [their needs and preferences] have been formed by the market in the most systematic and effective experiment in brainwashing ever undertaken."

