

For the Love of Birds



Many have heard of the Audubon Society and know it as an environmental organization dedicated to studying and preserving birds and their natural habitats. The organization is named after John James Audubon, the French American painter of birds who dedicated his life to his unique art. His birthday, April 26, is now celebrated as Audubon Day.

Audubon showed an affinity for birds starting in childhood. He spent hours roaming the countryside, collecting birds' nests and eggs, and drawing them once he returned home. Audubon's father was a sailor and hoped his son would join the navy, so John James went to military school. However, he suffered from seasickness and so returned to the woods.

In 1803, the Napoleonic Wars broke out in France. Audubon's father obtained a fake passport and sent John James to America to avoid the war. It was at his family's farm in Pennsylvania that Audubon devoted himself full-time to the outdoors: hunting, fishing, and drawing birds.

Audubon was obsessed with birds. In an effort to study their habits, he tied string around their legs to see if they returned year after year. He learned the art of taxidermy and worked in natural museums. But his greatest contribution to ornithology was his brilliant book *Birds of America*. He dedicated his life to drawing every single bird in America. His style was new and different: a highly detailed drawing of each bird, more accurate than ever before. His drawings were life-sized, with some pages over three feet tall and two feet wide. After 14 years of traveling the entire country, Audubon drew over 700 species of birds. *Birds of America* is often considered the greatest picture book ever made, and original copies have sold for over \$10 million. How's that for a nest egg?

April Birthdays

If you were born between April 1–19, you are Aries, the Ram. These independent adventurers like to strike out on their own and are natural leaders. Their enthusiasm and confidence give them big, outgoing personalities. Those born between April 20–30 are Bulls of Taurus. Bulls show a steady persistence in endeavors both professional and personal, and after working hard, they like to reward themselves for a job well done.

- Emmylou Harris (musician) – April 2, 1947
- Marlon Brando (actor) – April 3, 1924
- James D. Watson (scientist) – April 6, 1928
- Jackie Chan (actor) – April 7, 1954
- Sharon York – April 8, 1941**
- Queen Elizabeth II (royalty) – April 21, 1926
- Barbra Streisand (entertainer) – April 24, 1942
- Kelly Clarkson (singer) – April 24, 1982
- Duke Ellington (pianist) – April 29, 1899
- Rene Rensklev – April 30, 1947**

Major League Debut



On April 15, 1947, Jackie Robinson played his first major league baseball game with the Brooklyn Dodgers against the Boston Braves in front of a crowd of 25,000 spectators at Ebbets Field in Brooklyn. This marked the first moment that an African

American athlete played a sport in any of the major leagues.

Robinson did not get a hit that day, but he was awarded the first ever Rookie of the Year title that year. In 1949, he was named the National League's Most Valuable Player. The next year, he became the Dodgers' highest paid player with a salary of \$35,000. In 1955, Robinson led the Dodgers to a World Series victory over the New York Yankees. A perennial All-Star and Hall of Famer, Robinson's number 42 was retired by all of baseball on April 15, 1997.

Newsletter

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Celebrating April

Lawn and Garden Month

Humor Month

Welding Month

Laugh at Work Week

April 1–7

National Volunteer Week

April 21–27

Peanut Butter and Jelly Day

April 2

World Rat Day

April 4

Teflon Day

April 6

National Gardening Day

April 14

Take a Wild Guess Day

April 15

Earth Day

April 22

Talk Like Shakespeare Day

April 23

International Jazz Day

April 30

Tartan Tales

Scottish American Heritage Month is a time to don kilts, hum to the tunes of bagpipes, and celebrate the rich tapestry woven by Scottish immigrants in the fabric of American history. Rewind to the 17th and 18th centuries, and picture the adventurous Scots sailing across the Atlantic to the promising landscapes of Canada and the United States. They sought refuge from religious persecution, economic hardships, and land scarcity. Political unrest, coupled with the promise of religious freedom and better prospects, were incentives for many Scots to pursue a fresh start in the New World.

The spirited settlers didn't just plant their flags; they wove their culture into the fabric of their new homes. From Nova Scotia to North Carolina, they created communities that echoed the hills of Scotland. They didn't leave behind their love for haggis or the skirl of bagpipes; they infused these traditions into the heartbeat of American culture.

Fast forward to today, and you'll find echoes of Scottish influence in the very fiber of America. From the lilt of folk tunes to the thunder of athletes at Highland Games, their legacy lives on. The haunting, soulful whine of the bagpipes and the swirl of the tartans evoke a sense of kinship, reminding us of the indelible mark left by these pioneers.

Scottish American Heritage Month isn't just a nod to history; it's a celebration of resilience, tradition, and the merging of cultures. From their stories of fortitude to their rich cultural contributions, their legacy transcends time, resonating in the essence of the American spirit. This April, don your tartan, strike up the bagpipes, and celebrate the remarkable journey and enduring impact of the Scottish Americans who made this land their own. Raise a dram of whisky (or your favorite beverage) to salute the spirited Scots who helped shape America. Cheers to a heritage as rich and diverse as the Scottish landscape itself!



The Rise of Robots



From April 6–14, science and technology geeks will gather for RoboWeek 2024 to explore the future of robots and their place in society. Robots have long fascinated humans. Leonardo da Vinci may have been the first to envision a humanlike robot. The original Renaissance man, da Vinci was a painter, sculptor, inventor, and engineer. He

sketched his idea of a “mechanical knight” and engineered a suit of armor that could be moved by a system of pulleys and levers. When does a simple machine become a robot? Robots often possess computers that enable them to sense the environment and react accordingly. Also, they are able to move, either by themselves or via remote control. In these ways, robots are truly intelligent machines. From R2-D2 and C-3PO of *Star Wars* to Rosie the robot maid in *The Jetsons*, robots have become an integral part of our vision of the future.

The word *robot* first appeared in 1920, when the Czech writer Karel Čapek wrote a play about a factory that makes humanlike android workers. The word *robot* in Czech means “serf labor,” “drudgery,” and “hard work.”

Today, companies are beginning to manufacture intelligent machines that perform many laborious household tasks. For example, the Roomba is a floor-cleaning robot about the size and shape of a round cake that moves independently around the room sucking up dirt. Sure, it may get stuck under the couch or miss some dirt in the corner, but it could make vacuums obsolete. A similar lawn-mowing robot, the Automower, cuts lawns by itself. Sensors keep it from running into lawn furniture, flowers, or pets. There are even robots with arms that can feed people with disabilities, and soft pillows with robot arms inside that can be remotely directed to contract, hugging whoever is holding the pillow.

Honesty and Deception

You may find that April 4 goes against your moral code, for it's Tell a Lie Day. Many ethical people live by the credo “Always tell the truth.” But do we? Researchers have discovered that most people tell occasional lies for several reasons. Sometimes we lie to gain other people's respect or to cover up for making mistakes. The good news is that most people lie to spare someone else's feelings from being hurt. If people choose to always be honest regardless of the consequences, that honesty could lead to injury or harm. Compassion may sometimes override honesty.

Lucky, then, that April 30 is Honesty Day. Honesty can certainly hurt sometimes, but it also takes courage and maturity to be honest in difficult situations. Furthermore, staying honest attracts other honest people to you. When you are surrounded by the truth, you can be your authentic self. The freedom that comes with honesty is worth celebrating!

Unraveling the Art of Tatting



While a handkerchief, table runner, doily, or collar made of intricate knotted lace appears nearly impossible to construct, the art of tatting is easy to learn. All you need to start tatting is thread, a shuttle (a small device that helps guide a silk thread through loops into knots), and your two hands. Give it a try on April 1, International Tatting Day.

This decorative art form may have grown from the netting and ropework handmade by sailors and fishermen of olden times. Tatting became fashionable in the 1800s and enjoyed a surge in popularity during the 1950s and 1960s. Technology has usurped the handiwork required to make tatted lace, which means that handmade tatting is more precious than ever.

Savoring Art

April 13 is Slow Art Day. No, this doesn't mean you should draw pictures of turtles or molasses. It's just a day to spend some quality time with art, pondering the composition and closely contemplating the work.



For some, staring at a piece of art for 10 minutes or more may present a challenge. But Phil Terry, the founder of the slow art concept, discovered something highly rewarding when he spent hours studying two paintings in a New York City art museum one afternoon. He realized he did not have to be a professional art critic to understand and appreciate art.

How does looking slowly at a piece of art heighten the experience? In the good old days, the expert craftsmanship of products was appreciated. Modern culture places an emphasis on mass production, often at the hands of unskilled craftspeople or in mechanized factories. One of the major benefits of slow art is appreciating the amazing expert craftsmanship it takes to make a work of art. Taking the time to really look at art allows us to appreciate each brushstroke, the choice of materials, and the step-by-step process of creating a work of art. With this heightened awareness of craftsmanship comes a deeper emotional connection to the artwork.

Museums around the world have embraced the slow art movement, and on April 13, many will offer tours that visit only a few works of art. These tours end with lunch, where visitors can discuss what they saw and how the art affected them. But Terry is quick to point out that Slow Art Day isn't confined to just museums. Taking the time to appreciate art can happen anywhere, from sculpture gardens to city parks to historic houses. In essence, Terry is simply repeating the old maxim “Stop and smell the roses.” These roses just happen to be in a museum.

Mobile Milestone

On April 3, 1973, Motorola employee Martin Cooper stood on a New York City street corner and made the first cellular phone call to a colleague at Bell Labs in New Jersey. Unlike the first telegraph message (“What hath God wrought?”) or the first telephone conversation (“Watson, come here. I want to see you.”), Cooper's words have been forgotten. His device, however, is now everywhere, thanks to a purchase price far below the original price tag of \$3,995.

Let the Good Times Roll



All April long, opponents will be throwing their knuckles down. Don't worry, this isn't anything sinister. “Knuckles down” is the position you assume before shooting in a classic game of marbles. So, this April, Knuckles Down Month, you too can play for keeps.

The classic game of marbles is called ringer. Two parallel lines, lag lines, are drawn 10 feet away from each other. A large 10-foot circle is drawn between the lag lines. In the middle of the circle is a cross made of 13 target marbles, or mibs. To determine who plays first, each player lags from one lag line to the other; that is, they toss their shooter marble to the opposite line. The player whose shooter lands closest to the lag line goes first.

Play starts by knuckling down along the edge of the ring and using your thumb to cast your shooter at the mibs inside. The object is to knock a mib outside the circle while keeping your shooter inside. You next knuckle down inside the ring where your shooter landed. If you fail to knock out a mib, then it is your opponent's turn. The first player to knock out a majority of marbles wins, and it's up to you to determine whether to play for fair (return all marbles to their original owners) or play for keeps (the winner keeps all the marbles).