

# THE FALCON

December 2023

Weird and Wonderful Creatures!



Attendance: Why It Matters



Extinction



Legends and Superstitions



Album Review



Thirsk School  
& Sixth Form College

Sixth Form

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# The First Month of Sixth Form

By LB, Year 12

It seems strange, returning to education once you've finished your GCSEs. You've narrowed down the choice of subjects to only three or four. For me, I was extremely excited to start on my chosen subjects, two of which I had done at GCSE and one that was entirely new. I also knew that I was going to be starting my EPQ (extended project qualification) lessons as well at Sixth Form. Now that I've been at Sixth Form for slightly over a month, I am able to say how immensely happy I am with it. The workload is heavier (which is expected) however, when you're working on subjects you enjoy, it doesn't feel heavy. I genuinely love the subjects I have taken, which makes the content we are studying within those subjects interesting and fun.



Another great part about Sixth Form life is that your relationship with teachers and staff changes. The staff want the best for you and are also able to joke around with you all significantly more now that you are in Key Stage 5. It also makes you progress much faster within subjects, as the classes are smaller, and the teachers are able to give you more personal feedback and improvements. Smaller classes also make for more class discussion. This may be the opposite of what you might expect however, people become less afraid to speak up during class, meaning more students share their thoughts.

Sixth Form has completely been the right choice for me for my post-GCSE education and I am incredibly glad that I chose to stay on at Thirsk.

# Attendance: Why It Matters

By EA and CC, Year 9

Why is attendance important?  
How does attendance affect our lives in school and further in the future? *This interview with last year's Attendance Officer will help you to understand how much attendance matters.*

**Journalist:** How can attendance affect life in school?

**A Rickard:** The impact will be upon academic progress and social interaction. It has been stated that for every 5% absence, below 95% of students will drop a grade in all subjects at GCSE. Years 7-9 are the foundation years for GCSE's.

**Journalist:** How can attendance affect life outside of school and future plans?

**A Rickard:** Students who do not attend school become very socially isolated. They tend not to get involved in community clubs and groups and miss out on a huge range of opportunities, and they possibly don't develop the necessary skills to take them in to young adulthood.

**Journalist:** Does attendance increase or decrease across the school year?

**A Rickard:** Generally, attendance starts high at the start of the year and then dips as we get into winter flu season. Then it picks up again around spring and summer. However, any outbreaks of illness really impact upon attendance such as a sickness bug or Strep A.

**Journalist:** What consequences are in place for students with bad attendance?

**A Rickard:** Parents are legally obliged to ensure their children attend school regularly. When this does not happen, the school follows the North Yorkshire County Council attendance pathway. Letters are sent home, and students are placed on attendance contracts. For those who still do not attend, parents can be prosecuted with fines.

# Our Furthest Ancestor by Species: Ctenophora

By TD, Year 9

Ctenophora, more commonly known as 'comb jelly', is our furthest ancestor in terms of DNA.

## Basic Information

A comb jelly is an aquatic animal that lives in warm waters. It has a soft, gelatinous body and there is a currently known to be 100-150 species of comb jellies, and another 25 yet to be fully described and named. Comb jellies are predators, and they feast on microscopic larvae and small crustaceans. Their body, unsurprisingly, consists of mostly jelly and a layer two cells thick on the outside of it. They have a pair of retractable tentacles, which prove useful when catching prey, and is

hunted by fish, certain jellyfish, sea turtles and ocean sunfish.

## What is in their DNA? How is it different to ours?

Comb jellies are missing some crucial genes that produce microRNA (which helps control the kind and amounts of proteins they make and help prevent cancer, viral infections and responding to stress) unlike most other species. They also lack genes required to grow muscles, meaning that over the course of hundreds of years they evolved to develop muscles on their own. This makes them completely different to us as humans as we have these required genes, meaning that comb jellies had to evolve to grow muscles.

## Did you know?

- Most species have eight strips of cilia on their bodies that are the length of their own body, called comb rows.
- An average comb jelly's size is only 4 inches!



# Our Closest Ancestor by Species: The Bonobos

By DB, Year 9

Did you know that the bonobos DNA is the closest to humans?

## Basic information

A Bonobo is a type of monkey that lives in lowland rainforests. Bonobos have long legs, pinkish lips, and dark faces. They have a life expectancy of around 40 years. Interestingly, they share 98.7% of our DNA, making them our closest relative by species. They were first discovered in 1929 and did not become a separate species until the 1950s.

## Fun Facts and Trivia:

- A youtuber taught a Bonobo to play Minecraft!
- They share 98.7% of our DNA!

**Diet:** Bonobos love to feast on fruit. While fruit is their favourite food, they also eat leaves, flowers, seeds, bark, fungus, and honey.

## Habitat:

A bonobo's habitat is the Democratic Republic of Congo, in low land rainforests along the south bank of the Congo River.

## Average life span:

A Bonobos life span is around 40 years in captivity as an estimation, as their life span in the wild is unknown.



# Weird and Wonderful Animals

By LD, Year 9

Below there are the names and pictures of some animals I bet you didn't know existed. Count a point for every animal you know. See if you know more than the rest of your friends!

## Galapagos Batfish/Red Lipped Batfish

This animal is located in the Galapagos Islands which is a part of Ecuador. This animal is not at risk of becoming extinct.



## Purple Nosed Pig Frog

This animal mostly lives underground. Near damp soil or mountain ranges. This animal *is* endangered.



## Sarcastic Fringehead

These creatures can be very fearless and aggressive to anything that attempts to enter their burrow. They live on the exposed coast of the Pacific Ocean. They are not endangered.



# Evil Extinction

By CC, Year 9

Extinction has been a problem for earth's inhabitants from the moment we thrived, it has slowly been consuming our wonderful animals every year. Now with climate change, those numbers of extinct animals per year have rocketed. This article is here to show you recently extinct animals, and sadly, the ones yet to come.

## Spix Macaw (1)

The Spix Macaw was one of the beautiful blue habitants of the jungle. A movie called Rio was made to inform people about the upcoming extinction of this bird, but sadly it went extinct very recently in 2022.

All of these creatures have gone extinct, never to be seen again. They were very important in the eco system and now that they have gone, more poor species will perish. Now let's look at some beloved creatures that could become extinct any day now.

## Splendid Poison Frog (2)

The Splendid Poison Frog went extinct this year due to Amphibian Chytrid Fungus.

## Yangtze River Dolphin (3)

The Yangtze River Dolphin went extinct in the 2000s. It's a very unusual looking mammal but like everything in this article, it didn't deserve to go extinct.

**Endangered Animals:** Eastern lowland gorilla- 5000 left, Red wolf- 17 left, Asian elephant- 50,000 left, African wild dog- 230 left, Bornean Orangutang- 150,000 left, African lion- 20,000 left, Sunda tiger- 400 left, Arabian leopard- 200 left, Sumatran elephant- 2400 left, Amur leopard- 70 left, White rhino- 2 left.



Just remember, it's not too late to save these creatures. Many thought-to-be-extinct species have been rediscovered, but it doesn't mean all of them will. Change their fate; Change the planet.

(1)



(2)



(3)



# Legends and Superstitions

By JP

## Black cats

In the Middle Ages, people associated black cats with the devil and deemed them partially responsible for the black plague. It was also believed that witches used alley cats as companions and familiars (animal-shaped spirits that could help witches with their magic). By the time of the Salem Witch Trials, accusers thought witches could turn in to cats, typically black ones. One Scottish fairytale tells of the cat 'Sith', a giant black cat that could steal a dead person's soul before gods could take it.

## Witches

The type of witch we're familiar with in popular culture are scary, old women, typically brewing potions in a cauldron. This is taken from the pagan goddess, the crone, also known as "the old one" or "Earth Mother." She was once a symbol of wisdom, change, and new seasons. Celts believed souls entered the crone's cauldron after death and waited

there to be reincarnated. The crone stirred the cauldron so new souls could enter and old ones could be reborn.

## Bats and Vampires

The origin of this symbol revolves around Samhain. Celts would construct large bonfires to dance around and sacrifice animals with. The fire attracted lots of insects, and so bats came out to feast. Bat's blood was also said to be one of the ingredients in witches' ointments. In Medieval times, bats were considered the harbingers of death and suspected to be familiars for witches.

Stories of nocturnal monsters have origins all over the world, like the Chinese Jiangshis, evil spirits that attack people and drain life energy, or blood-sucking demons from India. But when Spanish explorers discovered that some bats drink animal blood, the legend of vampires and their animal counterparts grew. The 'Count Dracula' we all know comes

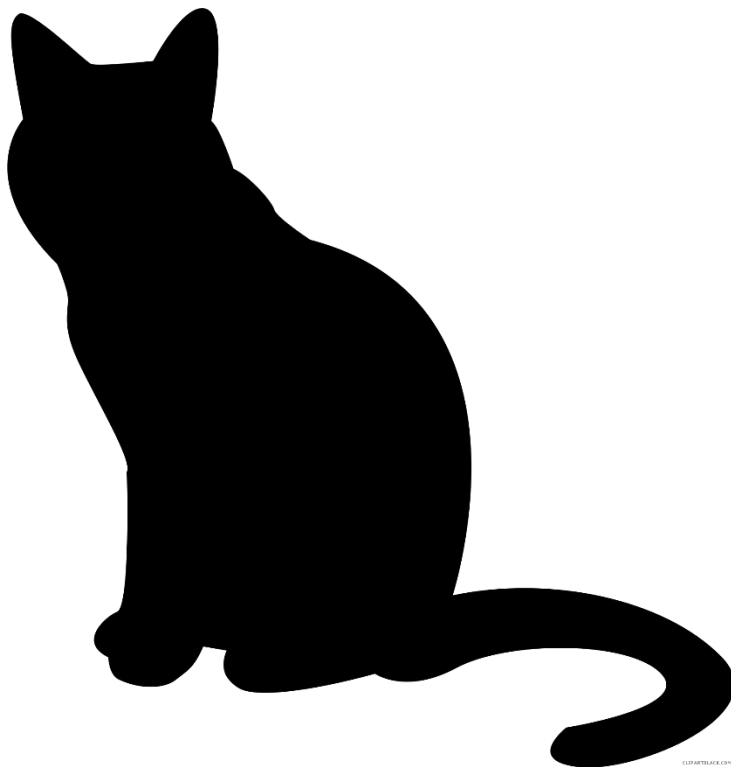
from Bram Stoker and his 1897 novel, but centuries older versions of vampires were demonic spirits, come back from the dead.

### **Cemeteries**

A common urban legend says that you must hold your breath every time you drive past a cemetery. If you don't, you could wake a spirit with each breath, make the spirits jealous, or even inhale them. The symbolic connection between breath, life, and spirits has existed since the beginning of human thought.

### **Spiders**

Because of their ability to spin webs, folklore often depicts spiders as storytellers and fortune-tellers. When talk of witches began to rise, these stories grew entangled with witchcraft. Spiders supposedly assisted witches in casting spells. However, medieval superstitions say that if you see spider on Halloween, it's actually the spirit of a dead loved one watching you.



# The Dark Truth of Nursery Rhymes

By EA, Year 9

You may not know this or won't believe me, but nursery rhymes have quite a horrible backstory.

“Mary, Mary Quite Contrary.”

As you may already know, this song talks about her garden but its referents to Mary the first (‘Bloody Mary) who was around in the Tudor times. Mary 1 was born on 18 February 1516 (the 18<sup>th</sup> of February is actually my birthday, but I was born many centuries after her) at the Palace of Placentia in Greenwich, England. She was the only child of King Henry VIII and his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, to survive infancy. She got the nickname ‘Bloody Mary’ because of how many people she executed.

“Ring Around the Roses.”

Nearly everyone has heard of this nursery rhyme, but have you ever wondered what it means? It is about The Black Death. When the song says, “A tissue, a tissue”, it means that everyone is beginning to catch The Black Death. “We all fall down”, really means we all drop dead.

Now that I have exposed the dark truth behind these nursery rhymes, you may think twice next time you sing them.



# **‘Endless Summer Vacation’ by Miley Cyrus – Album Review**

**By FM, Year 8**

On Friday, 10<sup>th</sup> of March Miley Cyrus released her new album, ‘Endless Summer Vacation’. This follows the release of ‘Flowers’, her first song to debut at number 1 on the Billboard Hot 100. ‘Endless Summer Vacation’ is Miley’s 8<sup>th</sup> studio album, containing 13 songs and also featuring 2 other artists.

In the highly anticipated album (which Miley has been teasing in the last few months), it includes SIA in “Muddy Feet” and Brandi Carlile in “Thousand Miles”.

Released on the same day as the album, the first-ever performances from ‘Endless Summer Vacation’ will be featured on a Backyard Sessions, on Disney plus, which Cyrus first began in 2012 and has done two other specials since then.

Before this album, Miley had won an astonishing 89 awards from many different categories and 49 Teen Choice Award

nominations from 2006 to 2014. This makes her the most nominated person in the history of the Teen Choice Awards.

Some of Miley’s historically popular songs are ones such as ‘Wrecking Ball’ (which has currently over a billion views on YouTube) and ‘Party in the USA’.

The 1<sup>st</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> track on the album is ‘Flowers’, which was the legendary song that hurled Miley back up to the number 1 spot in the Billboard Hot 100. After 2 weeks, the song had gained over 105 million streams on Spotify and the music video (which was shot at Miley’s own home in Los Angeles) soared to the top of the YouTube Music chart. This song has attracted much attention due to the similarities between the date of release, 13<sup>th</sup> of January and Miley’s ex-husbands birthday (Liam Hemsworth). In the song, the lyrics are either a response to or a twist on ‘When I Was Your Man’ by Bruno mars, particularly in the chorus. Overall, in the lyrics and the

music video, it shows a theme of independence.

The 9<sup>th</sup> track on the album featuring SIA, reveals an anger and irritation, specifically about being cheated on or in a toxic relationship. This is shown through lyrics like “You smell like perfume that I didn’t purchase” and “You’ve watered the weeds and killed all the roses”. Sia’s voice seems to contrast very well with Miley’s tone even though she only appears during the outro to the song.

Miley Cyrus has currently not announced a tour for the album and seems against it.



Endless Summer Vacation - Track list:

1. Flowers
2. Jaded
3. Rose Coloured Lenses
4. Thousand miles (featuring Brandi Carlile)
5. You
6. Handstand
7. River
8. Violet Chemistry
9. Muddy Feet (featuring SIA)
10. Wildcard
11. Island
12. Wonder Woman
13. Flowers (demo)

# What Does Christmas Mean to You?

By The Falcon Journalists

Preparing to release our December issue during the run up to Christmas has been an exciting time for us at The Falcon. We've been reflecting upon what makes us feel festive and why Christmas is such an enjoyable time of year.

Therefore, we're sharing our thoughts and encourage you to also consider: what does Christmas mean to you?

*Christmas means...*

“Seeing people being happy when they receive gifts.”

“Spending time with my family for Christmas dinner.”

“I spend time looking forward to nice events with friends and family.”

“Valuable time with family and friends, especially if you haven't seen them in a long time.”

“The food – especially pigs in blankets.”

“Enjoying being festive, doing all the things that you wouldn't normally do.”

“Letting yourself rest and celebrating those dearest to you.”

From all of us at The Falcon, we wish you a very merry Christmas and a happy new year.



# Festive Fun!



Christmas riddles to try with your friends and family:

1. What do you call a reindeer with three eyes?
2. What's the best thing to put into a Christmas cake?
3. Why couldn't the teacher find anyone to help them wrap gifts?
4. What was Santa's favorite subject in school?
5. How much did Santa pay for his sleigh?

## Christmas Word Search

G	E	E	E	V	L	E	T	T	T	R	E	E	H
S	E	L	E	I	T	A	E	O	H	E	D	R	R
N	C	G	V	C	C	T	E	N	S	E	I	S	R
O	H	S	T	E	T	N	A	T	R	E	N	E	E
W	R	V	S	N	S	A	V	T	M	E	N	T	G
M	I	E	S	E	I	S	E	V	I	E	E	T	S
A	S	K	N	E	N	T	R	V	T	A	R	F	T
N	T	S	E	V	I	T	S	E	F	S	E	L	N
I	M	S	L	E	I	G	H	I	V	E	S	C	E
E	A	S	T	O	C	K	I	N	G	S	T	M	S
E	S	T	A	E	E	L	T	N	V	E	E	E	E
E	O	T	E	L	T	S	I	M	T	I	T	M	R
R	S	R	E	I	N	D	E	E	R	S	E	K	P
E	N	E	L	S	E	N	R	G	E	S	M	S	E

ELVES  
CHRISTMAS  
SANTA  
MISTLETOE  
FESTIVE  
STOCKING  
SNOWMAN  
DINNER  
PRESENTS  
REINDEER  
SLEIGH  
TREE

Riddle answers:

1. A reiiindeer.
2. Your teeth.
3. No one was present.
4. Chemistree.
5. Nothing, it was on the house