

# THE VOICE

## MAGAZINE

*Volume 15 Issue 14  
April 20, 2007*



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comments to [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org),  
and please indicate if we may  
publish your letter.

### *To AU Students*

Microsoft Office 2007 will be officially released by Microsoft January 31, 2007, and has been available for download from Microsoft for a while.

While AU staff will eventually be using Office 2007, a full conversion to this software is several months away. An announcement will be posted when the conversion is complete. Until then, documents sent to AU staff should be saved as Office 2003 format. Save your documents as follows:

Word/Excel/PowerPoint 2007 - Create your document and immediately click on the Office start button (upper left hand corner), Save as and choose Word/Excel/ PowerPoint 97-2003 compatibility. The title bar will reflect the document is in the compatibility mode. The help files in the 2007 software (search for compatibility) explain this feature in detail.

Access 2007 - Create your database and immediately click on the Office start button (upper left hand corner), Save as and choose Access 2002-2003 compatibility. The title bar will reflect the document is in the compatibility mode. The help feature in Access 2007 (search for file format) will show how to change the default save format for Access to a different format.

### *AU Computing Services Helpdesk*

## THE VOICE MAGAZINE

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## No Easy Answers

The news reports are still coming in, the survivors are still in hospital, and already the tragedy at Virginia Polytechnic Institute has sparked a forceful reaction from those on both sides of the gun control issue.

Politicians are lying low, but the debate is simmering and it won't be long before it comes to a boil. As President Bush put it (even while sidestepping the issue), "I think there's going to be a lot of discussion" (1).

Public discourse, the freedom to engage in rigorous debate, is good. It is one of the hallmarks of a free society. But in this case, it is not a debate that ever will—or can—be won.

The question being raised in many articles and weblogs is whether or not the Virginia Tech assailant could have been stopped if students had been allowed to carry their firearms on campus.

The pro-Second Amendment camp says yes. As one poster on the *Wall Street Journal Online* website put it: "The only thing that deters bad people with guns are good people with guns" (2).

Philip Van Cleave, president of the Virginia Citizens Defense League, took the same stance. Although he couldn't guarantee that an armed campus would have prevented the tragedy, he suggested that if the students had been carrying weapons, they would have been "more like a wolf with some fangs, able to fight back" (3).

Still others point to the February 2007 confrontation in a Salt Lake City mall, in which an off-duty police officer used his weapon to prevent a teenaged shooter from claiming even more lives (4).

But those arguing for firearms as self-defence are relying on a very shaky assumption: that the average person, often with only basic instruction in firearm use, will possess the same clear-headed, capable judgement as professionals who regularly practice with weapons and are trained to handle crisis situations. That they would have reacted in the same way as the highly trained officer in Salt Lake City.

According to a 1997 U.S. Department of Justice report, 16% of U.S. adults own at least one handgun (5). Extending that national total to a Virginia Tech on-campus enrolment of over 26,000 would have placed more than 4,100 handguns in classrooms and on campus grounds that day.

In the midst of all the confusion, how would students—or even police—have been able to identify the one armed student among thousands who was the aggressor? With a crowd of frightened, panicked people running through hallways, barring doors, or jumping out windows, seeing someone approaching with a gun might easily have been enough to provoke an accidental shooting—purely in self-defence.

Yet those calling for stricter gun controls don't have the solution either. In this particular case, tightening Virginia's lax gun laws wouldn't have helped.

They are, admittedly, some of the loosest in the country: the state only requires two pieces of identification and a computerized background check. It is also known as a "shall issue state" (6), which means that law officials "must issue a concealed carry permit to almost anyone who applies" (3). (Incredibly, the state has found it necessary to limit people to one handgun purchase a month to avoid customers reselling in bulk.)

Other states, including California and New York, require buyers to undergo a thorough application at their local police department, and there is often a waiting period before they can obtain a gun (6).

But the fact is that tighter gun controls wouldn't have stopped this murderer. None of the conditions that would have raised a red flag were present: he didn't have a criminal record, and had never been involuntarily committed to a mental-health facility (although ordered for an assessment, he was only treated as an outpatient) (6). And if someone is determined to lay their hands on a weapon, they certainly don't need to go through legal channels to do it.

In spite of all the finger-pointing, all the rhetoric about gun control versus the right to bear arms, every situation is different and the variables are infinite.

Which random group of people will be thrown together in a given situation? What group dynamics will influence their reaction? Will they be lucky enough to have in their midst one (or more) professionals trained in crisis management, perhaps a police officer or a member of the military? If they're armed, will it be enough to deter an attacker who is psychotic, high, or both? It's impossible to know.

So what's the answer? The sad truth is that there isn't one. And in light of the terrible tragedies that have struck Virginia Tech, and others, in recent years, that may be the most frightening thing of all.

- (1) ABC News (2007). "Bush Offers Condolences at Virginia Tech." Retrieved April 19, 2007, from <http://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory?id=3049623&page=2>
- (2) *The Wall Street Journal Online* (2007). Reader response to "FBI Warns of Copycat Attacks." Posted April 17, 2007, 12:51 a.m. Retrieved April 19, 2007, from <http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2007/04/16/more-to-come/>
- (3) *New York Times* (2007). "Shooting Rekindles Issues of Gun Rights and Restrictions." Retrieved April 19, 2007, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/18/us/18pistols.html>
- (4) CBS News (2007). "Police: Off-Duty Cop Saved Lives In Mall." Retrieved April 19, 2007, from <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/02/13/national/main2466711.shtml>
- (5) Cook, P. And J. Ludwig. "Guns In America: National Survey on Private Ownership and Use of Firearms." U.S. Department of Justice, 1997. <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles/165476.pdf>
- (6) *New York Times* (2007). "Mental Health and Guns: Do Background Checks Do Enough?" Retrieved April 19, 2007, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/19/us/19weapons.html>





Rue Mouffetard

Although the weekdays I spend in Paris as an exchange student are not as full as those of my fellow (but regular) students, I have a special affinity for Sundays, and for a number of good reasons. Lucky as I am, I live close to the little square at the foot of rue Mouffetard, which leads slightly uphill to the Panthéon. On this narrow, lively street there is a market almost every day, but Sundays are my favourite. I have my breakfast in a café with the most magnificent view over a square with a fountain, a small park by the church Saint Medrad, and the first fruit stalls. Farther up the street you can buy a still-warm *baguette*, choose between an infinite number of cheeses (do you prefer the ones with mould or those with nuts?), select an appropriate wine to go with it, and even opt between fresh clams or an octopus. On Sundays, the market is especially crowded since the *famille nombreuses*, including at least three children, come to shop for their lunch. As I read in an influential newspaper, in about twenty years France is expected to become the most powerful country in Europe in terms of economy because of the rising number of people. Indeed, I have never seen so many little children as there are on Sundays in the streets and parks of Paris. Observing them neatly dressed and combed but not yet aware of time as they will be some years later, is, I believe, one of the most inspiring ways to start your morning.





Not a masquerade, just street actors on  
their way home

I leave the café just before noon, as another spectacle is about to begin on an empty spot between the fruit stalls and the park of the church. There are, in fact, many Sunday performances along rue Moufflard by musicians and street-theatre actors, but I prefer this one to all the others. A group of accordion players and singers prepare a provisional stage, the most important element being a microphone. They are dressed as typically French as they could be. Men wear black-and-white striped shirts, berets, and kerchiefs around their necks, while women wear long colourful skirts and wavy neckerchief of strong colors, pinned with brooches. Next to the musicians stand boxes of folders that contain texts of songs. As the crowd grows larger, the texts are distributed among the passersby, who stop to sing along. They stand in a half-circle and respectfully make space for those who feel like dancing. You are free to ask for a certain song to be played, but you are also free to take the microphone and sing it yourself. I will never forget that chilly yet sunny Sunday in February, when a tiny, white-haired lady sang a famous part of the opera *Carmen* with the voice of a prima donna while one of the couples danced something like flamenco, the man clicking with castanets. And all of a sudden you feel as if a light breeze had taken you out of the city, in some village two centuries ago.



Flamenco in the street of Paris

Leaving the lively square behind, I walk toward the Seine. All the shops are normally closed on Sundays, but bookworms nevertheless get their satisfaction. Of course you can find some enormous, several-storeyed bookshops in Paris, but unlike elsewhere around the Western world, these have not pushed smaller, friendlier bookshops over the edge. As I am a frequent book buyer (not always such a reader, though), Paris perfectly reflects my idea of heaven. On a Sunday walk you can turn around some corner and you might just discover a book market where you can buy books by pounds! And not only that—new and used, novels and art books, all of them are amazingly cheap, at least compared to my Slovenian homeland. By the Seine, opposite the Notre Dame cathedral, there is the most famous bookshop in France, Shakespeare and Company Books. This shop contains not only new and used English and French books on all subjects one can come up with, but also several beds, a small kitchen, and a table with a real (!) typewriter, all tucked somewhere between the shelves that are filled with dusty books. Apparently, aspiring writers from all around the world can come to live there for several months in return for some help around the shop and a pledge to write their own book someday. And on a Sunday, you are even served a hot cup of tea while leafing through the word treasury.



If I do not get completely caught up in one of many such magic places until the end of the day, I sometimes pretend to be a real tourist and visit a museum. A good reason why you may want to do that on the first Sunday of the month (even though you risk being trod on by a constant flow of people if you admire a certain object a bit too long), is that every museum in Paris is free of charge. Just before my arrival here, a new museum was opened and I quickly fell in love with it. Musée du quai Branly is interesting enough for its architecture, but as a future anthropologist I am attracted to everything that is happening there. That includes not only anthropological exhibitions on virtually every corner of the world, but also conferences, films, lectures, and concerts. Where else could you observe the masks of New Ireland in the Pacific Ocean, follow a lecture on the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, and round out the day with a concert given by Cuban improvisational poets?



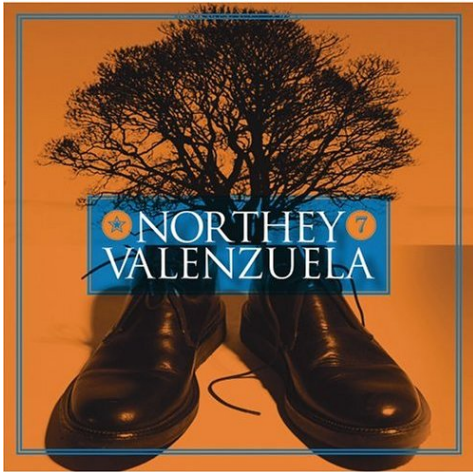
On other Sunday evenings, though, there is El Patio. You are right, this is not a French word. It is the Spanish name of a dancing room on the second floor of a narrow house in the heart of Paris. It is a place my boyfriend and I go to enjoy the company and dance of Carmen, a Uruguayan dancer of the Argentine tango, and her students, whom we joined a couple of months ago.

We soon came to adore this lean sixty-something lady who is bursting with energy and a love of tango. I once complained to one of our friends from the group that it is a shame the dances in El Patio are on Sundays since it is the end of the week and we often feel too tired to come. He answered that for him a new week simply begins on the Sunday evening when he spins around with one of the other amazing dancers to the rhythm of a tango, milonga, or waltz.

Can you imagine any better way to start your week?



Tango in Paris

*Northey Valenzuela*

Release Date: 2006

Label: Fuel 2000 Records

Tracks: 13

Rating: 4

This self-titled album is a joint effort from Craig Northey (the Odds) and Jesse Valenzuela (Gin Blossoms); *Northey Valenzuela* is the specialized blues-country record that neither respective band was focused on creating. Northey brings in his enthusiasm for songwriting while Valenzuela comes in with vocals, and the pair sounds like they've spent their entire careers recording together. The music is based heavily on guitar and low, searching lyrics but

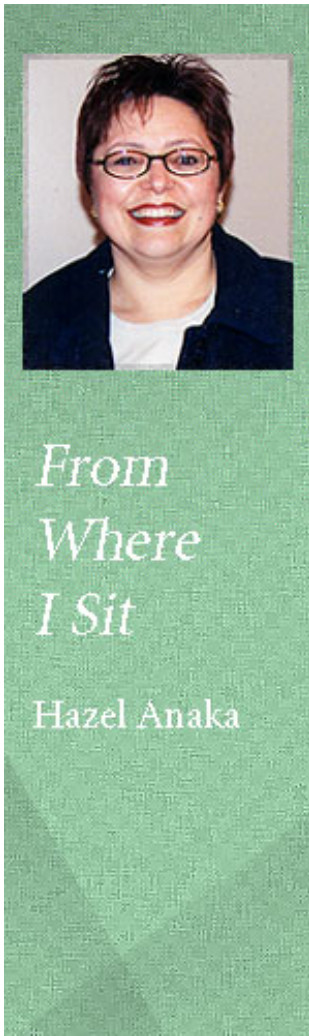
the duo is also well supported by bassist Doug Elliot and drummer Pat Steward, also ex-Odds members.

As alternative blues albums go, this is a solid effort by some talented musicians but the entire record is just a bit much for me. I do enjoy songs about how you can watch your dog run away for three days as much as the next prairie dweller, but without a particularly interesting musical sound to back it up I (and a lot of other people, I think) tend to get lost. In fact, this album takes me back to the Soul Asylum record *Let Your Dim Light Shine*; I played the damn thing a hundred times just so I could hear "Misery," but the record only got played fully on the occasional night when I needed something mellow to listen to while falling asleep. I might be persuaded to do the same with this album if only for "Talk to Yourself" and "Hurting on the Outside," cleverly the first and last tracks on the record. Holding out for the middle takes some determination.

Why? I've got a soft spot for down-home tunes, I guess, just not generally in large doses. I like the fact that the patchwork band was able to use blues structures over country and alternative rock, but I think the downfall with this particular combination of sounds is that the common tie between them is merely depressive and always irritating after a certain length of time. Regardless of this disheartening impression of their music, Northey and Valenzuela know what they're doing and I can honestly say that an echo of the fun they had making this album came through the speakers. Unfortunately, it wasn't enticing enough to leave a lasting impression, I'm sorry to say.

*Northey Valenzuela* was certainly a record for those who made it. Odds fans will likely appreciate it, but aside from that pre-established fan base it's not likely to receive huge sales from the rest of us. I wish them all the best, and I'm glad they had fun.





## Who Knew?

Harlequin Enterprises is a publisher of romance novels. I think the first and last time I had one in my hands was 1973. That lack of current knowledge about the product and its umpteen variations hasn't stopped me from mocking the stereotypical formulaic writing.

In the past I've written about heaving breasts and throbbing loins and happily-ever-after endings. I've never quite understood the appeal of this genre but millions of readers can't all be wrong. Apparently an author who's mastered the template can earn incredible money churning out several titles per year.

In a front-page story in the *National Post* we see that Harlequin has made an unusual move. The publisher is looking for more grown-up, average-looking men to grace its covers. The publisher is finding that modelling agencies are sending "progressively younger and younger, and skinnier and skinnier" (1) male models for its covers. Who knew?

On the same day in the *Edmonton Journal* an article appeared about "manorexia" (2)—anorexia in men. Dennis Quaid is one celebrity who has confessed to battling this complex condition. Jockeys and athletes whose weights factor into their success are particularly vulnerable. Who knew?

All the emphasis on eating disorders and body image issues has focused on females. It was female models at recent European fashion shows that were turned away because they were too skinny. It is size 14 Canadian models who are trying to convince design schools to make their samples in more realistic sizes rather than size 0 which has become the norm. It is women that Dove is targeting with its cutting-edge ad strategies and campaign for real beauty. It was the April issue

of *Chatelaine* that reported that 13-year-old Dakota Fanning has become the face of Marc Jacobs—a full 12 years younger than Audrey Hepburn was when she hooked up with Givenchy in the 1950s.

Lost in all this were the men. Who knew? Apparently, up to 15% of people with eating disorders are men. The shame and embarrassment is arguably worse for men, who are believed to be strong, capable, above all that. Couple that with a medical community largely unfamiliar with the condition in men, and the secrets persist.

Perhaps these related stories all appearing in quick succession means we've reached a tipping point. Maybe there's enough momentum, public awareness, concern, and outrage that gradually, glacially, attitudes will change. Perhaps what is palatable to the public will move closer to healthier, more reasonable expectations of models and starlets. And put an end to the myth that you can never be too young or too skinny.

So what now? For me, just having all this new information changes me forever. Once you know something you can't un-know it. Maybe this knowledge translates into consumer boycotts against certain companies, or increased sensitivity around men who may be suffering, or a heart-to-heart with the impressionable young people in our lives regardless of their sex. This affects us all, from where I sit.

(1) National Post (2007). "Top models not beefy enough for Harlequin." Retrieved April 16, 2007, from <http://www.canada.com/nationalpost/news/story.html?id=d309c38e-f3fd-4f5a-97d4-645216ac1e54&k=82652>

(2) Canada.com Network (2007). "Shedding light on 'manorexia'." Retrieved April 16, 2007, from <http://www.canada.com/topics/lifestyle/style/story.html?id=ec90796d-fe6b-424d-bf7e-9e574366794e&k=90418>

# The Chronicles of Cruiscin Lan

by  
Wanda  
Waterman  
St. Louis



## AUSU THIS MONTH



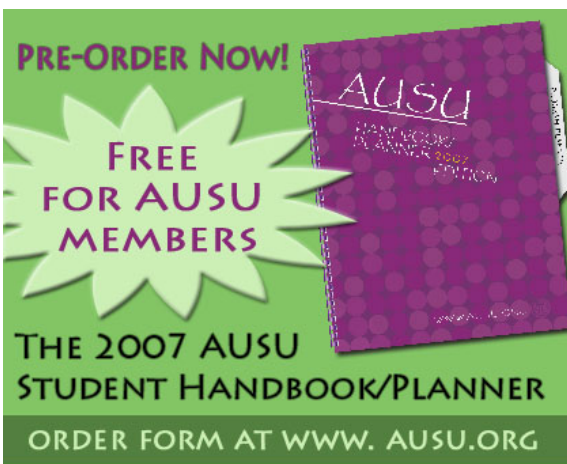
### Changes to Council Executive The AUSU "cabinet" does the shuffle

AUSU councillors are elected for two-year terms and, traditionally, the three executives also serve for two years. In early 2005, however, council began to discuss the possibility of holding a mid-term executive election for the following reasons:

- Executive positions are very demanding and require a large time commitment for a modest wage. All AU committees and executives work daytime hours, as do AUSU staff, therefore most meetings AUSU executives must attend regularly are also scheduled during the day. While executives can make their own hours to some extent, the frequent daytime commitments preclude AUSU executives from holding full-time jobs outside of AUSU. They may also find it difficult to maintain a full course load (many universities permit student council executives to hold full-time student status while taking only one course while they serve, but AU has no such provision). A mid-term election provides tired executives an opportunity to step down after a year without prejudice or a sense of ending their commitment early.
- Some councillors may not run for executive positions when they first get on council because they are inexperienced and do not feel ready to effectively serve in this capacity. For this reason, seasoned councillors usually are elected to executive positions. By midway through the two-year term, newer councillors may reconsider. This also allows councillors who may have been added to council through a by-election to have an opportunity to run.
- After a year, councillors will also have a better idea of who will serve best in each of the executive positions and may want an opportunity to cast a new vote.

A mid-term election was necessary during the 2004/06 council term due to the resignation of two of the three executives. This term, councillors developed a new executive election policy to allow for the option of a mid-term election each term. In mid-March, council decided to hold a mid-term election for this year.

Lonita Fraser, VP External for AUSU for the last two years, decided not to run at this time due to a high course load, and she has moved to a regular councillor without portfolio position.



New councillor Huma Lodhi, who has been with council for one year, chose to run for VP Finance, due to her experience on the AUSU Finance Committee over the last year.

VP Finance for the past three years, Karl Low, chose to run for the vacant VP External position.

Lisa Priebe, President for the last two years, opted to run again for her position.

The three candidates were acclaimed to their positions at a special meeting of council held on April 16, 2007. As both outgoing executives are still with council and available to assist their successors, the changeover is expected to be very smooth.



## INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK

What's new here and around the world

Mandy Gardner



Mandy Gardner

### At Home: SAND Focuses On Saving Native Alberta Fescue Grass

Environment Canada has just handed over a cheque for \$45,000 to the Southern Alberta Land Trust Society (SALTS) for a comprehensive plan to conserve remaining prairie fescue grass species. These species are under threat of eradication from agriculture and noxious weeds. The *Prairie Post* has quoted Alan Gardner, executive director of SALTS, as saying "it is very encouraging that the Federal government recognizes the importance of the native fescue grass as an unequalled watershed cover as well as an important element in mitigating climate change" (1).

Prairie fescue, according to Environment Canada's website (2), is assumed by ecologists to have been the main species group on the prairies before agriculture took hold. Its long root systems, reaching metres under the soil surface, are credited with capturing carbon molecules that have created the rich

black soils we depend on for crops, and it is feared that the species' widespread eradication will not only make for depleted soils but for the quicker onslaught of climate change in the north.

SALTS maintains that the conservation of fescue and other native grasses throughout southern Alberta is of concern not only to ranchers but to all inhabitants of the area who stand to lose their native landscape. SALTS aims for its conservation efforts to benefit clean air and water, biological diversity, culture and heritage, scenic beauty, economic vitality, and sustainable land use.

The local grant will be put to use controlling noxious weeds like nodding thistle, scentless chamomile, and other "invasive alien species" (1) that threaten not only the fescue but the animal life that has thrived here for so long. The ensuing project will focus on community action and information sharing so that landowners throughout the affected region will understand their impact on the environment as a whole. SALTS is actively seeking volunteers for this and related projects on its website, so if you want to see first-hand what's happening, check out the SALTS website at <http://www.salts-landtrust.org/index.html>.

(1) *Prairie Post West* (2007). "SALTS receives grant to protect native grass." Retrieved April 17, 2007, from [http://www.prairiepost.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=1017&Itemid=27](http://www.prairiepost.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1017&Itemid=27)

(2) Environment Canada. "Fescue Prairie." <http://www.mb.ec.gc.ca/nature/whp/prgrass/df03s34.en.html>

### In Foreign News: British Diplomat Accused Of Lewd Behaviour In Thailand

Ian Proud will be a British diplomat to Thailand until his tenure ends this May, and he's managed to end the job on quite an interesting note. After accepting an offer to write a weblog on Thailand's English-speaking newspaper, *The Nation*, Proud began keeping a regular blog about his thoughts and experiences in Bangkok. Unfortunately, this odd bit of political transparency was met with all the best the internet could offer: Proud received several blog comments that made references to his alleged outings in the city's red-light district. *The Nation* was forced to discontinue the stream of non-political discourse after the bombardment on Proud's character.

CTV News called the onslaught a “blog gone wild” (1) and BBC News says that Proud immediately refuted these claims and yet admitted that like any other tourist in the area, he did visit red-light areas known for the famed Thai sex trade (2). The U.K. Foreign Office has also announced that blogs kept by diplomats are being put under review (3); this follows the camera-blog spot held by U.K. Conservative Party leader David Cameron, also a point of humour with most Brits although less offensive than Proud’s turned out to be.

The incident, according to BBC News, has spawned a call for a code of ethics concerning blogs, but to be honest my bets are on the government controlling its own people through censorship in the near future. It’s a shame, of course, since the diplomat really seemed to be enjoying his short time in the non-political spotlight.

- (1) CTV (2007). “Blog gone wild for British diplomat.” Retrieved April 17, 2007, from [http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20070411/diplomat\\_blog\\_070411/20070411?hub=SciTech](http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20070411/diplomat_blog_070411/20070411?hub=SciTech)
- (2) BBC News (2007). “Diplomat blog pulled after abuse.” Retrieved April 17, 2007, from [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/6548653.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/6548653.stm)
- (3) *Telegraph* (2007). “Diplomat’s blog shut down after red light claims.” Retrieved April 17, 2007, from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/04/13/nblog113.xml>

## **CLICK ON THIS: Animalia**

**Lonita Fraser**

**Dinosaurs and Dragons** - <http://www.strangescience.net/stdino2.htm>

Did one myth come from another truth? Perhaps . . .

**Invertebrate Zoology** - <http://www.amonline.net.au/invertebrates/>

As humans, creatures used to a spinal column and obvious bone structure, it might be a little unfathomable to us how a creature could exist without them.

**World's Strangest Dinosaur Names** - <http://www.neatorama.com/2007/02/19/the-worlds-strangest-dinosaur-names/>

Arthur Conan Doyle, Camelot, Gojira—and I bet you think I’m joking.

**Albino Animals** - <http://www.messybeast.com/albinism/albino-index.htm>

The oddest I’ve ever seen was an albino male peacock. Unfortunately, he did not unfurl his tail.

**2006 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species** - <http://www.iucnredlist.org/>

Photographs, lists, programmes, advocacy, and more.

# classifieds

**Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org) for more information.**

## Research Subjects Wanted -

Distance and Open Education Effects on Accessibility for First Generation Learners

Participants must be:

- first generation post-secondary distance education students or alumni
- fluent in English
- at least 18 years old

Respondents who complete our survey will be entered to win \$150.

To participate or for information, email [survey@leximortis.com](mailto:survey@leximortis.com)

Study performed and funded by AU students L. Priebe, MA; T. Ross; and K. Low.

## THE VOICE

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**Contributors to listings columns:** Zil-E-Huma Lodhi, Lonita Fraser

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