



HUMAN INTEREST

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Injured eagle receives unique beak

ANCHORAGE, Alaska -- The wounded bald eagle found in December with severe damage to his beak is getting a little help -- from a place you might not expect. "We decided to call him Cyrano," said Cindy Palmatier at the Bird Treatment and Learning Center. "It seemed appropriate somehow. "This is a unique place with a unique bird -- and a unique problem. "The current and most workable theory is that he got some fishing line wrapped around that beak," Palmatier said. "And over time, it just slowly cut in and cut in and cut in." It's hard to imagine this

damage getting any worse, so the center's staff have a problem to solve. "Which is, prevent that beak from breaking backwards," Palmatier said. But this is Alaska, where a trip to any ordinary veterinarian to fix it just wouldn't do. "They asked me if I had an interest in helping to repair a damaged bird's -- bald eagle's beak," said dentist Kirk Johnson. "And I was willing to try." Of course, Johnson's usual specialty is people. "OK, this is just a big tooth for a different individual," Johnson said. [FULL STORY AND VIDEO.](#)

Australian sword swallower sets Guinness world record



SYDNEY - An Australian man has set a world record by swallowing eighteen swords in one jaw-dropping gulp. Chayne Hultgren - who calls himself the Space Cowboy - slid the 2ft 4in blades down his throat in Sydney as onlookers held their breath and prepared to call for an ambulance. But Mr. Hultgren, 31, proved he was a cut above the rest of the world's street entertainers by slowly slipping the swords, all bound together with a steel clasp, down his throat as he held his head back to create a straight channel into his lower body. 'It's amazing - I'm really happy,' said Mr. Hultgren, from Byron Bay, after withdrawing the blades. 'It's definitely one of my greatest achievements so far.' Not that he's any beginner. He has been practicing the dangerous art since he was 16 when he started out by swallowing a

garden hose. 'I waited a few years until I'd got it perfect and then I moved on to using stainless steel blades,' he explained. 'It's not dangerous when you know how to do it, but it's not something that's recommended by my doctor. 'It's an educated risk. I don't just straight away grab 18 blades and shove them down my throat - you've got to practise a lot and build up to it.' So what is the secret? Constant training with the device that he started out with - a garden hose. And, of course, learning not to gag. 'I stretch my throat with hoses and use a few different techniques to basically enable me to do what, until now, has been impossible. 'For this feat today I've been training a lot, doing a lot of meditation. I've learned how to control my muscles and my internal organs.' As a crowd beside Sydney harbor watched Mr. Hultgren slip the blades down his throat, there were gasps, 'oohs' and 'ahs' - then cheers when he withdrew them with a grin and a victorious clasp of his hands in the air. 'There you are,' he said. 'Still in one piece!' [FULL STORY](#) AND [VIDEO](#).

Operation Spamalot: After Taliban hit supplies, Army chef serves up 42 days of Spam



AFGHANISTAN - Dislike: Corporal Liam Francis' mother says he hates Spam. Being at the front line of a war zone brings countless hardships. But Britain's brave Armed Forces are justly famous for their resourcefulness in times of adversity. And one heroic figure surely deserves a medal for maintaining morale in Afghanistan among the soldiers of the 2nd Royal Welsh Guards - on a 42-day diet of Spam. Army chef Corporal Liam Francis refused to surrender when food supplies were interrupted by Taliban fighters for six weeks. With almost no gastronomic ammunition to hand, the 26-year-old opened tin after tin of the

chopped pork and ham and produced a series of dishes to rival the famous Monty Python Spam sketch. 'I was surprised what we could do: Sweet and sour Spam, Spam fritters, Spam carbonara, Spam stroganoff and Spam stir fry,' said the father of one from Tidworth, Wiltshire. 'We were on compo [field rations] for six weeks and we only had one menu - Spam.' But he added that the troops were relieved when fresh supplies finally arrived. 'The first day off Spam, I prepared battered sausages, chips and curry sauce,' he said. 'The Sergeant Major said it was the best meal he had ever had.' [FULL STORY](#).

Buff 8-Year-Old Sets Bench Press World Record



IOWA - Andrew Hedrich is not like other 8-year-olds. "I lift a lot more than they do." Hedrich said. "All the girls go, ooooh, ahhh, when they see my muscles. ... It's fun ... I get to be the strongest kid in the world." He can back up statements like that. Hedrich, an Elgin native, recently set the world-record for bench press with the Raw Powerlifting Federation, at a competition in Council Bluffs, Iowa. The youngster hoisted 57 ½ pounds. If that doesn't sound impressive, consider his frame: the third grader weighs just 54 pounds himself. He broke the record for his weight and age class. It's something he's been training for his whole life. Hedrich's father, Ken, who

set a national record for his age group with a 330-pound press, started his boy on an exercise routine before he could crawl. "Literally I started him from day one," Ken Hedrich, 40, an exercise physiologist who runs Body Evolution training center in St. Charles, said. "I know it sounds weird but even when he was in his diapers I had him doing resistance training." Andrew entered into his first power lifting competition at the tender age of four, which is a little out of the ordinary, said Raw

Power's regional chairman Ed Horowitz, who oversaw Andrew's lift. "It's pretty rare to have a kid that age in here," Horowitz said. [FULL STORY AND VIDEO](#).

Snow-Shovel Racing Went Downhill, but It's Getting a Second Chance



ANGEL FIRE, N.M.—When life gets complicated, some happy-go-lucky souls like to hop on a shovel and hurtle down a mountain. But now that lawyers are looming, snow-shovel racing is not as carefree as it used to be. Shay Tibljas dismounted her racing shovel in the runout area at the shovel racing competition at the Angel Fire ski resort Saturday. For three decades, the Angel Fire Resort here high in the Southern Rockies hosted an unusual competition: a poor man's luge of sorts, in which daring (and sometimes drunk) riders from around the country rocketed

down the ski slopes on metal shovels at speeds topping 70 miles per hour. Yet the irreverent tradition came to an abrupt end in 2005 because of growing liability concerns. The New Mexico resort got spooked by the reckless growth of a "modified" shovel racing subculture, which over time had turned some of the simple digging tools into death-defying speed machines, replete with roll cages and hydraulic braking systems. This past weekend, Angel Fire resumed shovel racing's "World Championship" for the first time in five years, but with a big catch: Only old-fashioned metal grain shovels were permitted. Customization was confined to paint and wax. To the sport's rabid garage tinkerers, who had begun attracting Formula One and dune-buggy enthusiasts with wind-tunnel-tested snow dragsters, it was akin to asking a NASCAR driver to take to the track in the family sedan. "So it's just a sledding day," said John "Shovelmeister" Strader, a husky wild man who is the sport's most outspoken personality. "They've taken the teeth out." [FULL STORY AND VIDEO](#)

Central Talent Booking