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## Everybody's Talking

**Cave giant:** Beneath a remote stretch of jungle in central Vietnam lies the world's largest known cave, a vast underground network named Son Doong. What sets it apart isn't just its size, but the strange, otherworldly features inside, like thick forests growing where the ceiling collapsed, and rivers that vanish into darkness. The cave includes towering rock formations, some as tall as buildings, and wide spaces big enough to fit aircraft. A local resident first stumbled upon it and researchers later mapped it, revealing an interior shaped by underground water over millions of years. To protect its untouched environment, access is limited. Even now, parts of the cave remain unexplored, leaving plenty of mystery underground.

**Wave chaser:** Across coastlines and rough seas, Pegleg Bennett has turned his unique path into a story of grit. Losing part of his leg as a child didn't slow him down, but became part of how he shaped his approach to riding waves. He crafted his own surf-adapted prosthetics, even drilling into them to improve movement. With each trip to new shores, he not only refined his skills but also helped push adaptive surfing into the spotlight. Using gear made from high-performance materials, he continues to lead by example, both in competition and as a mentor. Those around him, including others with physical challenges, have caught waves under his guidance. For him, it's not about limits but about what comes next.

**Primate parenting:** In Bristol, England, two young gorillas found an unexpected caregiver when their biological mothers couldn't raise them. Alan Toyne stepped in, blending human support with gorilla behaviour training. He wore textured vests to simulate fur and helped them eat alongside his own meals to mimic troop routines. Rather than isolating the infants, Toyne made sure they spent time with the other gorillas, building familiarity and social skills. The goal wasn't just survival, but preparing them for a proper return to their group. After months of care, they transitioned to surrogate gorilla mothers. What began as an emergency response became a lasting example of cross-species compassion.

**Island evolution:** Two types of palm trees evolved separately while growing side by side on Lord Howe Island, off Australia's coast. Scientists found that they bloom at different times depending on whether they grow in rocky or sandy soil, each type shaped by the microbes living underground. These changes created distinct species, supporting a rare concept called sympatric speciation. The palms likely came from mainland Australia and gradually diverged as they adapted to their surroundings. Researchers believe soil fungi influenced this split by forming unique bonds with each group. While Charles Darwin focused on isolation driving evolution, this case shows it can happen in close quarters, too.

## Quoteable Quotes

"Always be a little kinder than necessary." —James M. Barrie  
"We should always allow some time to elapse, for time discloses the truth" —Seneca

## What's Happening

**Now through January 5th: A December to Remember Holiday Lights will be** held on the Riverfront at Riverfront Esplanade, 179 S. Beach St., Daytona Beach. Large holiday lights display and nightly strolls along the Halifax River; lights and public displays run through Jan. 5. Free to attend.

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