

## Say What?

**Amusia** \ey-MYU-zee-ah\ *n.* Tone-deafness. Amusia can show up after brain injuries, but about 3 percent of adults have a hard time from birth with processing music—distinguishing differences in pitch, remembering melodies or singing in key. Canadian researchers report May 11 in *PLoS ONE* that even after listening to MP3 players loaded with popular songs daily for a month, a group of amusic children still performed poorly on pitch detection tests compared with peers. Brain activity suggests that it’s a neural disconnect between the auditory cortex and the rest of the brain, and not a lack of exposure to tunes, that causes these tin ears. —Allison Bohac



## SN Online

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### ENVIRONMENT

Snow layers warm northern soils, reducing how much climate-warming carbon the ground can hold. See “Arctic’s wintry blanket can be warming.”

### ON THE SCENE BLOG

A *Science News* editor visits Iceland’s Eyjafjallajökull in “Icelandic volcanoes slumber today, but not forever.”



## Science Past | FROM THE ISSUE OF JULY 14, 1962

**DEFORMED BABIES BORN AS RESULT OF SEDATIVE** — Some 800 deformed babies are expected to be born in the United Kingdom as a result of their mothers taking



a dangerous sleeping pill during early pregnancy. The drug, thalidomide, was previously reported in West Germany as causing some 400 abnormal births. It has now been withdrawn from the market....

Two Birmingham, England, investigators, Drs. Ian Leck and E.L.M. Millar, said that from the time thalidomide was put on the British market in April, 1958, till its ban in December, 1961, numerous deformities of limbs, absence of arms and legs or digits of the hands, webbed fingers and undersized ears had appeared in the offspring of mothers taking the drug.

## Science Future

### August 1

1970s-era Soviet space artifacts go on display at the new visitor center for the Space Foundation headquarters in Colorado Springs, Colo. See [bit.ly/SFspace70s](http://bit.ly/SFspace70s)

### August 4

The San Diego Zoo’s Black and White Overnight event offers an evening talk by a panda researcher and an early morning visit to the panda exhibit, plus other fun with black-and-white animals. Learn more at [bit.ly/SFzoonite](http://bit.ly/SFzoonite)

### GENES & CELLS

Sirtuin proteins, associated with longer life spans, also help sync the body’s circadian clock. See more in “Antiaging protein helps set daily rhythms.”

### BODY & BRAIN

Untreated fevers during gestation may double the risk of having a child with autism. See “Fever in pregnancy linked to autism.”

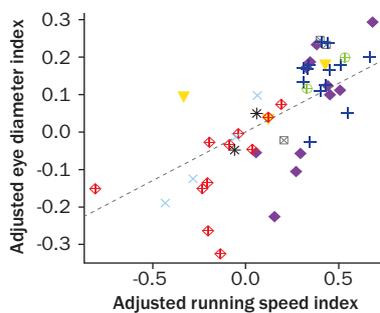
## The -est | LOWEST POINT GETTING HIGHER

The lowest place on Earth is rising. Because of water diversions, the surface elevation of the Dead Sea has dropped by nearly a meter a year since 1993. As the overlying water weight lessens, part of the seafloor below is lifting — by up to 4.3 millimeters each year, new satellite data show. The Dead Sea won’t be losing its title of lowest place on land anytime soon; its seafloor bottom is still around 730 meters



below mean sea level, compared with 240 meters for the next lowest, the Sea of Galilee. An international team reports the rise May 25 in the *Journal of Geophysical Research*. —Alexandra Witze

## Science Stats | ALL THE BETTER TO SEE YOU WITH



+ Even-toed ungulates    □ Odd-toed ungulates  
 × Marsupials            \* Elephants  
 ◆ Carnivores            ◆ Rodents  
 ▼ Primates              ⊕ Rabbit/hare/pika

An old maxim called Leuckart’s Law holds that fast-running animals need larger eyes to navigate and avoid collisions. A new analysis finds that Leuckart’s Law holds up, even when researchers use a statistic (shown) that adjusts for the effect of body size (larger animals tend to have bigger eyes and run faster).

SOURCE: A.N. HEARD-BOOTH AND E.C. KIRBY/ANATOMICAL RECORD 2012