

AN UNABBREVIATED 26-LETTER PANGRAM

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A pangram is a sentence of any length containing every letter of the alphabet. Obviously the ultimate achievement in this field is an example containing each letter once only. Unfortunately, all the minimum-length 26-letter pangrams that have been constructed over the years seem to have the same problem; they are in some way an abbreviation. For example:

Use of initials: V.D. Bug left Z.Q. Jaw my rock sphinx

Contrived headline: Quartz glyph job vex'd cwm finks

Description: Veldt jynx grimps waqf zho buck

This last specimen is the one currently cited in the Guinness Book of World Records under 'Shortest Pangram.' It describes the situation in which a wryneck woodpecker from the grasslands of Africa climbs up the side of a male bovid, which is grazing on sacred Muslim-owned land. At first reading it looks most impressive, but closer examination reveals several flaws.

1. The description is abbreviated; in full it would be 'a/the veldt jynx grimps a/the waqf zho buck.'
2. The verb grimp, meaning 'to climb or clamber,' is intransitive (OED, Webster's Second, Webster's Third). Therefore the jynx could conceivably grimp, but it couldn't grimp something - to do that requires the verb to be transitive. Grimp can be transitive, but its meaning is 'to cause to mount, elevate' (OED), hardly the sense desired in this pangram.
3. The zho is a hybrid bovine animal, bred from a yak bull and a common cow (OED). The male zho is a bull, not a buck.
4. It is highly improbable, some would say impossible, that a North Indian zho would ever be grazing on a waqf (sacred Islamic land), with a South African veldt jynx climbing up its side.

The challenge now would appear to be the compilation of 26-letter pangrams which make reasonable sense, and are not abbreviated in any way. Here is an example to get the ball rolling:

Zab, thy crwds vex jimp Qung folk

This is a mid-concert aside informing the head musician, Zab, that the odd sound of his touring group's ancient Celtic instruments is troubl/ing the audience of slim South African bushmen. The statement is not abbreviated; an analogy would be something like "John, your violins trouble poor Bantu people." Zab is an English form of the masculine given name Zabdiel (What to Name the Baby, Eve-

lyn Wells), *crowds* (variant of *crowds*) are ancient Celtic stringed instruments (Shorter OED), *jimp* means slender, slim (Shorter OED), and the *Qung* are a Southern African people of the Omatako River (Webster's Third).

MORE OMNI GAMES

In the February 1984 *Word Ways* review of Scot Morris's *Omni Games*, I wrote "let's hope that this [book] is the start of a long series". This wish is on its way to fulfillment with his *The Next Book of Omni Games* (New American Library paperback, 1988; \$8.95), an anthology of 39 more monthly columns in *Omni* magazine. These are reminiscent of Martin Gardner's mathematical recreations in *Scientific American* magazine in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Although technically less daunting, they cover an extremely wide variety of topics: flying kites, spinning toys, impossible constructions, a parlor game to inflict on a Male Chauvinist Pig, dice stunts, and modern folklore (such as the cement-mixer driver who dumps a truckload in his wife's lover's Cadillac). Scot Morris characterizes the book as "mental diversion or cerebral wordplay that is intellectually satisfying without being terribly serious".

Logology appears as a major topic in many places: a description of Dmitri Borgmann's achievements; a quiz on the meanings of specialized words such as *tragus* and *vamp*; a quiz on pronunciation; Huff's homonym wheel classifying the difference between two words in spelling, pronunciation, or meaning; a quiz on words relating to words; the search for the perfect pun; a 5-by-5-by-5 word cube with clues in verse; polyphonic ciphering (coding using the telephone dial). There is even a light-hearted Megameaning Quiz reminiscent of Philip Cohen's metric prefixes in the August *Word Ways*: 1,000,000 mouthwashes = 1 microScope; 1 word = 1 millipicture; $\frac{1}{2}$ lavatory = 1 demijohn.