


Kids Korner



What A River!

Did you know there are 54 different species of fish in the Chicago River? Along with the fish, mallards herons wood ducks, muskrats and beavers call the river home, too

The Chicago River itself is just one part of the Chicago River System which is more than 130 miles long


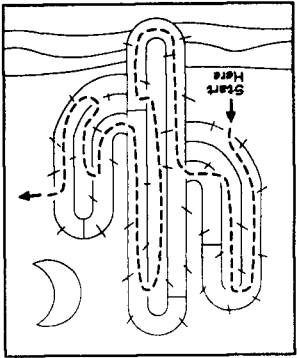
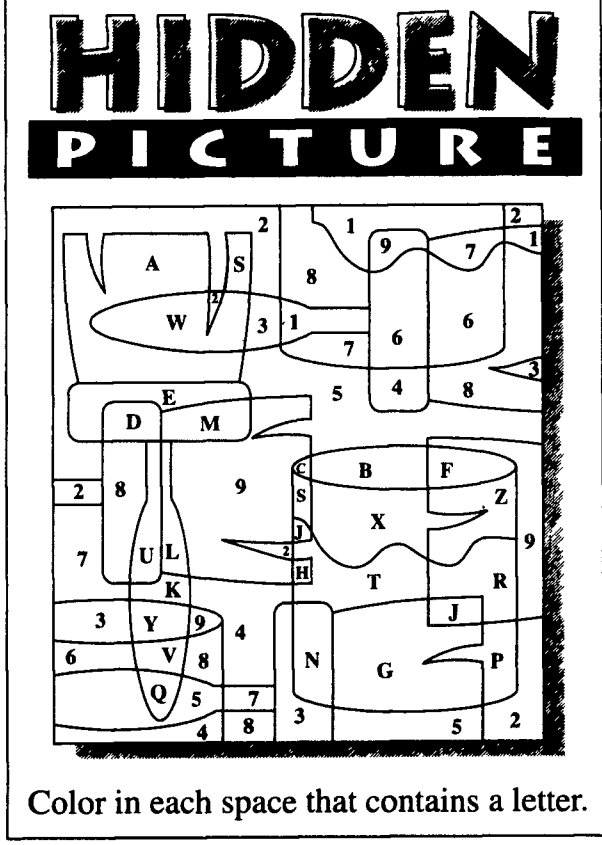
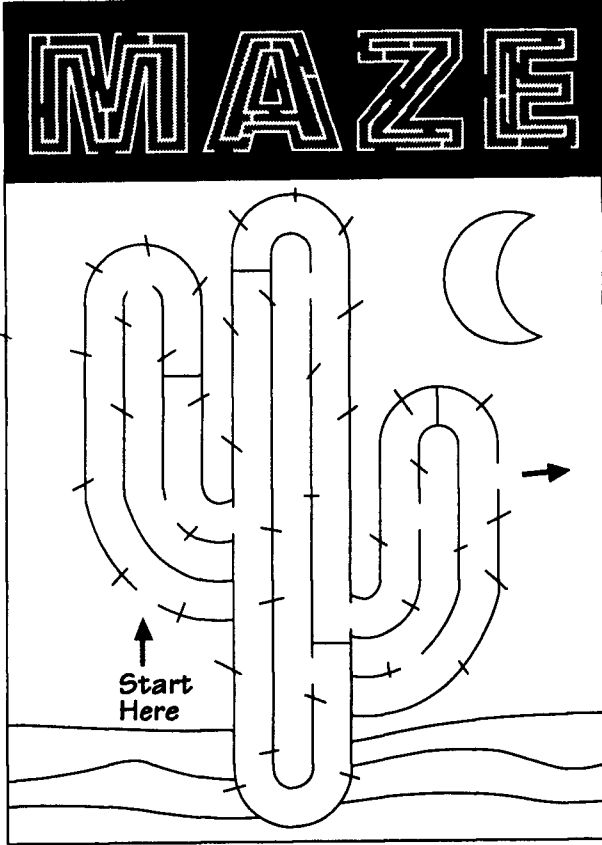
In the 1800s Lake Michigan was a source of drinking water for the city. However, with the waste put in the Chicago River by industries located along its banks, heavy rains would push polluted water into the lake. The polluted water led to deaths and disease so they constructed an underground tunnel to take water from further out in the lake. When the pollution problem returned, the flow of the river was reversed in 1900 so sewage and other waste would no longer harm the drinking water.

Most of the fish population is made up of carp and goldfish. There are also bullheads, darters, minnows, sunfish, bass, and even trout and salmon that come in from Lake Michigan.

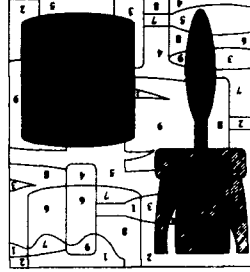
Each year, 52,000 commercial, recreational and passenger boats pass through the river. However, the river is probably most noticeable one day each year. That's because a pipe fitters union dyes the river green for St. Patrick's Day.

Can you name 10 items that have been pulled from the Chicago River? These are just some of the things that have been found during river cleanup days.

- A 500-pound safe
- A car
- A kitchen sink
- A water heater
- An outhouse
- Golf carts and balls
- Motorcycles
- Picnic tables
- Shopping carts
- Street signs

Answers



Hershey Gardens' annual Gardenfest is a free event on Sept. 20, from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Entertainment will include Pete Silldorff, above left, who attempts to pass his bicycle riding talent to magician Eric Noll. Special performances will include instrumental groups, historical portrayals, herbal recipes and butters for taste testing, flower arranging and "green thumb" hints. For more information, call (717) 534-3492.

Smart Stuff

WITH TWIG WALKINGSTICK

Why do gerbils burrow into their bedding?

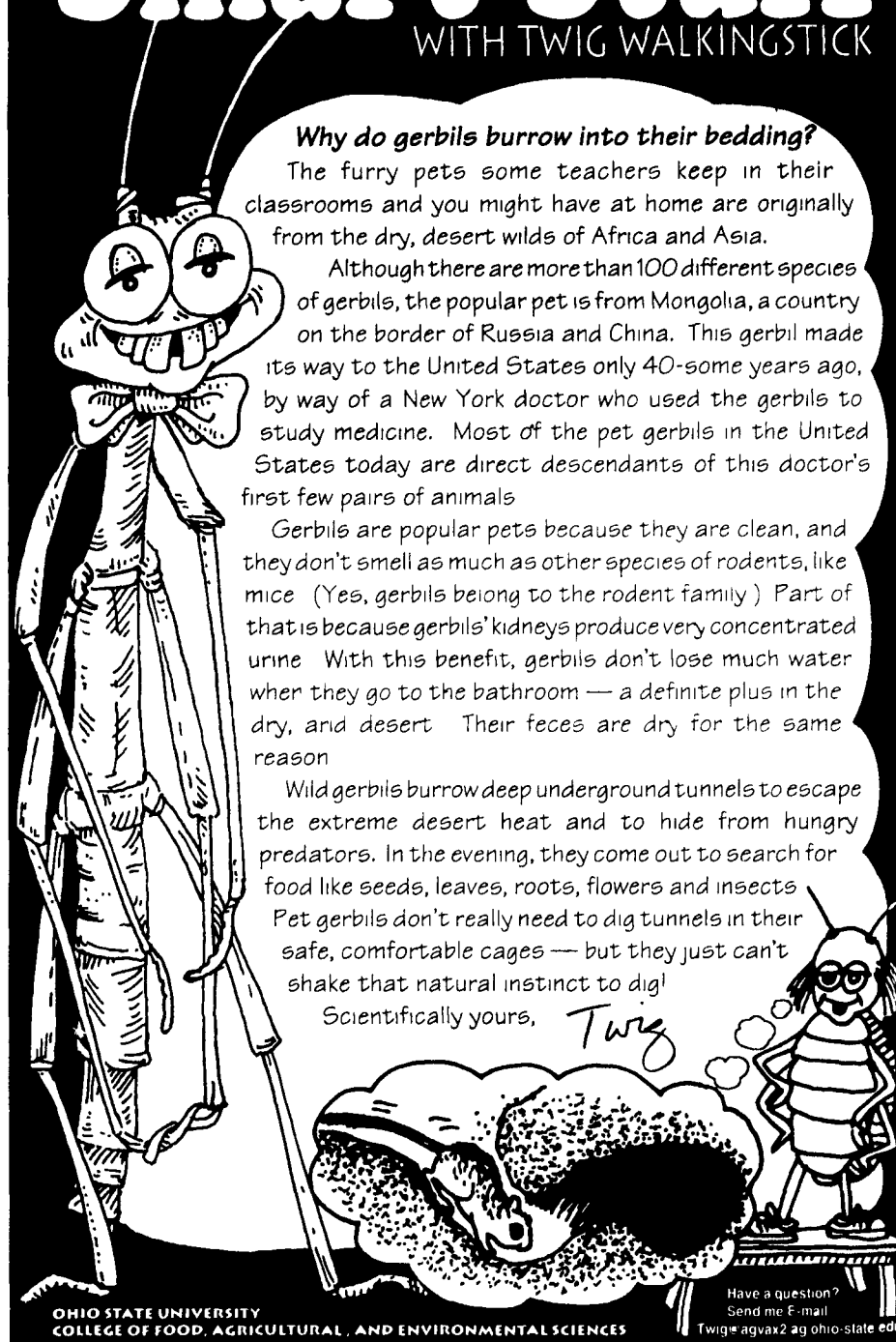
The furry pets some teachers keep in their classrooms and you might have at home are originally from the dry, desert wilds of Africa and Asia.

Although there are more than 100 different species of gerbils, the popular pet is from Mongolia, a country on the border of Russia and China. This gerbil made its way to the United States only 40-some years ago, by way of a New York doctor who used the gerbils to study medicine. Most of the pet gerbils in the United States today are direct descendants of this doctor's first few pairs of animals.

Gerbils are popular pets because they are clean, and they don't smell as much as other species of rodents, like mice. (Yes, gerbils belong to the rodent family.) Part of that is because gerbils' kidneys produce very concentrated urine. With this benefit, gerbils don't lose much water when they go to the bathroom — a definite plus in the dry, arid desert. Their feces are dry for the same reason.

Wild gerbils burrow deep underground tunnels to escape the extreme desert heat and to hide from hungry predators. In the evening, they come out to search for food like seeds, leaves, roots, flowers and insects. Pet gerbils don't really need to dig tunnels in their safe, comfortable cages — but they just can't shake that natural instinct to dig!

Scientifically yours, *Twig*



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