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The Basilisk Lizard

The basilisk lizard is an amazing lizard that lives near rivers and streams in rainforests of Central and South America. Growing up to three feet in length¹, the basilisk can be brown, green, striped, and even red in color. It eats insects, small invertebrates, flowers, small snakes, birds, and fish.² It must watch out though, for some of those animals would like to eat him!

When frightened or hunting, the basilisk runs on its back legs. It is one of only a few lizards that can do this. Even more amazing, the basilisk is the only lizard that can run on water! Because of this it is sometimes called the "*Jesus Christ Lizard*".

Recently two scientists (James W. Glasheen and Thomas A. McMahon from Harvard University) discovered how the basilisk is able to run across the top of a pond without sinking.³ By

videotaping the basilisk (see picture at bottom of page), they discovered that, using its long tail for balance, the lizard raised his leg in a circular

motion as high as his head and then slapped the foot down onto the water. The basilisk's feet have a wide sole and the five toes on its feet have fringes of skin which help to push the lizard up. A bubble of air is made above the foot, briefly forming an air pocket on top of it. This air pocket keeps the hole in the water open just long enough (one tenth of a second⁴) for the lizard to lift its foot out without being slowed down by the pull of water.

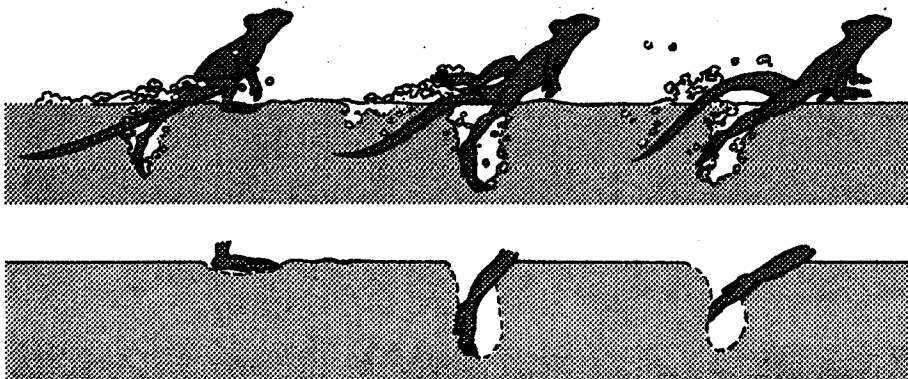
A young basilisk can run 60 to 100 feet across the water at speeds up to 7½ miles per hour.⁵ To run that fast it has to take about 20 steps a second!⁶

Adult basilisks don't run on water so easily. Mahon says that, "...big lizards weighing a hundred grams leave deep holes behind [in the water] which slam shut just after the foot is withdrawn. And, because the holes can't be any deeper than the leg is long, lizards soon grow to a size where they can't make holes deep enough to support their body weight."⁷ So the adults tend to sink or plow through the water.

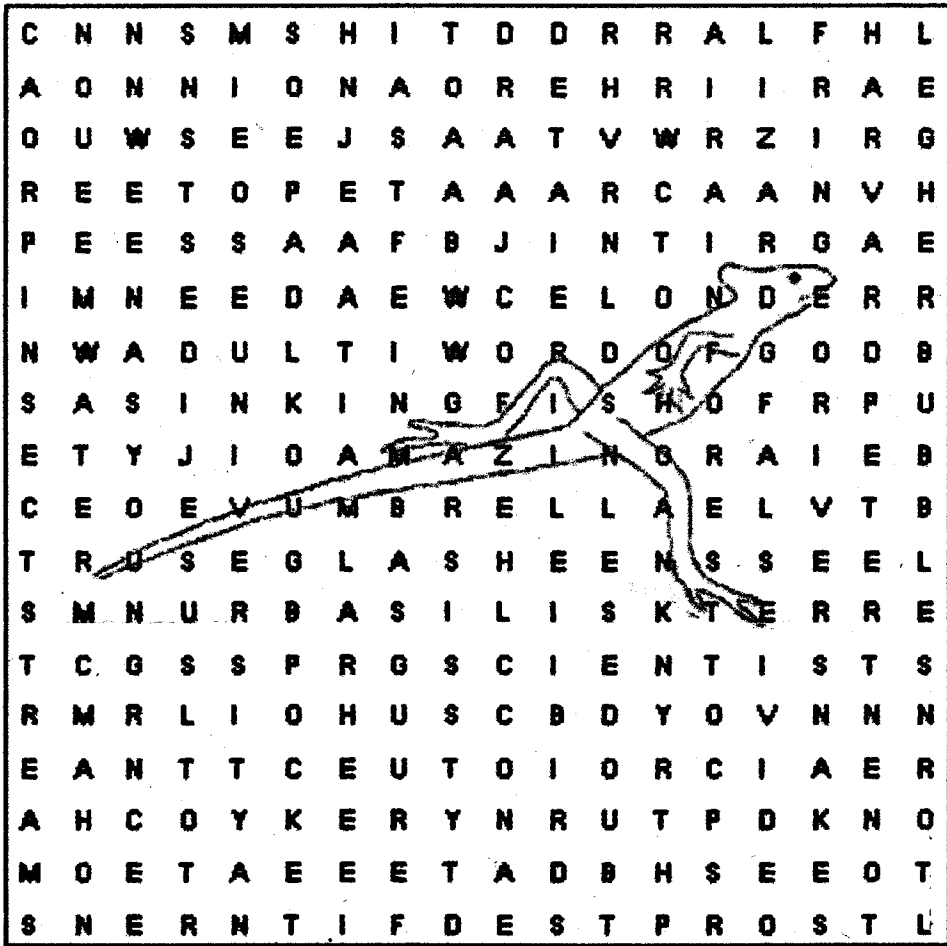
Could you run on water? Well, if you had feet the size of an umbrella, you might go a few steps before you sink. However, people are just not fast enough. In order to walk on water like the basilisk lizard, you would have to raise your umbrella-sized feet up to your ears and then slap them down very hard upon the water. Then you would have to close the umbrella and get your foot out before the air pocket closed (about ¼ of a second).⁸ You would have to do this at speeds of 65 miles per hour and use 15 times more power than people have!⁹ Your feet would be a blur as they spun past your ears!

There have been people, however, known to walk on water. In *Matthew 14:25-31* Jesus was walking upon the sea when Peter saw Him. Peter stepped out of the boat and began to walk on water towards Him. But when Peter took his eyes off of Jesus, he began to doubt and then began to sink. Jesus had to reach out to keep him from sinking.

We can learn a lesson from Peter. If we take our eyes off of Jesus... if we begin to doubt the Word of God... if we fall into the false idea that we are here by chance and accident, as evolution teaches, then we are in danger of sinking. We need to keep our eyes on Jesus and study and learn His word. "*In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion.*" Psalms 71:1 (KJV).



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WORD LIST

Look for the words hidden in the puzzle from the words in the box below. The hidden words might be up and down, sideways, or slanted (not backwards).

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- **BASILISK LIZARD** •
- ADULT AIR •
- AMAZING BASILISK •
- BIRDS BUBBLE •
- EARS FALSE •
- FISH FRINGE •
- GLASHEEN HARVARD •
- INSECTS JESUS •
- LEG LIZARD •
- MCMAHON POCKET •
- RAINFOREST RUNS •
- SCIENTIST'S SINKING •
- SLAP SNAKES •
- SOLE STREAMS •
- UMBRELLA UNIVERSITY •
- WATER WORDOFGOD •
-

ASK EUGENE

Dear Eugene:

"We saw a rainbow recently and we were wondering if rainbows can look square or if they can be totally circular?" Benjamin, Pipestone, MN



Dear Benjamin: A rainbow is made by light (usually sunlight) hitting water drops in the air. These water drops can be from rain, fog, or spray. Usually, rainbows are seen in the sky in a direction *opposite* the sun. When light enters a raindrop, it is bent (or refracted) in such a way that the white light breaks into its separate wavelengths and you see a spectrum of colors. It's called the "prism effect".

In nature, a rainbow is always curved because the colors only come into view when the water drops bend light at an exact angle with respect to the direction of the sun. That happens in such a way that it makes a circle around the point opposite the sun. Unless you're flying in an airplane, or standing on a high mountain, the most you'll probably see is a half circle.

Love Ya... Eugene

¹<http://www.gocities.com%2FE.nchan%2Fforest%2FDal1%2F3446%2Fkbasilisk.html,acl>
²http://www.in2.edu.com%2Fsuper_thematic_units_rich_tasks%2Fmotion_floating_sinking%2Ffloating_sinking_motion_info.htm,acl
³Glashen, J.W. and T.A. McMahon (1996a). A hydrodynamic model of locomotion in the Basilisk lizard. *Nature*, 380: pgs. 340-342.
⁴http://www.in2.edu.com%2Fsuper_thematic_units_rich_tasks%2Fmotion_floating_sinking%2Ffloating_sinking_motion_info.htm,acl
⁵<http://www.gocities.com%2FE.nchan%2Fforest%2FDal1%2F3446%2Fkbasilisk.html,acl>
⁶http://www.in2.edu.com%2Fsuper_thematic_units_rich_tasks%2Fmotion_floating_sinking%2Ffloating_sinking_motion_info.htm,acl
⁹ Ibid.

