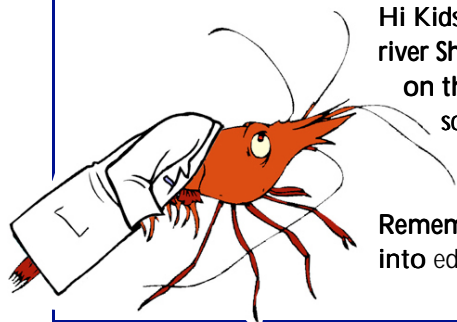
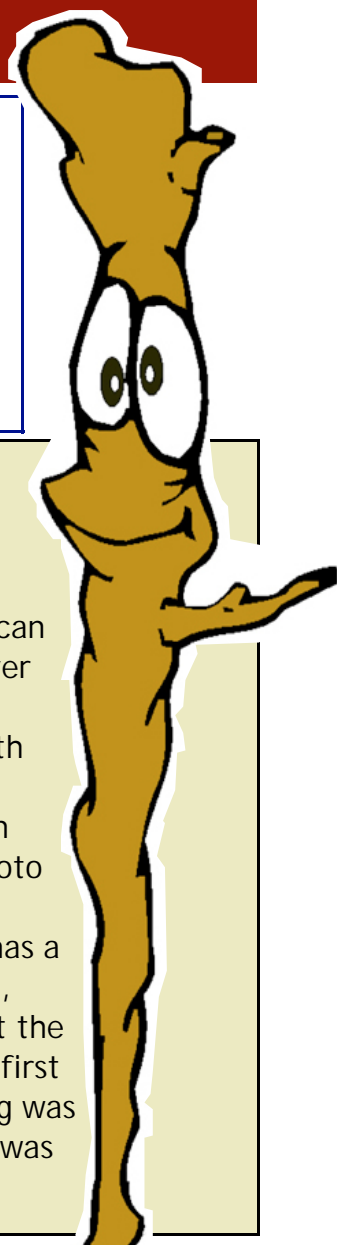


Tommy Time



Hi Kids, I'm Dr. Tommy Prawn, I'm a mad scientist that lives in the river Shannon in Ireland. My good friends at Nature's Web rang me on the watermobile and told me ye had a few questions about science and asked if I could answer them. I told the gang at Nature's Web "no probs, of course I would try to answer the questions you asked." So here I go..... Enjoy!
Remember, if you have any other science questions, just send them into editor@naturesweb.ie and they'll pass 'em on to me!

Dr. Tommy



What is the world's BIGGEST insect?

I know that to all you kids, all insects are tiny, especially here in Ireland. In fact in Ireland there aren't many big animals in general - the only thing that's really big in Ireland is the amount of rain, which is great if you're a fish but it's no good when you want to play football. But to me every insect is fairly big as I am tiny myself.

The female Giant Walking Stick (*Phobaeticus serratipes*) is the biggest in terms of length. It camouflages itself in branches of trees in Asia. The longest specimen on record was 55.5 cm. The biggest insect in terms of mass is the giant scarab beetles. For weight you'll find the giant wetas (*Deinacrida heteracantha*) of New Zealand is the heaviest.

A pregnant female can top the scales at over 71 gms. I was on the bus with Robbie Beetle the other morning when he showed me a photo of his cousin John Scarab Beetle. He has a double barrel name, very posh. I thought the sight of my mother first thing in the morning was rough, but this guy was pretty bad.



What speed is a plane going when it is taking off?

I love planes, because your travelling at over 700 kph. That is really fast. My brother Garry Prawn tried to build a plane once out of cardboard because he wanted to fly to Spain on his holidays. He did actually get it to fly, but on his way to Spain, it started to rain, and it dissolved the plane. The stupid prawn fell out of the sky, into a sandwich and we never saw him again. Very sad really. In answering this I will talk about normal sized aeroplanes, taking off from runways, which can be up to 5 kilometres long at some of the big airports. The takeoff speed of these aircraft varies quite a bit, depending on the takeoff weight and the use of high-lift devices like flaps (two) and slats. However, a good average speed range is about 260 kph (160 mph) to 290 kph (180 mph). That's fast considering the speed limit in a car is 100 kph on a normal road in Ireland. So if a plane was taking off on a road, the gardai would pull it over and give it a ticket for speeding. Remember, slow down or you will be fined.

Dr. Tommy Prawn would like to acknowledge the help of his good friend James Ring. Text: © James Ring

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