



"Foreign Correspondent"
Michael Ludwig reports on some strange goings on in the natural world.



Helping the Salamanders

Salamander numbers are declining around the world. In Vermont, USA, they are trying to do something about it. On

one night each spring, these amphibians make a journey from the woody upland habitats to lay their eggs in seasonal pools on lower land.

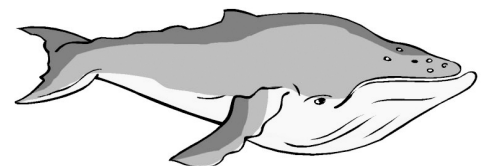
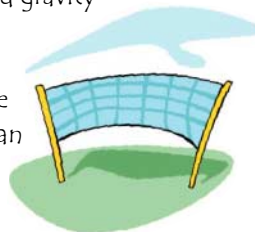
While making this journey they have to cross a number of roads, which results in many fatalities.

Local volunteers come out on the night of the

migration to help as many salamanders as possible to cross the roads safely. They also check how many salamanders make the crossing and how many don't. The state is considering installing tunnels under the roads to help these amphibians and other small animals make safer crossings!

Fog Catchers!

Here in Ireland we can often take rain for granted. It fills our reservoirs and provides us with a plentiful supply of water. But in some parts of the world, that's not the case. On the outskirts of Lima, in Peru, many people live on steep slopes on the edge of the city. There water is scarce and rain rarely falls. Only about half an inch (1.5 cm) of rain falls in Lima every year! The city gets its water from Andean lakes, which are a long way away. But for the people living outside of the city on the hill sides, they have to find water elsewhere. Every winter (which is from June to November), heavy fog sweeps in from the Pacific Ocean. Villagers have started collecting the tiny droplets of fog using large volleyball-like nets. As the droplets hit the coarse weave of the net, they join together to form water drops, and gravity pulls them down into a gutter, where they collect in tanks. A single net can collect more than 150 gallons (568 litres) on a good day!



Lifeboat Rescues a Humpback Whale!

Early this summer in Hook Head, Co. Wexford, divers preparing for a dive spotted a 30 ft humpback whale tangled up in a lobster pot line. Surfacing every five minutes or so, the divers could see that it was in need of help. The coastguard were contacted and soon the Fethard inshore lifeboat came to the rescue. They managed to cut the rope, which was wrapped around the tail, and once the string of pots were removed the exhausted whale gave two blows, sank into the water and headed out to sea. You can read more about this story and about humpback whales at the Irish Whale & Dolphin Group website www.iwdg.ie.

A Monkey Herding Goats!



You may have heard about sheepdogs herding sheep, but on the Palagapandi Estate in India they have a unique shepherd for their goats - a monkey! Three years ago workers on the estate nursed an injured monkey, which they named Mani, back to health. Once recovered, instead of leaving, Mani began to herd the goats, devising her own way of controlling the flock. Where once humans took the 75 or so goats out to graze around the plantation each day, now Mani shepherds them all on her own, returning them safely home each evening!



Humans Using Echolocation to "See"?

We read on page 5 how the bat uses echolocation to "see" in the dark. The bat bounces sound off objects, which returns to it as an echo, letting the bat know where objects are.

Now it appears that humans who cannot see might also be able to use this technique to help them get around. One such person, Daniel Kish, lost his sight when he was a young child. He taught himself to "see" by clicking his tongue, which has helped him ride a mountain bike, play games and go hiking, all without using traditional aids!