



The World Around Us

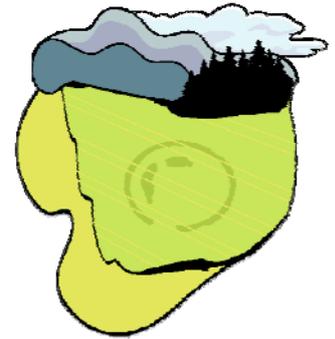


"Foreign Correspondent"
Michael Ludwig reports
on some strange
goings on in the
natural world.

A Heatwave Shows Off Our History

For archaeologists, this year's hot summer revealed many archaeological features in fields across Ireland. In some cases, as the soil dried out, a little bit more moisture was left behind in these features, making any crops growing overhead greener than crops growing in the drier ground.

One of the more striking archaeological finds was a circular enclosure or 'henge', near Newgrange in Co. Meath, thought to date from 2,500 BC. A historian, Anthony Murphy, has been studying the archaeology of the area for many years and uses a drone to capture images and video footage from the area. He had never seen the circular enclosure before and if it hadn't been for the dry weather, it may never have been discovered!



Hosepipe Ban & Water Conservation

Another consequence of the extremely dry conditions this summer was Irish Water putting a hosepipe ban in place across the country to help protect water supplies. Normally a short spell of dry weather doesn't cause drought or shortages but Ireland has experienced low rainfall over the past 6-9 months, with last winter being very dry compared to other years. There is now less raw water available to treat and supply which has put pressure on water supplies across Ireland. We can all help conserve water by making small changes. To see how you can help visit: <https://www.water.ie/conservation/>



The Ocean Cleanup 'System 001' floating in the lagoon in front of the assembly yard.

Image courtesy of <https://www.theoceancleanup.com/>

Hoping to Rid Our Oceans of Plastic

When Boyan Slat was 16 he was scuba diving in Greece and was surprised to see more plastic than fish. Back home in The Netherlands, he devoted his high school science project to understand the problem and research how it might be cleaned up.

He went on to found an organisation called The Ocean Cleanup, a non-profit organisation developing advanced technologies to rid the oceans of plastic. This September, it launched the world's first ocean clean up system from the San Francisco Bay in the US. The clean up system "System 001" is heading to a location 240 nautical miles offshore for a two-week trial. It will then continue its journey toward the Great Pacific Garbage patch, the world's largest accumulation zone of ocean plastics, 1,200 nautical miles offshore, to start the clean up.

'System 001' consists of a 600-metre-long U-shaped floating barrier with a three-metre skirt attached below. The system is designed to be propelled by wind and waves, allowing it to passively catch and concentrate plastic debris in front of it. Due to its shape, the debris will be funnelled to the centre of the system. Moving slightly faster than the plastic, the system will act like a giant Pac-Man, skimming the surface of the ocean. If it works, The Ocean Cleanup expects that the first plastic will be collected and returned to land within 6 months and recycled into products that can be sold to help fund the cleanup operations.

The Ocean Cleanup's ultimate goal is to reduce the amount of plastic in the world's oceans by at least 90% by 2040.

Flying Fish—literally!

The restocking of remote mountain lakes by Utah Division of Wildlife Resources puts a different perspective on flying fish! In the US, many states stock lakes for recreational fishing. Some of these lakes are often far from any road and can take a long time to reach by land, making it too stressful for the fish. Though an aerial drop may seem stressful, the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources explain that at least 95% of the fish are expected to survive the drop. The young fish are so small (2.5cm to 7.6 cm) long and fall to the water like leaves. The pilot will fly just above the tree line to drop the fish, getting as low as safely possible. If the lakes were not stocked this way, many would be stockless.



Giant Irish Elk antlers found in Lough Neagh

Thinking they had snagged a dead tree in their nets, fishermen in Lough Neagh have discovered the antlers of an extinct Irish Elk. It is believed the antlers, which could be about 10,000 years old, are a special find as they are still connected to the facial skeleton.



The giant Irish Elk is not really an elk but more closely related to deer species. They became extinct about 7,000 years ago and the find is important as it may help provide further information on these animals.

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