

Nature's Web

Issue No. 7

Autumn 2007

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

Editor's Page

Swans

Sharks

The Giraffe

Bulbs

Tom MacSweeney
- RTE Marine
Correspondent

Tommy Time

Colouring Nature

The World
Around Us

Shark's Close-up

Fun Page

Online Wildlife
Surveys in Ireland

Nature's
Noticeboard

In this issue of Nature's Web, we focus a little on surveying wildlife. Taking part in these type of surveys is a wonderful way of learning to appreciate nature and our natural surroundings. We also focus on bulbs, as now is the time to start putting them into the ground. They are an easy way of putting colour into your garden and can be grown by gardeners of all ages and levels. Once planted, all you have to do is wait for them to appear next spring!

Sharks are exciting animals, especially if seen in Irish waters. We take a closer look at the ones that you would most likely see around here. We also talk to Tom MacSweeney, Marine Correspondent for RTE and presenter of "Seascapes". He tells us about his work and how much the marine environment means to him.



Photo: © Robbie Murphy

We mention a number of wildlife surveys in the newsletter and though some begin a little later in the year or in spring, now is the time to start preparing if you want to take part. Once you've identified which survey you are interested in, begin reading up on the animals or plants in question. The more information you are armed with, the more accurate and useful your observations will be. If the survey is web-based, then there is a good chance the site will contain all the information you need to begin your survey. Perhaps you need to register with the people co-ordinating the survey (always seek permission from a parent or guardian first). There is likely to be a form to fill out, perhaps one for each individual sighting or maybe all sightings will go on one sheet. Familiarise yourself with these and be sure to ask the co-ordinators if you have any questions or if you don't understand something on the form. It's better to ask than to find out all your hard work is wasted by filling something out incorrectly. Survey co-ordinators will be delighted to receive all your valuable contributions. It would be even more exciting for them if your whole class or school took part as well. Once you've done all your research, you are nearly ready to go. All you have to do then is keep your eyes wide open. And maybe by beginning your survey early you just might find an exceptional record!



Editor's Page



We often hear about dolphins swimming in front of boats for fun - a practice known as bow-riding - but to see it firsthand is just amazing. Returning home from a trip to the mainland earlier this summer, six or seven dolphins began to follow the ferry just off Sherkin Island. It was an incredible sight seeing these sleek animals swimming effortless right next to the boat, diving in and out of the waves. What excitement there was onboard! And even better, as the ferry returned to Baltimore Robbie Murphy was on hand to take this excellent shot of one of the dolphins bow-riding.

Photo: © Robbie Murphy

Bow-riding

Garden Bird Survey

At the end of this newsletter we mention a number of online wildlife surveys that you can take part in. Another great survey worth a look at is Birdwatch Ireland's "Garden Bird Survey". Between December and February each year, they ask members of the public to keep note of the highest number of each bird species visiting their garden every week. They also ask for information on the size of the garden being surveyed, the kinds of food, if any, being offered to the birds, and so on. Taking part is fun, easy and an ideal way to get to know your garden birds better; it also makes an ideal school project. Why not take part in this year's survey? For details contact: ocrowe@birdwatchireland.ie www.birdwatchireland.ie



Welcome to the Autumn Edition of Nature's Web!

Dear Reader,



Welcome everyone to the autumn issue of Nature's Web. This issue we are focusing on swans, sharks, bulbs, and online wildlife surveys, as well as one of our favourite animals - the giraffe. Dr. Tommy Prawn has also joined us to answer some of your interesting science questions. Be sure to send in questions and he may well choose yours to answer in the next issue. Check out nature news from around the world on page 11 and enjoy a giggle with the jokes on page 13.

We would love to hear your views and comments and suggestions for future articles. Have a good read!

Susan & Audrey

Email:
editor@naturesweb.ie
Web: www.naturesweb.ie

Editors:
Susan Murphy Wickens
& Audrey Murphy
Layout and Design:
Susan Murphy Wickens
Photographs & Clipart:
Copyright © 2007 Sherkin Island Marine Station & its licensors. All rights reserved.

Foreign Correspondent:
Michael Ludwig

© Sherkin Island Marine Station
2007



Photo: © BIM

SEAFOOD RECIPE

Teriyaki Salmon

What you need:

600g salmon - skinned, boned and cut into chunks
4 tablespoons of teriyaki sauce

What to do:

- Add teriyaki sauce to salmon and marinate for 5 minutes, or longer if preferred
- Add fish and sauce to heated pan
- Cook gently for 8-10 minutes, turning occasionally
- **Or** Cover and microwave on highest setting for three minutes, allow to stand for 2 minutes
- **Or** Thread salmon cubes on to a skewer
- Grill or barbecue for 6-8 minutes, turning and brushing with extra marinade

Brought to you by BIM. www.bim.ie

Swans

Photo: © Robbie Murphy



Mute Swan



There are three different types of swan to be found in Ireland. The Mute Swan, the Bewick's Swan and the Whooper Swan.

Mute Swan

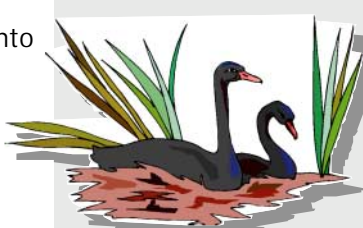
Mute Swan is the largest bird in Ireland. It has white plumage, a long neck, a bright orange bill and a black "nose". This swan was introduced into Britain by the Romans and then spread across into Ireland. They are an elegant and beautiful bird and because of this they have been encouraged to nest on our waterways around towns and villages.

Bewick's Swan

The Bewick's Swan is a winter visitor to Ireland, migrating from its Arctic breeding grounds. It arrives in large numbers to places such as the Wexford Slobs. The Bewick's Swan has a blacker bill than either the Mute or Whooper Swan, and is also considerably smaller - more like a goose.

Whooper Swan

The Whooper Swan is also a winter visitor to loughs and reservoirs in Ireland. It is bigger than the Bewick's Swan and it usually holds its long, slender neck upright. It has black feet and a black beak, with a triangular yellow patch on it.



Black Swans!

When we think of swans, we think of their gleaming white feathers. However Black Swans can be found in Australia where they live in salty and fresh waterways and wetlands.



Children of Lir

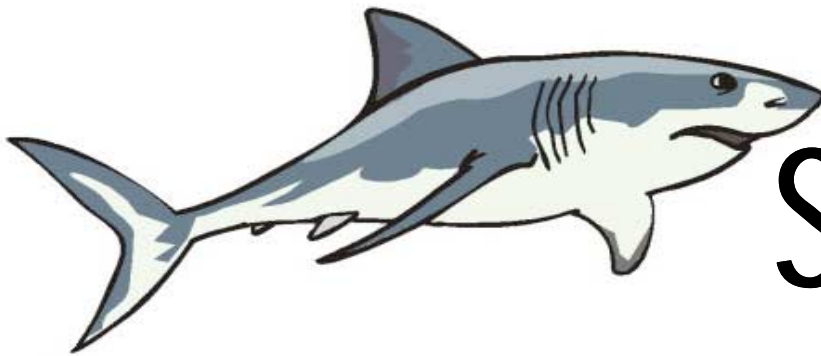
Swans have a special place in Irish folklore. Legend has it that the children of Lir (Ireland's chieftain), were turned into swans by their jealous step-mother, Aoife. Aoife felt their father loved his children more than her. She allowed them keep their human voice, so they could still talk to one another. Their voices were so sad and beautiful that many people stopped to listen to them. For 900 years they lived as swans, spending 300 years in Lough Derravaragh, 300 years in the Sea of Moyle and three hundred years in the waters of Inish Glora. They were only set free when they heard a monk ringing a bell in honour of God. Having turned back into human form, they died from old age but soon joined their mother and father in heaven.

DID YOU KNOW?

A male swan is a **cob**.
A female swan is a **pen**.
A baby swan is a **cygnet**.



© 2007 Sherkin Island Marine Station & its licensors. All rights reserved.

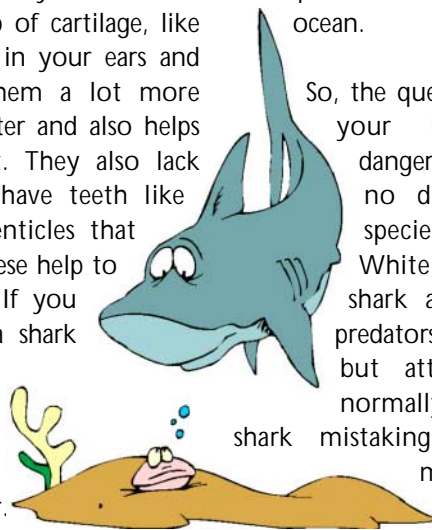


Sharks

If you are searching for an animal that has been on the planet for a long time look no further than the shark. Sharks have been around for nearly 400 million years that means they were about before the dinosaurs! Sharks, which belong to a group of animals known as Elasmobranchs, are a really successful group of animals that come in all sizes and shapes and differ from other fish in several ways.

Sharks do not have any bones; their skeleton is made up of cartilage, like the cartilage found in your ears and nose! This gives them a lot more flexibility in the water and also helps them stay buoyant. They also lack scales and instead have teeth like structures called denticles that cover their body; these help to protect the sharks. If you were ever to rub a shark from its tail to its head you would feel these denticles that make the shark feel like sandpaper.

Other features of the shark that make it different from other fish are that they usually have five gill slits (some have six and even seven!) and these can be seen behind their head. Like other fish sharks use their gills to take in oxygen and breathe. Sharks eat all types of food, some eat other fish and sea mammals but the largest of sharks are not carnivores. The Whale shark, the basking shark and Megamouth shark all eat plankton which are tiny shrimp-like animals found in the ocean.



So, the question that is on all your lips, are sharks dangerous? Well, there is no doubt that certain species like the Great White, Tiger, and Bull shark are highly adapted predators and can look scary but attacks on humans normally result from the shark mistaking people for sea mammals. What people tend not

to know is that humans kill thousands of sharks every year for their meat, fins, skin, cartilage and livers and that this is having a very bad effect on shark populations so that many shark species are now endangered. Killing sharks for their fins to make shark fin soup is one of the main reasons for such high numbers of sharks being killed.

By Emmet Jackson,
Irish Elasmobranch Group
Email: Jackson@bim.ie



Sharky Facts!

- ◆ There are an estimated 375 species of shark.
- ◆ The biggest fish in the world is the Whale shark that can grow up to 18m!
- ◆ The smallest shark is the dwarf lantern shark at just 15cm.
- ◆ The fastest shark is the shortfin Mako that can swim at speeds of 20mph
- ◆ Some sharks need to keep swimming to keep water passing over their gills and thus breathe.
- ◆ Sharks have an excellent sense of hearing and taste and can even sense electric fields.



© 2007 Sherkin Island Marine Station & its licensors. All rights reserved.

Countershading

Some sharks have different colouring on their top and bottom sides and is called countershading. You can clearly see this in the Great White Shark pictured here. The underside of the shark is light in colour so it blends well with the lighter water near the surface when viewed from below. Countershading makes it difficult for predators and prey to see sharks.



Photo: © Gary Hannan

The Giraffe

Each giraffe's body is totally covered by a unique pattern of spot, except for the underbelly.

Giraffes are the tallest of all land animals and are related to cattle and deer. Males can be up to 5.5 metres high and weigh up to 1,360 kg. Females are usually shorter and weight less.

They are native to Africa, living in the dry savanna and semi-desert



Giraffes have short horns known as "ossicones". They are made from ossified cartilage - cartilage that has changed into bone. They are similar to the horns of antelope but are covered by skin rather than horn. The horns can help you identify whether a giraffe is male or female. Females have tufts of hair at the top. Males tend to be bald on top, as a result of "necking". "Necking" is when male giraffes fight with their necks.

regions, from Sudan to Somalia and westwards to northern Nigeria.

While it takes humans nine months to produce a baby, giraffes take 14 to 15 months, after which time a single calf is born. Newborn giraffes are about 1.8m long and can run around within hours of being born. However they spend most of their first few weeks of life lying near their mother as they are prey to lions, leopards and hyenas.

A giraffe has a large heart to keep blood flowing to the brain. It pumps at a pressure two or three times that of a healthy man.

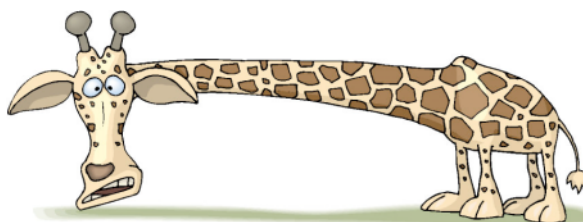
When pursued, a giraffe can run extremely fast but not for any length of time. It defends itself using its powerful legs and can deliver a fatal blow to a lion with well-placed kick.

Generally giraffes are thought to be mute (cannot make sound) but they have been heard to grunt and snort.

They need very little sleep, between 10 minutes and two hours in 24 hours. Giraffes can live for 20-30 years.

What's in a name?

All animals and plants are given a latin name. Even though scientists around the world speak in different languages, when they use latin names they are able to understand each other and know which animals or plants are being discussed. The giraffe's latin name is *Giraffa camelopardalis*. "Giraffa" mean "one who walks swiftly". The name "camelopardalis" is because it was once described as having the characteristics of a camel and a leopard.

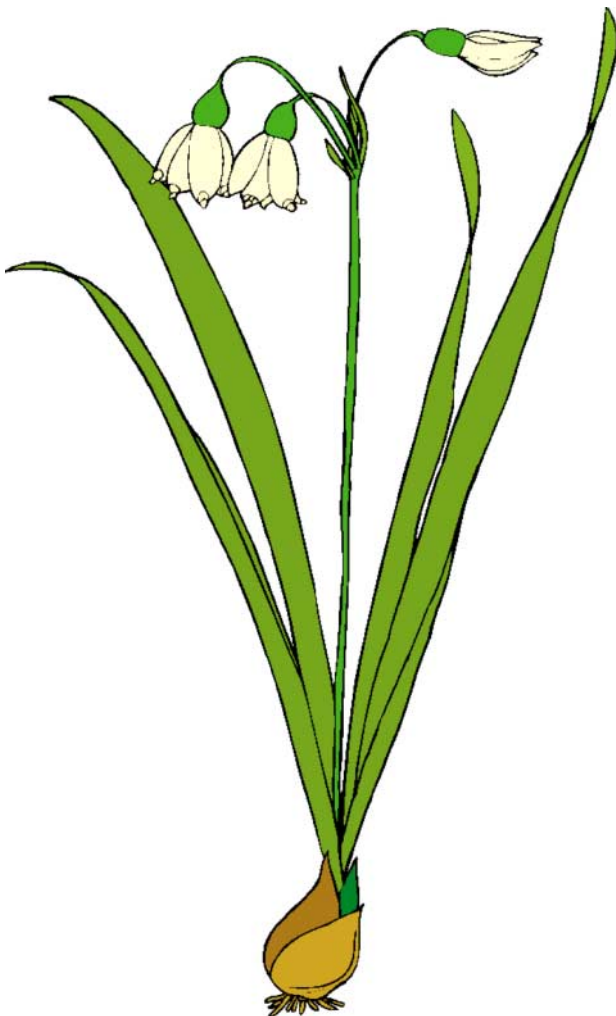
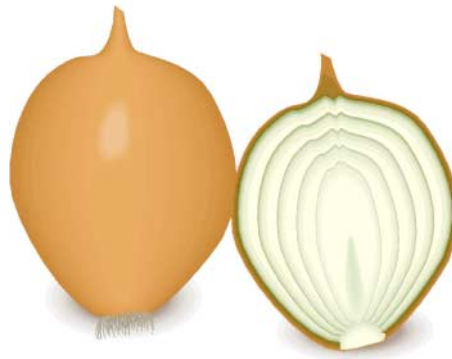


They have a long tongue, especially designed for grasping and holding. Its long neck allows them graze on the leaves of trees, particularly the acacia tree, whose long thorn are no problem for the giraffe's tongue. Giraffes can eat 63kg of leaves and twigs per day!

© 2007 Sherkin Island Marine Station & its licensors. All rights reserved.

Bulbs

The summer flowers are fading and we'll soon be thinking of getting our gardens ready for next year. One of the easiest ways of getting colour into your garden is to plant flower bulbs. You dig a hole, pop the bulb in (the right way up of course!) and cover it with soil. The following spring you'll have a beautiful flower without



having had to work very hard. But what is a bulb and how does it work?

Many of you will probably have planted a daffodil, or maybe a tulip. These are grown from bulbs.

Another well-known bulb is the onion. Though it's a vegetable and not a flower, it still behaves in a similar way.

A bulb is an underground stem, which is surrounded by fleshy scales. These scales are modified leaf structures. The scales contain the

What is the right way to plant a bulb?

Firstly you must dig a hole deep enough. A general rule is to work out how high the bulb is and dig a hole three times deeper than its height. Planting it this deep will make sure that the plant is well anchored in the ground when it grows.

It is important to put the bulb into the hole the right way up, otherwise as the plant grows it is facing the wrong way and so has to work a lot harder to grow the right way up - if it can at all! If you are a little confused by which way is up, many bulbs have a stubby root on the bottom.

Once in the ground, cover the bulb with soil and firm the ground. Watering the bulb after planting will help to settle it in and close any air pockets around it.



nutrients necessary to produce a flower in the following growing season.

When you buy bulbs in a shop you are buying the bulbs during their dormant season. Dormant means that they are inactive. They are no longer growing and they have a papery outer layer. This is because they have been removed from the ground once the flowers have died away and the outer layer has been allowed to dry out.

All in a Day's Work

Tom MacSweeney - RTE Marine Correspondent

Tom MacSweeney is based at the Cork Studios of RTE at Fr. Mathew Street, attached to RTE's News Division. You will find him at the desk every Friday which is the day when they produce and present SEASCAPES, the weekly maritime radio programme on RTE Radio 1.



Photos courtesy Tom MacSweeney

to 'see the other side' and to realise how difficult journalists could be! I returned to RTE as Southern Correspondent for Cork and Kerry. I developed the SEASCAPES maritime radio programme and finally got the chance to become the stations' first Marine Correspondent. In fact, the only full-time Marine Correspondent with any section of the media in Ireland.

What is your main aim?

I try in particular to convey to the public that we are an island nation and how important that is. 95% of our imports and exports move by sea and without ships, as an island economy, we would not survive. Imagine, there would be no cars, no planes, no trains, no electricity, no power, because ships bring the oil we need – and also no coffee, no tea, no oranges, no bananas, the list could go on and on. I also try to highlight the beauty of the sea, the pleasure of sailing and boating, and the importance to coastal areas of the fishing industry. I think more people are realising that the sea is important to us. I also wonder if everyone realises the importance of the environment, of clean water and of the maritime sphere – but I'll keep trying to bring it all to public attention.

Do you enjoy your work?

I love the job and meeting people and it is great when, even if you're not working, people say that they listen to SEASCAPES and enjoy the stories. My work takes me all over the country and particularly of course to coastal areas. I travel a lot alone, meeting a cameraman when I get to a story location. My only equipment is the new type of digital recorder – no tapes anymore – a flash card just like a camera records everything.

Is your job an easy one?

Often people think it is an easy job – doing a report on the news that might last only two minutes. But producing the report would have taken several hours of driving many miles and then once back at the office I would have to edit the pictures and radio pieces myself. The reporter/correspondent now has to do all of this. I would also

have to provide stories for newsreaders to read at the hourly headlines, as well as clips of sound, audio reports and interviews to two all-day radio channels, current affairs programmes and four main television news bulletins on two channels – so it can be hectic. But it is certainly never dull.

What is best piece of advice you would give to a budding journalist?

The best advice to those who want to get into journalism is that you will never be rich, but you will see a lot of life.

<http://www.rte.ie/radio1/seascapes/>

© 2007 Sherkin Island Marine Station & its licensors. All rights reserved.

A Day in the Life of Tom MacSweeney

What is a day in your life like?

I start work on Fridays at about 6.30 a.m., usually doing up a version of the programme script in my studio/office at home before heading into the studios. I meet the Producer, Marcus Connaughton, about midday when we sharpen up on the initial ideas and begin interviews, recordings about 3.00 pm., working on until transmission at 8.30 pm. After that, around 9.00 pm I start work on the SEASCAPES website, the AERTEL teletext service and answering Emails and phone calls which have come in during the programme so that it is usually after midnight on Fridays when I leave the office. It is a busy day.

Other days involve working for television and radio news. My work as Marine Correspondent involves all the station output and whenever there is information needed on a marine matter I get called to prepare television and news reports, and features for Nationwide. Of course SEASCAPES continues without let-up every day.

What training did you do to get where you are today?

When I started in journalism there wasn't any formal training. I began writing first for the school magazine in Presentation Brothers College in Cork and after leaving school if you wanted to be a journalist you tried around the newspapers, writing articles, seeking a job as a junior reporter which I was

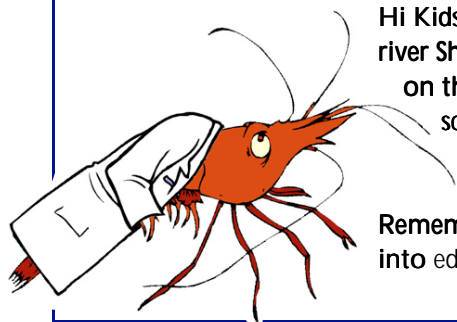
fortunate to get with the then Cork Examiner. I had to learn shorthand, now an art that has died out with the tape recorder and even the mobile phone recorder. From there I joined The Southern Star and got great experience in regional reporting, courts, local Councils, everything that happened in a county area. Then I joined The Irish Press in Dublin and that took me into Northern Ireland, Belfast, and the troubles there in the late 60s and 70s. I then joined RTE in Dublin and later was appointed as the first-ever regional correspondent, as Munster Correspondent. In the 80s I joined the State fertiliser company, NET, as Public Affairs Manager. It has since closed down. It was good experience



Above: The unusual Earthrace vessel on a recent visit to Cork.
Right: A tanker and freighter in busy Bantry Bay, Co. Cork.



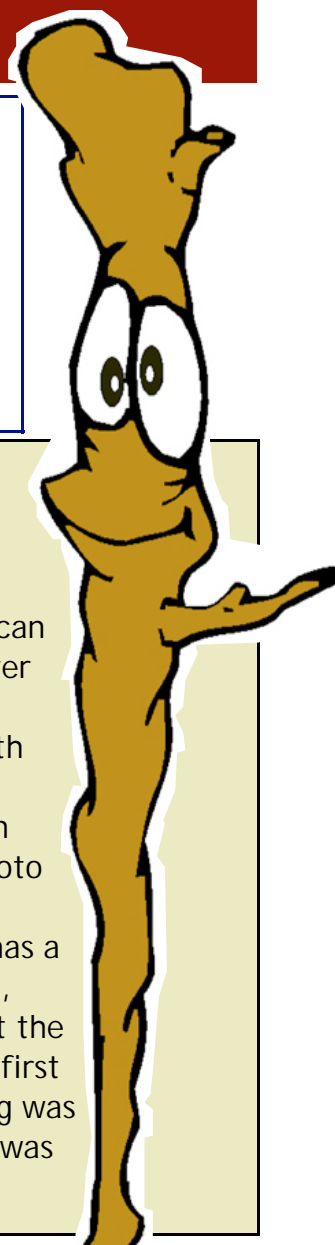
Tommy Time



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

© 2007 Sherkin Island Marine Station & its licensors. All rights reserved.

Colouring Nature

Here is a picture of Sydney the Squirrel for you to colour in. Now that autumn is here, Sydney is collecting nuts in the forest before winter arrives.

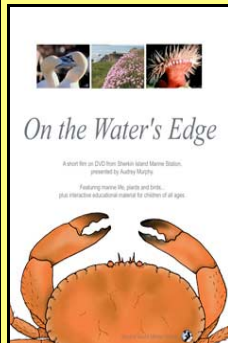


Learn More

NEW DVD!!

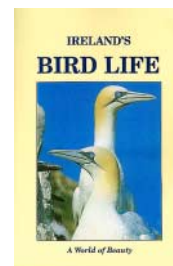
"On the Water's Edge"

Sherkin Island Marine Station has produced a dvd called 'On the Water's Edge'. It is made up of a short film on life beside the sea and is presented by Audrey Murphy. It includes hours of interactive material for children of all ages. Available from: Sherkin Island Marine Station, Sherkin Island, Co. Cork. €12.00 plus €1.30 postage.



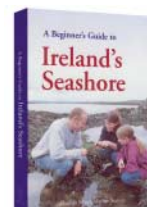
A collection of photographs of Ireland's bird life, featuring over 200 colour photographs taken by one of Europe's finest wildlife photographers, Richard Mills. 160pp

€16.00
including
postage



A Beginner's Guide to Ireland's Seashore is a pocket-sized guide, suitable for beginners of all ages. This book will help you to explore the wonders of marine life found on the shores around Ireland. 206pp

Only €6.97
including
postage

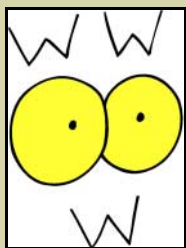


Special price
€1.50 plus 55c
postage.
Set €10.50
plus €1.85
postage.
32pp each

Sherkin Island Marine Station has published a range of colouring books, guides and activity books for children. Each thirty two page *Colouring & Guide Book* gives you the chance to colour, identify and learn about the wildlife around Ireland. *My Nature Diary* and *Safety Sam* activity book will keep you busy for hours.

To order books, send your name and address along with a cheque or postal order made payable to Sherkin Island Marine Station to:

Matt Murphy,
Sherkin Island Marine Station,
Sherkin Island,
Skibbereen, Co. Cork. Ireland.



Useful Web Addresses

There are lots of websites to be found on the web that will give you further information on topics we have covered in this newsletter. Here are a few that may be of interest:

Bow-riding: <http://www.wdcs.org/dan/publishing.nsf/allweb/F7675ABCAC7D27D7802569F4003A819A>

Swans: <http://www.birdwatchireland.ie/Default.aspx?tabid=408>

Children of Lir: <http://homepage.eircom.net/~HOLYFAM/legends1.htm>

Sharks: <http://www.sharktrust.org/>

Giraffe: http://www.nationalgeographic.com/kids/creature_feature/0111/giraffes.html

Bulbs: <http://www.plantingflowerbulbs.com/>

Tom MacSweeney - Seascapes: <http://www.rte.ie/radio1/seascapes/>

Giant Insects: <http://www.extremescience.com/giant-insects.htm>

Aeroplane Takeoff: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Takeoff>

Golden Eagle Chick: <http://www.goldeneagle.ie/>

Leatherback Turtle: <http://www.turtle.ie> <http://www.wildlifeextra.com/ireland-leatherback.html>

Purse Search Ireland: <http://marinedimensions.ie/index.php?id=730>

Yangtze River Dolphin: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/6969226.stm>

Carl Linnaeus: <http://www.linnaeus2007.se/>

We cannot be responsible for the content of external websites, so please observe due care when accessing any site on the internet.

© 2007 Sherkin Island Marine Station & its licensors. All rights reserved.



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



Donegal Golden Eagle Chick fledges

Great news for the Golden Eagles re-introduced into Glenveagh National Park in Donegal a few years ago. The eagles first nested and laid eggs in Donegal in 2005 and again in 2006 but this year's nest has produced young for the first time. One of the two chicks that hatched in April has now learnt to fly (fledged) and has left the eyrie. As normally happens, the second chick died shortly after hatching. The survivor spent 79 days being fed by both adults during the fledging stage and is likely to be fed by the adults until sometime in October.

Photo courtesy www.goldeneagle.ie

Plastic bag kills Leatherback Turtle



During the summer, a large Leatherback Turtle was found dead in the sea off Ballycotton, Co. Cork. Scientists believe that the turtle died from eating a plastic bag, which it mistook for a jellyfish. The turtle was huge - measuring 2.5m from the tip of one flipper to the tip of the other and her shell was 1.68m long. She weighed a tonne. Scientists working on the Irish Sea Leatherback Turtle Project, and who are monitoring turtle activity in Irish waters, have taken samples from the dead leatherback to learn more about her species.

Mermaid's Purse Search in Ireland

A massive nationwide search is underway for Mermaids' Purses, the eggcases of sharks, skates and rays. Irish scientists are hunting for these eggcases because they think that they could provide valuable information on the location of nursery areas for Ireland's skates and rays. If you would like to take part in the hunt, visit their website at www.marinedimensions.ie and read all about it.

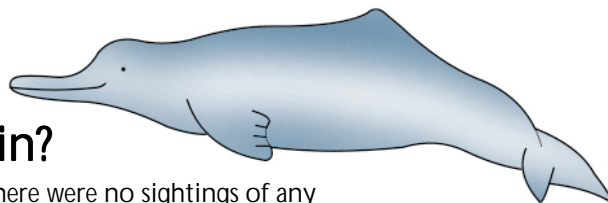


Celebrating a 300th birthday!

Carl Linnaeus, the scientist that invented the way we name plants and animals, would have been 300 years old this year (if he had lived that long!). Carl Linnaeus was born in Sweden in 1707 and trained as a medical doctor. But his passion was plants and he dedicated his life to providing structure to the way plants are named, using the Latin language - a language well used in the 1700s. *(We hope to show you the system Linnaeus invented in the next issue.)*

Second chance for Yangtze River dolphin?

The world was shocked to hear that there were no sightings of any of the Yangtze River dolphins during an recent intensive search, with the result that the dolphin was declared extinct. However, there is a little ray of hope as a possible sighting of the dolphin was made soon afterwards by a local man - a sighting that was confirmed by Chinese biologists.



Sharks

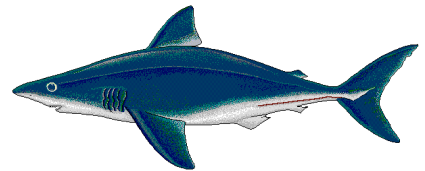
Sharks are not just found in warm waters. Contrary to popular belief, Ireland has a wealth of shark species in its waters. The group of animals that sharks belong to, the Elasmobranchs, also includes the animals known as the skates and rays. Sharks found in our waters range in size from the small lantern sharks to the basking shark and can be found from deepwater trenches to the coastal waters. There have never been any attacks on humans by sharks in Irish waters and we, as humans, often pose more of a threat to them. So the next time you hear someone giving sharks a bad name, stand up for the shark!

Porbeagle Shark

Lamna nasus Craosaire

The porbeagle is related to the great white shark and displays the typical shark body shape that everyone thinks of when they imagine a shark! It has a stout body, prominent gill slits, a tail fin set vertically, with the upper lobe somewhat larger than the lower, a conical snout and sharp teeth! It can live in much colder water than the great white as it can keep its body temperature above that of the water around it. We are lucky to have such a fantastic beast in our waters!

Colour: Dark grey above white or pale cream below.
Length: 350cm
Habitat: Temperate Pelagic (near the top) Waters
Diet: Carnivore eating mainly fish and cephalopods.



Lesser Spotted Dogfish

Scylliorhinus canicula Fíogach

This fish is one of the most common shark found in Irish waters and can often be seen in aquariums as they are easy to keep in captivity. They are small but are strong sinuous little creatures. These fish are also sometimes referred to as catfish. As their name suggests their skin is covered with small dark brown spots on their upper most side.

Colour: Upper surfaces brown or sandy with darker spots. Underside unmarked.
Length: 100cm
Habitat: They live on the sea bottom in gravelly, sandy and muddy bottoms.
Diet: Invertebrates and other fishes.

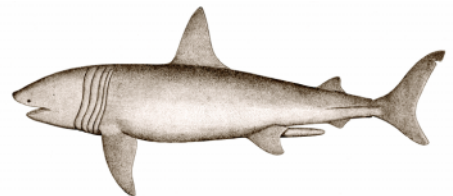


Basking Shark

Cetorhinus maximus Liomhan

Basking Sharks are fabulous creatures in many ways. Not only are they a filter feeding shark species but they are also the second largest fish in the sea - reaching a mammoth 11 metres long. We are very privileged to have these gentle giants living in our waters. As they swim near the surface in order to feed on plankton, they were easily hunted for their liver oils, skin and meat. Thankfully, today basking sharks are protected.

Colour: Brownish or greyish.
Length: Reported to reach 1500cm!
Habitat: Oceanic and pelagic.
Diet: Plankton



Blue Shark

Prionace glauca Siorc Gorm

One of the most beautiful of shark in our waters is the blue shark. It is aptly named as it has the most iridescent of blue colours on its upper body. It has a slender body and a long pointed snout. They are summer visitors to our waters from May to September, during their annual migrations. These sharks are prized as angling fish but are nearly always released back into the sea. Unfortunately blue sharks are heavily fished as they are caught by mistake in other forms of fishing.

Colour: Bright Blue above and white below.
Length: 300cm
Habitat: Open oceanic waters
Diet: Fish and Squid



Text by Emmet Jackson, Irish Elasmobranch Group

© 2007 Sherkin Island Marine Station & its licensors. All rights reserved.

Fun Page

How much did you learn?

The answers to all these questions can be found in the newsletter...see if you can remember!

1. What is it called when a dolphin swims in front of a boat?
2. What year was the Nature's Calendar (www.biology.ie) set up?
3. Name the longest insect in the world.
4. What programme does Tom MacSweeney present on RTE?
5. What is Sydney the Squirrel carrying in the "Colouring Nature" page?
6. What is the most common shark found in Irish waters?
7. How long can giraffes live?
8. When bulbs are dormant, they are actively growing. True or False?
9. Give the correct name for a male swan.
10. In which country would you hope to find the Yangtze River Dolphin?
11. What plant-loving scientist celebrates his 300 birthday this year?
12. What type of purse is being sought in Purse Search Ireland?
13. Name the stepmother of the Children of Lir.
14. What shark is the fastest in the world?
15. What type of sauce is used in the BIM seafood recipe?
16. Who runs the Garden Bird Survey?
17. How many Donegal Golden Eagle chicks hatched this year?

Answers: (1) Bow-riding (2) 2005 (3) Female giant walking stick (4) Seascapes (5) Nuts (6) Lesser Spotted Dogfish (7) 20-30 years (8) False (9) Cob (10) China (11) Carl Linnaeus (12) Mermaid's Purse (13) Aoife (14) Shortfin Mako (15) Terryaki Sauce (16) Birdwatch Ireland (17) 2.

What am I saying....?

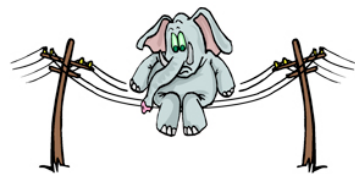
Have fun with your friends making up a title for this picture of a rooster.



Nature Jokes

What happens when you cross a bird and an elephant?

A lot of broken telephone wires.



What's a crocodile's favourite game?

Snap.



What do you get when two giraffes collide?

A giraffic jam.



How can you tell if a tree is a dogwood tree?

By its bark.



What did one flea say to the other?

Shall we walk or take the dog?

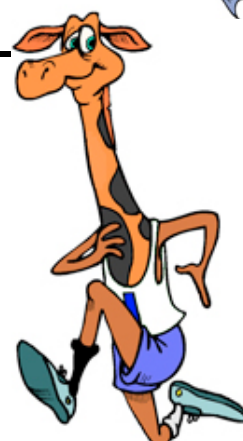


How did the rocket lose his job?

He was fired.

How do you cut the sea in half?

With a sea-saw.



Spot the five differences!

© 2007 Sherkin Island Marine Station & its licensors. All rights reserved.

Conservation

Online Wildlife Surveys in Ireland

It is more important than ever to watch the natural cycle of animals and plants, to see that there are no unusual changes. There are a number of online surveys in which you can participate in Ireland. Here are details of some of them:

www.biology.ie

Biology.ie was set up in September 2005 to collect Nature's Calendar (or phenology) data from the public. This data (sightings of natural events such as the first appearance of leaves) is placed on a map of Ireland for all users of the site to view. The Aims & Objectives of Biology.ie are:



- To collect Nature's Calendar sightings from the public into one central database.
- To increase awareness of Ireland's biodiversity and in so doing to increase awareness of the value of habitats for the plants and animals.
- To maintain a web site that allows the public to contribute their experience of the natural world via maps and blogs/forums.

www.greenwave.ie

The Greenwave experiment is looking at how Spring moves across Ireland. On a large European scale Spring moves from the South where it gets warm first to the North where it gets warm later. So Spring arrives in Spain and Italy before it arrives in Germany, and then it moves on to Sweden and Finland. We want to see what will happen in Ireland. By taking part in Greenwave you will actually do real science work! You will be taking part in a genuine mass experiment to find out if Spring moves from south to north across Ireland or inland from the coast to the centre of the country. You will study and record when plants and animals in Ireland react to the warmer and longer days of Spring.



www.springalive.net

The Spring Alive project is a simple birdwatching survey. Thanks to children and adults all around Europe they are able to track the spring arrival every year. Participation is very simple and can be great fun. All you need to do is register your first bird sightings on-line every year. They are interested in your personal first observation of swallow, swift, cuckoo and stork. They analyse the results to track the arrival of spring every year and to find the week when most people have seen their first birds. This knowledge will help Spring Alive to find out about bird migrations in Europe. When you visit the website take a look at the results pages to see what they discovered.



Many organisations have ongoing surveys where they ask you to fill out forms when you have made a sighting.

Check out some others: Irish Whale and Dolphin (www.iwdg.ie) Birdwatch Ireland (www.birdwatchireland.ie)

Irish Mammals (www.irishmammals.ie) Hop To It Frog Survey (www.ipcc.ie) National Lizard Survey (www.iwt.ie)

Bat Conservation Ireland (www.batconservationireland.org) Irish Sea Leatherback Turtle & Jellyfish Survey (www.turtle.ie)

Dublin Naturalists Field Club Butterfly Survey (www.butterflyireland.com)

Mermaid's Purse Chase (www.marinedimensions.ie)

© 2007 Sherkin Island Marine Station & its licensors. All rights reserved.

Wordsearch

Nature's Web Wordsearch

Try out this giant wordsearch containing words found in this issue of the newsletter.



Basking Shark

Biology

Black Swan

Blue Shark

bowriding

bulbs

dogfish

giraffe

Golden Eagle

Greenwave

Mermaid's Purse

Nature's Web

Porbeagle Shark

salmon

Springalive

surveys

Tom MacSweeney

Tommy Prawn

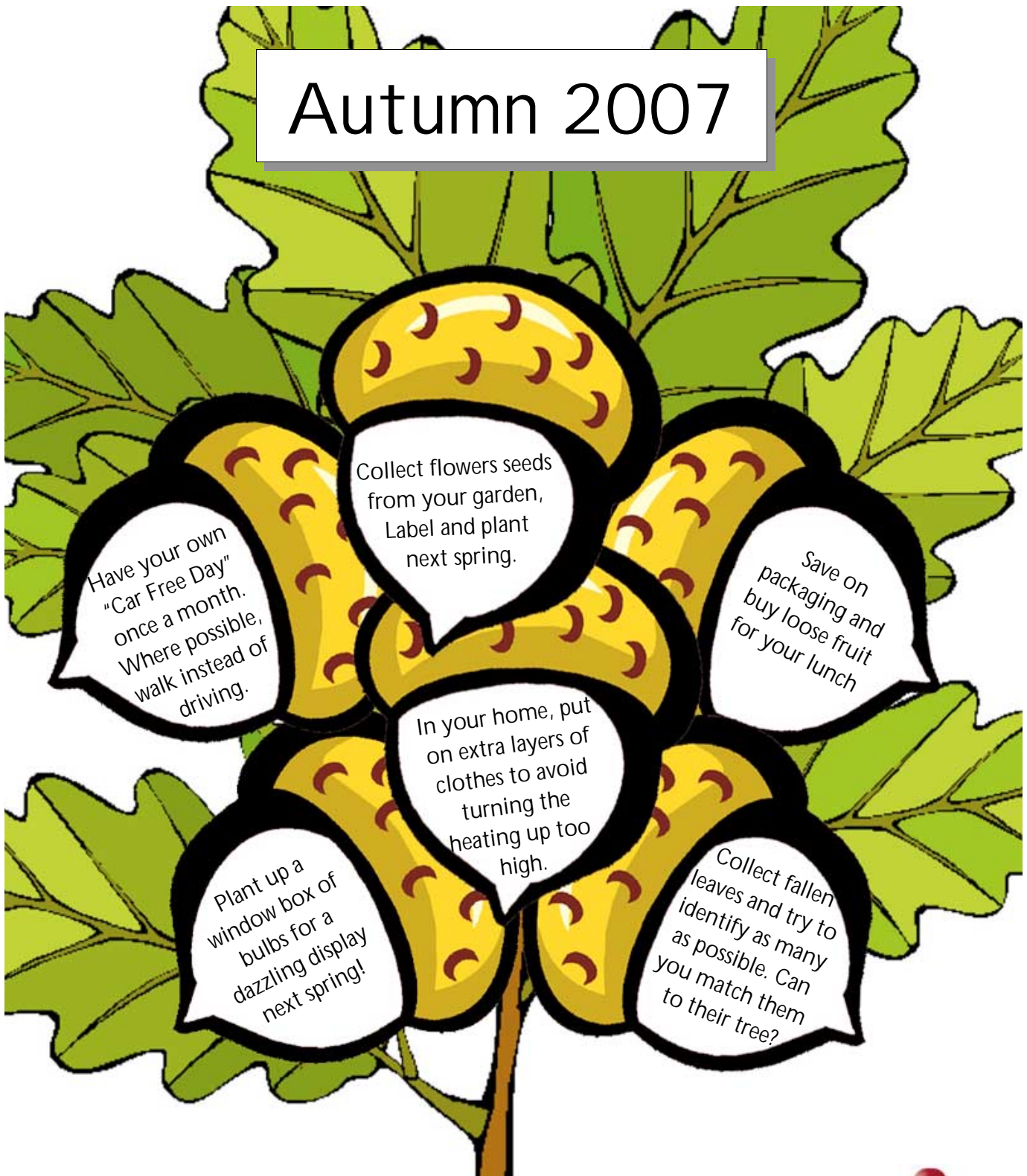


ANSWERS: (Over, Down, Direction): Basking Shark (1,2,SE); Biology (12,17,W); Black Swan (15,9,N); Blue Shark (2,12,NE); bowriding (4,1,SE); bulbs (7,18,E); dogfish (17,12,S); giraffe (7,1,SW); Golden Eagle (18,1,S); Greenwave (3,14,E); Mermaid's Purse (2,16,NE); Nature's Web (14,16,W); Porbeagle Shark (13,14,N); Salmon (16,6,N); Springalive (12,4,SW); surveys (12,7,NW); swans (2,8,NE); Tom MacSweeney (4,15,E); Tommy Prawn (11,10,NW).

© 2007 Sherkin Island Marine Station & its licensors.

Nature's Noticeboard

Autumn 2007



Sherkin Island Marine Station would like to thank PharmaChemical Ireland for their support in making this newsletter possible. We would like to thank those who have contributed to this newsletter especially Emmet Jackson, Michael Ludwig, Tom MacSweeney, Robbie Murphy and James Ring.

Visit the Sherkin Island Marine Station website www.sherkinmarine.ie



© 2007 Sherkin Island Marine Station & its licensors. All rights reserved.