



The World Around Us



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

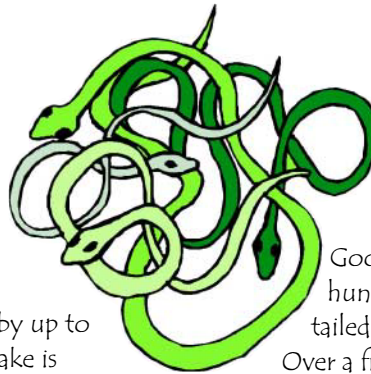
THE AMAZON RAINFORESTS DEPEND ON DUST FROM ONE SAHARAN VALLEY

Fertilising fields is one way to keep them productive, and Mother Nature uses the same method for her rainforests. But while we usually get the fertiliser locally She has been reaching across the South Atlantic for her supplies! Each year, millions of tonnes of mineral dust are carried by winds from the Sahara desert in Africa, to the rainforests of South America. This dust helps keep the soil of the rainforests fertile. Scientists in Israel have discovered that 56% of the dust comes from one place, the Bodele Valley in Chad, Africa. Using satellite images, they found that more than 40 million tonnes of Bodele dust is spread over the rainforests. The process is made possible by the topography around the Valley. Two mountain ridges create a wind venturi affect, which lifts the dust high into the atmosphere where it is carried across the Atlantic Ocean.



Snakes Predict Earthquakes???

Scientists at the earthquake bureau in Nanning, in southern Guangxi Province, China believe that snakes can predict when an earthquake is about to occur. They are monitoring local snake farms, using internet video links after discovering that their "slithering instruments" can sense the tiny tremors that precede, by up to five days, when an earthquake will happen. When a quake is about to occur, the snakes start moving strangely and if the quake is a big one, they even start smashing into their cage walls, trying to escape. Scientists said the serpents can sense a quake up to 120km (75 miles) away! I'd rather watch a seismograph, thank you!



White-tailed Sea Eagle Coming Back to Kerry

Good news for Kerry where, after one hundred years of absence, the White-tailed Sea Eagle will be re-introduced. Over a five year period starting in the summer 2007, 15 chicks a year from Norway will be reintroduced to The Killarney National Park in County Kerry. The Park appears to be the best place to re-introduce the 2.5 meter wingspan birds. Experts feel that the rich peninsulas and deep bays of Kerry and West Cork are very suitable for the White-tailed Sea Eagle. The 75 bird relocations should create a breeding population that will spread out across the rich peninsulas, coast, windswept islands and deep bays of Kerry and West Cork. It is hoped that the project will be as successful as the re-introduction of the Golden Eagle to Donegal six years ago. Apart from the cultural and tourism benefits of having eagles back in Kerry, this project will help Ireland meet its commitment to maintain and enhance native wildlife under the Rio de Janeiro accords.



Remains of a Dinosaur Found in Spain

Palaeontologists (people who study the history and development of life on Earth) have uncovered the remains of the biggest European dinosaur fossil ever found. The new species, *Turiasaurus riodevensis*, measures almost 120 feet (37 meters) in length and may have weighed as much as 48 tons (more than 50 cars!) The sauropod dinosaur was a giant plant-eater and has been named *Turiasaurus riodevensis*. It takes part of its name from Turia, the name of region, in Spain, where it was found.

The size of its bones suggest that it is among the largest dinosaurs to walk on Earth. The animal, with an 11-foot-long (3.5-metre) left forelimb, once roamed all across Europe and its discovery hints at future finds of behemoth dinosaurs on the continent.

