



The World Around Us



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

For the love of a dog!

Monty, the Bichon fries, had serious heart pump problems but his love for his owners never lessened and neither did theirs. So when the Veterinarian said Monty's heart needed a little help to keep a regular heart beat his owners said "yes" and a pacemaker was installed. A pacemaker is a device which uses electrical impulses to trigger and regulate the heart's beat. Monty problems were unusual because he needed a two chamber pacemaker. The implant is the first of its kind in a dog but Monty and his owners didn't care. And, Monty is again mischievous and up for some fun. He loves playing and is always ready for adventures!



A 1,000 Common Dolphins off Cork Coast

The Irish Whale and Dolphin Group (IWDG) received a report from Mícheál Cottrell (from Baltimore, Co. Cork). He was hauling nets on a commercial fishing boat in mid-February, off the Old Head of Kinsale in Co. Cork, and his skipper shouted to him that a huge pod (herd) of Common Dolphins was "working" (feeding) in the area. There were at least 1,000 dolphins in the pod and they could be seen on the fishing boat's radar. They appeared to cover an area of about 0.75 x 1.5 nautical miles. According to the IWDG, Common Dolphins have a behaviour (practice) of feeding in teams. It appears that they have learned that it is far easier to find food if they co-operate with each other rather than striking off on their own. Cooperation is good!



Celebrating International Year of the Forest

National Tree Week, which is organised by The Tree Council of Ireland, has just celebrated its week-long celebration of trees in our lives and environment. This year the theme of the week was 'The Year of the Forest - Celebrating Forests for People' in keeping with the United Nations' 'International Year of the Forest'. The Tree Council of Ireland tell us that even though Ireland has made great advances in the past 100 years, it is still the least wooded country in Europe. Only 11% of our land is covered in trees, compared to an average of 40% in the rest of Europe. Ireland has agreed to plant more trees so that our forests will cover 17% of the country by 2035. To learn more about woodlands, check out the 'Balrath Project' on www.treecouncil.ie/schools.html. The Tree Council of Ireland, along with Meath County Council, are developing Balrath woodland in Co. Meath as an 'outdoor classroom'.



Take part in a BioBlitz!

In the Spring 2010 issue of Nature's Web we featured Biodiversity (Biological Diversity - the difference between all living things on Earth). To learn a little more about biodiversity you can take part in a BioBlitz, a unique event where scientists, students and the general public can come together and learn how scientists and observers use their skills to study the wildlife of an area. It will also introduce the non-specialist to the fabulous wealth of biodiversity that occurs all around us.

BioBlitz is a scientific race against time. It is a fun event to find as many species as possible within a park over a 24 hour period. It begins at 17.00 hrs on 20th May 2011 and finishes at 17.00 hrs on 21st May 2011 at five venues around the country:

- Ballycroy National Park, Co Mayo
- Dromore Woods, Co Clare
- Killarney National Park, Co Kerry
- Raven National Nature Reserve/ Wexford Wildfowl Reserve, Co Wexford
- Waterstone Park, Dublin 7

From soaring eagles to the smallest bugs in the undergrowth, teams of scientists and volunteers will comb the parks recording what they find. Each state-owned property will have a different group vying for the title of BioBlitz 2011 Champions, with each site pitted against one another to see which property can find most species.

Visit <http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/home-page/irelands-bioblitz/> for information on last year's event and to get more details about this year's BioBlitz.

