



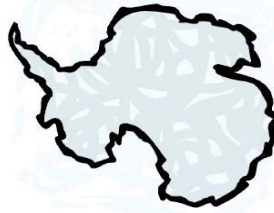
# The World Around Us



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

## Moving a research station on Antarctic

The British Antarctic Survey has several Antarctica research stations, where they study the ozone layer and other aspects of life in Antarctica. One station is Halley VI. It is situated on the Brunt Ice Shelf, which sits in the Weddell Sea. The shelf is cracking and the station had to be moved. Located just 23 km from a crack that began widening in 2012, when another crack appear just 17km on the other side of the station in October 2016 relocation was needed. The new crack was 40km long. Though there was no immediate threat, it was decided to move the Station to a more stable location. If both cracks were to join up a very large iceberg would calve (or break off) the ice shelf, and the Halley IV would be adrift. The Station is made up of individual pods joined together. They were designed to be moveable. The relocated station will be reoccupied at the end of the Antarctic winter in November.



## 'Drive thru' sequoia

Redwood or Sequoia trees are the giants of the tree world. In the 1800s, a few of these living giants had tunnels carved through them allowing people, horses, and even cars, to pass through them. This was done to encourage people to visit the trees. However, as these are living trees, carving through them severely damaged and weakened the trees. One such sequoia was "The Pioneer Cabin" in the Calaveras Big Trees State Park, in Southern California. It is estimated to be over 1000 years old. Over a century ago, the tree lost its top and a tunnel was carved into the 50m tall and 10m diameter tree. For generations it was a visitors attraction. Sadly, the tunnel was to ultimately spell the end for the weakened tree. In January 2017 a bad storm blew it down. Thankfully Sequoia trees are no longer carved and damaged in such a way, making them healthier and much more stable.



The Pioneer Cabin in 2006. The tunnel was cut in the 1880s to compete for attention with Yosemite's Wawona Tree.

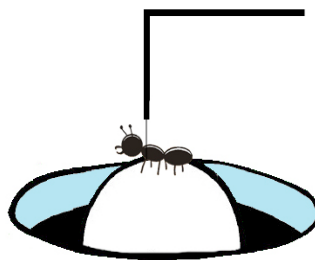
## Snakes in the Classroom!

Well, this is unlikely to be a problem in an Irish school! Last September a high school in Ware Shoals, South Carolina, USA, had to close a classroom after five snakes were discovered in the room over a period of 10 days. The snakes were non-venomous, Rat Snakes, thought to have slithered into the classroom through cracks in the walls where old radiators once were. The cracks were sealed up and a pest control company dealt with the snakes. Isn't it a relief that there are no snakes in Ireland!



## Ant on treadmill

Scientists have used treadmills for many years to study the movement of humans and large animals. However, what if they wanted to study the movement of ants? Typical treadmills would obviously be too big. An innovative approach to study the homing movements of two species of desert ant was found by scientists at the University of Freiburg in Germany. Using a Styrofoam ball on a cushion of air and securing the ant in place with a dental floss leash glued to its back, they created a perfect-sized "ant" treadmill. As the ant moved, it was able to rotate the ball, allowing the scientists to study ant walking speed and orientation at any time. The scientists found that the ants showed a significant difference in walking speed and behaviour, depending on whether they thought they were heading home or when they realised they were lost.



## A Printed House!

In recent years, people have found more and more uses for 3D printers. Now it seems they can print houses! A company in San Francisco, Apis Cor, have just printed a 38<sup>2</sup>m house in just 24 hours, using a concrete mixture as the "ink". It has a curved design and has a hall, bathroom, living room and a compact kitchen and costs just under €10,000.



© 2017 Sherkin Island Marine Station & its licensors. All rights reserved.