

Nature'sWeb

Issue No. 17

Spring 2010

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A Spiky Friend!

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Editor's Page

A Man on a Mission!

Our Dad loves feeding the birds in his garden. Each winter, he buys a large bag of bird feed and once the weather turns cold, goes out each morning to top up the bird feeder. Now, as the cold weather stretches into spring, he is still feeding them and birds continue to flock to his garden. It is a real treat to look out the window at all the different varieties, including blue tits, greenfinches, robins and wrens.

With the very cold weather there have been more birds than usual. At one stage, there were thousands of redwings on the island and Dad's garden was fluttering with activity. The harsh winter had forced them to take refuge nearer to homes. Redwings are members of the thrush family and they visit Ireland each winter.

The cold weather isn't the only reason for more birds in Dad's garden this year. Instead of feeding the birds peanuts as he did every other year, he changed to bird seed, which the smaller birds seem to prefer. He also bought a new feeder with smaller openings to deter the crows and placed it nearer the house. Now he can marvel at the birds just outside his window – a lovely reward for all his hard work!



Photograph by Susan Murphy Wickens

Welcome to the Spring Edition of Nature's Web!

Dear Reader,



Welcome everyone to the Spring issue of Nature's Web. In this issue we look at the hedgehog, a fascinating mammal with a very distinctive spiky coat. (Did you know that there are no hedgehogs on Sherkin?) We also talk to fisherman John Ball who gives us a glimpse of the wonderful marine life he sees everyday and tells us about how much he enjoys his work. If you want to see more marine life, Captain Cockle gives you some helpful tips before visiting the shore. 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!

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CHUNKY WHITE FISH STIR-FRY



What you need:

675g white fish - filleted and skinned
½ inch root ginger - finely grated
1 clove garlic - finely grated
1 courgette - cut into matchsticks
2 spring onions - cut into matchsticks
110g baby corn
110g spinach
55g mangetout
2 chillies - deseeded and finely chopped
1 tablespoon soy sauce
Juice and zest of 1 orange
Flour
Salt and Pepper
2 desertspoons Sesame oil / olive oil

Method:

- Add breadcrumbs, spring onion and garlic to salmon. Season and moisten with lemon juice
- Cut fish in 1½" cubes
- Toss lightly in seasoned flour
- Heat half the oil in a wok or deep pan
- Fry fish briskly, browning all sides
- Remove
- Heat remaining oil
- Add chillies, garlic and ginger
- Stir-fry for 1 minute
- Add courgette, corn, mangetout and spring onion
- Continue to stir-fry
- Return fish to pan with spinach, soy sauce, orange juice and zest
- Cook for 2 minutes

To Serve

Serve with rice or noodles.

Brought to you by BIM. For more fish
recipes visit www.bim.ie

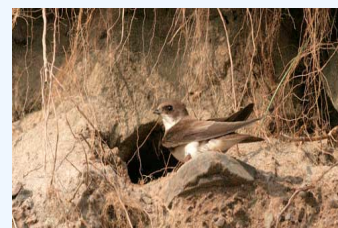
Bird Nests

Birds have to lay eggs to reproduce. They need to lay these eggs in a safe, comfortable environment, not just for their own protection but also for their eggs, and the young chicks when the eggs hatch. There are many different types of birds so it is not surprising that there are many different types of nests. What a nest looks like will depend on such things as the size of the bird, where it lives and what materials are available. An eagle is not going to fit into a bird box in the back of your garden, while a little robin is not going to fly to the top of a mountain ledge to build its nest.



Courtesy of Tibor Dulikovich CC-BY-SA 2.5

A platform nest is normally flat and built on a tree top.



Courtesy of Robbie Murphy

Some birds make burrow nests in the earth.



Courtesy of Arplingstone

Flamingos build mound nests out of mud, and these can be as high 1ft.



Courtesy of Laleh CC-A-SA 2.5

A cup nest is the typical nest that comes to mind.



Courtesy of Meegs CC-A-SA 2.5 Generic

A scrape nest can just be a shallow hollow.



The spherical nest has a narrow opening at the top.



Courtesy of USGS

Pendant nests are sac-like and usually hang from tree branches.



Courtesy of US Fish & Wildlife Service

Some don't build nests, just laying eggs directly onto rock ledges.



A cavity nest in a tree is a ready-made home.

Watching from a Distance

It is really important not to touch or go near a nest. It may cause distress to the birds, attract predators or cause the parents to abandon the eggs. Even if the nest is empty, it might still be in use and by touching it, you leave your scent. On its return to the nest, a bird will smell this scent and may leave the nest for good. If you want to observe a nest, keep a distance and keep yourself hidden.



Giving the Birds a Helping Hand

Humans can provide a suitable place for some birds to build a nest. A bird box provides birds with a safe, warm and dry environment. If a bird chooses to nest in the box, it will line it with suitable materials, such as twigs, feather and grass, before it lays its eggs.

Birds that can be attracted to these types of bird boxes are: Blue Tits, Great Tits, Robins, Wrens and Spotted Flycatchers. Nest boxes should be located in a quiet corner of the garden, away from disturbance and the possible threat from pets. It is best not to place a nest box near a feeding table, as the activity from the feeding birds will disturb the nesting birds. Some nest boxes can be set up with video cameras, allowing you to see what's going on inside.



Aquatic Life

A Trip to the Seashore

The rocky seashores around our coast offer a chance to see a dazzling variety of animals and plants to those who will only take the time to look. The seashore is also full of examples of how animals and plants adapt to a wide range of changing conditions as the tides come in and out.

When to go

The best time to visit the seashore is an hour before the low Spring Tide. Spring tides occur every two weeks and bring with them the lowest tides, exposing as much of the shore as possible. Their time and dates can be determined from tide tables published in local newspapers or purchased in angling and yachting shops. By visiting the shore an hour before Low Spring Tide you

will experience the water dropping to low tide, turning and rising again, making the best use of your time on the shore.

Planning for Safety on the Shore

You will need waterproof boots and warm clothing in winter or old shoes that can get wet in summer. Teachers will need a whistle to call their class together and need to observe the standard pupil/teacher ratio for a field trip. A mobile phone is also a useful safety item. Finally you will need a wooden frame of standard size (0.25 m²) to compare the number of animals and plants up and down the beach, notepaper, buckets, nets and a simple magnifying glass.



Seaweeds

The most obvious living things on the seashore are plants, which range from land plants like Sea Holly and Sea Pinks at the top of the shore, through lichens (a cross between an algae and a fungus), down to the true algae – Wracks, Kelps and red seaweeds at the bottom of the shore.

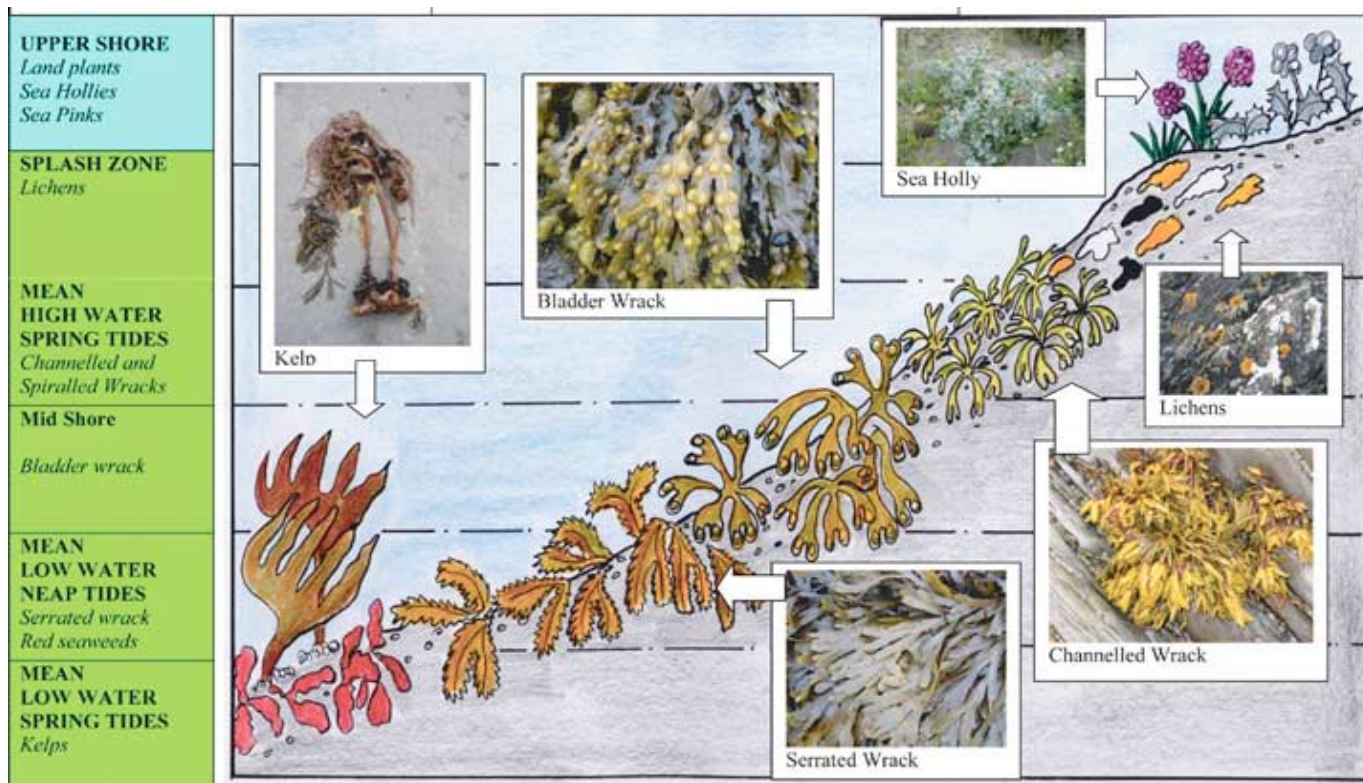
Make a note of which types grow where on the shore, or

make an accurate count from low tide to high tide using your standard frame and a measuring tape.

Captain Cockle's Log



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www.captaincockle.com



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The Hedgehog

Latin: *Erinaceus europaeus* ("Erinaceus" means "spiky wall")

Irish: Gráinneog (meaning "horrible one")

Hedgehogs in Ireland
Though hedgehogs are common

throughout Ireland, they are not native to this country. It is thought they were introduced by humans, possibly the Normans in the 13th century.

The hedgehog in Ireland is the same species as that found in the rest of Europe. There are about a dozen other species of hedgehog and these are found in South East Asia, China and Africa.

Hedgehogs are protected in Ireland. If you want to keep one captive (perhaps because it is ill) you need to apply to the National Parks and Wildlife Service for a license. Hedgehogs cannot be sold.



Courtesy Samuel Palmer CC-BY-SA 2.5

woodlands and gardens. In the wild, a hedgehog can live for about three to five years, but some can live up to 10 years. Hedgehogs are nocturnal and wander about at night, travelling about 3 km in search of food. If you see one during the day, it is possible that it could be ill.

Hedgehogs hibernate in winter when food becomes scarce. They wake up now and then and feed, often when the weather is mild. They build nests out of leaves, grass and other vegetation, often under hedges, in compost heaps and beneath piles of wood.

Few animals will eat a hedgehog because of its spines, but badgers will. The biggest killer of hedgehogs are cars and in the garden, slug pellets. Hedgehogs are a gardener's friend, eating slugs and caterpillars and not doing any damage.

The hedgehog is easy to recognise. Its head and back are covered with sharp spines, each 2-3 cms long. These spines are actually modified hair (much harder than normal hair). If frightened or attacked, it will curl up into a ball, and uses the spines to protect its body. An adult hedgehog has approximately 5,000-7,000 spines.

A hedgehog is about 25 cm long. It has a sharp snout, relatively long legs

(for its size), and a short tail. Its small bright eyes cannot see very well but it has a very good sense of smell and great hearing. For food, hedgehogs eat caterpillars, earthworms, slugs, beetles, snails and insects – and are very noisy eaters! They also make pig-like squeals when distressed and grunt when courting. Hedgehogs generally live alone and only look for company when they are mating. They live in

Hedgehogs and their young



The hedgehog will have four or five young at a time, one litter between May and July and often another in August or September. The young are born with soft spines, which will soon harden.

A baby hedgehog is called a hoglet and is also known as a pup, kit or piglet.

Are hedgehogs and porcupines related?

As both hedgehogs and porcupines have spines, you might think that they are related, but they are not.

Hedgehogs belong to a group of animals known as "insectivores", small mammals that feed mainly on insects and similar small creatures.

Porcupines are rodents and, being herbivores, mostly eat plant food such as bark and leaves.

The hedgehog doesn't really have any close relatives. However, it is thought that there is some distant link to moles and shrews.

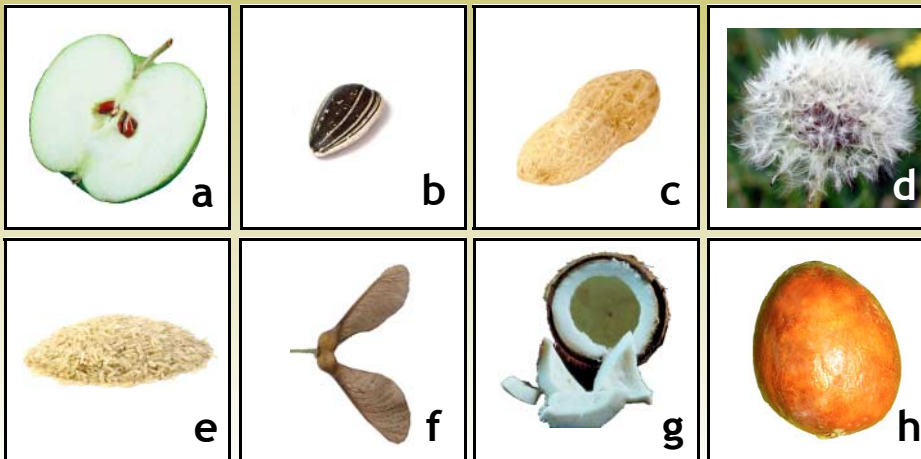


Courtesy of www.naturesonline.org

Porcupines (above) are not related to hedgehogs.

Seed Surprise

Match the seeds with the plant, fruit or flower



Seeds come in all shapes and sizes. Some we can eat, some we cannot. Can you work out which seeds on the left, match which images below?

Can you also match the names with these images?

Apple Blossoms
Coconut Tree
Rice
Sunflower
Dandelion
Sycamore
Avocado
Peanut Plant

(Answers on page 13)

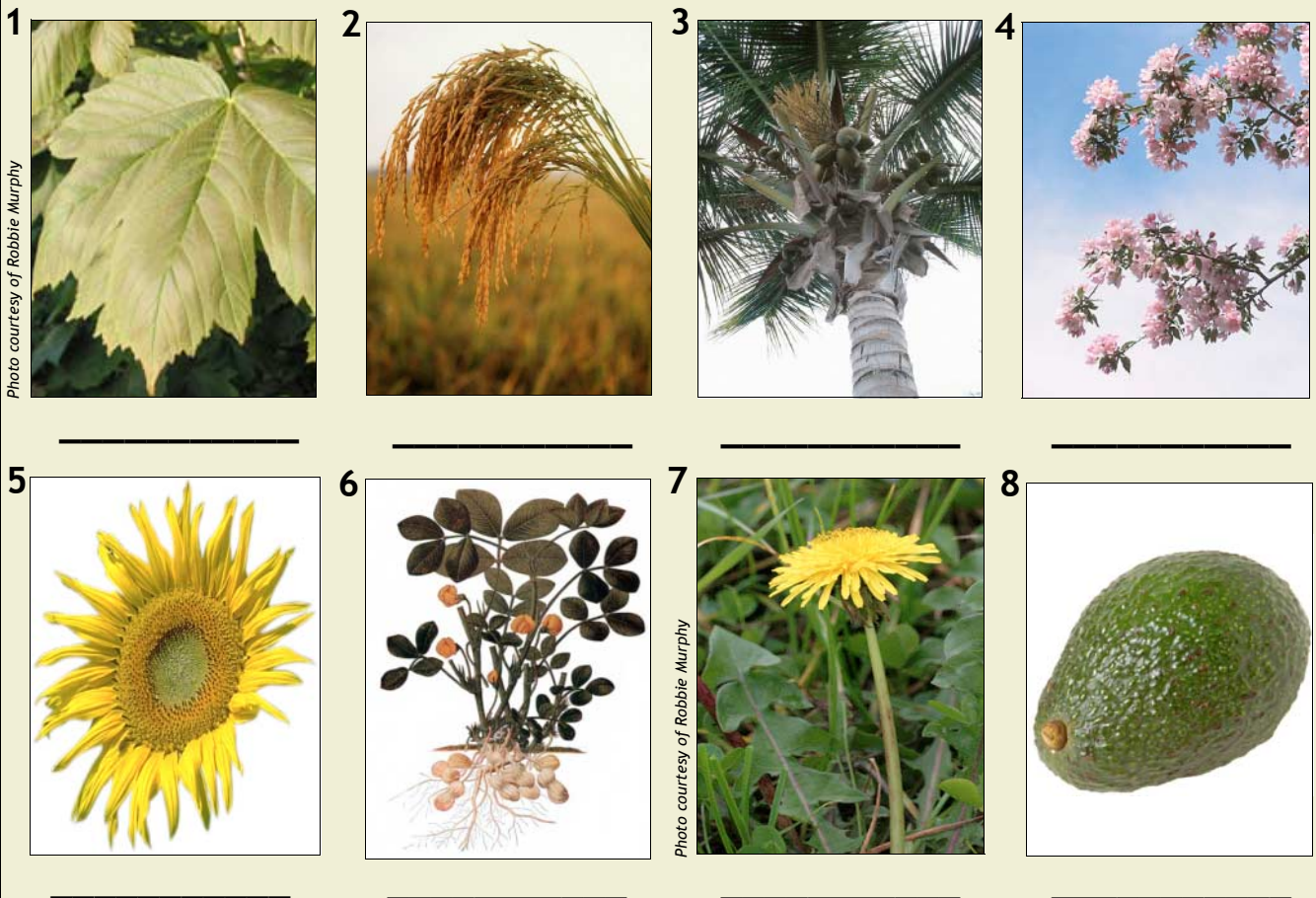


Photo courtesy of Robbie Murphy

Photo courtesy of Robbie Murphy

All in a Day's Work

John Ball – Fisherman

PROFILE

John Ball is a fisherman and fishes out of Turk Head near Skibbereen in West Cork.

Photographs courtesy of John Ball



A Day in the Life of John Ball

What do you fish for?

I fish for shrimp, crab, lobster, pollock and mackerel – mostly with pots and fishing lures.

When is your busiest time of year?

My busiest time of the year is during the shrimp season, which is from August until late December. January to April are very quiet so there is very little fishing.

Do you work alone or as part of a team?

I fish on my own with a 21ft fibreglass boat and most of the time I fish around the islands– Sherkin, Cape Clear, the Skeams, as well as south of Baltimore Harbour. It depends on where the fish are.

Have you always wanted to be a fisherman?

I have always been interested in fishing and the sea and could never see myself being far away from it. Before going out on my own I fished on trawlers and other fishing boats for a good few years. This gave me a lot of experience.

What is a typical day like?

An average day's fishing during the shrimp season could start at 5.30am and end at 5.30pm. Some times the day can be shorter or longer depending how things go (weather etc.). Every day is different. Fishing for shrimp involves hauling, baiting and re-shooting 20 pot trains of gear. These trains, or lines, have a buoy attached and are anchored at each end so as to keep them from moving and tangling. After hauling and re-shooting each train, the catch is sorted and the small and undersized go back into the sea alive. The shrimp that are big enough to keep go into tank pots until the end of the day, after which time they are collected alive by a refrigerated truck and sold to market.

Is your catch collected for market each day?

Shrimp are collected mostly every day, depending on the quantity. Crab are collected once or twice a week and are

usually loaded onto trucks with big tanks of sea water to keep them alive for market in France or Spain.

Do you always fish in the same area?

Shrimp pots and crab pots are shot back in the same area if the fishing is good, but at times you have to find a different area. This often takes up a good part of the day. Wind, weather and tides have a big effect on all fish and where they move to on the fishing grounds.

What's the worst thing about your job?

The worst thing about my job must be the bad weather. It can make it very difficult to fish, so I can lose a lot of fishing time during the winter months. Gales and stormy weather can often cause a lot of damage to the pots and can badly tangle them up.

What is the best thing about your job?

The best about my job is that it changes every day. I like all the seasons and the different fish that come along with these changing seasons. I am fascinated by the creatures and sights that I see. Some of the unusual fish I have come across have been sunfish, trigger fish and flying fish. Most of all, I enjoy being my own boss!



Top left: A small mechanical pulley hauling in the train of pots.

Right: Lobsters and crabs waiting to be sold to market.

Bottom: A stack of pots in the boat, waiting to be shot into the sea.



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World of Wonder



Scorpionfish are just one of many types of small fish hauled up in the pots. Others include blennies, gobies, pipefish and small flatfish.



The Edible Crab's carapace (its shell-like body) is like a big "pie crust". It also has large pincers, with black tips, which it uses to defend itself and for finding food.



The Squat Lobster's body is oval-shaped and flat so that it can hide in crevices. If disturbed it can jump backwards by flicking its abdomen, which it folds underneath its body.



Known in Ireland as Dublin Bay Prawns, these are actually a type of small lobster. The maximum length they will grow is 25 cm (from tail to claw), though they are normally smaller.



Photographs courtesy of John Ball

Hauling the Pots

When fisherman John Ball hauls his pots (see page 7), he comes across many different marine animals. Some are inside the pots but others are clinging to the outside (see above). Only a small selection of these animals can sold to market – most will be put back into the sea alive. This is just a select of the animals that John might see.



Common Whelks live in deep water, but empty shells sometimes wash up on the shore. Common Prawns are transparent, although some may have fluorescent yellow leg-joints and red and black lines on their bodies. Common Starfish have five arms and if one is lost, it can be re-grown. When visiting rockpools keep your eyes open for Common Prawns and Common Starfish!

Nature's Web Wordsearch

Nature's Web Spring 2010



Wordsearch

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

S	E	S	R	O	G	K	H	L	Y	R	D	Q	G	C	S	S	Q
T	Z	Y	O	Y	X	W	L	Y	E	O	A	Z	O	H	E	G	F
N	H	N	K	H	O	A	L	D	Q	V	I	G	H	U	E	O	I
A	H	U	M	P	B	A	C	K	W	H	A	L	E	N	D	R	S
H	E	L	X	N	O	L	P	W	O	X	Z	F	G	K	S	F	H
P	D	A	H	A	O	B	E	G	D	T	S	Y	D	Y	U	Y	E
E	K	O	I	V	I	B	Y	O	R	T	E	Y	E	W	R	D	R
L	J	T	E	B	C	V	X	P	S	K	C	C	H	H	P	R	M
E	B	R	J	A	F	T	N	E	I	B	C	L	V	I	R	A	A
T	K	E	M	S	A	X	N	D	V	R	Q	A	V	T	I	H	N
R	R	F	K	C	E	D	N	O	I	T	A	V	R	E	S	B	O
A	V	O	B	E	R	E	N	D	X	O	Z	Y	B	F	E	Q	I
M	I	I	U	I	Y	A	S	Y	O	U	B	G	N	I	R	U	M
S	E	L	B	V	B	U	S	H	V	E	T	C	H	S	S	J	B
R	T	Z	E	D	R	S	E	A	S	H	O	R	E	H	C	V	C
R	V	T	V	X	F	L	N	R	E	D	E	E	F	D	R	I	B
R	C	P	M	E	I	P	D	A	I	L	H	O	Y	H	A	U	L
H	O	E	W	U	R	L	N	P	G	Z	D	E	O	F	J	E	A

SOLUTIONS: (Over, Down, Direction) Bird feeder (18,16,W); Bird nests (4,14,NE); Bush Vetch (6,14,E); Chunky white fish (15,1,S); Fisherman (18,2,S); Gorse (6,1,W); Hardy Frog (17,10,N); Hedgehog (14,8,N); Humpback whale (2,4,E); John Ball (2,8,NE); Kidney Vetch (11,8,SW); Observation deck (18,11,W); Red Clover (11,1,SW); Ringbuoys (16,13,W); Seashore (7,15,E); Seed surprise (16,1,S); Smart elephants (1,14,N); Trefoil (3,8,S); Webcam (9,5,SW).

Bird feeder

Bird nests

Bush Vetch

Chunky white fish

Fisherman

Gorse

Hardy frogs

Hedgehog

Humpback Whale

John Ball

Kidney Vetch

Observation deck

Red Clover

Ringbuoys

Seashore

Seed surprise

Smart elephants

Trefoil

Webcam



Learn More

A Beginner's Guide to Ireland's Wild Flowers

Have you ever wanted to put a name to the wild flowers you see about you every day, or while on a walk, or on holiday? With the help of this pocket-sized guide, you will be able to do just that. Beginners of all ages will be introduced to the many common wild flowers found around Ireland. 206pp



Only €8.50 including postage

Sea Life DVD:

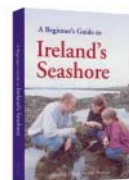
"On the Water's Edge"

Sherkin Island Marine Station has launched 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 6-10 hours of interactive material for children of all ages. Available from: Sherkin Island Marine Station, Sherkin Island, Co. Cork. €13.30 including postage.



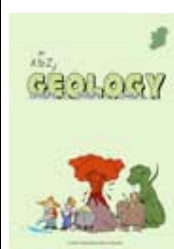
A Beginner's Guide to Ireland's Seashore is a pocket-sized guide, suitable for beginners of all ages. This book will help you to explore the wonders of marine life found on the shores around Ireland.

Only €8.00 including postage



Only €2.10 each including postage or €12.00 for all seven! 32pp each

Sherkin Island Marine Station has published a range of colouring books, guides and activity books for children. Each 32-page Colouring & Guide Book gives you the chance to colour, identify and learn about the wildlife around Ireland. My Nature Diary contains lined pages to fill in a daily record of sightings and nature news.



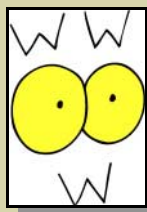
"An A to Z of Geology" explores the fascinating world of rocks and geology - a world of volcanoes, tsunamis, earthquakes, diamonds, gold and even dinosaurs! Produced by Sherkin Island Marine Station, in association with the Geological Survey of Ireland, the book aims to highlight the importance of geology in our everyday lives.

Only €5.99 plus €1.00 postage

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

Sherkin Island Marine Station, Sherkin Island, Co.Cork. Ireland.

Visit: www.sherkinmarine.ie



Useful Web Addresses

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

Feeding Birds: <http://www.birdwatchireland.ie/Advice/Factsheets/tabid/386/Default.aspx>
http://www.bto.org/gbw/BIRDS_FEEDING_HOME.htm

Bird Nests: <http://www.lincstrust.org.uk/factsheets/nestbox.php> <http://www.prbo.org/cms/193>
<http://www.birdwatchireland.ie/Advice/Factsheets/tabid/386/Default.aspx>

A Trip to the Seashore: <http://www.captaincockle.com/safari.htm> <http://easytide.ukho.gov.uk/>

The Hedgehogs: <http://www.npws.ie/en/Biodiversity/Ireland/Mammals/Hedgehog/> www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk
<http://www.wicklowmountainsnationalpark.ie/Hedgehog.html>

Seed Surprise: <http://theseedsite.co.uk/>
<http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/lmd/campaign/svalbard-global-seed-vault.html>

Marine Life: <http://www.habitas.org.uk/marinelife/> www.bim.ie

Smart Elephants: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8518831.stm>

A Room with a View: <http://www.nasa.gov/centers/kennedy/stationpayloads/tranquility.html>

Lost on the Ice: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8496586.stm>

Hardy Frogs: <http://www.biology.ie/> <http://www.ipcc.ie/lifecycle.html>

Pea & Clover Family: <http://www.floralimages.co.uk/fabaceae.htm>

Ringbuoys: www.ringbuoys.ie www.iws.ie

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

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The World Around Us



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



Smart Elephants

It seems there may be more to an elephant's brain than a long memory, the BBC has reported. Studies of the elephants in Amboseli National Park in Kenya, have found that elephant matriarchs (the head female) can learn to recognise the voices of at least 100 elephants. The researchers (from the University of Sussex in the UK) are also setting out to discover if the elephants can recognise the difference between certain human languages but it is still too early to tell. Another survey in Japan has discovered that elephants are also good at numbers and can perform better than monkeys, apes and even human children when it comes to recognising the difference between larger numbers of objects, such as the difference between five and six items.

Hardy Frogs in West Cork!

Checking out www.biology.ie, we have discovered that the frogs in West Cork seem to be some of the hardiest! Despite the really cold weather, the first sighting of frog spawn again this year was in Timoleague, Co. Cork. www.biology.ie is a great place to record wildlife sightings – have a look for yourself!



Humpback Whales Seen Breaching off Hook Head, Co Wexford

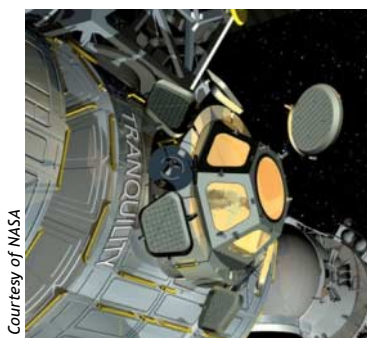


There was great excitement at the end of January when members of the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group (IWDG) not only saw, but managed to video, a Humpback Whale breaching so close to the Irish coast. Seen at Hook Head, Co. Wexford, the whale was nicknamed "Hook", for obvious reasons. It stayed in the area for a number of weeks and, along with 3-4 fins whales, could be even be seen from land. Scientists are not really sure why whales breach. It may be that they are communicating with other whales or trying to attract a mate. They may also be warning off vessels or other males, or just cooling off. Whales and dolphins are protected animals and it is really important to follow strict guidelines if you encounter such animals. These guidelines are available on the IWDG website (www.iwdg.ie), where you can also read more about the humpback's activities.

A Room with a View

Most of us would need a carpenter to install a new window, but it's not easy to get a carpenter in space! The International Space Station has just installed a brand new observation deck, which will give the astronauts a 360-degree views of Earth, outer space and the space station. Up until now, astronauts have only been able to view the Earth through small portholes.

Two astronauts used a giant robotic arm to move the observation deck into place. Costing \$27 Million the domed "eye-pod" was installed in early February.



Courtesy of NASA

Lost on the Ice

Webcams can transmit video images over the internet as they are happening. Many cities and scenic places have them, allowing people to watch events as they unfold on their computers, even if they are on the other side of the world.

A woman sitting at a computer in western Germany, was admiring the sunset at the resort of St Peter-Ording, 500km away on the northern tip of Germany. She noticed a flashing light and realised that a person was lost on the ice. She alerted the police, who were able to guide him to safety.

The stranded person was an amateur photographer who had wandered out on the frozen sea to take a picture of the setting sun. When darkness fell, he became disorientated and couldn't find the coastline again because it was covered in snow. Using his pocket torch, he began flashing the light, hoping to alert someone. Luckily for him, it was such a wonderful sunset and someone was watching 500 km away!



Up Close

PEA & CLOVER FAMILY

Members of the Pea and Clover family include peas, beans, chickpeas, lentils and other major world food crops. They have a number of easily recognizable features. The flowers have a classic "pea-flower" structure, each with 5 petals: a larger, upright 'flag' or standard, a pair of side petals or wings, and a basal pair of joined, boat-shaped petals or keel. The 10 stamens form a tube, which surrounds the ovary and stigma. The fruit is a long pod, which is often flattened, and is known as a legume. The leaves are often arranged in 3s, or in opposite pairs. Sometimes, the tips of the leaves have tendrils, with which the plant climbs by attaching itself to other plants. The family occurs worldwide.

Gorse or Furze *Ulex europaeus* Aiteann gallda

This densely bushy shrub with sharp-spiny, almost leafless green branches is more common in the east, but can be found all over Ireland. Note that young plants have leaves with 3 leaflets. The fragrant flowers, smelling somewhere between vanilla and coconut, are at their best in April and May. Nevertheless, at least a few flowers can be seen all through the year, even in late autumn and winter. On hot summer days the hairy blackish fruits dry out and split, scattering seeds with a loud, cracking pop!



Photographs courtesy of Robbie Murphy



Bush Vetch *Vicia sepium* Peasair fhiáin

Bush Vetch is common enough on hedge-banks and along lanes, but can be overlooked as the flowers have a rather faded appearance compared with the bright colours of other vetches. This slightly hairy perennial has clumps of weakly erect stems that cling to other plants with the help of branched tendrils at the leaf tips. On sand-dunes in parts of the north-west of Ireland, dwarf plants of Bush Vetch lack tendrils and grow as low hummocks. Occasionally, in the west, some plants have cream flowers.

Red Clover *Trifolium pratense* Seamair dhearg

Red Clover, a short-lived perennial with dense, round flower-heads and large 'clover' leaves, each with 3 oval leaflets, is a familiar wild flower of grassland. It was once widely grown for fodder and to add nitrogen to soil. Bumble-bees pollinate the flowers – hence a nice story of how plants and animals interact. The great 19th-century biologist, Charles Darwin, noted how cats protect these vital pollinators by hunting mice that raid their nests. Thus a cat on a farm ensured a good crop of clover seed.



Kidney Vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria* Meara Muire

Kidney Vetch is a flat-growing or weakly erect biennial or short-lived perennial, with showy yellow or pink flowers. It is locally common on rocks and cliffs or grassland on shallow lime-rich soils, especially near the sea. The elegant leaves, which are silky-hairy beneath, differ from those of other wild flowers in this family. Most are in a basal rosette and each one has 3–9 oval leaflets, but perhaps the most obvious is the pair of deeply cut flower-leaves or bracts that form a collar beneath the flower-head.

Common Bird's-foot Trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* Crobh éin

One of the most attractive and welcome flowers of early summer in Ireland, this low-growing perennial brightens dry pastures, sand-dunes, rock outcrops and sunny banks. It always grows on drier, well-drained soils. The flowers are in small, neat clusters or umbels of 3–8 on a long, rather slender stalk. The English name of this and related plants refers to the slender, cylindrical brown fruits, 15–25 mm long, which resemble the clawed foot of a bird, especially when they are in clusters of three or four.



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 do flamingos use to build their nests?
- 2 During the shrimp season, at what time does John Ball start work?
- 3 Hedgehogs spines are made of hardened hair. True or false?
- 4 How many astronauts did it take to install the new observation deck on the International Space Station?
- 5 Finish the slogan that appears on the poster on page 15: "A Stolen Ringbuoy....A Stolen _ _ _ _"
- 6 Which county in Ireland has the hardest frogs?
- 7 How many oval leaflets does a red clover leaf have?
- 8 When is the best time to visit the seashore, according to Captain Cockle?
- 9 How many seeds are inside an avocado?
- 10 Is a matriarch elephant male or female?
- 11 Why does the squat lobster have a flat body?
- 12 What nickname was given to the Humpback whale that was seen breaching off Hook Head in Co. Wexford?
- 13 When the man got lost on the ice in Germany, what was he looking at?
- 14 What type of sauce is in the BIM fish recipe?
- 15 Matt Murphy often sees hedgehogs in his garden on Sherkin. True or false.

Answers to "How much did you learn?": (1) Mud; (2) 5.30am; (3) True; (4) Two; (5) Life; (6) Cork; (7) Three; (8) An hour before low spring tide; (9) One; (10) Female; (11) So it can hide in crevices; (12) "Hook"; (14) The sunset; (15) Soy sauce; (16) False (there are no hedgehogs on Sherkin!).
Answers to "Seed Surprise" on page 6: a=Apple Blossoms; b=Sunflower; c=Peanut Plant; d=Dandelion; e=Rice; f=Sycamore; g=Coconut Tree; h=Avocado; i=Sycamore; j=Rice; k=Coconut Tree; l=Apple Blossoms; m=Sunflower; n=Peanut Plant; o=Dandelion; p=Avocado.

What am I saying?

Can you think up a caption for this photograph of a Canadian Goose (front) & a Chinese Goose (back)?

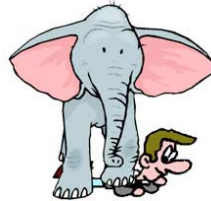


Photo courtesy of Robbie Murphy

Nature Jokes

What is black and yellow and buzzes along at 30,000 feet?

A bee in an aeroplane.

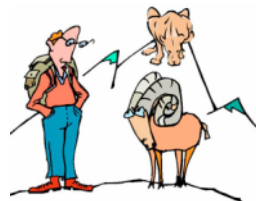


What do you call a friend who had an elephant on his head?

A flatmate.

What is a hedgehog's favourite food?

Prickled onions.



What happened to the man who tried to cross a lion with a goat?

He had to get a new goat.

What do you get if you cross a hedgehog with a giraffe?

A long necked toothbrush.

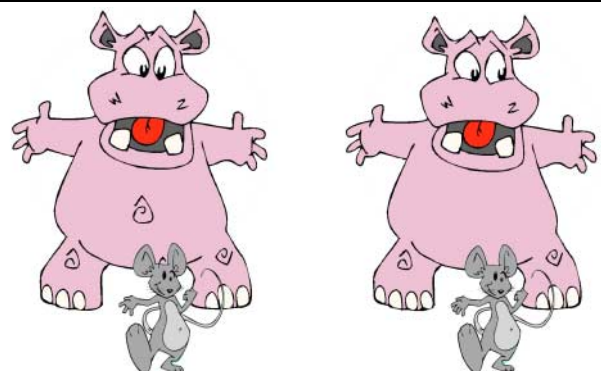


Why didn't the two worms get on Noah's Ark in an apple?

Because everyone had to go on in pairs.

What kind of wig can hear?

An earwig.



Spot the five differences!

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A Little Egg Nest



RINGBUOYS.IE

A Stolen Ringbuoy – A Stolen Life

Images courtesy of www.ringbuoys.ie



Now that spring is in the air, people are beginning to move back to the water – taking walks on the beach, going out on boat trips and, despite the still chilly weather, some are even thinking of going swimming again!

If a Ringbuoy is Missing

1. Note the Location
Is the box empty?
Is it floating in the water?
Does the box have a number?
2. Report it on:
www.ringbuoy.ie

RINGBUOYS SAVE LIVES

Don't presume someone else has reported it...

In most public areas where people gather by the water's edge, you will find a ringbuoy. This is displayed in a prominent position, to be grabbed in the event someone gets into difficulty in the water.

We always expect the ringbuoy will be in the box if we need it, but unfortunately that is not always the case.

There are still incidents of malicious damage and theft of these ringbuoys by vandals. The absence of a ringbuoy could result in the loss of life so it is important that if you discover a ringbuoy is missing or damaged, you report it.

An easy way to do this is on the website: www.ringbuoy.ie

Every year 170 people drown in Ireland. It is important to be aware of the risks surrounding water. By checking the ringbuoy we are not only making sure the ringbuoy is available if needed, but see the ringbuoy reminds us of the potential dangers of water. For more information on water safety, contact Irish Water Safety www.iws.ie. It's a good idea to brush up on water safety before the busy summer season begins.



How do you use a Ringbuoy?

To effect a rescue with a ringbuoy the rescuer should aim the ringbuoy to fall a short distance beyond the casualty so that it can be retrieved towards them. When the casualty has a firm grip they are retrieved slowly to the bank or edge. It is essential that the rescuer reassures and instructs the casualty throughout the rescue to ensure their co-operation and confidence.

A STOLEN RINGBUOY
A STOLEN LIFE

REPORT MISSING RINGBUOYS TO YOUR LOCAL AUTHORITY

Wise Up to Water Safety
at www.iws.ie

Irish Water Safety, The Long Walk, Galway
e-mail: info@iws.ie

LoCall: 1890 420 202

Irish Water Safety is the statutory and voluntary body established to promote water safety in Ireland.
Tá Cumann Sálbháilteacht Uisce na hÉireann doonach reachtúil a bunúchúil le sálbháilteacht uisce a chosú in Éireann.

Nature's Noticeboard!

Spring 2010



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