

# Nature'sWeb

Issue No. 25

Spring 2012

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## Wild Thing!



Feral Horses  
(Female and Male  
Wild Mustangs) in  
Wyoming, USA.

Courtesy of Elaine R. Wilson www.naturesonline.com

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## Editor's Page

# Does your cat watch TV?



Images courtesy of Dave & Beth Crestin

Dave and Beth Crestin love cats. "Boomer" and "Kiwi" are recent additions to their family and this four-month-old pair are full of fun. When not chasing each other around the house, they occasionally take time out to watch TV from the floor or perched on a table or chair. Much of what is on telly must be a mystery to them but "Boomer" knows birds when he sees them! It's likely he thought he could grab a snack and must have been mystified as to why he couldn't get into the picture to catch his prey. He wasn't too upset though and was soon back playing and chasing his sister around the house.

The Crestin's live on Cape Cod, in the US, and though cats may be capable hunters of birds, rabbits, squirrels, field mice and snakes, they are also vulnerable to attack from coyotes, who enjoy eating cats in the Cape. Thankfully Dave and Beth keep their two little charges snuggled up safely at home!



Courtesy of BIM

### What you need:

450g/1lb fish of your choice, skinned and cubed  
250g/9oz fresh pasta of your choice  
50g/2oz butter  
1 onion & garlic clove - finely chopped  
50g/2oz mushrooms, finely sliced  
150ml/1/4pt cream  
1 tsp Dijon mustard  
Fresh herbs - coriander, parsley or basil  
Salt & pepper

## Pasta with Seafood Cream & Fresh Herbs

### Method:

- Melt butter in frying pan, add onion, garlic and mushrooms, sauté for a few minutes.
  - Add cream and mustard, simmer for about 5 minutes.
  - Add fish and season, cook gently for further 3 minutes.
  - Cook pasta, drain add to the sauce and mix.
- Serve with a sprinkling of herbs.

Brought to you by BIM. For more fish recipes visit [www.bim.ie](http://www.bim.ie)

Welcome to the  
Spring Edition of  
Nature's Web!



Dear Reader,

Welcome everyone to the Spring issue of Nature's Web. This newsletter has a bit of a "horsey" theme. Not only do we look at the life of a horse but we also take a closer look at the many jobs they carry out. The sea has its own "horse" - the seahorse! Kealan Doyle tells us all about his work with these unusual and beautiful creatures at Seahorse Aquariums in Dublin - a job he absolutely loves! Check this out on page 7, as well as 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

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# Bird Life



Courtesy of Robbie Murphy

## FACT FILE

**Colour:** White, with pale yellow head, black tips on the wings.

**Breeding:** On coastal cliffs and remote islands.

**Length:** Wingspan 165-180 cm.

**Diet:** Fish.

**Call:** Loud, grating call when nesting.

**Egg:** One bluish-white egg.

# Gannets



**Scientific Name:** *Morus bassanus*

**Irish Name:** Gainéad

The Gannet is a common seabird around the Irish coast. A large ocean-going bird, it only returns to land to breed. While at sea it often travels in a small group, where it glides in the wind and searches for fish in the waters below. The Gannet's long body and tail, huge narrow wings and funnel-shaped head and beak, help to make the Gannet's body streamline, enabling it to move more efficiently. The long, dagger-like bill is also ideal for catching fish. Once it sees its prey it dives, often from a height of 40m, folding back its wings and hitting the water (at speeds up to 100km per hour) to catch it.

## Family Matters

Gannets nest on cliffs and rocks in a colony (or group) called a gannetry. In a gannetry, space is often very limited and from a distance it can look like the cliffs are covered in snow. In Ireland there are five breeding colonies on the islands off the coast, though one of these colonies is very small. The largest is on Little Skellig, Co. Kerry and it has over 26,000 nests. The other main colonies are at Great Saltee, Co. Wexford and Bull Rock, Co. Cork, with a smaller one on Ireland's Eye, Co. Dublin.

Once a bond is formed at the nest, a pair of gannets will remain together for years, returning to the same nest year after year.

A gannet chick is very well cared for by its parents and will usually leave the nest about three months after hatching. While at the nest, the chick is fed on regurgitated fish. The parent catches food at sea and swallows it. When it returns to the nest it brings the food back up again and allows the chick to reach deep into its throat to feed on it!

**Left:** An adult feeding its chick.

## Colouring

Gannets are very distinctive. Most of its feathers are bright white, except for black tips on its wings and buff (yellowish) colouring on its head and the back of its neck. Its eyes and beak are icy blue and its large webbed feet are black. In its first year, a gannet has brown plumage, with white dots. It will

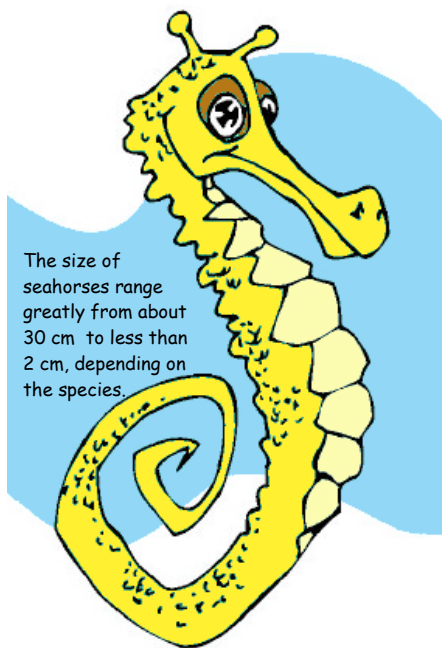
take over four years before it acquires its adult plumage.



Courtesy of Robbie Murphy



Courtesy of ADWilson www.naturesonline.com



The size of seahorses range greatly from about 30 cm to less than 2 cm, depending on the species.

### Where they live & how many are there?

Seahorses are found in almost every sea and ocean in the world from as far north as Ireland to as far south as Tasmania. Seahorses tend to like sea grass beds and areas where they can hang on in the current, in fact a seahorse may hang to the same piece of seaweed for its entire life. There are between 30 and 40 species worldwide with most being found in the Indo-Pacific region. New species continue to be found nearly every year.

# Seahorses

Seahorses are fish that have existed on the planet for over 40 million years. They live in water, breathe through gills and have a swim bladder. Seahorses are like a mixture of animals, having the head of a horse, the pouch of a kangaroo, the tail of a monkey and the colour changing ability of a chameleon.

Seahorses have excellent eyesight and their eyes are able to work independently on either side of their head. This means they can look forward and backwards at the same time, which is particularly helpful when hunting food and avoiding predators.

Seahorses will ingest anything small enough to fit into their mouths (mostly small crustaceans, but also fish fry and other small invertebrates). They have no stomach or teeth. Instead, they suck their prey in through a tubular snout at such speeds that the food instantly disintegrates.

Seahorses have few predators due to excellent camouflage, a sedentary lifestyle, and unappetising bony plates and spines. They have been found in the stomachs of large fishes, as well as penguins and other water birds. Crabs may be among the most threatening seahorse predators; damaged tails indicate a narrow escape. Unfortunately for most seahorse populations, man is their biggest predator!



Some smaller seahorse species can live for only one year but most species live for on average 6 years.



### Poor Swimmers

Seahorses are poor swimmers. They swim by beating their dorsal fin along their back between 30-70 times per second. Pectoral fins which appear as ears either side of the head are used to help the seahorse with stability and steering.

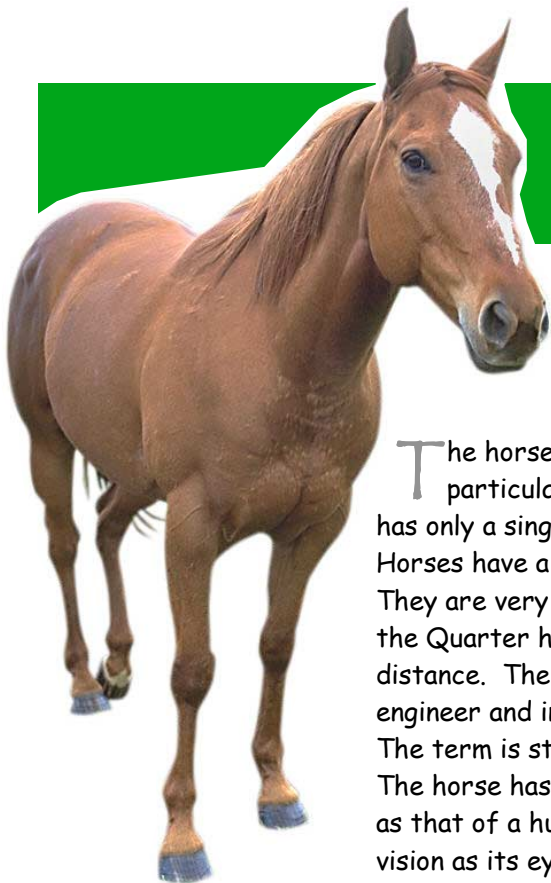


This information is provided by Seahorse Aquariums in Dublin, the largest aquatic specialist shop in Ireland. Run by marine biologist Kealan Doyle and his team, it not only sells seahorses but also offers a huge selection of fish and aquarium supplies. To read more about Kealan Doyle's work see page 7. You can also visit [www.seahorseaquariums.com](http://www.seahorseaquariums.com)

### It must be love!

Seahorses pair for life. They perform an elaborate courtship dance every morning of their lives. The seahorse is the only animal in the world where the male gives birth. The female transfers her eggs into the male's pouch which he then releases sperm to fertilise the eggs. Pregnancy varies from 14 days to 4 weeks. The number of juveniles born ranges from 50 to 1500 depending on the species. Less than one in a thousand will survive to adulthood in the wild. For more details about their lovelife, read *Captain Cockle's Log* on page 15.





## Animal Life

# The Horse

The horse belongs to a group of animals known as "hoofed mammals". More particularly it is an "odd-toed mammal", which in the horse's case means it has only a single toe, or hoof, on each foot.

Horses have a long head and neck, a barrel-shaped body and long, slender legs. They are very strong animals and can run at speed. The fastest breed of horse is the Quarter horse, which can reach a speed of 50 mph (80 kph) over a short distance. The term "horsepower" was first used by the 18th century Scottish engineer and inventor James Watt, to compare the work of an engine and a horse. The term is still used today to describe an engine's power.

The horse has good hearing and sense of smell. Though its eyesight is not as good as that of a human, it has a much wider range of vision as its eyes are at either side of its head and work independently of each other.

Horses are herbivore and need to graze on grass

or hay for 16-18 hours per day, except when they are stabled or in training. Grazing is important for their digestive system. They also need to drink lots of water every day or they can become seriously ill.



### On the Hoof!

The horse's hooves are made from keratin, which is like hair, and they are constantly growing. They need to be trimmed approximately every 6-8 weeks by a farrier, who is trained to trim and shape the hooves with special tools. A horse may also be fitted with horseshoes, which protect the hooves, particularly if they are walking on hard ground.



### Work & Play

Humans have used horses for thousands of years, both as work horses and for pleasure.

They have been used for transport, agriculture, warfare and recreation. Though machinery has replaced the horse in many areas, they are still used today in many areas, such as on farms, for policing, in forests, and for leisure (trekking, racing and jumping).



### In the Wild

Horses were domesticated in approximately 2,500 BC. There is only one species of wild horse in existence, the Przewalski's wild horse. Originally from Mongolia, it now survives in zoos and parks but there have been attempts to re-introduce it back into the wild.

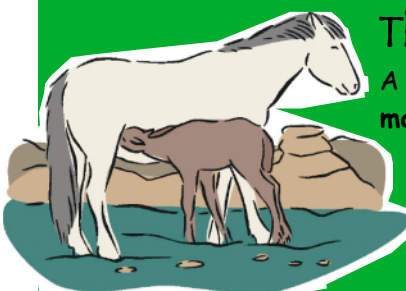
The Mustang is a feral (or "wild") horse that roams free in the US. It is really a domesticated horse, which was originally brought to the Americas by the Spanish.



Przewalski's wild horse.

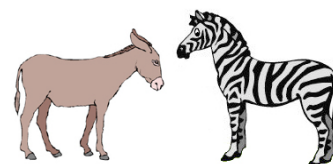
### The Family

A male horse is called a **stallion**, the female, a **mare** and the young, a **foal**. Mares usually have a single foal (and twins on rare occasions). The gestation period for a horse (the length of time the mother carries her young) is 11 months. The horse has a life-span of about 25-30 years.



### The Relatives

Zebras and asses are closely related to the horse. Other "hoofed mammals" include reindeer, rhinoceros and hippopotamus, though these are more distantly related.



# The Dandelion

Courtesy of Robbie Murphy



**English Name:** Common Dandelion

**Scientific Name:** *Taraxacum officinale*

**Irish Name:** Caisearbhán coiteann

Dandelions are the most familiar of Ireland's wild flowers. There are lots in flower during the spring but they can be found in bloom at almost any time of the year. The Dandelion is perennial (coming back year after year) and has a deep tap root. As a plant, it forms large rosettes of leaves, each cut into pointed lobes like a shark's teeth. The plant produces single yellow flowers, about 20-40 mm across, with strap-shaped ray florets, on a single, long stem. The stem itself is hollow, leafless and often reddish in colour. The florets are sometimes reddish or brownish beneath. To many gardeners, dandelions are considered a weed, but beauty is in the eye of the beholder!

## A Mass of Flowers

### FACT FILE:

**Habitat:** Grassland and disturbed or cultivated ground.

**Colour:** Golden-yellow.

**Height:** 5-40 cm.

**Uses:** For medicinal purposes and for food. Also food for bees.

Dandelions are composite flowers. Composite means to be made up of many parts. In the Dandelion's case, each of the strap-shaped rays (or petals) is an individual floret and in the centre are individual disc florets, all coming together to make up a flowerhead. Dandelions are in the same family as daisies, which are also composite flowers.

The dandelion, which is made up of many individual florets, is a typical composite flower.



## Seedhead & Clock!

Most of us have picked up a dandelion seedhead to blow the seeds in the wind. The seedhead is a stunning creation. Each little floret produces a 1-seeded fruit, with a feathery parachute of silky hairs. This parachute helps the wind carry the seed in the hope of finding a suitable place to grow. There is an old wives' tale that blowing on the seedhead can help you tell the time. The amount of blows it takes to blow off all the seeds is the hour of the day!



Courtesy of Robbie Murphy

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# All in a Day's Work

## Kealan Doyle – Seahorse Aquariums

### PROFILE

Kealan Doyle is a marine biologist who runs Seahorse Aquariums, Ireland's largest aquatic specialists. Seahorse Aquariums not only makes tanks and sells fish but has a hatchery where they breed many of the fish they sell in the shop. [www.seahorseaquariums.com](http://www.seahorseaquariums.com)



Images courtesy of Seahorse Aquariums

### Where do you work?

I work in Seahorse Aquariums which is on the Red Cow roundabout in Dublin – the craziest roundabout in Ireland!

### Have you always been interested in what you do?

Always – all I ever wanted to do was breed fish. One of my old teachers told a story at a class reunion recently. I arrived late for class when I was 7 and explained that it was "because my fish had babies and I could not leave them". She said she had not the heart to punish me and so let me away with it!

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

I studied Marine biology in Galway, Scotland & Poland before heading to Africa to research fish for several years. I then moved to the Galapagos Islands for 3 years to study seahorses, after which I took charge of seahorse research projects in Australia, Indonesia, Philippines & India. On returning to Ireland I set up the world's first seahorse conservation and cultivation operation in Connemara, Co Galway. Now I am in the big smoke in Dublin!

### What is a day in your life like?

My average day is crazy, which is just the way I like it. I start work at 7.30am and finish at 10.30pm, with many late nights. Some of the things I do include managing a big team of staff and try and have everything running smoothly; working in the breeding room feeding baby seahorses and clown fish (AKA Nemo); dealing

with customers from all over Ireland who come to buy fish and get advice; testing all the water in the tanks to make sure it is healthy for the fish; doing big tank installations in big companies.

### What is your main aim?

My main aim is to enjoy work and to hopefully make a small difference. Our aim for this year is to launch a campaign called *SOS* which stands for *Save Our Seahorses* which aims to help save seahorses from extinction. We have Westlife and many other celebrities coming on board to help with *SOS* so you will be hearing lots about it so... Watch this space....

### What is the best thing about your job?

I love and will always love breeding fish, especially when it means they will not have to be taken from the wild anymore. I also love when kids come into the shop, especially the ones who really like fish and love learning from me and the team. I am a workaholic and work day and night. My biggest problem is that I hate going to bed and cannot wait to get up so I can get back to work.

### What is the worst thing about your job?

Siphoning seahorse poo from the tanks every morning (including Christmas day) but hey! Someone's got to do it...

### Do you work alone or as part of a team?

Very much part of a team, which is so important. We have an amazing team who all have particular skills and we learn from each other. All the staff were once customers of the shop and so are friends and are also fish nuts like me.

### What advice would you give someone who wants to do your job?

Get experience and try out everything you can, as they may not always be what you imagine. If you like animals then try and volunteer somewhere that works with them and

find out if you like it. I encouraged my daughter to try as many different jobs as she could (like I did) until she found what she REALLY liked. You spend more time working than anything else so check it out as much as possible.

### What is best piece of advice you have ever had?

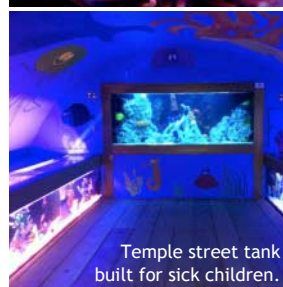
Work – find something you love and you will never work a day in your life. Work is a hobby for me and I love it!



Working in the shop.



Two of our Nemo breeding pairs.



A colourful seahorse.



Kealan Doyle & his team.

# Daisy Days



# Nature's Web Wordsearch



## Nature's Web Spring 2012 Wordsearch

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



Apple Fall

Boomer

Dandelion

ECO-UNESCO

Frog

Gannet

Horse

Horse jobs

Kealan Doyle

Lobster

Magnetic Soap

Mother's Day

Police horse

Seahorse

Seahorse

Aquariums

Seedhead

Showjumping

Texting



SOLUTIONS: (Over, Down, Direction) Apple fall (18,13,NW); Boomer (10,11,SE); Dandelion (17,5,SW); ECO-UNESCO (9,15,W); Frog (13,16,NW); Gannet (16,5,S); Horse (13,3,SW); Horse jobs (16,SE); Kealan Doyle (8,11,N); Lobster (18,17,NW); Magnetic soap (1,4,E); Seahorse (7,11,NE); Seahorse (18,17,NW); Mother's Day (18,3,S); Police horse (1,4,E); Seahorse (17,17,W); Seedhead (6,9,N); Showjumping (8,12,NE); Texting (1,13,E).

# Learn More



Only €1.95 each (plus €0.60c p&p) or €12.00 (plus €2.00 p&p) for all eight! 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. *Safety Sam's Activity Book* is filled with activities to encourage safety for children. *My Nature Diary* contains lined pages to fill in a daily record of sightings and nature news.

## ***A Beginner's Guide to Ireland's Wild***

***Flowers*** With the help of this pocket-sized guide, beginners of all ages will be introduced to the many common wild flowers found around Ireland. 206pp

Only €7.00 plus €1.00 p&p



***Ireland's Hidden Depths*** has just been published by

Sherkin Island Marine Station. Ireland's amazing marine life, glorious kelp forests and spectacular undersea scenery are featured in over 200 spectacular photographs by nature photographer Paul Kay. 277 x 227 mm 160 pps  
Only €17.99 plus €2.00 p&p

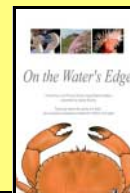


## Sea Life DVD:

### ***"On the Water's Edge"***

Produced by Sherkin Island Marine Station, the dvd '*On the Water's Edge*', features a short film on life beside the sea.

Presented by Audrey Murphy, it includes 6-10 hours of interactive material for children of all ages. Only €6.00 plus €1.30 p&p.



***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.

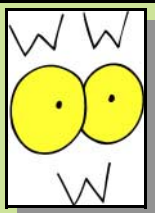
Only €7.00 plus €1.00 p&p



**"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.

Only €5.99 plus €1.00 p&p

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](http://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:

**Gannets:** <http://www.birdwatchireland.ie/Default.aspx?tabid=144>  
<http://www.rspb.org.uk/wildlife/birdguide/name/g/gannet/index.aspx>

**Seahorse:** <http://www.seahorseaquariums.com/store/>

**The Horse & Horsey Jobs:** <http://www.horsesportireland.ie/> <http://www.rdai.org/> <http://www.ihwt.ie/site2/>  
<http://www.garda.ie/controller.aspx?page=38> <http://www.horsepowerinireland.com/>

**The Dandelion:** [http://www.wildflowersofireland.net/plant\\_detail.php?id\\_flower=86&wildflower=Dandelion](http://www.wildflowersofireland.net/plant_detail.php?id_flower=86&wildflower=Dandelion)

**Kealan Doyle, Seahorse Aquariums:** <http://www.seahorseaquariums.com/store/>

**Apples fall from the sky:** <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-16197529>

**Magnetic Attraction:** <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-16681106>

**Baltimore Lifeboat:** <http://www.baltimorelifeboat.ie/> <http://www.rnli.org.uk/>

## **The hazards of texting:**

<http://www.jhunewsletter.com/science-technology/cell-phone-use-interferes-with-walking-accuracy-1.2776453>

**The world's tiniest frog:** <http://news.discovery.com/animals/tiniest-frog-papua-new-guinea-120112.html>

**ECO-UNESCO:** <http://www.ecounesco.ie/eco-dev/>

**Captain Cockle:** <http://www.captaincockle.com/>

<http://www.marine.ie/home/aboutus/newsroom/pressreleases/marineinstituteresearchintolobsterrestocking.htm>

<http://www.aims.gov.au/docs/research/sustainable-use/tropical-aquaculture/rock-lobster.html>

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



# The World Around Us



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

## Apples fall from the sky!

In the middle of December 2011, a small town in Coventry, England, got a big surprise when over 100 small green apples suddenly fell out of the sky, landing on startled drivers and bringing cars to a standstill. No one knows where the apples came from but meteorologists think they were picked up into the sky by an air vortex or mini tornado. When the wind velocity slowed and the apples got too heavy to hold they fell like raindrops on the unsuspecting motorists. I wonder if a local gardener didn't think that someone had robbed his or her apples? This isn't the first strange "rain" in the UK. Great Yarmouth, in Norfolk, had a fish fall in 2007, and frogs came down in 1996 in Llandewi in Wales.



Courtesy of Robbie Murphy

## Baltimore's New Lifeboat

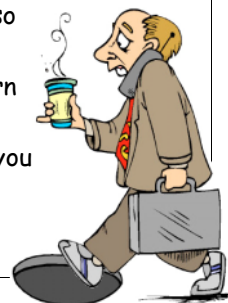
On 15th February 2012, a new Tamar Class lifeboat arrived in Baltimore, Co. Cork. The lifeboat, called

the "Alan Massey", will replace the "Hilda Jarrett" a Tyne class lifeboat, which has served Baltimore since 1988. The new lifeboat is 16.3 metres in length with a maximum speed of 25 knots compared to the 14.3 metres of the "Hilda Jarrett", which has a maximum speed of 18 knots. The new lifeboat is self-righting and is equipped with electronic systems that allow the crew to monitor, operate and control the lifeboat from their seats.

[www.baltimorelifeboat.ie](http://www.baltimorelifeboat.ie)

## The hazards of texting!

In Ireland it is against the law to driving while holding a mobile phone. The reason for this is that it disrupts your concentration when you should be focused on driving. Now scientists in Stony Brook University in New York have found that talking and texting on a mobile phone while walking can also disrupt your gait (or pattern of walking), so much so that you could have an accident!



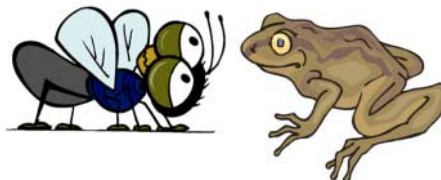
## Magnetic Attraction!

Scientists from the University of Bristol, UK, have invented the first magnetic soap. They have discovered a way of putting iron in the centre of soap particles so that the soap becomes sensitive to magnetic fields. Soap is one of the main ways of cleaning oil spills in the sea and of cleaning oil off animals and plants - the soap loosens the oil bonds (just like using washing up liquid in an oily frying pan). Unfortunately, soap is a combination of things that can harm the environment. Magnetic soap could help us clean up spills then be lifted out of sensitive environments once it has done its cleaning job. Ideally however, it's best that our environment is not polluted in the first place!



## The world's tiniest frog

Can you imagine a frog the same size as a house fly? Well, scientists have found one! It has a long scientific name - *Paedophryne amauensis* - and it lives on Papua New Guinea's rain forest floor, amid the leaf litter. The scientists who found it, Christopher Austin and Eric Rittmeyer from Louisiana State University in the USA, search for frogs by listening for their calls. These are incredibly high-pitched and hard for humans to hear and locate. Eventually they grabbed a bunch of leaf litter and put it in a plastic bag and when they searched the contents they saw the frog hopping off a leaf. The "new" frog is a great jumper and can jump 30 times longer than its body. This discovery makes the frog the world's smallest known vertebrate.



# Horsey Jobs

THERE are many types of horse, with various different attributes that make them useful for various jobs. Here are just a selection of jobs that horses might do....

## Working horses

For thousands of years, horses have been trained by humans to perform all sorts of tasks, from ploughing land to pulling to transport. Though many kinds of horses can be used as work horses, the extremely strong Draught horse is often used for jobs where physical power is needed, such as pulling and ploughing. Work horses need to be physically strong but also need to be steady and calm, and sometimes quick and agile, depending on their type of work.



Courtesy of Rosser1954

## Racing horses

Horses that race need to be fast. Some breeds of horse are faster than others and so are used for racing. The type of race will also determine which type of horse is run. Horses that race on a flat surface include Thoroughbreds, Quarter Horses and Arabian horses. Thoroughbreds are good at racing over jumps and Standardbred Horses are a breed that race while pulling a driver in a sulky (a two-wheeled vehicle).



Courtesy of Jeff Kubina CC BY-SA 3.0

## Showjumping & Equestrian horses

Showjumping is a sport which involves jumping over various jumps, placed strategically around a stadium. Horses of all heights from ponies upwards are used for jumping over different sized courses, though ponies are more for the younger rider. Jumping horses need to have the courage to jump over great heights and also need to be able to move in spurts and turn quickly. Other equestrian sports, such as dressage and eventing also require horses that are strong and well disciplined.



Courtesy of Ronjimin CC BY 2.5

## Police horses

In certain situations, horses help the police. They can help with crowd control on city streets, when large groups of people congregate. Their size and height make the police more visible and act as a deterrent to crime and disorder. Mounted police are also used in parks and wilder areas, where police cars cannot reach. Ireland's Garda (or police) has a Mounted Support Unit and they choose horses that have suitable physical attributes and temperament for working in a busy environment. They also need to be brave and not become distressed if there is confrontation.



Courtesy of Mriya CC-BY-2.5

## Horses for therapy

Horse riding therapy can be very beneficial for people, particularly for those with disabilities. It can help in many ways - the motion of the horse can increase flexibility, balance and muscle strength and working with a horse can also increase confidence, patience and self-esteem. Only certain horses are selected as therapeutic horses. The main traits necessary are a sweet temperament, soundness at all speeds and not being frightened easily. There is an association for riders with disabilities called *Riding for Disabled Ireland* [www.rdai.ie](http://www.rdai.ie)



Courtesy of Dori CC-BY-SA

# 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 excuse did Kealan Doyle give his teacher for being late for school?
- 2 What class of boat is the new lifeboat in Baltimore, Co Cork?
- 3 Eco-Unesco is Ireland's Environmental Education and Youth Organisation. Where is it based?
- 4 A gannet is a garden bird. True or false?
- 5 What is a horse's hoof made of?
- 6 What are Dave and Beth Crestin's cats called?
- 7 In Ireland, is it against the law to drive while holding the steering wheel or while holding a mobile phone?
- 8 Do lobsters produce two, one hundred or thousands of eggs?
- 9 A draught horse is usually used for racing. True or false?
- 10 What do gannets eat?
- 11 Who is the seahorse's biggest predator?
- 12 What is a male horse called?
- 13 What job does Kealan Doyle have to do every day – even on Christmas day?
- 14 What might magnetic soap help to clean up?
- 15 How long have seahorses existed on Earth?
- 16 What type of root has a dandelion?
- 17 In the UK last December, what unusual objects fell from the sky?

Answers: (1) His fish had babies and he could not leave them! (2) Tamar Class. (3) 17 St Andrew Street, Dublin. (4) False. It is a sea bird. (5) Keratin. (6) Boomer and Kiwi. (7) A mobile phone. (8) Thousands of eggs. (9) False. It is a work horse. (10) Fish. (11) Man. (12) A stallion. (13) Siphon seahorse poo from the tanks. (14) Oil spills in the sea. (15) Over 40 million years. (16) Tap root. (17) Apples.

## Think of a Title!

Can you think up a caption for this photograph of a Northern Gannet?



Courtesy of ADWilson www.naturespisonline.com

## Nature Jokes

How did the horse feel after he ate a pillow?  
Down in the mouth!



What kind of horse can swim underwater without coming up for air?  
A seahorse.

Why didn't the cat like the tree?  
It was afraid of it's bark.



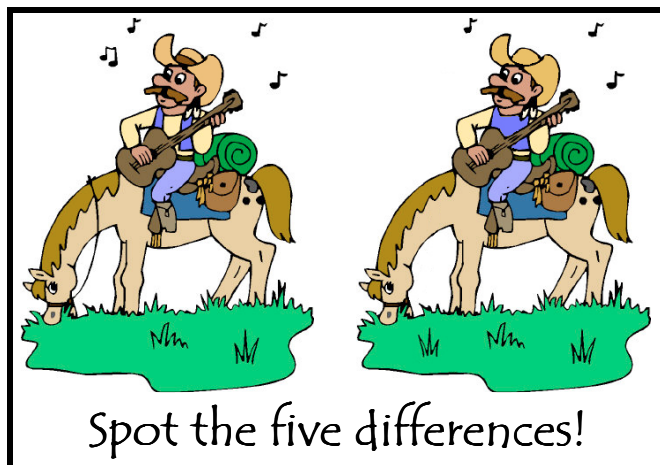
If a crocodile makes shoes, what does a banana make?  
Slippers.

What do you get if you cross a bunch of flowers with some insects?  
Ants in your plants.



What do you get if you cross a skunk and a pair of tennis rackets?  
Ping pong!

What part of a gannet has the most feathers?  
The outside!



Spot the five differences!

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# Conservation

## ECO-UNESCO

ECO-UNESCO is Ireland's Environmental Education and Youth Organisation affiliated to the World Federation of UNESCO Clubs, Centres and Associations (WFUCA). It offers a wide range of programmes and services for young people including ECO-UNESCO Clubs, Young Environmentalist Awards, Environmental Workshops, ECO-Explorer Kids Camps, Training and even ECO-Kids Parties! Read more below...



### Annual Young Environmental Awards 2011

The ECO-UNESCO's Young Environmentalist Awards is an all-Ireland environmental awards programme that recognises and rewards young people who raise environmental awareness and improve the environment. Since 1999, this exciting event has involved 25,000 young people aged 10-18 from all 32 counties. In 2011 we received over 200 entries to the Young Environmentalist Awards. Young environmentalists came up with great ways to improve their environment and raise awareness in creative and innovative ways including clean-ups, recycled fashion, a carbon-calculator app and much more. The Award's Gala Showcase was a great success and involved exciting green-themed activities including creative recycling workshops, the Biozone, live entertainment, an "ECO-Factor" song contest and much more.



### ECO-Camps

ECO-UNESCO run children's camp at The Greenhouse in Dublin for every major school holiday, Easter, summer and Halloween!!! Taking a city centre safari and treasure trail, building a bug hotel, starting a sunflower race and even launching an ECO-Rocket are some of the activities children taking part enjoy while learning about their environment and nature and having lots of fun.



### ECO-UNESCO Clubs in Action!

ECO-UNESCO, in partnership with Toyota Ireland, are offering ECO-UNESCO Clubs throughout the country access to seed grants to carry out an environmental activity and link in with their local Toyota dealerships. Seed Grants can be used for a range of environmental awareness activities that are aimed at raising awareness in your locality on the environmental issue. See the website for the 6 categories under which Clubs can apply for Seed Grants.



### Publications and Resources

ECO-UNESCO publishes a wide range of education resources focused on environmental education for young people including fun-filled publications, posters, activity sheets and CD ROMs. These resources aim to support teachers, youth leaders and other educators to apply environmental education to their educational activities. You can find a full list and order forms online at [www.ecounesco.ie](http://www.ecounesco.ie).

You can also contact ECO-UNESCO at *The Greenhouse*, 17 St Andrew Street, Dublin 2. Tel: 01-6625491

### National Youth ECO-Forum

The 2011 National Youth ECO-Forum was a great success with a theme of "learning to inspire, innovate, create!" Over 50 young people met in ECO-UNESCO's Dublin home, The Greenhouse and Dublin City Council's Wood Quay Venue, to learn about young green entrepreneurship. Guest speakers included our sponsors Dublin City Council, Cornucopia and Rothar, and young entrepreneurs from Donegal Pens.



Images courtesy of ECO-UNESCO

## Special Feature

Marine animals, such as fish, crabs and starfish produce many thousands of eggs, just to make sure that at least some of their offspring survive in the harsh conditions of the sea.

In March 2011 a female ornate rock lobster (Latin name *Panulirus ornatus*) produced thousands of eggs that were all hatched out at the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) headquarters in Townsville. Because ornate rock lobsters are very difficult to breed in captivity, this was a great breakthrough. It paves the way not only for a farmed lobster industry in Australia, which will ease fishing pressure on the wild stock, but will also allow scientists to restock lobsters back into the wild.

Lobster restocking is already being investigated in Ireland, using the native species (*Homarus vulgaris*) at the Shellfish Research Laboratory of NUI Galway. Because our domestic lobsters tend to eat each other, each tiny lobster has to be raised separately until they are large enough to release into the wild. At this point they are delivered to the bottom by divers to protect them from being eaten by carnivorous fish on the way down.

## Happy Mother's Day Mrs. Lobster



## "The Love Life of Sea Horses"

Sea horses mate for life and perform a complicated courtship "dance" as part of their mating ritual. The dance takes place between a pair of sea horses for about an hour each day for about a week until, on the last day, a much longer dance of up to eight hours takes place. At the end of this dance the female sea horse places her eggs in a special pouch that the male has on his belly and he hatches them out. Tests have



shown that if the male is taken away from the female after a day or so at the beginning of the week, she will happily accept another male to give her eggs to. But if that first male is brought back again and reintroduced to her later, she will not accept him. It is almost as if he "jilted her" and she is angry at having been "stood up" on a date.

Sea horses are under threat in Asia because their dried bodies are used in Chinese medicine and for the souvenir trade. This is why a number of projects all over the world are experimenting with ways of breeding them in captivity to provide live

animals that might be restocked back into the wild or used as a substitute for wild sea horses in the future. Learn more about these fascinating creatures on [www.seahorseaquariums.com](http://www.seahorseaquariums.com)

### Captain Cockle's Log

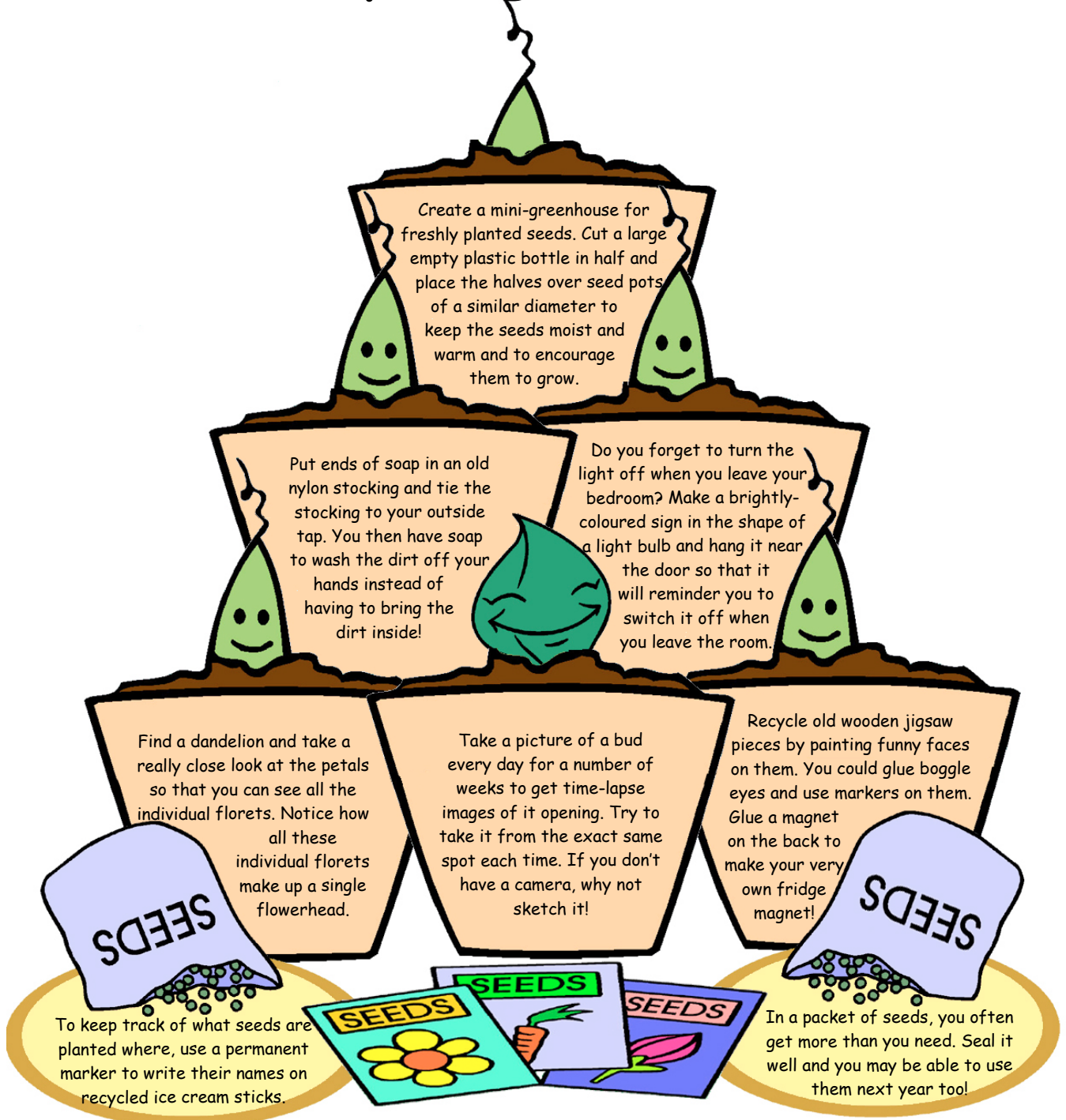
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John Joyce 2012  
[www.captaincockle.com](http://www.captaincockle.com)



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# Nature's Noticeboard!

## Spring 2012



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 Lyndsey Ni Chonaill, Beth and Dave Crestin, Kealan Doyle, John Joyce, Michael Ludwig, Pat Maher, Matt Murphy, Robbie Murphy and Jez Wickens.

Visit the Sherkin Island Marine Station website at [www.sherkinmarine.ie](http://www.sherkinmarine.ie)



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