



The World Around Us

Observing the Earth



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

NASA is celebrating the tenth anniversary of the launch of its Earth Observatory. Over the ten years NASA has been providing satellite images of the Earth, telling the story of our planet and helping scientists to understand it better. For the anniversary they have pulled together a series of images showing how the planet has changed over the decade. They include forests, oceans, human landscapes, and even the Sun! You can even see amazing animations showing the patterns of various everyday events including changing land and sea surface temperatures, vegetation cover, cloud cover and snow falls. Check out these images and animations on their site:

www.earthobservatory.nasa.gov



Photo courtesy of NASA

Though this looks like a patchwork quilt, it is in fact a satellite view of agricultural fields in Kansas, USA!

A Mobile Library with a Difference!

Libraries are wonderful places, allowing readers to borrow books for only a small annual charge. Most towns in Ireland have a library, and those that don't are often visited by a mobile library. However, not every country is as lucky. In La Gloria, Colombia, a man named Luis Soriano wanted to provide a portable library for people living in remote villages in the surrounding area. A primary school teacher, Luis was always fascinated by books and he could see how important reading was to children and how it could improve their lives. So he began a mobile library, distributing books on the backs of two donkeys - Alfa and Beto! The library started with 70 books and he would travel out to the villages every weekend to lend books and read to the children. When people heard about his work, books and money were donated and his collection of books then grew to 4,800. A small library is being constructed near his home and he hopes to finish it when more funds are available. Meanwhile, Luis still continues to run his portable library with the help of Alfa and Beto!

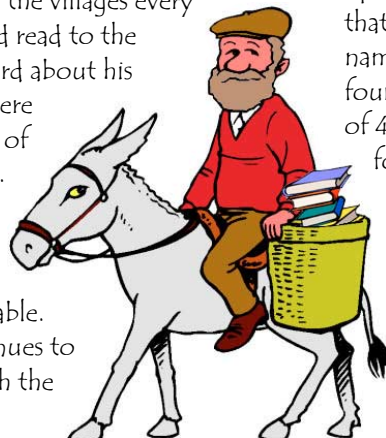


Photo courtesy of CC-A-SA 2.5 Chris Huh

The Crab-eating Macaque.

observed this behaviour at a shrine in Lopburi. There, crab-eating macaques were also observed spending twice as long flossing when their young were watching, suggesting that the adults were also teaching them

Monkeys Flossing with Human Hair

To keep our teeth clean and avoid cavities, we must brush them every day. Not only this, dentists also encourage us to floss regularly. But humans are not the only species that do this. Would you believe there are monkeys in Thailand that floss their teeth using human hair! Scientists

Florida's "RoboCroc"

Veterinary surgeons in Florida, who operated on an American Crocodile that had been run over by a car, named it "RoboCroc", because of the four steel plates inserted in its skull. Kept in place with the help of 41 screws, the plates were inserted after the crocodile was left for dead with traumatic injuries, including a crushed skull and a fractured body. The crushed skull meant it couldn't eat and would have starved to death if the vets hadn't performed the face reconstruction. Though the surgery was an amazing success, it was still not enough to save the crocodile's life and he died two weeks later. However, what surgeons learnt by doing the ground-breaking surgery may help other crocs in the future!



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