



The World Around Us



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



Eight-legged Thief!

A rather unusual thief tried to get away with an expensive underwater camera but didn't succeed! A diver in New Zealand got a little too close to a curious octopus, who pried the camera out of the diver's hands in an attempt to bring it back to its lair while it was still recording! (Octopi like to collect things!) Not wanting to lose his expensive equipment, the diver, who was diving without oxygen, followed the octopus from the surface of the water for almost five minutes. When the octopus slowed down, he dove down with the spear gun, which he used to distract the octopus and grab his camera back. Lucky for the diver that the octopus didn't attack him with its powerful beak, which is able to crack rock!

Little Einstein

A little foal born in New Hampshire, USA, could become the world's smallest horse. It weighed only 2.7kg (6lbs) when it was born and measured just 35.5cm (14in) – proportions more suitable for a human baby. Before this, the record weight for the smallest foal was 4.1kg (9lbs). Named Einstein by its owner, the pinto stallion is perfectly proportioned. Even though the foal is a miniature breed, it is still really tiny for a horse.



Beaver Dam can be seen from Space

The world's largest beaver dam is so big, it can be seen from space! Sited in Wood Buffalo National Park (in a remote area of northern Alberta, Canada), researcher Jean Thie used satellite imagery and Google Earth software to locate and measure the size of the dam. In Canada, the average beaver dams are 10-100m, with some rarely reaching 500m. This one is a whopping 850 metres long! It is thought that generations of beavers have worked on the dam, which was likely to have been started in the mid-1970s.



Iceland's Volcanoes

There are about 130 active volcanoes in Iceland. Every five years Iceland will experience some kind of volcanic event. Hekla, the most famous volcano on the island, has erupted 18 times since 1104, the last time in 2000. On 20th March 2010, Eyjafjallajökull (meaning "island-mountain glacier") erupted, forcing 500 local people to be evacuated from the area. However, on 14th April 2010 the volcano erupted once again. This time it was 10-20 times more powerful and spewed out large amounts of volcanic ash, causing huge disruption to airline flights across Northern Europe. But why are there so many volcanoes in Iceland? The Earth's crust is made up of about 12 rigid plates that constantly collide, separate and slide against each other. Most of the effects from the movement of these plates are felt at the boundaries where the plates meet. Iceland sits across the boundary of the Eurasian and North American Plates. The island is also situated on a volcanic hotspot. These two factors create a lot of volcanic activity, with regular eruptions of ash and lava. On the good side, this activity provides Iceland with an endless supply of geothermal energy, which is cheap and clean and heats over 90% of Icelandic homes.

The "Dead Zoo" is Back Home!

Great news for anyone living or visiting Dublin, the Natural History Museum has reopened on Merrion Street. It was forced to close in July 2007, following the collapse of a staircase but it's now back in action – well, maybe not too much action as all the animals in the museum are dead! That is how it became affectionately known as the "Dead Zoo". Now people can see familiar favourites like the skeleton of the 11,000-year-old giant elk, the skeletons of whales hanging from the ceiling, Spoticus the giraffe, the families of badgers, foxes and otters. If you have never visited the Museum, now you have the chance.

