



The World Around Us



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

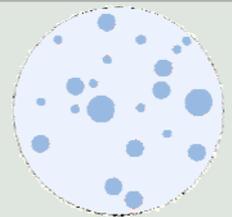
One-use Plastic Bottles

It has become commonplace for people to buy water in plastic bottles. These bottles are used once and then disposed of, creating a lot of waste. Imagine if you bought a bottle of water five days a week—every week for one year. You would have used 260 plastic bottles! Sometimes you have no alternative but to buy bottled water but if you need to take a bottle of water with you every day, buying a reusable water bottle and filling it with tap water at home would avoid a lot of waste—and save a lot of money!

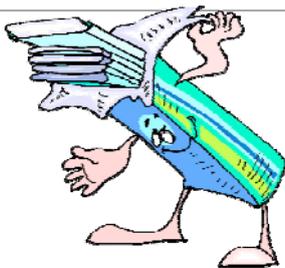


...and plastic IN our water is becoming a problem too!

A recent study of bottled water sold around the world, showed that tiny plastic bits, also called microplastics, were in many of them. Researchers tested over 250 bottles of water across 11 different brands, from nine countries. They found that plastic turned up in 93 out of every 100 of the bottles. On average, each bottle contained 10 particles that were wider than a human hair, along with 300 smaller particles. To count the pieces of plastic they used a particular red dye that clings to plastic and glowed when viewed under a blue light. After the dye was added, the water was poured onto a special type of paper that allowed the water pour through but caught the plastic. The pieces of plastic were then counted under the microscope.



Microplastics are getting into our waterways—streams, rivers, lakes and oceans. They can come from large pieces of plastics that break up, or from the many detergents, facial scrubs, toothpastes and similar products, that contain microplastics. These microplastics are put into these products to act as abrasives, producing a scrubbing effect. Some of our clothes, such as fleeces and nylon, are made from plastic, and when they are washed tiny particles break away and go into the waste water. All these reasons, and more, are the cause of microplastics in our waters.



The Story of Your Stuff

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has found the 2018 winners of *The Story of Your Stuff* competition in Co. Kerry. Amber Pomeranz and Lauren Lehane, students at Presentation Secondary School Milltown, teamed up to tell the story of chewing gum – from its history to how it’s currently manufactured and how innovative ways are being found to reduce its negative impact on the environment after use. You can view their winning video at www.thestoryofyourstuff.ie along with the runners up.

Students were asked to submit stories about the life cycle of an everyday object with an underlying theme of recycling and sustainability. The submitted entries focused on everything from wellies to wheels to plastic bottles.

Helping to make our seas rubbish-free

An 11-year-old Dublin girl, Flossie Donnelly, has fundraised to buy a sea bin for Dun Laoghaire Harbour. The bin, powered by electricity, uses a pump to suck in water around it, which in turn pulls in nearby plastics and rubbish that are floating on the surface of the water. Located at the marina in Dun Laoghaire it is being looked after by the authorities who empty it every day. It is a very simple and positive idea that is helping to keep the area cleaner for humans and marine life. Ideally, the plastic and rubbish won’t make it’s way into the water in the first place but well done to Flossie for highlighting the problem of marine litter and for showing us what can be done to help.



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