



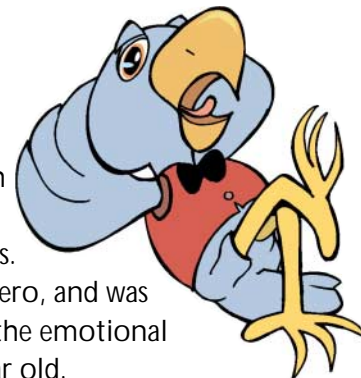
The World Around Us



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

AN EXCEPTIONAL PARROT

Alex, a famous African Grey Parrot died recently, at the age of 31. Since he was bought in a pet shop in 1977 by scientist Dr. Irene Pepperberg, someone has worked with him 8 to 12 hours every day of his life, teaching him how to identify 50 objects, seven colours and five shapes. He also learned to count amounts up to six, including zero, and was able to express certain feelings. When Alex died he had the emotional age of a 2 year old human and the mental age of a 5 year old.



A NEW RECORD FOR STONE-SKIMMING!

On visits to the water's edge, many of us enjoy skimming stones. But there is a new world record by a man called Russell "Rock Bottom" Byars, in Pennsylvania, USA and will be hard to beat. He threw a stone that skipped on the water 51 times, breaking the previous record which was 40. The stone travelled about 250 feet and though he threw 40 stones that day, his first throw was the one that broke the record.

Hot Water May Help Heat Northern Ireland

In Larne, Co. Antrim, scientists at Geological Survey NI have discovered a hot water source 3,000 metres beneath the earth, where the water is said to reach temperatures close to boiling point. Hot rocks deep under the surface of the earth heat the natural groundwater. It is hoped that the energy generated from the hot water could be used to provide heat and electricity for towns and cities in Northern Ireland.



THE WORLD'S OLDEST LIVING ANIMAL

The oldest living animal to have been discovered is a clam that was dredged up off the coast of Iceland. Scientists from Bangor University in the UK calculate the age of the clam to be 405 to 410 years old! They were able to put an age on the clam by counting the rings on its shell - similar to counting rings on a tree. Because the clam was born when the Ming Dynasty was in power in China, they have nicknamed it "Ming".



FROGS SUFFERING FROM FARM POLLUTION

More than 10 years ago, school children in the US found that half the leopard frogs in a pond that they visited were either missing limbs or had extra limbs. Scientists researched the problem and recently discovered that pollution from farms was partly to blame. Nitrogen and phosphorous flowed into the water starting a cycle that resulted in parasites infecting tadpoles. The parasites live in snails that eat algae. The pollution caused algae to grow very fast in the water. Because the snails had lots of food, they ate more and reproduced more. With more snails came more parasites and these parasites infected the tadpoles, resulting in deformed frogs.

