



The World Around Us



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

A new Canary Island?

Spain's seven Canary Islands may be about to get an eighth. The Islands were formed when volcanoes burst through the seafloor off the coast of north Africa. Volcanoes develop at "hotspots" (places where magma is close to the surface of the earth or seabed). It seems that a new "submarine volcano" has been erupting three miles off the southern coastline of El Hierro, the smallest of the Canary Islands. The volcano is just 60m below the sea surface and spewing gases and lava, which have been breaking through the sea's surface. Accompanying the eruption, more than 11,000 earthquake tremors have been detected on El Hierro. One was a magnitude 4.6, strong enough to be felt on other islands. This volcanic activity has put everyone on alert and has discouraged tourists from visiting.



A NASA satellite records the volcanic activity.

Courtesy of NASA



Courtesy of Robbie Murphy

Lough Hyne's Unusual Visitor

The first sighting of a dolphin in an Irish salt-water lake was recently recorded at Lough Hyne, Co. Cork. The lake, which is Europe's first Marine Nature Reserve (MNR), is situated 5 km from Skibbereen in West Cork. Water from the sea enters it through 'The Rapids', a narrow tidal channel. The MNR is a unique habitat, home to a rich and varied population of rare and beautiful aquatic animals and plants, many of which are not found elsewhere in Ireland. The sighting of the dolphin was made by Jim Kennedy, a Skibbereen-based kayaking instructor, who filmed the dolphin over several days. Pdraig Whooley of the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group believes it is the first verified record of a cetacean using an Irish lake.

Lobsters with a Difference!



Two interesting stories about lobsters have been reported in recent months. In Youghal, fisherman Kevin Murphy netted a giant lobster, weighing 5.4kg and over 76.2cm long. The average lobster usually weighs 0.9kg and is about 30cm long.

Jimmy, as the lobster became known, was thought to be between 50 and 80 years old, based on its size. Rather than ending up on a dinner plate, Kevin found a new home for Jimmy at Seaworld in Lahinch, Co. Clare. Meanwhile, at Dingle Oceanworld, Dingle, Co. Kerry, fisherman Eddie Moore found out that his rare white lobster, caught while fishing near the Blasket Islands, was a genetic variety of the common lobster, which as you know, are usually dark navy blue.

A Treat for Club Members

The Inishowen Wildlife Club is a group of people interested in the flora and fauna of the Inishowen Peninsula in Co. Donegal. They often assist in surveys and species counts for national organisations. On one of their outings at the end of November, they came across a troop of Red Squirrels that were rushing to and fro, collecting nuts and other food from feeders hanging along the Nature Trail in Lisnagrath Wood. The squirrels, along with a large flock of Coal Tits, were not perturbed by their audience and went on busily collecting food for their winter stores. To find out more about the clubs activities, check out: www.inishowenwildlifeclub.com/viewsandnews.htm

