



The World Around Us



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

The Hazel Dormouse in Ireland!

The Hazel Dormouse (also known as the Common Dormouse) is not native to Ireland and is not usually found in the wild here. However, one of these tiny animals was found recently in a treehouse in Co. Kildare. This was the second sighting of this species in the area in the last two years. As the animal is a non-native it could not be left in the wild so it is currently living in the Kildare Animal Foundation Wildlife Unit.



The Hazel Dormouse
(Courtesy of Danielle Schwarz GFDL CC-BY-SA-3.0)

A dormouse looks very like a mouse but can be distinguished from other mouse-sized mammals by its thick, bushy tail. This species is native to Britain, other parts of Northern Europe and Turkey.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service are interested in hearing from you if you think you have seen this species - so if you have, please submit your sighting information on the link at <http://records.biodiversityireland.ie/index.php>



Shark falls from sky on to Golf Course

There was an unexpected and unusual visitor at the San Juan Hills Golf Club in southern California recently, and it made an even more unusual entrance - it fell from the sky! A person working at the golf club noticed something moving around on the course and on closer inspection discovered a 2ft (0.6m) leopard shark. Puncture wounds on the side of the shark gave some clue as to how it got there - it seems it was plucked from the ocean by a bird and dropped in mid flight on to the golf course (6.5 km from the coast). The shark was quickly put in a golf cart and brought back to the clubhouse, where it was put in a bucket of "homemade" salt water. It was then brought back to the sea, where it gave a quick flip and was off!



Blue Honey

Imagine the shock you would get if there was blue honey on your toast in the morning. Well, think of the fright beekeepers in Ribeauville, Alsace, in northern France, got when they discovered not just blue, but also yellow, green and brown honey in their hives at the end of the summer! At first they could not understand what caused such unusual colours but soon it emerged that the bees were feeding on sugar waste from a nearby Mars factory that made M&Ms. The bees were feeding on the colourful sugar waste and bringing it back to the hives to make honey. When the factory became aware of the problem they sealed up the waste bins and the bees had to go back to making their golden coloured honey from the flowers!

Ash Trees Fighting Disease

It is not only animals that get diseases, plants do too. At the moment "Ash Dieback Disease", caused by the fungus *Chalara fraxinea*, is sweeping Europe. Since first seen in Poland in 1992, it has been found at 291 sites in the UK and Northern Ireland. The fungus causes general leaf loss and crown (the top of the tree) death then the whole tree dies. The first sign of disease is wilting leaves, which curl and turn brown. Forest owners in the Republic of Ireland are fearful that the disease will spread throughout their ash trees. The first confirmed case of the disease was in imported saplings (young trees) in Co. Leitrim. The infected trees were destroyed. It is hoped that action like this will stop the spread of the disease.



Symptoms of *Chalara ash dieback*, a fungal disease affecting the ash trees of Europe.
Courtesy The Food and Environment Research Agency (Fera), Crown Copyright (<http://www.fera.defra.gov.uk/copyright.cfm>)