



The World Around Us



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

The World's Largest Underwater Sculpture

The Bahamas are now home to the world's largest underwater sculpture. Created by Jason deCaires Taylor, "Ocean Atlas" is a 5.49m high, 54.4 tonne sculpture of a Bahamian girl who appears to hold up the ocean. It is inspired by a story in Greek mythology of the Titan Atlas who, as a punishment from the gods had to hold up the heavens for eternity. The sculpture is intended as a reminder of all the environmental threats facing the world's oceans. Made from a material that does not harm the waters in which it sits, over time "Ocean Atlas" will attract local marine life on its surface, turning this sculpture into an artificial reef.



Image courtesy of Jason deCaires Taylor

The sculptor is now working on a new project with the local government in Lanzarote in the Canary Islands. Called "Museo Atlántico", it will be an underwater museum, which will include over 300 sculptures. The public can apply to become models for the sculptures and are being asked to cover the costs of the moulding materials. It's an interesting way to be immortalised!

Comet Update!



On 12th November, the European Space Agency successfully landed the 'Philae' lander from the 'Rosetta' spacecraft on to Comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko. Unfortunately 'Philae' bounced on landing and ended up in the shade so its batteries could not be recharged by the sun. Thankfully it managed to gather important data before running out of power and it is hoped that as the comet journeys around the sun, light will reach the lander from another direction and it will wake up.

The Journey of a Loggerhead Turtle

In November 2013, Lorna King of Quilty, Co. Clare, discovered a loggerhead turtle washed up at Seafield in Quilty. The Irish Whale & Dolphin Group and the Shannon Dolphin & Wildlife Foundation helped to transport 'Leona' to Galway Atlantaquaria, where it was nursed back to health with the help of the County Council vet. In November this year it was finally time to release Leona into the warm waters off Gran Canaria. Transporting Leona from here to there was a problem as putting her in the hold of a plane for too long, without access, would be harmful for her. Aer Lingus came to the rescue and found a way of transporting her in a special container in the cabin. After a few days rest on Gran Canaria, Leona was released back into the ocean and thanks to Celestial Green Ventures, she was fitted with a GPS tracking device which means we can track her progress from now on (www.celestialgreenventures.com/leona-loggerhead-turtle).



Collect water from the air as you cycle

Cycling is thirsty work. Now it seems you can harvest drinking water as your peddle. An Austrian designer Kristof Retezar has invented a self-filling water bottle, called the 'Fontus', that collects moisture from the air and condenses it into fresh and safe drinking water. It works best in humid weather when there are more water droplets in the air. In the right conditions half a litre of water can be collected in just under an hour. Cyclists won't be the only people who could benefit from this invention. People who live in places where there is no access to fresh drinking water could benefit too.



A Solar-powered Cycling Path

And speaking of cycling! The Netherlands have just opened the world's first solar-powered cycling path. The "SolaRoad" is made of concrete sections that have solar panels embedded in them. Covered by a tough glass and coated with a special non-slip surface, the panels generate electricity that can be fed into the national grid. In 16 days SolaRoad collected 140 kilowatts of electricity, enough to power 140 washing machine cycles. The path will continue to be tested for the next two years to see how it performs. It is hoped that the project can be eventually "scaled up" with installations along the 25,000 km of Dutch cycling paths. If that goes well it could be expanded to roads, which could generate huge quantities of 'free' electricity. A bright idea that works!

