



The World Around Us



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

Sky Watch

The National Oceanic Atmospheric and Administration (NOAA) and Vancouver Aquarium have been using Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV or "drones") to carry out research on Southern Resident Killer Whales. These really endangered whales are found in waters around the San Juan Islands north of Seattle, USA. There are only 81 of them left in the wild. Scientists were unable to count them until they used the UAV to photograph and monitor the health and reproductive success of the population. We know a lot more now!



(Photo courtesy of NOAA/Vancouver Aquarium)

Naming Our Winter Storms

We have had Storm Barney and Storm Desmond so far this winter. So what will the next few storms be called? The National Meteorological Services of Ireland and the UK, Met Éireann and the Met Office, teamed up to ask the public to submitted suggestions and the following is the list of storm names that they finally agreed upon. These names will be used to name medium and high-impact windstorms that will affect Ireland and/or the UK over the coming months:

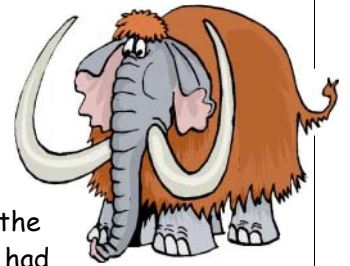
- Abigail
- Barney
- Clodagh
- Desmond
- Eva
- Frank
- Gertrude
- Henry
- Imogen
- Jake
- Katie
- Lawrence
- Mary
- Nigel



- Orla
- Phil
- Rhonda
- Steve
- Tegan
- Vernon
- Wendy

Woolly Mammoth Discovery

As a farmer, you might expect to dig up vegetables or even stones but imagine digging up a mammoth! Two farmers in the state of Michigan, USA, recently came across the partial skeleton of a woolly mammoth while digging a drain in a field of soybeans. Scientists from the Museum of Paleontology at the University of Michigan had to remove the skeleton in just a single day as the farmers had to bring in the harvest. The skeleton, one of the most complete ever found in the state, belonged to a mammoth that walked on the earth about 15,000 years ago.



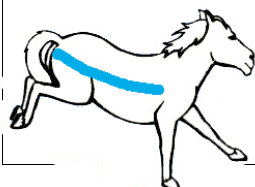
Build a Bridge

Every year, 50 million Christmas Island red crabs migrate from the island's forests to the sea to spawn. The islanders go to great lengths to protect the crabs from harm on their trip. They use more than 20 km of plastic barriers and 31 crab road underpasses to guide the crabs away from danger. While the migration of the crabs is a major tourist attraction on the island, the 5m high "crab bridge", which carries the crabs over a busy section of road, is itself becoming a tourist attraction on the island. Where else can you walk with the crabs?



Staying Safe on the Roads - for Animals

In Dartmoor, the UK, bad weather often brings poor visibility to the moors. This year so far, 74 animals have been hit on the foggy roads. In an effort to prevent other animals being harmed, some Dartmoor ponies have been painted with a special reflective paint so see whether or not it would make them more visible to motorists. The trial is progressing so well there are plans to extend it to see if it will also work with cattle. Thankfully us humans don't need to put on paint before we go out. We can just put on bright clothes and reflective material - unless you want to paint on a big stripe to make you safer!



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