

The World Around Us



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

Giant panda gives birth to twins

On August 10th this year a panda called Xue Xue gave birth to twins in a Chinese animal rescue centre. This is good news for the panda population as there are only 1,600 pandas left in the wild. The baby boy and girl pandas are doing well but their 18 year old mother is only able to look after one cub so the boy is being cared for by the staff in the rescue centre. Xiao Xing, the little boy, weighed in at 122g and his sister, Da Xin weighed in at 151g.



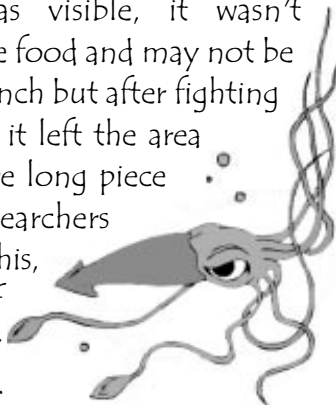
Ivory-billed Woodpeckers No Longer Extinct

It seems the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, which disappeared about 60 years ago, is actually alive and well in a National Wildlife Refuge in Arkansas, America. The bird with a wingspan of three feet had not been seen in so long it was assumed to have become extinct. It is one of the largest woodpeckers in the world.

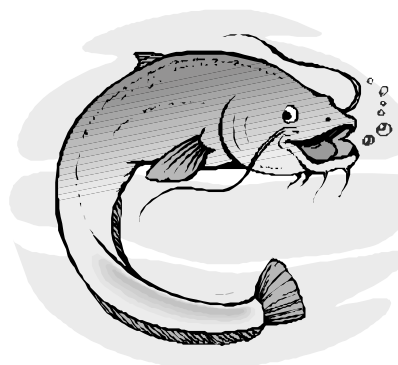


Verne's Giant Squid

It seems that Jules Verne in his book "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea" had it right when he wrote that large, nasty and hungry things swim beneath our feet at the beach. A team of Japanese researchers have taken pictures of one of Verne's giant squid attacking and fighting with a large chunk of bait hanging on hooks about 1000 meters below the sea surface at a research site off the Japanese Ogasawara Islands in the western Pacific Ocean. Purplish red in colour, like its smaller squid cousins, but almost 8 metres in length, the giant squid was attracted to the bait and cameras and put on a display of its feeding practices for the researchers. The squid pictures reveal that over the almost four hours the monster was visible, it wasn't successful at getting all the food and may not be very smart. It came for lunch but after fighting with the food and hooks it left the area after tearing off a 5 metre long piece of one of its arms. Researchers recovered and studied this, but there was plenty of meat left for a BIG dinner party for the investigators.



Huge Catch



The largest catfish ever caught was landed in the Mekong River in Northern Thailand recently. The Mekong giant catfish weighed 294 Kgs which earned it a place in

the Guinness Book of World Records. Because the Mekong giant catfish is so rare it was hoped to release the fish again to allow it to increase the population of catfish in the river but unfortunately it died before this happened. The fish, which was described as being as big as a grizzly bear was eventually eaten by the inhabitants of a local village.

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