

The World Around Us



"Foreign Correspondent"
Michael Ludwig reports
on interesting news from
the natural world.

Walnuts – the No. 1 nut!

For a long time, scientists have known that nuts are important in our diet. However, scientist now believe that the walnut is the healthiest nut of all to eat. Certain nuts, such as walnuts, almonds, peanuts, pistachios and hazelnuts provide us with fibre, protein, vitamins and minerals, but a recent study by scientists in the University of Scranton in Pennsylvania, USA, have discovered that walnuts have twice as many anti-oxidants as any other commonly eaten nut. Anti-oxidants help to fight pollutants in our bodies and can improve our health. It is suggested that there should be more walnuts in our diet, but only for those who don't have a nut allergy!



Leatherback Turtles around the West Cork Coast

There have been a number of sightings of leatherback turtles in the waters around West Cork this summer. The Irish Whale and Dolphin Group reports a sighting made by Colin Barnes while onboard his whalewatching vessel, *MV Holly Jo*. It occurred about 1 mile south of Galley Head, which is near Clonakilty, in Co. Cork.

There can be as few as 30 leatherback turtles sighted each year in the waters around Ireland and Britain. The Irish Sea Leatherback Sea Turtle Project, which ran for a number of years, wanted to understand the populations, origins and behaviour of leatherback turtles in the Irish Sea. To learn more about leatherbacks in our waters, look at their final report online at <http://www.jellyfish.ie/turtle.asp>.



Orang-utan Bridges

On the Malaysian island of Borneo, orang-utan families are becoming isolated from each other and are finding it hard to get around in their forest. Human activities are the cause. These activities are destroying old trails and paths over waterways and through the forest by making roads, palm oil plantations and villages. This is causing habitats to become fragmented because the tree canopies have been removed. As the orang-utans cannot swim, they have no way of easily crossing smaller rivers, so to help them, eco-groups are building bridges for the orang-utans to cross over.

One problem the groups have encountered is that orang-utans destroy most of the materials used to make the bridges. Chester Zoo in the UK has been asked to help the Kinabatangan Orang-utan Conservation Project build bridges similar to those used in the Zoo. Those bridges are made of tough polyester webbing. It seems to be "orang-utan-proof!"



Laughter is the Best Medicine!

Most of us have heard the saying that "laughter is the best medicine" - that a good laugh makes us feel better. Now researchers from the University of Oxford believe that it really is true. Part of their research involved studying two groups of people, one watching comedy videos and the other watching boring programmes. They found those that had a good belly laugh were able to withstand 10% more pain than before they started watching the videos. Those who watched the boring programmes were actually less able to bear pain afterwards. Belly laughing (laughing so hard that you feel it in your tummy!) causes the body to release endorphins, which are chemicals that the brain produces to manage pain and make you feel good.

