



The World Around Us



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



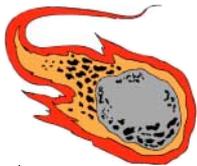
Giant Bubble Bath in Australian Town!

In late January, the residents of Mooloolaba, Australia, woke up to find their small coastal town had been partly buried by sea foam (spume). Stormy weather had whipped up big seawaves and they, in turn, created a huge amount of spume. Then the wind carried it into the town. In some places the foam was almost 3 metres high! Spume is created when seawater containing large quantities of dissolved organic material, such as plankton from algal blooms, is agitated. The foam became quite a spectacle for residents and tourist alike. Many of the people were photographing and playing in the giant bubble bath.

Dogs are smarter than we think!

It seems dogs understand what humans can and cannot see. A recent study at the University of Portsmouth in the UK studied 84 dogs and humans placed in rooms with different light levels. They were commanded not to touch tempting food treats, but as the room got darker the dogs took more food more quickly. Researcher Dr. Juliane Kaminski, who led the study, said it shed new light on dogs' ability to understand humans ability to watch them. Dog might understand us more than we except, but we may never really understand them. So, the next time the lights go on in the kitchen,

it might be just the dog at the fridge!



Meteor Blazes a Trail Across Russia

On 15th February 2013, the largest meteor to hit the Earth in over 100 years, landed about 80 km from Chelyabinsk, Russia. It entered the atmosphere at a speed of 18 km per second and for about 30 seconds it created a very bright trail in the sky. Huge amounts of energy, released by the meteor, created blast shockwaves injuring about 1,200 people in Chelyabinsk, many by glass shards from broken windows. The meteor, which was about 15 metres in diameter and thought to weigh up to 10,000 tonnes, broke up before it hit. Only fragments of the meteor (called meteorites once they land) have been found. Because the pieces are so valuable, people were running around trying to "cash in" on the event! Want to buy a rock?

The World's Oldest-known Wild Bird Hatches a Chick

At the age of 62, a Laysan Albatross, known as "Wisdom", is the world's oldest recorded wild bird. Despite her great age 'Wisdom' has hatched a chick for the last six consecutive years. Having first received an identification band in 1956, when she was estimated to be about five years old, she has worn five identification bands since then. Being able to identify 'Wisdom' has given scientists invaluable information about the bird. The chief of the North American Bird Banding Program at the US Geological Survey is amazed by her accomplishments and at how she has re-written the record books.

'Wisdom' spends much of her life flying thousands of miles around the Pacific Ocean. However, like other albatrosses, once a year she lays a single egg on Midway, a remote island northeast of Hawaii. Midway is a US national wildlife refuge and home to the world's largest albatross colony, where approximately 70% of the world's population nest.



Image courtesy of Pete Leary/USFWS CC BY 2.0

After returning from foraging at sea on November 29, 2012, Wisdom (left) attempts to nudge her mate off the nest for her turn at incubating the couple's egg.

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