



The World Around Us



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

When the Sun, Moon and Earth are in almost perfect alignment!

On 20th March 2015, there was an almost total solar eclipse over northern Europe. Solar eclipses occurs when the Moon passes between the Earth and the Sun. Over Ireland, approximately 92% of the Sun was obscured from our view. A total solar eclipse takes place if the Sun, Moon and Earth are lined up nearly perfectly. Though they occur every year, the last time Ireland had a good one was in 1999 and the next one won't be until 2026.

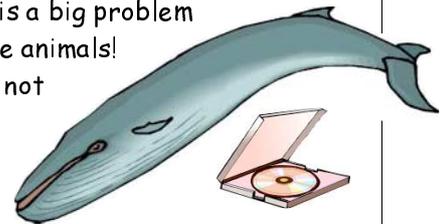


This picture of the solar eclipse on 20th March 2015 was captured through a high level welding helmet. It is extremely dangerous to look directly at the sun as it can cause permanent eye damage.

Image courtesy of Jez Wickens

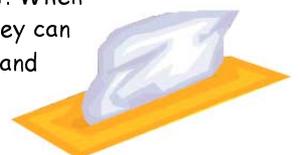
Rubbish in the Sea and its affect on marine animals

In August 2014, a dead 14m Sei whale was found in the Elizabeth River, a tributary of Chesapeake Bay in Virginia, USA. When examined they found a broken DVD case in its stomach. It prevented the whale from feeding and so it starved. Then it was hit by a ship, which fractured its backbone. Marine debris can look like food and is a big problem for marine animals! Please do not litter.



....yet more marine waste!

Something that many use to clean up with is also becoming a big beach litter problem. The UK's Marine Conservation Society reports an average of 35 wet wipes were found for every kilometres of UK beach cleaned in 2014. That is 50% more than in 2013! "Wet wipes" are often just thrown away but they don't decompose (disintegrate) very fast. When flushed down toilets they can cause sewer blockages and overflow into rivers and the seas. Yeech!



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The World's Largest Container Ship

Container ships carry goods around the world. At the

beginning of the year, the "MSC Oscar", with a carrying capacity 19,224 containers, became the best container ship in the world. Built in South Korea, it is 396m long (nearly four football pitches laid end to end) and needs 16 m of water to float. Though "Oscar" is smaller than the previous largest ship, the "Globe," it can carry 124 more containers. To give an idea of her cargo space, she can carry 1.15 million washing machines!

Goats Fighting Invasive Plants in America

When plants are introduced into an environment and start to grow out of control, they are said to be invasive. To get rid of invasive plants, chemicals are often used but this can damage the soil. Digging them up can also cause erosion. One company has found a very eco-friendly solution. They have started hiring out herds of goats to clear areas of invasive plants in an eco-friendly way - by eating them! Goats eat nearly everything and a herd of 35 goats can eat half an acre of vegetation in about four days. This method doesn't get rid of the invasive plants completely so an area has to be grazed a number of times. Eventually the plants begin to weaken and less seeds are produced over time so fewer plants grow.

