



The World Around Us



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

A Dog who Survived a Tsunami

The devastating earthquakes and tsunami in Japan in March shocked the world and it's hard to imagine any good news from such human tragedy. But, a resident of Kesennuma saw her home destroyed and her dog swept out to sea by the power of the wave that reached a height of 37.9 metres. Ban, a mixed-breed dog, was feared dead but three weeks later she was found perched on the roof of a collapsed house, which had drifted a mile out to sea. The dog was rescued by a Japanese Coast Guard helicopter but it took several hours because the dog wouldn't leave home! The rescue was broadcast on national television. Ban's owner, who was watching the rescue, was overjoyed to see her pet and they were soon reunited.



Underwater Museum

Would you like to visit an art museum where you didn't have to walk around to see the exhibits, but could swim around instead? In Cancun in Mexico, there is just such a museum - it is underwater! The museum, Museo Subacuático de Arte (MUSA) was created in the Gulf of Mexico's warm, blue waters for viewing art and improving the environment.



Courtesy of www.underwatersculpture.com

MUSA has 403 life-size sculptures, created by Jason deCaires Taylor. Each sculpture is made from materials that encourages coral to grow on it. Over time the sculptures are developing into a fascinating reef. With nature reefs being damaged by souvenir hunters and Cancun's Marine Park one of the most visited reefs in the world, it is hoped that this museum will take pressure off the natural reefs by attracting some of the visitors away from them.



Too Many Cream Buns?

Imagine being famous thousands of years later, for being the oldest known case of an illness! The Egyptian Museum in Cairo, as part of a US-Egyptian collaboration, did x-ray scans on 52 mummies dating back to between 688 and 332 BC. The scans revealed that almost half of the people had clogged arteries and heart problems. The earliest mummy found to have heart disease was a princess. According to one of the co-leaders of the study, Gregory Thomas, (a University of California Professor of Cardiology) said, if he could travel back in time he would tell her to lay off the fat, take plenty of exercise and then he would schedule her for heart surgery. I wonder if yummy cream buns were on the menu in Egypt 3,500 years ago?

Atlas of Mammals in Ireland

We are all familiar with an atlas. It shows maps of the countries of the world, especially our own, with all its physical features, counties, towns and villages.

Some of Ireland's leading mammal scientists are planning to create a very special atlas, one that maps the distribution of all 64 species of mammals known to occur in Ireland. This includes 27 species of land mammals, 10 bat species, 3 marine mammals and probably 24 cetaceans (whales and dolphins).

The National Biodiversity Data Centre is co-ordinating the initiative, which will bring together information collected by a wide variety of organisations, and the public. Between now and 2015, members of the public are invited to submit, online, any sightings of mammals they are looking for so that they can build up an understanding and map where mammal species occur in Ireland. The group needs your help!

If you can help and would like to take part, access their website at <http://mammals.biodiversityireland.ie>

