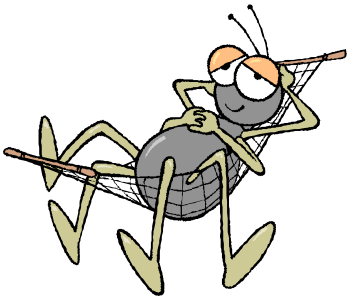

Nature's Web

Issue No. 12 Winter 2008

Inside This Issue...

It's Black & White!

Okay, so this newsletter isn't really in black and white but we're featuring something that is – the magpie! A member of the crow family, it is a reasonably big bird and it is very easy to identify. Most of us would have seen one at sometime or other and many of us are familiar with the nursery rhyme that is associated with them. If you're not, you can read it on page 3.

Also in this issue we look at ants. Now ants are not the cuddliest of creatures but they do live in a fascinating world. Stuart Munroe, who just LOVES insects, tells us loads about ants, such as what they look like, how they live and what they eat.

This issue also takes a close look at carnivorous plants. Believe it or not, these are plants that eat insects! Hard as it is to imagine, they have developed ways of trapping these tiny creatures, killing them and digesting them!

Photo courtesy of Arpingstone

The Magpie

Catching a Wave.... on camera!

Photo: © Terry Farnell

Find out what a typical day is like for Terry Farnell, who is a photographer on Sherkin Island (see page 7). His favourite subjects to photograph are landscapes and the environment.

October Wave: sometimes you have to be very quick to get the right photo!

Editor's Page

Planets in the Night Sky!

Photo: © Robbie Murphy

For a few hours after sunset on 1st December last we were treated to a spectacular sight in the southern sky. Luckily our brother Robbie was on hand with his camera so we have a photograph of the event to share with you!

Venus (bottom of photo), the brightest planet in the night sky, had a close encounter with Jupiter (top right of photo), the second brightest planet. Right next to these planets was the young crescent moon, which had a wonderful glow from the light reflecting from Earth. All this produced a wonderful night-time display.

The next time that Venus, Jupiter and the moon will be as close and as visible as they were on that night, will be on 18th November 2052! But you only have to wait until December 31st 2008 to see Venus paired with the crescent moon again.

There are other sights to look out for in the night sky over the next few weeks. On New Year's night Saturn will be rising in the east after midnight (maybe you could have a quick look after the celebrations are over!). Mercury will also be visible above the western horizon after sunset on 20th December. It should be visible in the night sky until the middle of January.

Seafood Recipe

Spanish Style Pancakes

Photo courtesy of BIM

Brought to you by BIM.
For more recipes visit **www.bim.ie**

What you need:

- **250g of diced cooked seafood e.g. prawns, salmon and monkfish**
- **1 clove garlic - crushed**
- **1 onion - finely chopped**
- **parsley - finely chopped**
- **freshly milled black pepper**

Batter:

- 150g flour
- 1 egg
- 150 ml milk
- Oil to fry

What to do:

- Make the batter in the usual way
- Add in the diced fish, garlic, onion and parsley. Season
- Heat the oil in a frying pan. Place a dessertspoon of mixture in the pan
- Cook until golden brown. Continue until all the mixture is used
- Drain each pancake well and serve immediately sprinkled with chopped parsley
- Drain each pancake well and serve immediately sprinkled with chopped parsley and grated cheese.

Serves 4

Welcome to the Winter Edition of Nature's Web!

Dear Reader,

Welcome everyone to the winter issue of Nature's Web. We are delighted to feature Terry Farnell in this newsletter. He is a landscape photographer on Sherkin Island and has taken many wonderful images of the island. We often meet Terry on the road, day and night, having been out for hours trying to get a shot! Check out his work at www.sherkinphoto.com!

You can also check out nature news from around the world on page 11 and enjoy a giggle with the jokes on page 13.

We would love to hear your views, comments and suggestions for future articles. Have a good read!

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Foreign Correspondent:
Michael Ludwig

Magpie

Latin: *Pica pica*
Irish: Snag breac

Photo courtesy of Benutzer

The magpie is probably the easiest bird to recognise. It has striking black and white colouring and a long tail. A relatively large birds, it can be seen in the open countryside and in gardens. It nest is dome-shaped and, made from twigs and mud, it is built up in trees.

Magpies are very sociable birds and can often be seen in pairs or small family groups. A large group of magpies is known as a tiding (other names include gulp, charm and parliament!). In these gatherings they jump about, chase each other and chatter loudly.

Magpies can be unpopular at times as they sometimes eat small birds and eggs. However, it is thought this happens for only a short period of time and that for the rest of the time they take other food.
Many birds feature in nursery rhymes. The magpie has quite a well-known rhyme written about it:

One for sorrow, two for joy;
Three for a girl, four for a boy;
Five for silver, six for gold;
Seven for a secret, never to be told;
Eight for a wish, nine for a kiss;
Ten for a bird that's best to miss.

The Relations!

The magpie is a member of the **Crow** family . There are eight members of this family in Ireland and the UK - these are Choughs, Jackdaws, Jays, Magpies, Ravens, Rooks, Hooded Crows and Carrion Crows. Hooded Crows (black and grey) are found in Ireland and NW Scotland, and Carrion Crows (all black) are found in England, Wales and SE Scotland.

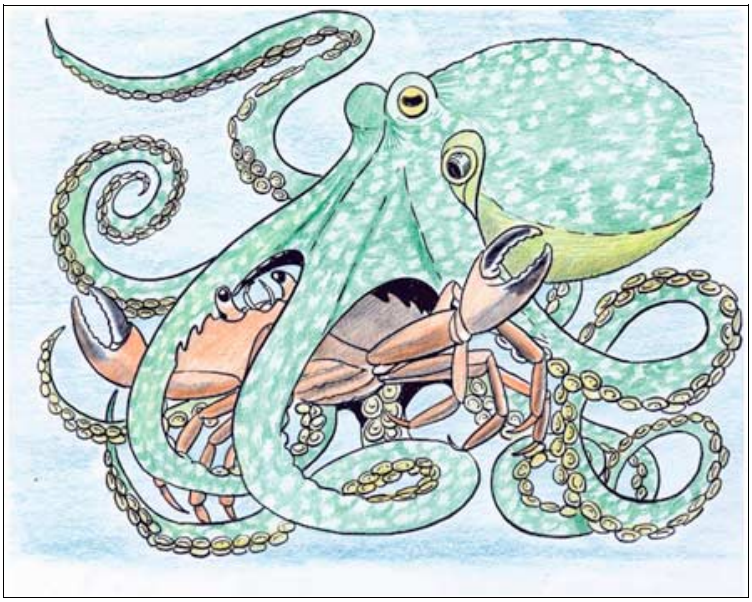
Fact File

Colour: Black and white body, with blue-purple sheen on black head and tail and green sheen on its long black tail. Tips of wings and belly are white.
Length: 40-51 cm
Diet: Worms, slugs, seeds, insects, eggs and chicks of other birds and even food left out for cats and dogs.
Habitat: Gardens, along the road, on farms, towns and parks.
No. of eggs: 4-7

Photo courtesy of Skarabeusz CC-BY-SA-2.5

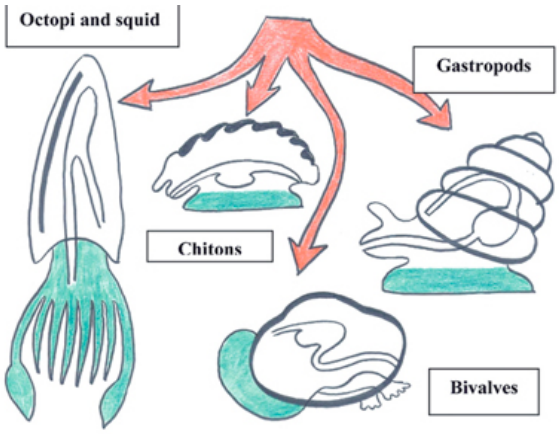
The Marvellous Molluscs

The molluscs are a very successful class of animal, with some 60,000 living species and at least 35,000 fossil species. They include slugs and snails on land and winkles, whelks, oysters, scallops, squid and octopi in the sea.
Molluscs are invertebrates - which means that they have no skeleton or backbone. They do however have a single muscular foot which, in snails and slugs is used for sliding and gripping and in octopi and squid for far more complex tasks, including mating and catching prey.
Of all the invertebrates, octopi and squid are the most intelligent, with brains capable of moving their eight arms, searching out prey, darting after it at high speed by "jet propulsion" or manipulating their skin colour and texture to blend in with their surroundings completely.



The Molluscs' Family Tree...

Biologists think that modern molluscs probably evolved from a simple worm-like creature into four distinct groups, each with a distinctive muscle (shown in green below left). These groups are the Chitons (or coat of mail shells), the Gastropods (stomach feet!) or snails, whelks and winkles, the Bivalves (two shells) including oysters, clams and scallops, and the most advanced group, the Cephalopods (head-feet) or octopi and squid.

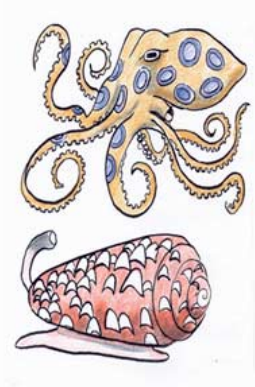


Eye - Eye ...

If you think that wearing glasses is a problem, spare a thought for the scallop, whose shell is lined with dozens of tiny simple "eyes". These are very useful for avoiding predators such as starfish, which scallops evade by snapping their shells and flapping off like a pair of flying false teeth!

Captain Cockle's Log

Welcome aboard shipmates! Together, we'll be taking a look at the world's greatest natural resource – the sea!
Words & pictures by John Joyce
John Joyce 2005
For more adventures from Captain Cockle, visit his website at
www.captaincockle.com



Murderous Molluscs

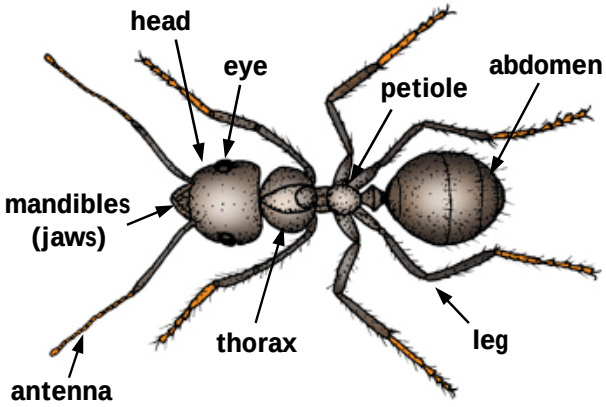
The blue-ringed octopus is no bigger than a golf ball, but has poisonous saliva capable of killing a human being in minutes. The blue rings only glow when it is about to attack. Luckily for us in Ireland it is only found in Australia.
Other deadly natives of tropical waters are the beautifully coloured cone shells. These marine snails prowl about coral reefs in search of small fish to eat. Their poison, which can be injected with harpoon-like teeth, acts on the nervous system to cause paralysis and even death.

Ants

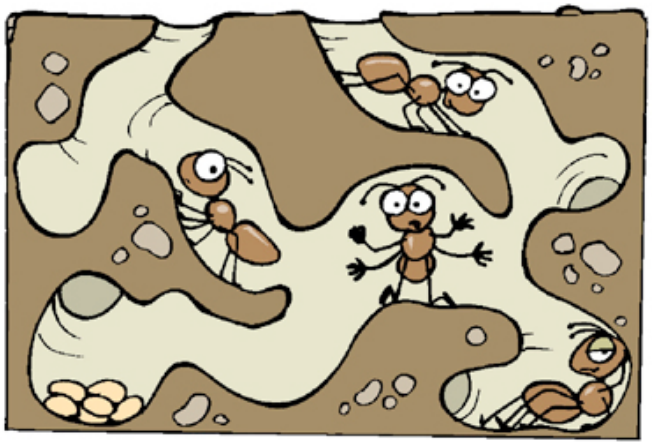
By Stuart Munroe

Ants belong to the same group of insects as the bees and wasps – the ***Hymenoptera*** – with over 40 different species indigenous (that is to say *native*) to Britain and Ireland. There are other species however which sometimes "invade" and are able to survive in permanently heated buildings, hothouses etc. These invaders are often brought in on cargo from foreign countries; most often wood (timber).

An Ant's Body



Ants share a similar body structure to wasps but can be easily distinguished by the 1 or 2 humps, or knots, that occur on the thin "waist" between the foreparts of the thorax and the abdomen.



Ants go through what is known as **complete metamorphosis**; this means that the babies (**larvae**), which resemble small maggots, look completely different to the adult ant, going through a middle **pupa** stage just like a caterpillar turning into a butterfly.
The larvae have no legs and so are carried everywhere by the worker adults; for example from one chamber of the nest to another if they are too hot or cold.

Who does what?

Unlike some bees and wasps, there are no solitary ants. All ants are **social** which means they live together in a highly organised group, usually in an underground nest. This nest contains many different chambers; for rearing eggs/larvae or storing food. The social structure is split up into specialised groups of individuals or **castes**; there is the **Queen** who lays all the eggs and is cared for by the **workers** and **soldiers** who are all sterile females (they cannot lay eggs). Later in the summer winged males are produced which, along with new-born queens, are the flying ants we see in late July and August.

Smelly-vision!

Ants do not "see" very well; most of their sense of the environment around them and communication is done by chemical smells and by touch, using their antennae. Ants leave special "scent" trails for others to follow to food sources. This is why we often see long trails of ants going back and fore from their nest.
Each species, often each nest, has its own distinct smell, which allows the soldiers on guard to recognise and attack intruders. However some insects, including beetles and other ants, copy this nest smell allowing them to live and eat in the nest of the host ant without being attacked!

Most ants eat other small insects, which they find dead or kill by biting, stinging or squirting chemicals onto them. The Driver Ants and Army Ants of South America and Africa will even catch and kill much larger prey such as tarantulas, scorpions and lizards using sheer numbers to subdue their victims (these colonies can exceed 500,000 individuals). In addition, most ants supplement their diet with nectar from flowers and even "farm" aphids (greenfly) for the sugary substance they excrete.

Carnivorous Plants

Photograph courtesy of Rbrtjong

A drowned lizard was found in this newly-opened pitcher plant (having being pulled out of the digestive area for the picture).

By Marketa Janouchova

Believe it or not, some plants eat animals. They are called carnivorous plants. They are also known as insectivorous as they can barely eat any animal larger than an insect (at least in our mild climate). But they are really "insect–voracious". A Great Sundew *(Drosera anglica)* can catch several hundred insects a year! The Pitcher Plants, which grow mainly in Southeast Asia, can trap not just small insects but also cockroaches, centipedes and scorpions. The digestive acid in them is so powerful, that a midge will disappear entirely within hours! The Rajah Pitcher Plant *(Nepenthes rajah)*, the biggest of all Pitcher Plants, is said to be able to eat mice!

Can insectivorous plants become vegetarian?

Everyone who had grown these plants at home knows that there is no need to feed them with insects. Once they are grown in soil with enough nutrients, the plants have no need to hunt for insects!

Midge Catchers!

These plants will digest any animal that they can trap, usually insects and bugs. One such insect is the midge. If you've ever been out in the garden on a warm humid evening, it's quite likely you've been bitten by one. These tiny insects are very annoying and love the warm damp conditions where carnivorous plants live. Though the midges have few enemies, these type of plants are certainly one of them!

What do they gain from eating insects?

Insectivorous plants usually grow in places which lack nutrients in the soil, like bogs and peat, and have their "feet" in water most of the time. As they cannot get nitrogen from the soil, which they need for their growth, they get it instead by trapping insects and using digestive juices to extract nitrogen from the proteins in them.

How do they trap them …

…if they cannot jump and leap on their prey like tigers? They just have to wait patiently until the insects come along. The animals are lured to the plants and once the animals settle on them they become trapped. Different species use different tricks and have different traps to catch them (see page 12).

Are there any in Ireland?

Insectivorous plants occur in many countries around the world, such as America, South Asia, Australia, New Zealand and Madagascar. They also occur in Ireland. We have 12 insectivorous species (if we count the hybrids - plants produced from two different species)!

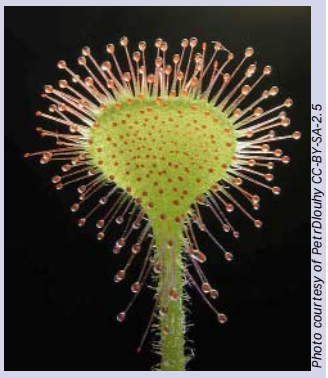


Photo courtesy of PetrDlouhy CC-BY-SA-2.5

Round-leaved Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*) is commonly found in boggy areas around Ireland.

All in a Day's Work

Terry Farnell - Landscape & Environmental Photographer

PROFILE

Terry Farnell has a degree in Geography and Landscape Studies and has worked in forestry and international haulage. In 1993, he came to the Sherkin Island Marine Station and has lived in Ireland ever since. Currently, he lives on Sherkin and works as a photographer (www.sherkinphoto.com).

A Day in the Life of Terry Farnell

Where do you work?

I live on Sherkin island, so most of my work is on the island itself. I have to split my time between being out and about taking photographs and sitting in front of the computer in the office at home.

Have you always been interested in what you do?

Yes, I still remember getting my first camera when I was 8 years old and that's a long time ago - I've been taking photographs ever since.

What training did you do to get where you are today?

I've no formal training in photography, but I did go to college to study geography, which is probably why I'm so interested in photographing the landscape.

What is a day in your life like?

Really, there's no typical pattern to a day in my life, which is one of the things that makes it so enjoyable. I may well be up before dawn and out to a location where I'm hoping for a beautiful sunrise, or I may be going out of the door at midnight, to take photographs of moonlit landscapes. Then all the photographs have to be processed on the computer at some stage and I'm often so engrossed in what I'm doing that I'll sit up late until I'm finished.

What is your main aim?

To enjoy life and to be happy. Oh, and to make a bit of money too! I think I've achieved two out of these three aims…

Where does your work take you?

To the top of the highest hill and to the bottom of the deepest hole - anywhere that I think I can find an interesting photograph.

What is the best thing about your job?

The variety and never knowing what's around the next corner. I love walking around the island with my camera gear, looking for the right light in the right place, and having grown up with films and darkrooms, I'm fascinated by what can be done with photographs in the computer.

What is the worst thing about your job?

Marketing and accounts! It's no good running a small business based on photography if you never sell any photographs! Some people enjoy this side of business, but I find it a chore.

Do you enjoy your work?

I'm glad you didn't ask me this a week ago, when I spent two hours on top of Mount Gabriel, near Schull, West Cork, in pouring rain and with a north wind whistling around my ears - you might have got a short answer! But the long answer is - yes, I love it and I wake up every morning looking forward to the day.

What equipment do you use?

Too much! I went digital three years ago and have been amazed by the flexibility of the system and the quality of the photographs. Having said that, there are still some situations where film is best and I'm currently unearthing all my darkroom chemicals.

What advice would you give someone wanting to do your job?

It's unlikely that you'll step out of school and into a job as a landscape photographer, so think about suitable college courses, or maybe think about getting work in an associated industry, such as picture editing or magazine or newspaper journalism. And all the time, take photographs, read, eat and sleep photography and get your photographs out where people can see them, on the internet, in magazines, in competitions. But if you want a normal life, don't do this job!

What would you do if you weren't doing what you do?

Whatever it was, I'd spend all day dreaming of doing what I'm doing now!

What is the best piece of advice you have ever had?

Follow your own star. Find a career that makes you happy and everything else in life will just slot into place.

Sherkin puppies.

Clearing Storm and Rainbow.

Wordsearch

Nature's Web Wordsearch

Try out this giant wordsearch containing words found in this issue of the newsletter.

p	a	s	f	m	a	d	a	t	y	c	z	j	V	h	w	w	s
u	i	u	e	u	o	f	o	l	o	o	a	e	a	e	w	T	t
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a	n	i	m	a	l	h	a	b	i	t	a	t	s	v	k	q	s

animal habitats

ants

bladderwort

blue whales

butterwort

carnivorous plants

crow family

gorilla

magpie

molluscs

pancakes

pitcher plant

pygmy hippo

pyramid

skunks

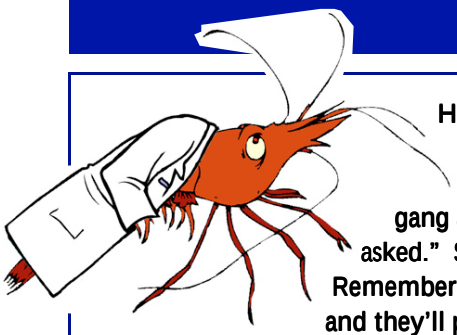
sundew

Terry Farnell

Venus flytrap

ANSWERS: (Over,Down,Direction): animal habitats (1,18,E); ants (1,5,E); bladderwort (14,16,W); blue whales (12,10,NW); butterwort (18,11,N); carnivorous plants (2,17,NE); crow family (1,10,NW); gorilla (9,8,SW); magpie (6,14,NW); molluscs (5,1,SE); pancakes (16,4,S); pitcher plant (1,1,SE); pygmy hippo (7,13,E); pyramid (12,17,W); skunks (18,13,S); sundew (11,6,NE); Terry Farnell (17,2,S); Venus flytrap (14,1,SW).

Tommy Time



Hi Kids, I'm Dr. Tommy Prawn, I'm a mad scientist that lives in the river Shannon in Ireland. My good friends at Nature's Web rang me on the watermobile and told me ye had a few questions about science and asked if I could answer them. I told the gang at Nature's Web "no probs, of course I would try to answer the questions you asked." So here I go…….. Enjoy!

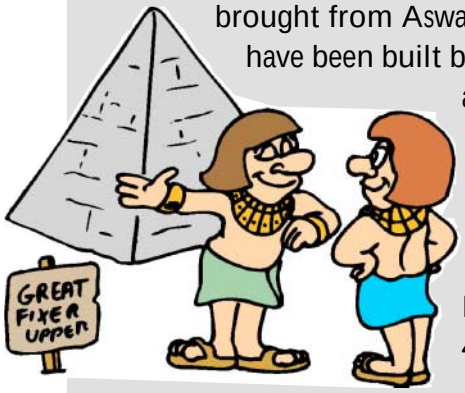
Remember, if you have any other science questions, just send them into editor@naturesweb.ie **and they'll pass 'em on to me!**

Dr. Tommy

How Much Stone Was Used in a Pyramid?

Very interesting question, and of course depends on the size of the pyramid. On my holidays to Egypt I met a guy called Mustafa Camel. He told me that camels were ships of the desert. I said you don't look like a ship to me, you look like a camel. He said, "I am a ship of the desert". I said he was the ugliest looking ship I ever saw. He spat at me, all the camels spit in Egypt. Dirty little things!

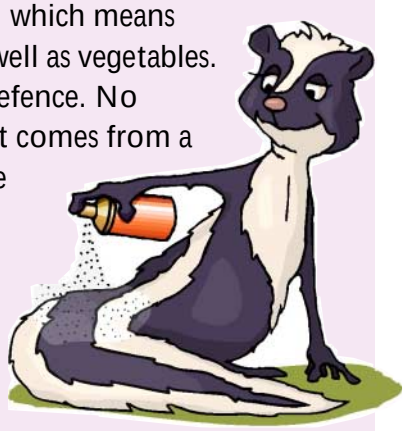
I'll talk about the great pyramid in Giza when answering this. It took 20 years and 100,000 people to build it. The stones used were stones brought from Aswan and Tura. This pyramid is thought to have been built between 2589 - 2566 BC. It took over 2,300,000 blocks of stone with an average weight of 2.5 tons each (with some as heavy as 15 tons). The total weight was 6,500,000 tons and measured 481 feet (147m) in height. It is the largest and the oldest of the Pyramids of Giza. An interesting fact is that this is the only one of the Seven Wonders of the World that still survives.



Imagine that, 6,500,000 tons in weight. That's the weight of roughly 444,445 African elephants. Not even superman would lift that I think!

What Makes Skunks Smell?

Skunks are small black and white mammals and are members of the weasel family. Skunks are very common in some parts of the world like California. The skunk is nocturnal, which means they come out at night. They eat mice and rats and other small rodents as well as vegetables. No wonder they smell so bad if they eat rats! The smell is the skunks best defence. No creature, human or animal, can stand being near a skunk with that odour. It comes from a fluid called musk, which is produced and stored in a pair of glands under the animal's tail. A skunk can propel the spray about 10 feet (3 metres).



Bottom line kids, if you see a skunk, run. It's as simple as that. Don't try to rub it or pick it up. My friend Mikey Bull tried once and the skunk sprayed him, then he had to go on a date. Let's just say he most certainly did not have the Lynx effect!

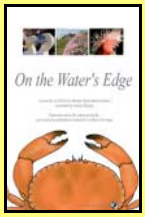
Dr. Tommy Prawn would like to acknowledge the help of his good friend James Ring. Text: © James Ring

Learn More

A Beginner's Guide to Ireland's Wild Flowers
Have you ever wanted to put a name to the wild flowers you see about you every day, or while on a walk, or on holiday? With the help of this pocket-sized guide, you will be able to do just that. Beginners of all ages will be introduced to the many common wild flowers found around Ireland. *206pp*

Only €8.50 including postage

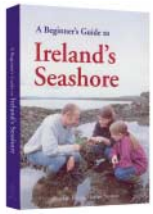
Sea Life DVD: *"On the Water's Edge"*



Sherkin Island Marine Station has launched a new dvd called *'On the Water's Edge'*. It is made up of a short film on life beside the sea and is presented by Audrey Murphy. It includes 6-10 hours of interactive material for children of all ages. *Available from: Sherkin Island Marine Station, Sherkin Island, Co. Cork. €13.30 including postage.*

A Beginner's Guide to Ireland's Seashore is a pocket-sized guide, suitable for beginners of all ages. This book will help you to explore the wonders of marine life found on the shores around Ireland. *206pp*

Only €8.00 including postage



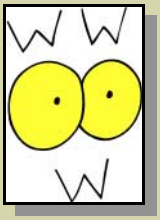
Only €1.95 each including postage or €12.00 for all eight!
32pp each

Sherkin Island Marine Station has published a range of colouring books, guides and activity books for children. Each 32-page *Colouring & Guide Book* gives you the chance to colour, identify and learn about the wildlife around Ireland. *My Nature Diary* and *Safety Sam* activity book will keep you busy for hours.

To order books, send your name and address along with a cheque or postal order made payable to Sherkin Island Marine Station to:

Matt Murphy,
Sherkin Island Marine Station,
Sherkin Island,
Skibbereen, Co.Cork. Ireland.

Visit: www.sherkinmarine.ie



Useful Web Addresses

There are lots of websites to be found on the internet that will give you further information on topics we have covered in this newsletter. Here are a few that may be of interest:

Planets in the Night Sky: http://www.fourmilab.ch/yoursky/
http://www.astrospace.co.uk/nightsky/MonthlyNightSky.htm

Magpie: http://www.birdwatchireland.ie/Advice/FAQ/MagpieFAQ/tabid/374/Default.aspx

The Marvellous Molluscs: http://www.enchantedlearning.com/subjects/invertebrates/mollusk/Printouts.shtml

Ants: http://www.antblog.co.uk http://www.biokids.umich.edu/critters/Formicidae/

Carnivorous Plants: http://www.botany.org/Carnivorous_Plants/ http://www.sarracenia.com/faq.html

Terry Farnell – Life as a Landscape Photographer: www.sherkinphoto.com

Pyramid of Giza: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/pyramid/ http://www.eyelid.co.uk/index.htm

Skunk: http://www.projectwildlife.org/living-skunks.htm http://www.hww.ca/hww2.asp?id=104

The Blue Whale: http://www.rorqual.com/ http://www.iwdg.ie

Pygmy Hippo: http://www.zooborns.com/zooborns/2008/11/taronga-zoo-shows-off-rare-baby-hippo.html

Waste Electric and Electronic Equipment: http://www.weeeireland.ie/

A Patient with a Difference: http://www.totallywild.net/howletts/index.php?p=news_item&id=389

Animal Habitats: http://www.uen.org/utahlink/activities/view_activity.cgi?activity_id=3792

We cannot be responsible for the content of external websites, so please observe due care when accessing any site on the internet.

The World Around Us

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

Blue Whales in Irish Waters!

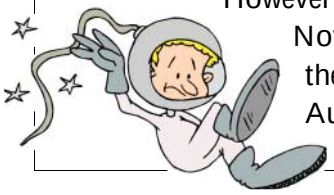
Blue whales are the biggest animals in the world, measuring over 30m in length.They were hunted to near extinction in the first half of the 20th century, but in 1966 the hunting of blue whales was banned, giving them worldwide protection. Though they can be found in all the oceans of the world, sightings are rare because of their low numbers and their preference for deeper waters. In September this year, Alan O'Kelly, a member of the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group, was lucky enough to photograph a blue whale off the southwest Irish coast, beyond the Blasket Islands. Days later there were similar sightings from two separate research vessels, one by Dave Wall of the IWDG, and the other by scientists from Bord Iascaigh Mhara - Peter Tyndall and Ronan Cosgrove. Scientists in Canada, who hold a database of whale photographs, have confirmed that the blue whale Alan O'Kelly photographed is a new record for the North Atlantic.

Pygmy Hippo Birth

At Taronga Zoo in Sydney, they have welcomed the birth of a baby pygmy hippopotamus - the first at the zoo in 23 years. Pygmy hippos are highly endangered animals, with only about 3,000 left in the wild. When fully grown, they are a fifth of the size of their cousin, the Common Hippopotamus. Zookeepers have called her "Monifa".

Dispose of Waste CAREFULLY!

Here in Ireland we can now recycle our waste electric and electronic equipment (known as WEEE). These are goods which either have a plug or a battery. However, in space astronauts might think they can get rid of this type of equipment the old fashioned way, by throwing it away. Not so! Last year an astronaut threw a tank of ammonia (used for cooling) off the International Space Station, as there was no room to bring it back to Earth. Believing there would be little chance of it hitting Earth, NASA were keen to reassure people. However, at the beginning of November the tank crashed into the Tasman Sea, between Australia and New Zealand!

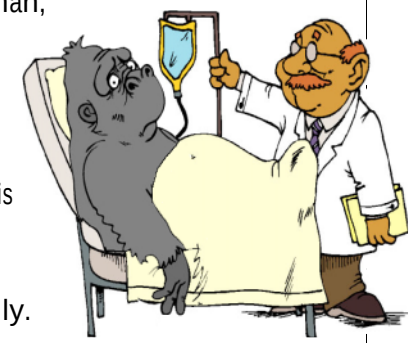


A Patient with a Difference

Recently, a surgeon in the UK found himself helping a vet operate on an unusual patient - a 22 year-old gorilla, who lives at Howlett's wildlife park in Kent, UK. The gorilla was suffering from an illness that was causing him to lose lots of weight. Known as hyperparathydroidism, the illness is caused by glands in the neck producing too much of a certain hormone. The gorilla needed surgery to remove some of these glands and, though the operation is relatively common in humans, it had never been performed on a gorilla.

The operation was carried out by Jane Hoppe, a vet, who was advised by Richard Collins, a "human specialist". Though it was a little strange, the surgeon treated the operation like a regular one. He found the gorilla was slightly different to operate on than a human, having an air sack to help blast out calls in the jungle.

After an hour-long operation, the gorilla is now on the road to recovery and has been reunited with her family.



Carnivorous Plants

By Marketa Janouchova

Carnivorous plants (see page 6) are insect-eating plants. They have developed ways of attracting, trapping and digesting insects, to obtain nutrients that the plants may be unable to find elsewhere. In total there are over 650 species of carnivorous plants. Here are just a few of them.

Photo courtesy of NoahElhardt CC-BY-SA-2.5

Venus Flytrap

Venus Flytrap *(Dionaea muscipula)* has sensitive bristles on a leaf folded in the middle. Nectar on the leaf can attract a fly and as soon as the fly lands on it, the bristles act like triggers and the leaf folds. It closes so quickly that the fly will be caught inside – a little like toast being held in the toaster. The fly cannot get out as the spines on the rim of the leaf imprison it inside. What a lunch the plant has!

The Pitcher Plant

Pitcher Plants *(*e. g. *Heliamphora chimanthensis* or *Sarracenia purpurea)* have leaves curled into a long tube, a bit like a trumpet or a jug, creating a trap for insects. The insects are attracted to nectar glands at the top of the plant. The hungry insects try to investigate what delicacies are left at the bottom of the "jug", then slide down and fall into water, which has collected in the traps. The insects drown and are digested.

Photo courtesy of Arpingstone

Photo © Robbie Murphy

Sundew

Sundews *(*e. g. *Drosera rotundifolia)* have ruby-red stalked glands, which look like and behave a bit like little tentacles, covered with droplets of sticky liquid. Insects are attracted to the plants as they think the sticky dew on the glands is nectar (it contains sugars) but instead of getting a sip of tasty juice they get stuck (a bit like a fly in honey) and cannot move. The plants then use their "tentacles" in a way the octopus would, together with their digestive juices (which are as strong as acid in our stomachs), to hold and digest their prey.

Butterwort

Butterworts *(*e. g. *Pinguicula vulgaris)* have sticky glands all over the leaf surfaces to trap insects. The leaves are shiny and oily and to an insect can look very much like a "buttered pancake" . The insect might think what a lovely breakfast it will have if it bites into the leaves but instead ends up being breakfast itself! Once it becomes stuck, the leaves roll in and the insect is digested in a similar way that of the Sundews.

Photo © Robbie Murphy

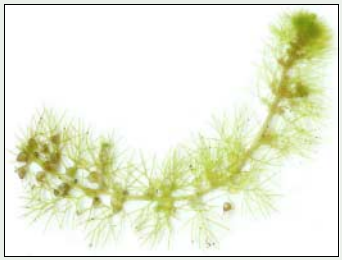


Photo courtesy of Veledan

Bladderwort

As the name suggests, Bladderworts *(*e. g. *Utricularia minor)* use bladders to trap insects. The plants grow in fresh water and their fleshy branches are filled with air to help them float. The bladders look as if they also help the plants to flow. However, aquatic animals are sucked into them and there is no way of escaping!

Fun Page

How much did you learn?

The answers to all these questions can be found in the newsletter...see if you can remember!

1 Of which family of birds are magpies members?

2 A venus flytrap can trap and kill flies. True or false?

3 What name was given to a pygmy hippo born in Sydney zoo recently?

4 What animal is know as the "ship of the desert"?

5 Where on a skunk are the glands that produces its awful smell?

6 How many people were needed to build the Great Pyramid in Giza, Egypt?

7 Where does Terry Farnell, the photographer, live?

8 What type of animal was operated on by a "human" surgeon in Kent, UK?

9 On 1st December 2008, in the night sky over Ireland, what two planets were clearly visible near the moon?

10 Do molluscs have backbones?

11 In what conditions are the carnivorous plants Round-leaved Sundews commonly found in Ireland?

12 What does WEEE stand for when it comes to recycling?

13 In the magpie nursery rhyme, what do "six" magpies represent?

14 Do ants have a good sense of smell?

15 Where did Alan O'Kelly see a blue whale recently?

16 Do all animals live in all habitats?

17 Can having a shorter shower save water & electricity?

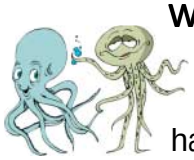
Answers: (1)The Crow family (2) True (3) Monita (4) The camel (5) Under its tail (6) 100,000 (7) Sherkin island (8) A gorilla (9) Venus and Jupiter (10) No (11) Boggy areas (12) Waste Electric & Electronic Equipment (13) Gold (14) Yes (15) Along the SW coast of Ireland, beyond the Blasket Islands (16) Yes.

Think of a Title!

Have fun with your friends making up a title for this picture of a hooded crow searching for food.

Photo courtesy of Thermos CC-BY-SA-2.5

Nature Jokes



What did the boy octopus say to the girl octopus?
I want to hold your hand, hand, hand, hand, hand, hand, hand, hand.

What kind of snake is useful on your windscreen?
A viper.

What bird is always out of breath?
A puffin.

What's green, fuzzy and if it fell out of a tree would kill you?
A pool table!

What do owls sing when it is raining?
'Too wet to woo!

Did you hear about the restaurant on the moon?
It has great food, but no atmosphere.

What do you call a fly with no wings?
A walk.

Spot the five differences!

Animal Habitats

A habitat is where an animal lives. Examples of these habitats are the ocean, a lake, a tree or the desert. Not all animals can live in all habitats. A camel can live in the desert but would not be able to live at the North Pole. It would be too cold. However a polar bear would be able to live near the icebergs but would find the desert far too hot. Therefore the camel's habitat is the desert and the polar bear's habitat is the North Pole. The same applies to fish and chickens. A fish, for example, lives in the sea and not in a hen house and a chicken lives in a hen house and not in the sea.
These animals below have forgotten where they live. Could you help them find their way home?

1

I need to live near freshwater. I lay thousands of eggs in the water and these will eventually transform into animals like myself.

2

My home, which is called a nest, is made out of twigs. In this nest I lay my eggs and raise my young. I have a black body and a yellow beak and eat insects, earthworms, berries and fruit.

3

My home is near the sea. I live in my own house, which I carry around on my back. When the tide is out I close up my home to stop me drying out.

a. Polar Bear

b. Camel

c. Dog Whelk

d. Frog

e. Cow

f. Blackbird

4

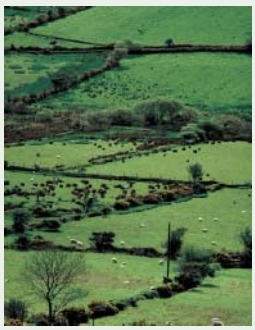
I am known as the "ship of the desert". I can store large amounts of water in my body and can travel for long periods.

5

I live in a very cold place, which is covered in snow and ice. Luckily, I have a thick layer of blubber and fur to keep me warm in these freezing conditions.

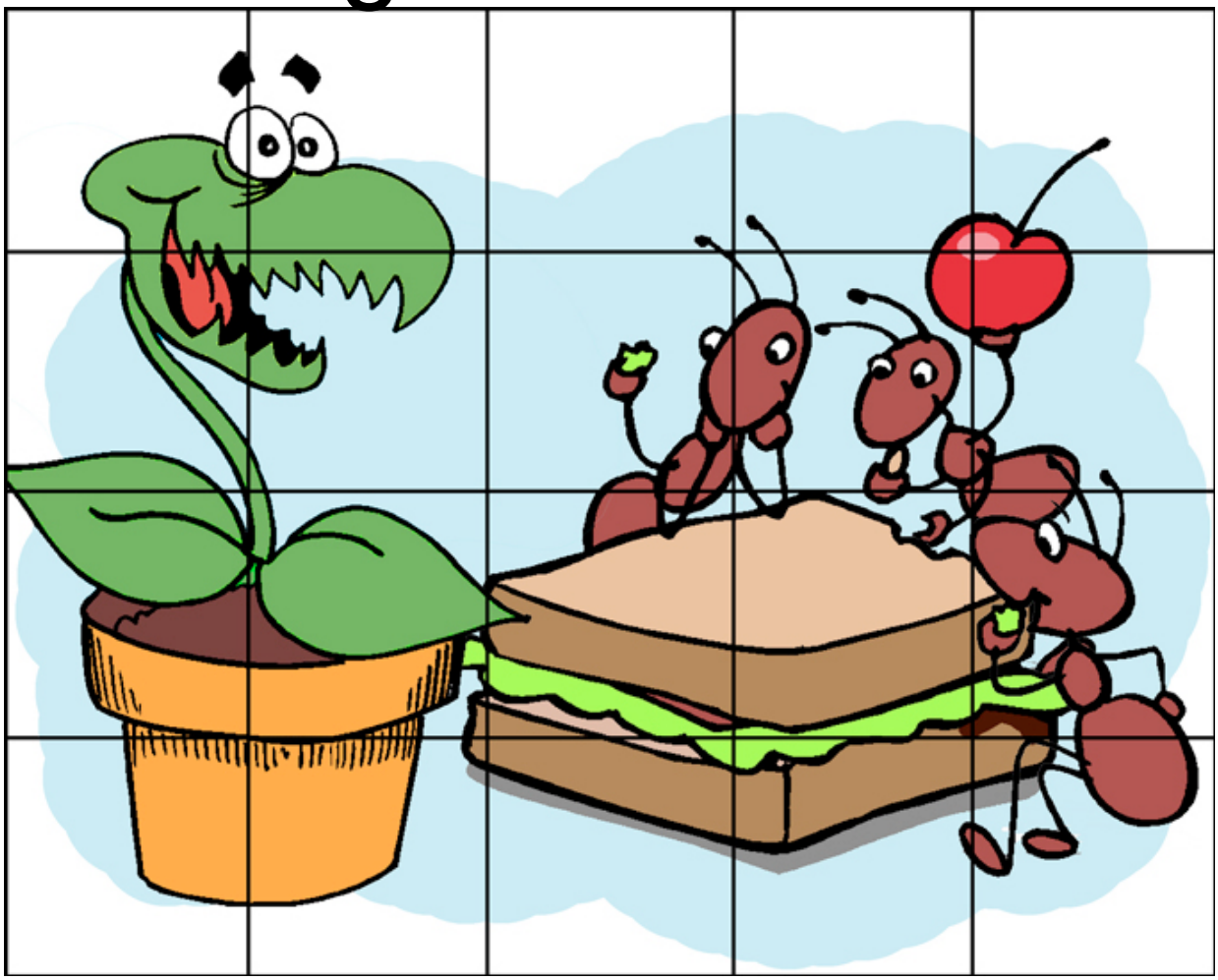
6

I spend most of my life grazing in lush green fields. I produce milk for the farmer and when it gets really cold and wet during the winter, the farmer often brings me inside into a big barn.



ANSWERS: 1=d; 2=f; 3=c; 4=b; 5=a; 6=e

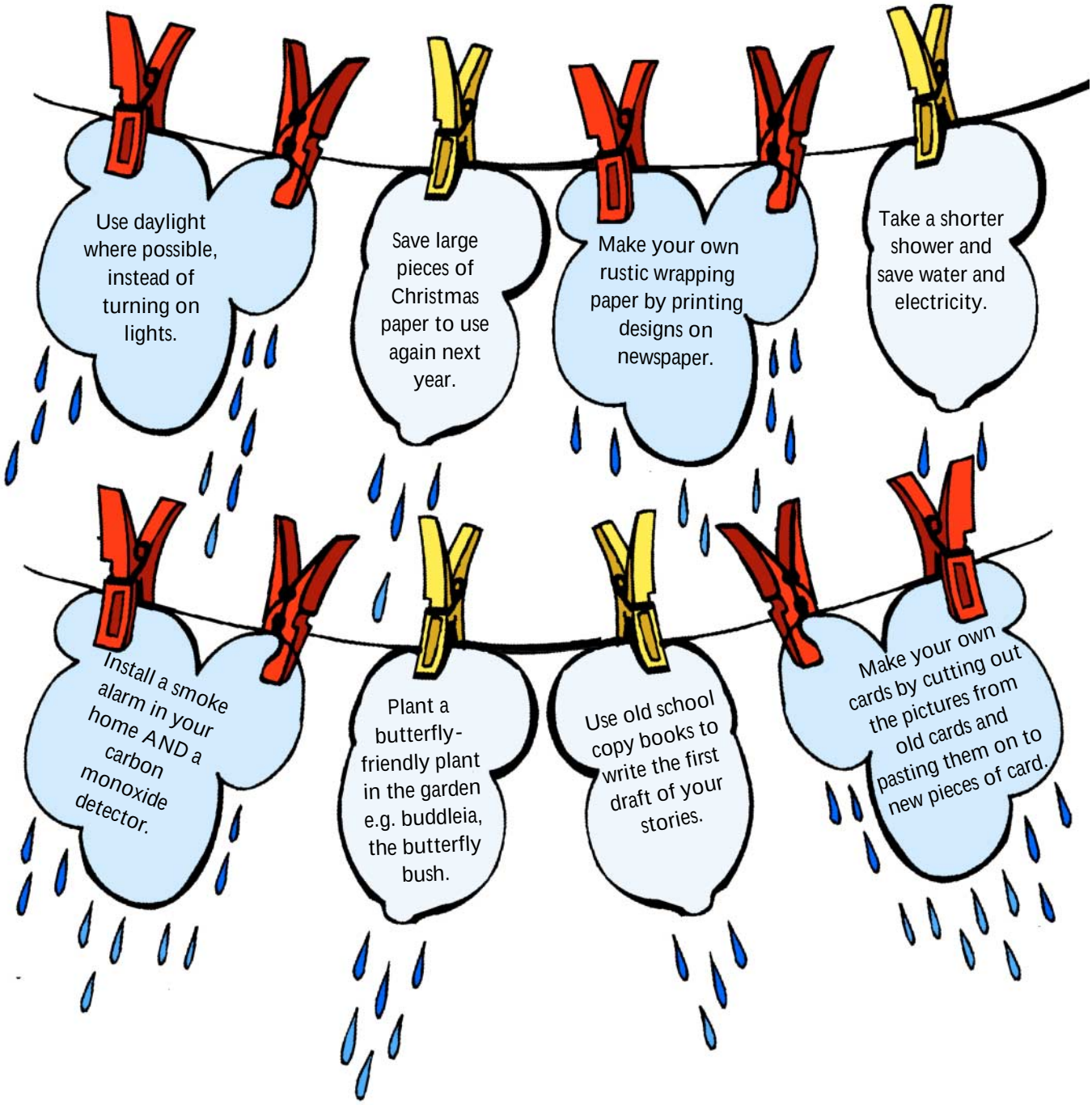
Jigsaw Puzzle



Here you have a chance to make your own jigsaw! You can cut out the pieces (make sure you have permission to use the scissors) and put the picture back together again.
If you feel creative, you can draw your own picture into the grid on the right, colour it and to make your own jigsaw.

Nature's Noticeboard!

Winter 2008



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