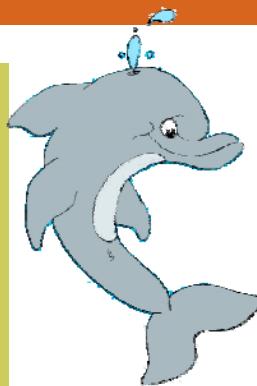




# The World Around Us



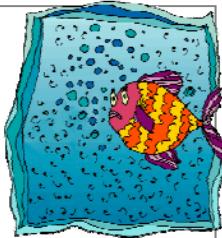
"Foreign Correspondent"  
Michael Ludwig reports on  
some interesting goings on  
in the natural world.



## Where's Fungie?

From 1984, the Bottlenose Dolphin, known as Fungie, made its home in Dingle, Co. Kerry. Sightings of the very friendly dolphin in Dingle Harbour delighted generations of spectators. A male Bottlenose Dolphin can live for at least 40 years, and some have lived much longer. As Fungie is at least 37 years old, he is heading to old age. Whether he has reached the end of his life or has decided to go to new waters for awhile, no one knows for sure.

What is definite is that Fungie has helped raise the awareness of marine mammals in Ireland and further afield. This awareness helps us understand the importance of keeping our seas and oceans clean.



## Microplastics and seafood

Sadly, more and more tiny fragments of plastics, known as microplastics, are getting into our foodchain. One way this happens is when plastics end up in the sea. The plastic breaks into tiny pieces and circulate in the water. Animals eat the plastic thinking it is food and it is held in their flesh. Humans can then accumulate plastics from the fish.

Scientists in Australia have carried out a study of five of the most popular seafood bought in the country to see how much plastic is in them. They found that every single sample that they took had plastic bits in it. Levels did vary from species to species and from individual to individual but it is a very disturbing find.

As humans we are at the top of the foodchain, therefore we are consuming any microplastics that enter our foodchain, whether it's through our water courses, seas and oceans or food stuffs.

## Magical Plants in the Witches Garden!

The National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin, is a place to enjoy the wonder and beauty of nature. It might not be possible for people to visit the gardens, however they have produced some fun videos to help you learn more about plants — from Flesh-Eating Plants, to Potion Plants to Desert Plants. Check them out at: <http://botanicgardens.ie/blog/> You can also listen to a podcast called 'The Bots', in which Brian Gallagher looks at the lives of those who live, work, study, and relax in the vicinity of Ireland's National Botanic Gardens.



## A Record-breaking Bird!



A Bar-Tailed Godwit has made a record-breaking journey from Alaska to New Zealand. The non-stop journey took 11 days and covered 12,000 kilometres. At times, the bird was flying at a speed of 89 km per hour. The migratory bird's journey was recorded using a satellite tag. Identified as "4BBRW", the bird started its journey in southwestern Alaska, flew by the Aleutian Islands as it made its way to a bay near the city of Auckland, New Zealand.

## Darwin's Records

Charles Darwin was a 19th century naturalist who travelled the globe to learn about the natural world. He came up with the theory that all animals and humans are related and that species changed and evolved over time. This theory was first published in 1859 in his book "On the Origin of Species". At the time, the idea that humans were related to animals was considered wild.



The notebooks in which he documented his findings, are an invaluable record of his work. Sadly, it has recently been announced that two of his notebooks, housed in Cambridge University Library, in the UK, have been missing for the last 20 years. The notebooks, worth millions of euro, were initially thought to be mislaid within the vast library. Now, after extensive searches, it is feared they may have been stolen. One of the notebooks contains a rough sketch of a tree, showing Darwin working out his thoughts on the theory of evolution. Luckily the notebooks have been digitised so their contents are not lost forever.