

THE SHELLFISH NETWORK
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Aims: 1) To increase public awareness of the fact that shellfish are living creatures capable of experiencing pain and stress.
2) To stop the cruelty involved in, and eventually to bring an end to, the slaughter of shellfish for human consumption and other abuses.



Well, folks, the new photocopier is worth its weight in gold! And you are still sending me so much info that there is not always room for it, although, as you will have noticed, I have upped the number of pages now that copying is so quick. And postage is no more expensive, either. Thanks to all those regular senders and donors.

LOBSTERS & CRAYFISH

Marks & Spencer is paying £12,000 to fund half the salary of a technician at the National Lobster Hatchery because UK supermarkets have to rely on Canada as their main source of lobsters. The scarce number of crustaceans in British waters is making them semi-endangered in these shores. The site aims to release 25,000 lobsters into the wild this year. 'Their few months under the watchful care of the Hatchery significantly increase the chances of these little lobsters making it to full maturity and on to our plates.' Says Harry Wallop of *The Daily Telegraph Business News* 6. 7. 06. M&S is the country's largest retailer of lobsters, selling 305,000 last year.

(And what happens when these run out? Will they then become fully endangered? Ed. Answer: Stop eating the poor little things NOW)

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It seems that kindly DEFRA (Dept. of Env. Food & Rural Affairs) is to increase the minimum landing size of lobsters from 87mm to 90mm. (Wow! 3mm bigger. Lucky old them! Ed.) Source: *Sea Fisheries Conservation Division, email 24. 6. 06*

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Scientists from the Environment Agency, assisted by crayfish experts (sic) at Avon Wildlife Trust, have relocated the native crayfish from By Brook, near Chippenham, Wilts, a tributary of the Avon. The British crayfish are increasingly under threat from the alien American signal crayfish which were originally imported for food, but which are now eating all the native crays. They also carry a deadly fungal disease called crayfish plague, which kills the native species as they have no immunity. The exact location of the safe haven is being kept a secret to avoid anglers being tempted to hunt the crayfish, which they illegally use for bait. (What do you expect from those great river caring folk? Ed.) There are dozens of species invading Britain and threatening the natives, including the American mink, the toxic giant hogweed, the Chinese mitten crab and the Asian topmouth gudgeon. Top of the list is the Japanese knotweed. (America, China and Japan! What a wonderful combination. Ed.) *Daily Tel. 10. 8. 06*

However, Mark Hix, the chef at the Ivy, Le Caprice and Rivington grills, boils live crayfish in a beer and fennel broth. (Lovely. Ed.) Hix is a great believer in searching out artisan producers. 'There's so much good produce in the UK but not everyone makes use of it. That's a bit sad, really,' he says. (No, Mark, it's you who are sad. And cruel. And mindless. Otherwise you're a really nice guy. Ed.) *Tel Magazine No date.*

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Moving on... FOOD

Diana Henry In the *Sunday Tel. 23. 7. 06* says 'Often the meals I make for friends start as fantasies, particularly at this time of year' and goes on after glorifying coral-coloured

salmon as a centrepiece etc. ‘but how about a full-on crab feast?’ She explains that she asked her friends to bring nutcrackers and skewers to deal with the animals, (which she has ‘killed’ as she thinks by putting in tepid water for 30 minutes until they stop moving. She imagines they are unconscious by then. She then puts them in cold water and brings to the boil. She adds ‘I am grateful to Ken Condon, who teaches at Billingsgate, for this method, perfected by 50 years as a fishmonger.’ Does it really take 50 years to learn how to kill crabs? More sad people. Ed.)

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An article in *The Independent*, 25. 9. 06, says that rising demand for sushi is helping to drive tuna stocks to the edge of collapse and could lead to the seasonal closure of fishing grounds. And on 29. 9. 06 in *the Ind.* Paul Kelbie writes: For millennia Europeans have harvested the oceans with little thought to the future, but over-fishing, illegal catches, wasteful methods and destructive techniques are turning once plentiful waters into barren seas.’ He goes on to say that seafood is still a healthy part of the European diet! (Not if you get shellfish poisoning it ain’t!!!)

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And yet Swedish crayfish parties are ‘a marathon of aquavit, crustacean, and yet more aquavit’ says Jonny Beardsall, *Tel Magazine* 19. 8. 06. (Of course, the crayfish are boiled alive. When will people start to be human and THINK? Ed.)



However, *The New York Times* 2. 7. 06 asks ‘How Much Should We Care About the Animals We Eat?’ Frank Bruni goes on to ask ‘do oysters have little bivalve souls? Do they dream briny dreams, scream briny screams?’ He hopes not, because they are alive when they are shucked, but don’t thrash about in boiling water like lobsters. He spoils it by saying ‘these questions seem less ridiculous (!) than they once did. Last month Whole Foods announced that it would no longer sell live lobsters. Chicago City Council recently outlawed the sale of foie gras and California passed a similar law. Other states and cities are considering such measures. Michael

Pollan, author of ‘The Omnivore’s Dilemma’ is happy that we are now more concerned about where our food comes from and how it is raised. He tells a strange story about a steer he bought slated for slaughter later and one of his readers, a Hollywood producer, wanted to let the animal graze on his land. He kept on at Mr Pollan, offering him a meal of prime beef in Brooklyn in exchange for the young animal! (Ee, fold are weird! Ed.) And Mr Pollan adds that there is a difference between the sentience of an oyster and the sentience of a lobster and the sentience of a cat. (How does he know? I think there really is a difference between the sentience of Mr Pollan and our readers. I know who I’d plump for! Ed.)



Aldo Zilli, restaurateur and chef, says ‘Never buy a lobster that’s ready-cooked; you should always buy them alive as the flavour is so much better.’ He adds that if you are not after a fancy presentation, go for one that has been in a fight and is missing a claw, it is cheaper but tastes the same. Fiona Sims, writing this article in *The Times*, 12. 8. 06, explains that she had ‘felt a sharp tweak on my left buttock’ but sadly for her it was a lobster. The creature had inched its way along the worktop, grabbing her and pinching, before falling on the floor. ‘Taking advantage of its stunned state, I squeamishly drove a sharp knife through the markings on its head, cutting it into two while it was still twitching, cleaned it, brushed it with olive oil and then whacked it on the charcoal grill for a few minutes. Though scoffing it moments later wasn’t the sweet revenge that I thought it would be – we had a history, me and that lobster’.



INDUSTRY

Scottish shellfish farmers harvested about £6million worth of produce last year, says Fisheries Research Services *Aberdeen Press & Journal* 22. 5. 06

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A new scheme aimed at raising standards within Scotland's fishing industry is to be set up by the Sea fish Industry Authority (Seafish). Seafish is setting this up to raise standards, improve efficiency and secure the future of the UK's seafood industry. *P & J*. 17. 4. 06

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A Scottish shellfish industry leader has called for more environmental protection to allow businesses to thrive. Due to a decline in output from mussel growers, Doug McLeod, chairman of the Association of Scottish Shellfish Growers, said that environmental factors and lack of public sector investment were hampering growth. 'We are trying to protect the quality of coastal waters, but we are apprehensive about the amount of investment that is planned in water treatment works, because if this is not done properly the quality of coastal waters will decline.' He said. *P & J* 12. 6. 06

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An inquiry into proposals for the management of shellfish fisheries in the Highlands has been gathering evidence. It is claimed the proposal will improve management of a variety of shellfish, including scallops, crabs and lobsters. *P & J* 22. 6. 06

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Shellfish diver David Skea won the Highland final of the 2006 Prince's Scottish Youth Business Trust and Royal Bank of Scotland Business Awards. He started his Fishermen Direct operation in 2004, marketing shellfish sold live to markets in London, Spain and Singapore. David was presented with a cheque for £600. (Nasty work if you can get it! Ed.) *P & J* 20. 6. 06

PRAWNS, SHRIMP, LITTLE ONES ETC.

On Farming today, (*Radio 4*, 25. 9. 06) it said that prawns farmed in Lanarkshire are then sent to China for processing and returned for packaging here. The Chinese workers get £40 a month and ours £800 a month assuming an 8hr 5day week. The owners say that this is the only way to maintain economic viability. I know that the same happens in Greenland with shrimp. Greenland's economy is in poor shape because of global warming. How

ironic that sending the creatures there and back is adding to CO2 emissions!

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New proposals to regulate the prawn fishery have come about following the growth of vessels fishing for nephrops (scampi or langoustine) with trawls and static gear, and calls from the industry itself to prevent further increases in fishing effort to protect the viability of the fishery. The increase in vessels entering the industry and the consequent increase in creels being used was brought about by the development of a new market for live prawns 13 years ago. Current licensing restrictions control the power of the boats' engines. *P & J* 20. 4. 06

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Scottish fisheries Minister, Ross Finnie, said he would challenge any proposals for a large cut in days at sea for prawn fishermen. It seems that cod stocks are being affected by the amount and types of fishing. (One answer I can think of...! Ed.) *P & J* 12. 8. 06

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Outlines for shrimp farming have been agreed by 50 countries at a UN Food and Agriculture Organisation aquaculture meeting. Shrimp farming has been criticised for its environmental impact (mangrove swamps being ravaged, Ed.) but millions of small-scale producers depend on it for their livelihoods. The new guidelines look at environmental issues such as the siting of farms and their design, the use of resources like water and feed and the impact of aquaculture on local communities. *P & J* 12. 9. 06

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There may be around 100 times more different microbes in the oceans than previously thought. A single swallow of sea water might contain 1,000 different forms of life and this raises new questions about life in the oceans as well as providing a new benchmark (sic) to assess the health of the seas.

'The number of different kinds of bacteria in the oceans could eclipse 5 to 10 million', said

Dr Mitchell Sogin of the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, Massachusetts.
Daily Tel 1. 8. 06

OYSTERS, MUSSELS AND SCALLOPS

For the third time in a year, Arcachon's oyster farms have been shut down following the deaths of two people who had eaten the local produce. Furious at the threat to their livelihood, the farmers insist a good bivalve never hurt anyone. But French health officials say that extreme caution is justified. There has been an upsurge all over the world, possibly connected with global warming, of unknown, toxic micro-algae, which can render oysters and other shellfish dangerous to humans. (doesn't sound too good for the oysters, either. Ed.) *Ind.* 9. 9. 06

But it seems a spate of illnesses linked to contaminated oysters in California supports this theory. Oysters are 'filter feeders' that pump water through their bodies, sometimes concentrating contaminants in their tissue.
Los Angeles Times 5. 8. 06

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But...the alleged 'killer oysters' of Arcachon were cleared of one of the deaths on 10th September, although the other one is still a mystery. The oyster farmers are furious at what they see as the over hasty reaction of the French government to the two deaths. Many of the 350 oyster farmers are convinced they are the victims of either a miscarriage of justice or a conspiracy. (I wonder what the oysters think they are victims of? Ed.) *Ind.* 11. 9. 06

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And the Scottish fish and seafood processors were also given the all-clear to a range of products tested for potentially harmful ingredients. The all-clear came from the Food Standards Agency (FSA). The survey covered 165 samples ranging from fish fingers and fishcakes to fish and shellfish pastes and ready meals. It found that levels of metals and dioxins were all below European Union limits, although a batch of the Scottish Shellfish Marketing Group mussels had been withdrawn due to the presence of paralytic shellfish poison (PSP) which can cause severe symptoms. (Would you eat them, even it

were ethical? Ed.) *P & J* 5. 5. 06 and thanks to Bernie



Mussels from the bay of Mont St Michel have become the first French seafood to be awarded the Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée label, which is usually associated with wines. (I'll just bet the mussels are jumping through hoops for joy! Ed.) *Daily Tel.* 5. 7. 06

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But sadly, freshwater mussels are dying out because of the amount of Prozac people are excreting into river systems. It is making the females release their larvae too early, before they can survive on their own. *Times*, 16. 9. 06

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And hundreds of freshwater pearl mussels have been found dead in the north and north-east of Scotland. The fear is that criminals raided the mussel beds and ripped out the creatures, which can be up to 100 years old, in their search for pearls. Constable John Bryden, Northern Constabulary's wildlife crime officer, said that these molluscs are of vital importance to Scotland's biodiversity. 'They once purified our rivers. They are indicators to the welfare of our countryside and anyone found interfering with this fragile creature will be dealt with severely', he said.
P & J 8. 9. 06

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Plans to shut down lucrative scallop beds of the Jurassic coast of the south-west of England have been defended by English Nature. The environmental body claims that damage is being caused to a site of national importance – the Lyme Bay beds which are the habitat of Pink Sea Fans, Ross Corals and Sunset Corals. *P & J* 1. 6. 06

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A little tit-bit – Did you know that oyster shells were used in the building of York Minster? They are basically limestone, the same as the Minster stones, and were used in the cracks to make the stones level! *ITV* 15. 9. 06

AQUACULTURE

According to a new report from the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), nearly

half the fish consumed as food worldwide are raised on fish farms rather than caught in the wild. Since 1980, the percentage of farmed fish consumed by humans has risen from 9% to 43%. FAO assistant director-general for fisheries, Ichiro Nomura said, 'Aquaculture is crucial to the fight against global hunger. It offers a source of food that is rich in protein, essential fatty acids and vitamins and minerals...' (What he didn't add was the other things farmed fish is 'rich' in such as the chemicals etc. that are polluting our seas as they escape. Of course, if we didn't eat all the cattle that are fed on all the protein-rich foods grown for animal consumption, and we ate the food instead, we could feed the world several times over. But where is the money in that? Ed.) Mr Nomura added that 'We must ensure the sector continues to expand.' *P & J* 7. 9. 06

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The FAO are also concerned that even fish farming may not be able to meet the demand for fish, especially in rich nations. Farmed carnivorous fish currently need to be fed wild-caught fish, which are themselves over-exploited and are in decline – probably forever – says the UN. Fish farming is therefore dependent on the development of vegetable-based alternative to fish oil and meal. (Well, how daft can you get? Ed.) *Daily Tel* 5. 9. 06

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Also in the *Daily Tel* 29. 8. 06, an article says that more than a million farmed salmon have escaped into the wild in the past three years in accidents which scientists fear may be driving the wild salmon population towards extinction. Recent scientific evidence shows that the escape of farmed salmon from pens each year can lead to catastrophically reduced survival of the progeny of wild salmon which breed with the domesticated fish. Don Staniford, of the Pure Salmon Campaign (!) says, 'Farming salmon in sea cages is an open invitation to mass escapes. Salmon farmers term escapes 'Acts of God' but placing farms in remote locations where the weather is known to be stormy makes escapes seem more a man-made than a natural disaster.



MORE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Greenpeace ship *Rainbow Warrior II* was barred from entering Marseilles by angry fishermen on 23 August. Greenpeace are campaigning for a moratorium on tuna fishing. They say that illegal fishing in the Mediterranean threatens to wipe out bluefin tuna. *Ind.* 14. 8. 06



(seahorse, not tuna!!)

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Shellfish, crabs, lobsters and other species could become extinct around Britain and Europe because our seas are becoming more acidic. Carbon dioxide, generated by human activity and already linked to climate change, is also sharply altering the chemistry of the oceans. The gas forms carbonic acid when it dissolves into sea water. Some species, such as corals and some plankton, are so sensitive to the rising acidity that they could be in rapid decline within decades. Others, such as crabs, mussels and lobsters, are more resistant, but they are all affected because they build their shells or skeletons from calcium carbonate, a mineral they extract from sea water, but which is attacked by carbonic acid. Just a small change in acidity has seen some of these creatures unable to grow or reproduce properly. The acidification of the oceans is directly linked to the 23 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide emitted annually by humans and about half of these emissions are soaked up by the oceans. At first this benefited the planet because they reduced the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, but about 10 years ago scientists noticed that the oceans could no longer cope. *The Sunday Times* 12. 3. 06

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A scientist has led in-depth research on the differences between the health of fish populations at the bottom of the sea and those at the top, and has come to the conclusion that 'a lot of fish communities are fundamentally changed by fishing.' (Well I never! Ed.) It seems that stocks of surface-dwelling fish are largely driven by the behaviour of predators – such as fishermen – while the fish they

studied more than 6,500ft down are affected much more by food supply. *P & J 12. 4. 06*

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The 'venomous weed', *Lyngbya majuscula*, a strain of cyanobacteria, an ancestor of modern-day bacteria and algae that flourished 2.7 billion years ago has appeared in at least a dozen places around the globe; the atolls of the Pacific, the shrimp beds of the Eastern Seaboard, the fiords of Norway, and Moreton Bay, Australia. It is known as fireweed and each spring tufts of hairy growth spread across the seafloor fast enough to cover a football field in an hour. When fishermen touched it, their skin broke out in searing welts. Their lips blistered and peeled and their eyes burned and swelled shut. In many places some of the most advanced forms of ocean life are struggling to survive while the most primitive are thriving and spreading. Fish, corals and marine mammals are dying while algae, bacteria and jellyfish are growing unchecked. And it is runoff from modern life that is feeding the explosion of these primitive organisms. This 'rise of slime' as one scientist calls it, is killing larger species and making people sick. *LA Times 30. 7. 06*

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97% of elkhorn and staghorn coral off Florida's coast have disappeared since 1975, 90% of worldwide stocks of tuna, cod and other big fish have disappeared in the last 50 years, 650 gray whales have been washed up sick or dead along the West Coast of the US in the last seven years, 150 oxygen-depleted 'dead zones' have been identified in oceans around the world and 75% of kelp forests off the Southern California coast, prime habitat for fish, have vanished in the last 50 years. *LA Times 30. 7. 06*



A California sea lion, found in a sorry condition at Avila Beach near San Luis Obispo, was taken to Raytel Medical clinic, where it was found that she was suffering from symptoms of domoic acid poisoning. This a condition that scrambles the brains of marine mammals and causes them to wash ashore in California. They pick off the acid by eating anchovies and sardines that have fed on toxic algae. These algae also break the

bond between sea lions and their calves. The health of marine mammals is a barometer of the sea's health. The type of algae that poisoned the sea lion is called Pseudo-nitzschia and is blooming riotously in California waters. It didn't proliferate until the 1950s when grain farmers began widespread use of chemical fertilizers. *LA Times 31. 7. 06*

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And a tide of harmful algae, known as red tides, has advanced on Little Gasparilla Island, Florida. The blooms produce toxins that kill fish, taint shellfish and cause sickness to animals that eat them. The toxins also send locals to hospitals. Scientists say the red tides are increasing worldwide. *LA Times. 1. 8. 06*

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Tons of garbage that swept down the Los Angeles River after a storm was collected by a boom in Long Reach. Most of this rubbish ends up in the sea, killing fish, mammals and birds, especially young albatross. *LA Times 2. 8. 06*

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In *The Sunday times*, 30. 7. 06, Kate Humble writes on Britain's marine life. She says that there has been a 94% increase in beach litter in the past decade, much of it left by people after their day at the seaside. Plastic bottles, crisp packets, Styrofoam trays, empty drinks cans are all abandoned. But the tide doesn't carry them away. They stay on the beach or get washed up on another one at the tide line. The shoreline provides a home and sustenance for thousands of animals and birds. This rubbish can cause entanglement and a slow death to all these creatures. Plastic bags, floating in the water, can be mistaken for jellyfish, the principal diet of the leatherback turtles, who migrate to our shores from their egg-laying grounds in the Caribbean. The turtles die of starvation because, once ingested, the plastic bags block the passage for anything else.

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But all is not doom and gloom!! When California Governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Prime Minister Tony Blair met in August, the Governor said the state 'will not wait' for federal government to act on global warming, and signed a pact with our Tony. (Wowiee.

Don't hold your breath. Ed.) *LA Times* 1. 8. 06



And great news. Bulldozers smashed through the wall of sand separating the Pacific from the Bolsa Chica wetlands, allowing millions of gallons of seawater to rush onto the marsh for the first time in 107 years. Experts say that new species will inhabit Bolsa Chica almost immediately and their variety will grow. *LA Times* 31. 7. 06

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AQUARIA

The National Institute of Research into Aquatic Habitats, (NIRAH) is not having a very good time! In the last 12 months five of Bedfordshire County Council's officers at the heart of the ongoing row against this aquatic 'zoo' have resigned. Of course, this has nothing to do with the ethics of keeping free-swimming creatures in an aquarium – oh no – it is about...yes, you've guessed it – money! There was an exposé of NIRAH and its financial dealings on the Politics Show (eastern region) on 24th September. I missed it, but CAFT-UK says 'A local news bulletin where the local council's chief exec. is seen squirming her way around the questions about public funding into this proposed aquarium and animal lab was shown on local tv news by the BBC. There is also a demo on 7 Oct. Too late for readers, but there will be others. Many thanks to Linda and arevents@lists.rbgi.net.

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Brighton Sea Life Centre (a dreary place if ever there was one. Ed) has been given permission to build enclosures to house seals and otters despite a campaign to encourage the local council to refuse the application. More than 1,000 people signed a petition calling on the council to reject the planning application. Captive Animals' Protection Society (CAPS) supported the campaign, co-ordinated by Brighton Animal Action. Thanks to CAPS (no date)

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Mexico has banned the importation and exportation of primates and marine mammals. This follows action taken in the wake of the

allegedly illegal importation of 28 dolphins from the Solomon Islands to Mexican-based commercial dolphinariums in 2003. CAPS, no date.



Many of you will know about the tank of seahorses at Dublin Airport. They were there to advertise Estee Lauder-owned Crème de la Mer. The Alliance for Animal Rights took issue with the Retail Manager of Aer Rianta, where the tank was fixed, but Mr Neeson refused to remove the tank, even though several fish had already died and been replaced. However...one demo did the trick! (Thanks to *Bernie and AFAR*)



OK, so you've seen him once already, but isn't he cute? Poor little things, fancy being holed up in that!

GENERAL

A freshwater jellyfish usually found in the Amazon has been discovered in a flooded clay pit in Leicestershire. It is thought the species *Craspedacusta sowerbii* was imported to Britain on plants brought to Kew Gardens from Brazil in the 1830s. There have been other sightings, but this was the first in Leicestershire, which is landlocked. *Ind.* 16. 9. 06

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Eighteen basking sharks were spotted off the coast of Cornwall in August. The sharks are harmless. *Ind.* 19. 8. 06

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Strange but true The American mink is reported to be 'devastating Britain's fish, aquatic birds and mammals' (If it works a bit harder it might catch up with human devastation techniques! Ed.) However, the article in *The Ind.* 13. 9. 06 says that 'otters are fighting back, often chasing off the alien mink. Before this approach to nature's asylum-seekers is too warmly applauded, it should perhaps be pointed out that our brave otters also devastate fish, aquatic birds and mammals, and rather more than mink, needing to eat 20% of their body weight every day.

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Researchers have found that the weight of jellyfish in the Benguela current off Namibia – once one of the most prolific fishing areas in the world – now far exceeds that of commercially important fish stocks such as hake, sardines and anchovies. The discovery raises fears that a permanent ‘regime shift’ may have been caused by over-fishing and that the change could take place in other seas. Scientists have given warning about the danger of jellyfish taking over from cod in the Baltic. *Daily Tel.* 13. 7. 06



An alligator which appeared in the James bond film *Live and Let Die* is to be stuffed and displayed following his death. Big Boy, who was three metres long, died at Beaver Water World in Tatsfield, Kent, aged 45. *Ind* 13. 9. 06

FISH

A factory trawler equipped with new technology has discovered a way to exploit the world’s last great untapped source of food, Antarctic krill, but this has sparked concern among conservationists about the effect on the Antarctic ecosystem, particularly the breeding areas for seals and penguins. Krill, a shrimp-like crustacean, forms a vital part of the diet for seals in the Antarctic. *Daily Tel.* 25. 9. 06

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Dozens of new species, including nocturnal sharks that ‘walk’ on their fins, ‘flasher’ wrasse and many previously unknown forms of reef-building coral, have been discovered off the Indonesian province of Papua. *Daily Tel.* 18. 9. 06

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Japan is to use tiny fish in the battle against terrorism. Ricefish, measuring less than two inches and commonly kept as pets, react rapidly to contaminated water. The pale orange fish pushes its face close to the surface when it experiences breathing difficulties or simply dies like the canaries in the gas-filled coal mines. And catfish are watched carefully because they are believed to thrash about

when an earthquake is looming. It is suggested that they are unusually sensitive to electric fields which are disturbed when a fault line is about to slip. *Daily Tel.* 25. 7. 06

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In honour of the King of Thailand’s 60th year on the throne, fishers in northern Thailand have promised to stop catching the endangered Mekong giant catfish. This is the largest freshwater fish in the world and can grow up to 3 metres long. It is found only in the Mekong River system, which runs through China, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. *National Geographic News.* 10. 7. 06



Researchers from Plymouth University trained goldfish to press a lever to collect food. Once they had been taught to do this, scientists made the lever work for just one hour a day. The fish soon had this licked too. (I wonder if scientists can be trained to leave creatures alone? Doubtful, Ed.) *Ind.* 7. 9. 06

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At least 10 stingrays have been found dead in Queensland waters in what are feared to be revenge attacks for the death of Steve Irwin, the Australian television naturalist. (No comment! Ed.) *Ind.* 13. 9. 06

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Many of you will have signed petitions against the terrible Canadian and Namibian seal culls this year. And the International Whaling Commission might have been hijacked by countries taking possible bribes to join so that they can vote to keep the Japanese and Norwegians killing whales. All we can do is to keep up the pressure and support the brave Green Peace sailors trying to stop this bloody slaughter. We are a strange species. On the one hand we love all these nature programmes such as Autumn Watch and Steve Irwin’s programmes and yet are perfectly happy to eat many of these same creatures! Still, onwards and upwards. No poem this time, but don’t forget John’s Poems of the Sea £1.50

Have a good Christmas, Julie