

An Litir Bheag le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

An Litir Bheag is a shortened and simplified version of Ruairidh's Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh (also available on the BBC website), designed for those who are at an earlier stage of learning Gaelic. The topic each week is the same as Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh so that, once the Litir Bheag is mastered, a student of the language might wish to try the full Litir. This is Litir Bheag 450 (which corresponds to Litir 754). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you about 'the adder man', Tormod an t-Seòladair. He was also keen on eels. He found out that the eel rests in the winter. It's rather like hibernation.

At the end of October, eels look for mud. They make a hole for themselves. That's where they spend the winter. They reappear at the start of April.

If it weren't for that, said Norman, the trout and salmon of Scotland would become extinct. Why? Well, when the fish are spawning, the eels are hidden in their holes. If they were out, looking for food, they'd eat the spawn of the trout and salmon, and the wee fish as well.

In olden times it was believed, if a hair fell from the tail or mane of a horse into water, that it would turn into an eel. Norman wrote an interesting thing about that. 'I saw with my own eyes,' he said, 'a horse hair ... showing animated movements by curling from side to side...' Moving like an eel!

He had a scientific explan-

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu 'fhear nan nathraichean', Tormod an t-Seòladair. Bha e cuideachd measail air easgannan. Fhuair e a-mach gum bi an easgann na tàmh anns a' gheamhradh. Tha e car coltach ri cadal a' gheamhraidh, no cadal na feòraig.

Aig deireadh na Dàmhair bidh easgannan a' lorg poll. Bidh iad a' dèanamh toll dhaibh fhèin. Sin far an cuir iad seachad an geamhradh. Nochdaidh iad a-rithist aig toiseach a' Ghiblein.

Mura b' e seo, thuir Tormod, bhiodh bric is bradain na h-Alba a' dol à bith. Carson? Uill, nuair a tha na h-èisg a' sìolachadh, tha na h-easgannan am falach anns na tuill aca. Nam biodh iad a-muigh, agus a' lorg biadh, dh'itheadh iad iuchair a' bhric 's a' bhradain, agus na h-èisg bheaga cuideachd.

O shean, bhathar a' creidsinn, nan tuiteadh gaoisid à earball no muing eich a dh'uisge, gum biodh i a' tionndadh na h-easgann. Sgrìobh Tormod rud inntinneach mu dheidhinn sin: 'Chunnaic mi le mo shùilean fhèin,' sgrìobh e, 'gaoisid eich ... a' sealltainn gluasadan ainmhidheach le bhith a' snìomh bho thaobh gu taobh...' A' gluasad mar easgann!

Bha mìneachadh saidheansail aige.

ation. After a while in water, the centre of a hair becomes hollow. Tiny creatures, such as protozoa, get in. They are also on the outside of the hair. And it's their movement that causes the hair to move as if it is alive.

Norman was of the opinion that there was a monster in Loch Ness. He was thinking that it was perhaps an enormous eel.

And here is an anecdote Norman heard in Kintyre. A certain old man cleaned his false teeth. He put them on a stone to dry. A black-backed gull came and stole the teeth. The old man reckoned he'd never see them again. But, a few days later, they were found, intact. They were on a beach, about a mile from the old man's house. A new saying is coming into my head. I might use it sometime ... I dropped it like the black-backed gull dropped the teeth! Cheerio.

An dèidh greis ann an uisge, fàsaidh meadhan gaoisid còsach. Gheibh meanbh-bhiastagan, leithid protozoa, a-steach ann. Bidh iad cuideachd air an taobh a-muigh dhen ghaoisid. Agus 's e an gluasad acasan a tha a' toirt air a' ghaoisid a bhith a' gluasad mar gu bheil i beò.

Bha Tormod dhen bheachd gun robh uilebheist ann an Loch Nis. Bha e a' smaoineachadh gur dòcha gur e easgann mòr mòr a bha ann.

Agus seo agaibh naidheachd a chuala Tormod ann an Ceann Tìre. Ghlan bodach a bha seo na fiaclan fuadain aige. Chuir e air clach iad airson tiormachadh. Thàinig farspag agus ghoid i na fiaclan. Bha am bodach dhen bheachd nach fhaiceadh e tuilleadh iad. Ach, beagan làithean às dèidh sin, bha iad air an lorg, slàn. Bha iad air tràigh mu mhìle air falbh o thaigh a' bhodaich. Tha abairt ùr a' tighinn dham cheann. 'S dòcha gun cleachd mi uaireigin i ... *leig mi e mar a leig an fharspag na fiaclan!* Beannachd leibh.