



MARK CARWARDINE

WILD THOUGHTS

A device that repels teenagers has just won the peace prize at this year's Ig Nobels – the spoof alternative to the more illustrious Nobel prizes. Howard Stapleton has invented the Mosquito, which discourages teenagers from hanging around outside shops by emitting a piercing sound at a frequency only adolescent ears can pick up.

I think I might ask Stapleton if he'd mind developing some variations on his theme. My first choice would be a device – perhaps called the Cod-pod – to stop anyone from hanging around supermarkets or fish and chip shops that sell cod from depleted North Sea stocks.

Yet again, EU ministers are about to ignore hundreds of scientists from 19 European countries, who are calling for a total ban on cod fishing in British waters, so the Cod-pod could be a more effective recipe for change.

Then he could develop the Wrapper-zapper to keep litter louts away from beaches and oceans.

According to a recent report by the United Nations Environment Programme, there are 46,000 pieces of plastic floating in every square mile of the world's oceans. Even in Britain, the density of litter along our coastline has increased by 90 per cent in the past decade, according to the Marine Conservation Society. With the mere flick of a switch, the Wrapper-

zapper would have beach visitors, fishermen and ship's crews – the main culprits – running for cover.

Howard could also make the Twitcher-snitcher, to single out the irresponsible minority who give twitching a bad name. When a rose-coloured starling was recently blown off course and landed in the village of Winterton-on-Sea, Norfolk, hordes of birdwatchers descended on the poor bird. Determined to get a new life tick, the twitchers – according to one local – “hounded it to death.” Maybe a piercing sound at a frequency only twitching ears can pick up would have removed them from the otherwise sensible birdwatching flock?

It's such a shame that teenagers loitering on street corners are the least of our problems.

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