

# MARK CARWARDINE



On the wild thoughts that won't let him sleep. This month:

## The eco-claim game

I've just seen an advert for an 'eco-holiday' to the Galápagos Islands. It's not just any old holiday – it offers an opportunity to share your once-in-a-lifetime experience with no fewer than 99 other people aboard a luxury cruise liner.

But how can they possibly claim that taking such a huge group to somewhere as over-crowded and ecologically sensitive as the Galápagos Islands counts as an eco-holiday? It's no more 'eco' than racing a jet ski around a seal colony.

I'm getting very tired of organisations that masquerade as environmentally friendly when, quite clearly, they're not. Words such as 'eco', 'green', 'natural' and 'clean' are abused on a daily basis by companies trying to deceive their customers.

Take all the hotels that have jumped onto the eco-bandwagon by persuading guests to reuse their towels to 'save the environment'. What a load of greenwash. Most of them do it simply to cut costs, and it makes me cross every time I check into a new room.

Banks, meanwhile, force customers to conduct their finances online, thus saving themselves a lot of printing and postage costs, while boosting their largely nonexistent green credentials.

At least reusing your towel, or checking your bank

statements online, doesn't do any harm; it might even do a little bit of good. And, after all, most people see through the pretence. But many other businesses tell outright lies or lull us into a false sense of security.

Think how many use meaningless phrases such as 'full of natural goodness', when their factory-farmed, pesticide-laden products are nothing of the sort. Others change their packaging to make their products appear



All at sea: would you want to visit the Galápagos with 99 other tourists?



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to be 'greener', when they're exactly the same as they were before.

Do these companies give a damn about wildlife or nature? Of course they don't. They're just hijacking the environmental movement for their own purposes.

Mark Carwardine is a zoologist, photographer, conservationist, writer, BBC TV presenter and this month's guest editor (see p3).