MARK



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

The eco-claim game

'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.

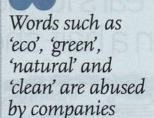
Take all the hotels that have jumped onto the ecobandwagon by persuading guests to reuse their towels to 'save the environment'. What a load of greenwash. Most of them do it simply to cut costs, and it makes me cross every time I check into a new room.

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





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

on a daily basis."

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).