

Gifts from the Sea

Introduction to The Sand Horse and Beach Detective

The beach: waves plunging, galloping and tossing spray. Seagulls gliding and whirling. There's a lot going on where the sea meets the land...

The water's edge

Have you ever made something out of sand in a sandpit or on a beach, then poured water over it? What happens? The sand crumbles and collapses leaving you with what you started with – a pile of sand.



The sea sweeps the beach clean by carrying things away on its waves. It can also wash away sandcastles and footprints.



The sea can bring us things too. It brings shells, seaweed or even rubbish. You can read about the unusual things that the sea brings us later on in Beach Detective.



In this section you are going to read about what happens to a horse made out of sand.

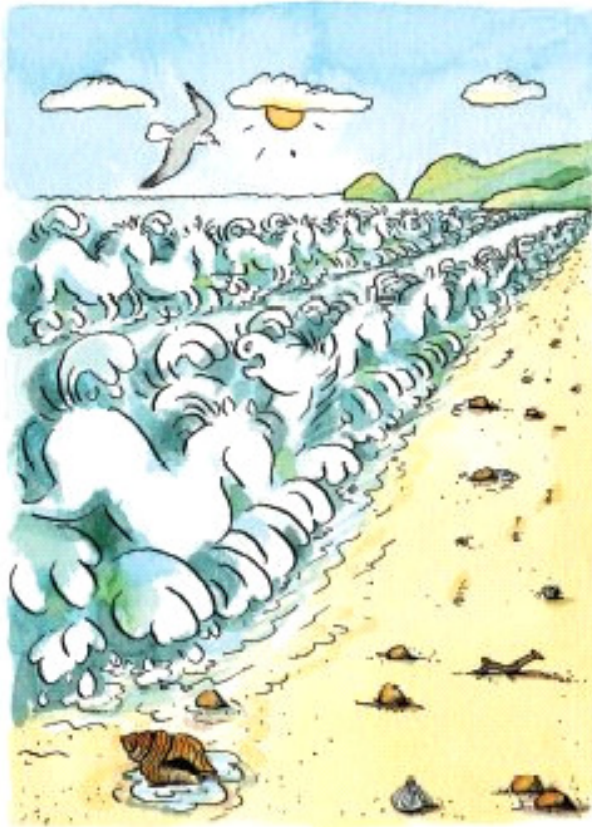
2. The Sand Horse

Once there was an artist who lived in St Ives. He lived with his wife and baby in a house by the sea.

Sometimes the artist worked in his studio, but on fine days in summer he went to the beach and made animals in the sand. He could make dogs and cats and seals and dolphins, but mostly he made horses, because horses, he said, were the most beautiful animals of all.

One morning the artist woke to a brisk blue day with a choppy sea and white crests on the waves.

“Look! White horses!” said his wife. When the sea is rough and the waves have white tops people call them white horses. The artist saw them: far out in the bay, plunging and galloping, tossing spray from their manes.



“Today I shall make a horse,” he said.

He went to the beach, put his hat down on the sand, and started work.

First he fetched water from the sea. He splashed some onto the dry sand. He patted and moulded the sand.

The horse began to appear: muscles and hooves, raised head and rippling mane.



The beach filled up with people. They stopped and admired the sand horse. They threw money, and the coins chinked in the artist's hat.

The horse grew. He was a galloping horse, galloping forever on his side.

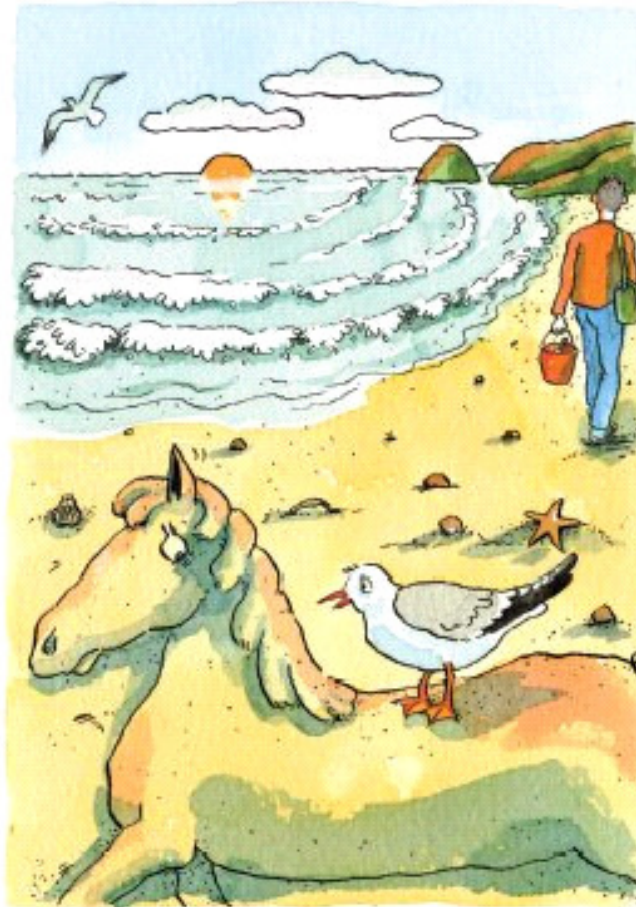
All day the artist worked on his horse, shaping the muscles of his legs and neck, twisting each curl of his mane.

He worked until the sun set and the beach grew cold. Families began leaving. They folded their deck-chairs and shook sand from their clothes. The artist scooped up the coins in his hat and went home.

The sand horse woke up.

He was alive, but he could not move. He opened his one eye, but all he saw was clouds. He listened with his one ear. He heard seagulls. He heard the boom and hiss

of the sea. And faintly, in the crash of waves, he heard neighing.
A seagull landed on his back, and walked about, jabbing the air with his sharp beak.
“Seagull,” said the sand horse, “what’s that neighing I hear?”
“That’s the white horses,” said the seagull, “out in the bay.”
“What are they doing?”
“They are prancing and frisking and flicking their tails.”
“Where are they going?”
“Everywhere!” said the seagull.
“I want to go with them!” cried the sand horse.



“You!” The seagull wheeled up in the air, laughing, and all his friends joined in. He swooped down again and said, “You! You are only a sand horse. You can’t go with them.”

The sand horse tried to move. He was a galloping horse, but he was fixed in the sand. He could not go with them.

The sky darkened. The seagulls flew away. The boom of the sea was louder.

Much closer now, the sand horse heard the white horses neighing.

“Come with us!” they called.

The sea crashed on the shore, flinging spray over the sand horse.

“Come with us!”

The sea crashed again, and the sand horse was soaked with spray.

“Come with us!” called the white horses.

A wave broke and flooded the sand horse, drenching his head and mane.

“I’m coming!” he called. “Wait for me!”

Another wave broke, and the sea ran foaming all around the outline of the sand horse, filling every space. The sea sucked and pulled. It was pulling him down the beach.

"I'm coming! I'm coming!" he cried.



A huge wave rolled up the beach. It reared, curled over, and smashed down upon the sand horse, washing away his mane, his head, his legs, and his body. It went hissing back down to the sea, dragging the sand horse with it.

The sand horse felt waves buoying him up.
Amongst the waves white horses were prancing.
He neighed and tossed his mane.

His hooves struck spray from the sea.
"I can move!" he cried, "I can gallop!"

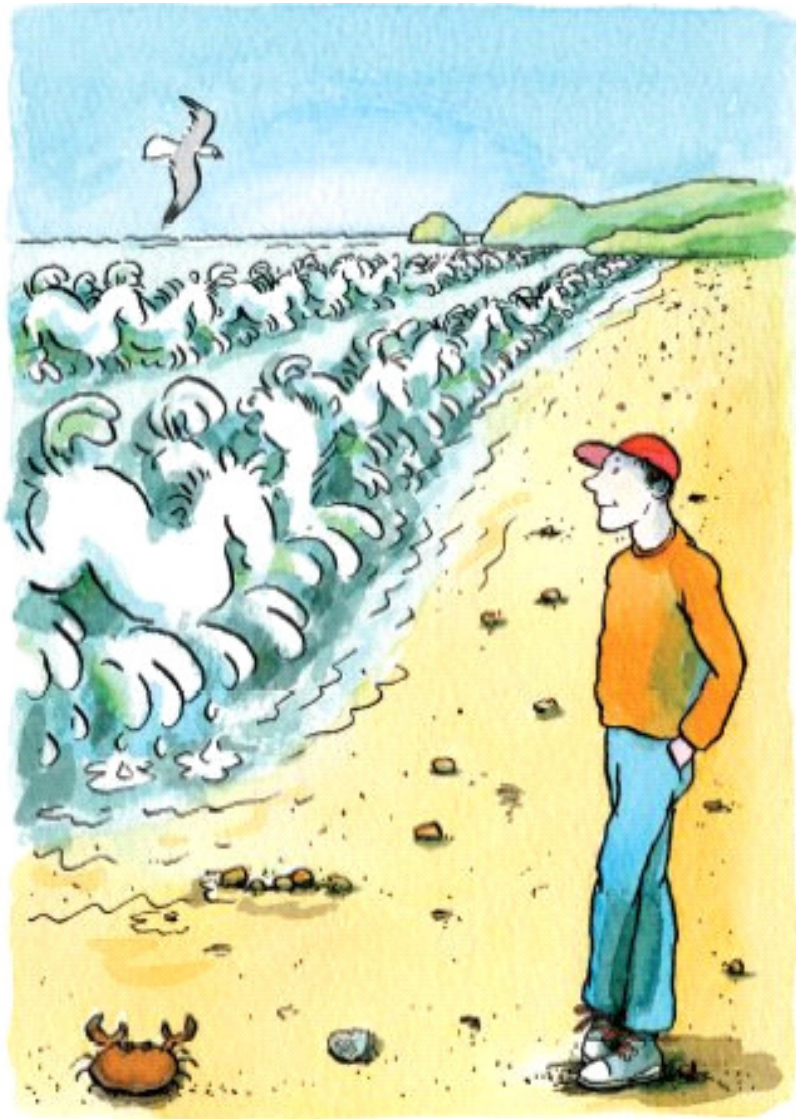
He frisked and galloped. He swished his white tail.

All around him the white horses plunged and jumped the waves.

They galloped away, and the sand horse went with them.

Next morning, when the artist came down to the beach, people looked at the smooth sand and said, "It's a shame. All that work washed away."

But the artist smiled. He knew where his sand horse had gone.



The Sand Horse by Ann Turnbull, published by Andersen Press.

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Beach Detective

May 2003

Newsletter

Detective House, New Road, Seamouth, SE10 9LU

Welcome to the latest copy of Beach Detective. As you can imagine I spend a lot of my time on the beach. Some people may think that this is boring but not me. How can you get bored when everything around you is always changing and the sea is always bringing you gifts? You have certainly kept me busy this month. I have been finding out about everything from rubber ducks to giant bird eggs!

All change

There are many things which change on the beach. The sun makes colours fade. The wind can change a calm sea into a rough sea. The sea and the sand can change a broken piece of glass into a smooth and shiny jewel.



Gifts from the sea

Everyone expects to find shells, seaweed and pebbles on the beach. Which of the following objects do you think have been washed up on beaches around the world?

- 29,000 yellow rubber ducks
- 2,000 new trainers
- 3 million plastic animals and bricks



Well, the truth is that all of these things have been found on beaches in the last ten years.

Can you help?



I wonder if any of you know what these unusual objects are?

If you think you know what they are, write to me here at the newsletter offices or send me an email at beachdetective@gca.org.uk

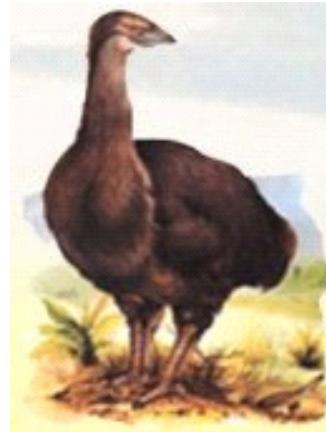


In Depth



This month we are going to take an **In Depth** look at an unusual object which was found on a beach in Australia. It was big enough to hold eight ostrich eggs, or one hundred and eighty chicken eggs! What was it? It was an ELEPHANTBIRD EGG. I wanted to find out more so I put my detective hat on and started investigating. I got in touch with my beach detective friends. I asked for clues about this mysterious piece of beach treasure. **Here is what I found out:**

- Elephantbirds lived on an island, called Madagascar, up until 300 years ago. Sadly, they died out because people hunted them.
- Elephantbirds were three metres tall. They looked a bit like a giant ostrich. They were the heaviest birds ever to have lived. As they were so heavy, they were unable to fly.
- The Elephantbirds used to bury their eggs in the sand. The eggs stayed in the sand for hundreds of years until heavy rains washed them out to sea. The sea then carried them past South Africa all the way to Australia.



Next time you take a stroll along the beach, keep your eyes open: you never know what you may find!