

Friends of Penzance B.S.A.C. Conservation Officers Report February 2014

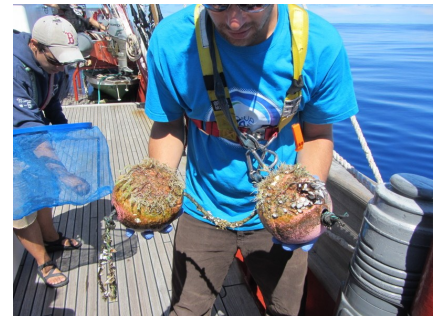


Locals in Inukjuak, a remote village 900 miles north of Montreal Canada have asked the Canadian Government to help free a dozen killer whales that have become trapped in a vast stretch of ice in Hudson Bay. They say the whales are breathing through a hole in the ice. The villagers said they usually see killer whales only in the summer. A hunter in the area first spotted the whales a day after the locals say the Bay froze, and dozens of villagers made a one hour snowmobile ride to see the whales. The villagers are concerned because the hole appears to be shrinking as the ice froze further. Fisheries and Oceans Canada is assessing the situation



and are exploring every possible option, but will only be in a position to determine what – if anything – can be done once their specialists arrive on site. A spokeswoman for the department said that the icebreaker ships were very busy with the ice conditions at present and three commercial ships had become trapped in the St Lawrence River in Quebec that week.

Scientists are revealing how microbes living on floating pieces of plastic marine debris affect the ocean ecosystem, and the potential harm they pose to invertebrates, humans and other animals. New research delves deeper into the largely unexplored world of the “Plastisphere” an ecological community of microbial organisms living on ocean plastic that was first discovered last year. When scientists initially studied the Plastisphere, they found that at least 1000 different types of microbes thrive on these tiny plastic islands, and that they might pose a risk to larger animals including invertebrate and humans. The original studies also showed that the Plastisphere inhabitants included bacteria known to cause diseases in animals and humans. The picture shows a scientist holding recovered foam floats containing invertebrates and microbial biofilm.



Despite continuing increases in atmospheric levels of greenhouse gases, and in the total heat content of the oceans, global-mean temperatures at the surface of the planet have shown a relatively little warming since 1998. This so-called ‘slow down’ or ‘hiatus’ has received considerable scientific, political and popular attention. Volcanic contribution to the slow-down is the subject of a new study which shows that volcanic eruptions in the early part of the 21st century have cooled the planet which partly offsets the warming produced by greenhouse gases. Volcanic eruptions inject sulphur dioxide gas into the atmosphere and in the stratosphere the gas forms tiny droplets of sulphuric acid which reflect some portion of the incoming sunlight back into space, cooling Earth’s surface and the lower atmosphere.

There were only nine reported sightings of cetaceans during January, probably due to the stormy weather keeping people away from the coast. One sighting of Bottlenose Dolphins was a pod of about 9 seen off St Ives on the 11th. Also seen on the 11th was a pod of about 20, well off Carn Glouce, thought to be Common Dolphins. Six sightings of Harbour Porpoises were from Trevoise Head on the north coast to Mousehole on the south. Two unidentified cetaceans were seen off Prussia Cove and there was also a report of 2 Grey Seals off Padstow.