



Friends of Penzance B.S.A.C Conservation Officer's Report, June 2015



Shortly after researchers set up a long-term rainforest research site in eastern Madagascar in 2001 they discovered the world's only known living population of Sibree's Dwarf Lemur. This species was first discovered in 1896 but this tiny lemur was never studied in the 20th

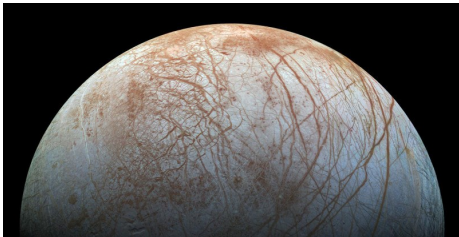


Century, and following the destruction of its only known rainforest habitat scientists had no idea whether the species existed in the wild. Instead of the rainforest species they were expecting to find this little lemur looked more like a species known from dry western forests. However further study revealed that this new lemur was very like the only known specimen of Sibree's Dwarf Lemur, now in the Natural History Museum in London. It is hopeful that this new discovery will lead to new conservation efforts, but protecting this newly rediscovered species from extinction in a country ravaged by destruction is the next challenge.

A Conger Eel about 7ft long was accidentally caught in a net by a trawler "Hope" in the 2nd week of May. It was dead when brought aboard and was landed at Plymouth Market. It weighed 131lbs, not quite a record, which is a line caught fish of 133lbs 4oz.

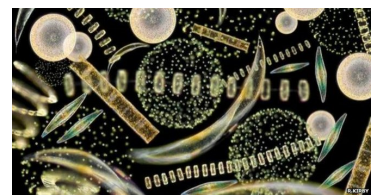


A fresh look at data collected by NASA's Cassini spacecraft during its 2001 flyby of Jupiter shows that Europa's tenuous atmosphere is even thinner than previously thought and also suggests that the thin, hot gas around the moon does not show evidence of plume activity at the time of the flyby. The new research provides a snapshot of Europa's state of activity at the time, and suggests that if there is plume activity, it is likely intermittent, but the icy moon does display many signs of activity, including its fractured crust and a dearth of impact craters. Scientists continue to hunt for confirmation of plume activity.



An international team of scientists took part in expeditions collecting samples of plankton on board the Tara schooner between 2009 and 2013. It sailed 30,000km across the world's oceans with researchers taking samples from the very top layers of the ocean down to 1,000 metres.

The project has cost about 10m euros. The team have been studying the samples collected and have so far found 35,000 species of bacteria, 5,000 new viruses, and 150,000 single-celled plants and creatures. They believe that the majority of these are new to science. Planktonic organisms are minute, but together they make up 90% of the mass of all of the marine life in the ocean. They form the very base of the food chain, and produce, through photosynthesis, half of the oxygen we breathe.



There were only 3 reported sightings of Bottlenose Dolphins during May, one was of the well known Clet off Falmouth and other two were of a pod of 9 off Portheras Cove on the 27th & 28th. The biggest pod of the 7 reports of Common Dolphins was of a pod of over 200 in Fal Bay the other 6 were of pods of 6 to 70 seen various sites from Eddystone to Runnelstone. 8 sightings of Risso's Dolphins were from Pendeen Watch to Mounts Bay with pods of up to 30.. 15 sightings of Harbour porpoises were of singles to a pod of 19. A Humpback Whale was seen from the Scillonian. 4 Basking Sharks seen from Pendeen to Fal Bay and an Ocean Sunfish in Mounts Bay. Perhaps the most unusual sighting was an Otter in Mounts Bay seen by the Marine Discovery Team