

# Friends of Penzance B.S.A.C. Conservation Officer's Report January 2016



It's long been known that birds take advantage of upward air currents to save energy when flying. This boost of upward moving air can be found when the wind hits a large obstacle, like a cliff or mountain range, and to a smaller extent close to human-made obstacles like a large building. We can envisage that in the future Micro air Vehicles, MAVs (plane like models similar to drones,) will be used for many tasks in urban environments such as delivering packages, performing surveillance, and search and rescue, and using these updrafts would make them more efficient. and therefore extend their working range. If you're familiar with the kestrel you may know they've got a unique way of hunting, hovering over a location without flapping their wings. This allows them to keep their heads still with incredible precision helping them spot prey on the ground. The preciseness at which they hold position led researchers to think they could copy this 'wind-hovering' technique on their MAV. and used a commercially available polystyrene foam sail-plane as their test platform. The MAV the researchers chose had a number of advantages, including the ability to fly well in light winds and large control surfaces making it more nimble in the air.. The MAV was flown at two test locations, near a hill and close to a building. At the hillside the MAV was able to gain approximately 360ft (120mts) in height, and could fly autonomously until the control batteries lost power. Tests close to the building proved more difficult, with the MAV only capable of sustaining flight for around 20 seconds.



The government is to create a marine reserve almost as big as the UK in the Atlantic waters of Ascension Island. Just over half of the protected area will be closed to fishing. The fishery in the other half will be policed under a grant of £300,000 from the Louis Bacon Foundation, a charitable body. It is the latest marine reserve to be declared around remote islands, which will increase marine conservation zones to about 2% of the ocean. That remains a far cry from the 30% recommended by scientists to preserve species and expand fish stocks. but is much more than just a few years ago. Governments have designated marine parks at Palau in the north Pacific, Easter Island and Pitcairn in the south Pacific, and New Zealand's Kermadec Islands, in what has become a landmark year for ocean conservation The latest reserve at Ascension Island is said to hold some of the largest Marlin in the world, one of the largest populations of Green Turtles, big colonies of tropical seabirds and the island's own unique frigate bird.. The reserve totals 234,291 sq.km, slightly smaller than the UK. It could be ready for formal designation as soon as 2017, once further data has been collected and analysed



There were 7 reports of Humpback Whales in January, 2 were seen off St Ives on 3rd and 5th and off Godrevy on the 6th, singles were seen off St Ives on 4th, 9th, and 10th and off Perranporth on 17th. A pod of Common dolphins was seen heading west off Gwennap Head on the 14th and a stranded one at Porthtowan was successfully refloated early in the month. Harbour Porpoises were seen off Gwennap Head and The Brisons on four different days. A young Logger Head Turtle found stranded at Gwitian on the 6th was taken to the Blue Reef Aquarium at Newquay