



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



A Malagasy-German research team has discovered a new primate species in the Shafina Forest in Eastern Madagascar, a forest that had not been studied before. The name given to the new species is Gerp's mouse lemur, (*Microcebus gerpi*). Several researchers of the team had visited the Shafina Forest in 2008 and 2009 to create an inventory of local lemurs. They captured several mouse lemurs, measured them, took photos and small biopsies for genetic studies, and released them again. The Institute of Zoology of the University of Veterinary Medicine of Hanover, analysed the samples and the morphological dataset, and confirmed that the animals from the Shafina Forest belonged to an undescribed species of the small nocturnal mouse lemurs. The team were surprised by these findings. The Shafina Forest is only 50 miles away from the Mantadia National Park in eastern Madagascar, which contains a different and much smaller species, the Goodman's mouse lemur. The distribution of the Gerp's lemur is probably restricted to the remaining fragments of the lowland evergreen rain forest of this region in eastern Madagascar, and continuing deforestation poses a serious threat for these animals.

The Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC) is a major system of currents in the north Atlantic, and monitoring changes in its movement is important for understanding climate variability and changes, including the severity of Britain's winters. A ground breaking project to observe and analyse regular data about ocean circulation and how it impacts on Britain's climate has reached a ten year milestone, giving valuable insights into how ocean currents can effect global warming. This £20 million research project aims to better understand the changes to the AMOC and how it can affect the UK's mild temperatures. From 2004 the project team have been monitoring the AMOC at 26.5N degrees—near where it carries its maximum heat—using scientific instruments moored at 30 locations across the Atlantic between the Canary Islands and The Bahamas. The instruments measure the temperature, salinity and pressure of the ocean, from which the AMOC's strength and structure can be calculated. Twice daily estimates of the AMOC have been made every day since the project started. Prior to this measurements had only been taken during 5 different ship surveys—one every ten years since 1950s. This significant increase in recorded data has revealed some surprising findings. Firstly the sensors have detected that the AMOC is declining faster than anticipated. Secondly, it revealed that the AMOC was significantly more variable than previously thought. Thirdly, the data also appeared to confirm that the AMOC had a direct impact on the British winter weather, which could be significantly seen with respect to the harsh winter of 2010/11.

There were 9 reported sightings of Bottlenose Dolphins in April, 7 were of a single known as Clet in Fal Bay and 2 were of pods of 7 and 5 in Mounts Bay, 3 sightings of unidentified dolphins were possibly also Bottlenose,. 6 sightings of Common Dolphins were of 4 pod of 12 to 50 in Fal Bay, and pods of 6 in Mounts Bay and a pod of 15 off Sennen. There were 12 reported sightings of Harbour Porpoises, 9 in Mounts Bay, and 3 in Fal Bay. 7 Sightings of Basking Sharks were from Kiberick Cove, just east of Falmouth to Porthcurno, all single animals except a pair off Porthcurno. 21 sightings of Grey Seals were from Mounts Bay and Fal Bay where there were also 2 sightings of a Common Seal. 23 sightings of Barrel Jellyfish were from Mounts Bay and Fal Bay, where 2 of the sightings were described as thousands