

Friends of Penzance B.S.A.C. Conservation Officer's Report November 2014

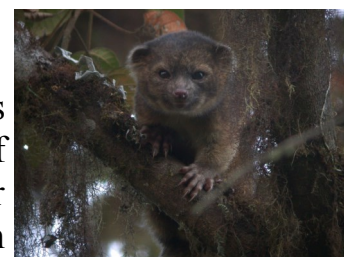


An international team of scientists studying Emperor Penguin populations across Antarctica finds the iconic animals in danger of dramatic declines by the end of the century due to climate change, and is currently under consideration for inclusion under the US Endangered Species Act. Criteria to classify species by their extinction risks are based on the global population dynamics. Emperor penguins are heavily dependant on sea ice for their livelihood, and therefore are sensitive to changes in sea ice concentration. If sea ice declines at the rates projected by the IPCC climate models and continues to influence the penguins as it did in the 2nd half of the 20th century in Terre Adèlie, at least 2 thirds of the colonies are projected to have declined by greater than 50 percent from their current size by 2100. None of the colonies, even the southern-most locations in the Ross Sea, will provide a viable refuge by the end of the 21st century. The foundation for the research is a 50 year intensive study of the Emperor penguin colony in Terre Adèlie, in eastern Antarctica. Researchers have been returning to Terre Adèlie every year to collect biological measurements of the penguins there, charting the population's growth (and decline) and observing their mating, foraging, chick rearing, and following marked individuals from year to year.



Discovering a new species is, among biologists, akin to hitting a grand slam, and University of South Carolina ichthyologist Joe Quattro led a team that did just that. In the *Journal Zootaxa*, they described a rare shark, the Carolina Hammerhead, that had long eluded discovery because it is outwardly indistinguishable from the common scalloped hammerhead. Through it's rarity the new species, *Sphyrna gilbert*, underscores the fragility of shark diversity in the face of human predation.

A new species of carnivore, olinguito (oh-lin-GHEE-toe) looks like a cross between a house cat and a teddy bear. It is actually the latest scientifically documented member of the family Procyonidae which it shares with raccoons, coatis, kinkajous and olingos. The 2 pound olinguito, with its large eyes and woolly orange-brown fur. is native to the cloud forests of Colombia and Ecuador. In addition to being the latest described member of it's family, another distinction it holds is that it is the newest species in the order Carnivora—an incredibly rare discovery in the 21st century



There were only 2 reported sightings of Bottlenose Dolphins in October, a pod of 7 off Gwennap Head and a pod of 15 off Newquay. 8 reported sightings of Common Dolphins were pods of 200 & 300 in Fal Bay and pods of up to 40 elsewhere including a sighting from the Scillonian. 18 sightings of Harbour Porpoises were from around West Penwith and in Fal Bay . Largest pod was of about 20 seen from the Scillonian. Two Minke Whale sightings were of one in Fal Bay on the 2nd and one from the Scillonian on the 25th. A dozen sightings of Grey Seals were all from Mounts Bay or Fal Bay and a Common Seal was seen in Fal Bay. There was also an Ocean Sunfish seen in Mounts Bay on the 11th.