



"Foreign Correspondent"
Michael Ludwig reports on the some strange goings on in the natural world.

Razorbill M23170 celebrates its 41st birthday!



Photo courtesy of Gs97jks

A razorbill

To learn more about how long birds live and when and where they move, many are fitted with a lightweight, uniquely numbered, metal ring on their leg. This ring provides a reliable and harmless way of identifying individual birds. The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) looks after bird ringing in Ireland and Britain and they have recently discovered a bird which they can confirm is 41 years old! Razorbill M23170 (its unique ring number) was ringed in 1967 as a chick on Bardsey Island (off the Welsh coast), Gwynedd, UK. Forty one years later it was seen again in the very same place. Separately, a 31-year-old curlew, which was ringed in Clwyd, Wales, UK, was seen breeding in Germany. In total, the BTO recorded a total of 11 record-breaking sightings.



Photo courtesy of US Geological

Mount St Helens in the early 1980s

Sweet Dreams!

We often hear of volcanoes becoming active, with the increased likelihood of them erupting. However, scientists in the the US Geological Society believe that one well-known volcano, Mount

St Helens in Washington State, USA, has gone back to sleep! After three years of activity, the volcano has had no sign of eruptive activity in the last five months. The volcano erupted violently in 1980, killing 57 people, and reawakened in October 2004 with blasts of steam and ash. A lava dome continued to grow on the volcano until January of this year.

Lonesome George may be a Daddy?

Lonesome George, on the Galapagos Islands, is the last surviving giant tortoise of his kind in the world and is the world's rarest creature. He was rescued in 1972 from Pinta, an island off Ecuador's Pacific coast but showed no interest in reproducing. Two of his female companions have recently laid nine eggs and a number have been placed in an incubator. If these eggs have been fertilised, it will take 120 days to discover if Lonesome George is the father!

<http://flickr.com/photos/23005733@N00/1351695967>



Life-saving, with a difference

We often hear of humans rescuing other humans who have gotten into difficulty in water, but one biologist took this a step further. Adam Warwick, a biologist with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) saw a 375lb male black bear struggling in the sea off Florida and jumped in to rescue it. The bear had been wandering through a residential area and, in an attempt to move it to a remote location, FWC officials shot it with a tranquiliser dart. The tranquiliser took longer to work than they expected and the bear bolted into the water, where it started to become drowsy. Having jumped in after the animal, Adam kept one arm underneath the bear's head and held onto the scruff of its neck with the other. Luckily the water was only 4 ft deep and he was able to guide the bear back to shore. Adam was uninjured, expect for cuts on his feet from barnacles and a scratch from the bear on his foot. A bystander arrived on the scene with a backhoe and with the help of other on the scene, they managed to load the bear into an FWC truck. It was eventually relocated in the Osceola National forest near Lake City, Florida, USA.



Photo provided to FWC courtesy of Becky Bickerstaff

Don't try this at home. FWC biologist Adam Warwick saves a 375-pound black bear from drowning in Gulf waters off Florida, USA.

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