CONSERVATION NEWS

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Red squirrel, photo by Andrew Kelly, www.akellyphoto.com

NEW FISH HOOK AIMS TO REDUCE SEA TURTLE MORTALITIES

TRADITIONAL J-SHAPED fishing hooks have been responsible for large numbers of sea turtle mortalities through by-catch. But now a project by the WWF will hopefully make this a thing of the past. Moisés Mug, the Fisheries Senior Program Officer for WWF in Latin America and the Caribbean hopes to expand a project where they replace traditional hooks with a new round hook into Central America. Workshops are currently being held with local fishermen in Costa Rica and researchers will go on board fishing vessels to see if the scheme will work.

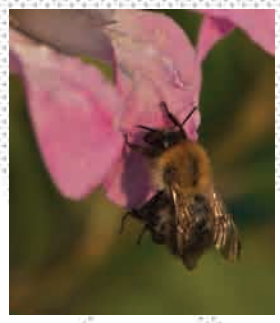
GREY SQUIRRELS OFF THE HOOK

THE GREY SQUIRREL HAS been found to be responsible for the decline of red squirrels and damage to broadleaf trees but for once they seem to have been cleared of one charge: the decline of woodland birds. A number of birds in Britain have been declining, including the lesser spotted woodpecker, hawfinch and common starling and some parties believed that nest predation by this invasive species was the cause. The British Trust for Ornithology reviewed population data on grey squirrels and woodland birds and found that, although squirrels may have a local impact, there was no evidence that they were linked to an overall national decline in the bird species studied.

THE DECLINE OF HONEY BEES

THE SAYING "variety is the spice of life" may have a ring of truth for bee conservation. Scientists from the French National Institute for Agricultural Research in Avignon have traced a possible link between the diversity of bee diets and the strength of their immune systems. Bees that sourced their pollen from at least five different plants produced honey that contained a higher amount of Glucose Oxidase which protects against the attacks of microbes. There appears to be a correlation between the decline of plant diversity in the countryside due to agricultural intensification and the decline of honey bees. The study highlights the need for diversification of our farming landscapes and particularly the need to protect and manage our hedgerows, which are a lifeline to many species. Honey bees are of immense importance to our economy, contributing up to £200m per year in the UK and $14bn in the US through the pollination of food crops. It is in our interest to protect them.

Bee photos courtesy of Sheena Jolley, www.sheenajolley photography.com



ONE OF THE MOST BIODIVERSE PLACES ON EARTH

Yasuni National Park in Equador has been found to be the most diverse area of rain forest in the Amazon basin. Over 500 species of birds, 150 amphibian species, 200 mammal species and incredibly over 10,000 insect species. Within 25 hectares of forest over 1,000 tree species can be found. Unfortunately a section of the park sits on rich amounts of oil reserves. However, the Ecuadorian government is promoting a revolutionary plan, known as the Yasuní-ITT Initiative, which would leave the park's largest oil reserves in the ITT block permanently under the ground. A lack of funding commitments, however, now threatens the proposal.

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