



## Wild words

**"IT'S NOT LIKE, 'I GIVE YOU MEAT AND A FEW HOURS LATER, YOU'RE GOING TO COPULATE WITH ME'".**

Primatologist Cristina Gomes on the subtleties of male chimps exchanging meat for sex with females.



## Fishy business

**40%** The percentage of the world's recorded fish catch that is unused, according to the journal *Marine Policy*. It amounts to 38 million tonnes of wasted fish.

# NEWS OF THE EARTH INTERNATIONAL

## IN BRIEF



### SAUTÉED SHARK

A rare shark that has only ever been seen an estimated 40 times has ended up sautéed in coconut milk after turning up in the nets of Filipino mackerel fishermen. The megamouth shark was first discovered in Hawaii in 1976 and is the third filter-feeding species known to science, after the whale and basking sharks.

### LETHAL SONAR

Scientists have carried out controlled studies to show that mid-frequency sonar of the type emitted by naval warships can "induce temporary hearing loss in a bottlenose dolphin". The authors of the study in *Biology Letters* suggest this produces "mild behavioural alterations" that may explain why some cetaceans strand after exposure to sonar.



### NARROW ESCAPE

A major volcanic eruption in the Galápagos in April is not thought to have threatened any rare species. Fernandina is an active volcano and, at a mere 50,000 years old, the youngest of the Galápagos Islands. It is home to endemic Galápagos penguins and flightless cormorants, but its colonies of both species were unscathed.



The survival of the critically endangered silky sifaka has been put at risk by logging within Marojejy National Park.

# Madagascar suffers wildlife disaster

## Political unrest adds to the problems facing Madagascar's rich and varied wildlife.

Madagascar's unique but gravely threatened fauna, including rare chameleons, birds and lemurs, is in even greater danger due to political unrest spreading to reserves and national parks.

Months of unrest led to a coup and the breakdown of law and order in January of this year. Criminal networks seized the opportunity to plunder national parks, including World Heritage Sites Marojejy and Masoala, for precious hardwoods.

Marojejy was forced to close in March, raising concern among conservationists for one of the world's most endangered primates, the silky sifaka, which is found only in the area.

Eleven NGOs, including WWF and Conservation International,

issued a joint plea to stop the "deplorable acts", which also include intensified wildlife smuggling, illegal mining and slash-and-burn agriculture in protected areas. Park rangers are abandoning their posts in fear.

Many governments are advising against travel to Madagascar, and the £275m tourism industry that largely funds conservation in the country has ground to a halt. Hotels have shut and people employed in tourism have been forced to turn to more desperate means of earning money.

"Conservation organisations are becoming less efficient due to lack of funding and increasing anarchy," said Dr Rainer Dolch of Association Mitsinjo, which runs two reserves on the island.

The damage may be lasting. "Some species on the brink of extinction could be pushed over

the edge," said Hilary Bradt, an expert on Madagascar's wildlife. Yet she remains hopeful: "Once political stability is restored, tourism will pick up." *Kara Moses*

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

Put pressure on the UK to help resolve the situation by **signing the petition** at: [petitions.number10.gov.uk/madagascar](http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/madagascar)

Write to your **MP and/or MEP**.

A sample letter and more information can be found at: [www.madagascar-library.com/crisis/action](http://www.madagascar-library.com/crisis/action)

Travel to **Madagascar**. The FCO has lifted its warning on travel to the country (but do check its website) and the tourist board is offering a free 30-day visa.

