



MARIANA BAZO | REUTERS
Dolphins are seen swimming in the sea near tourists at Organos beach in Piura, Peru, Tuesday.

Record dolphin deaths in Black Sea

REUTERS

SOFIA, Bulgaria — Carcasses of dolphins are washing up on Bulgaria’s Black Sea beaches at a higher than normal rate, with a record 108 dead animals discovered this year, local authorities said Thursday.

The cause of the deaths has yet to be determined, Environment Minister Ivelina Vasileva said after collecting information by regional centers, adding that 77 of the dead dolphins were found in the southern part of the country’s Black Sea coast.

Bulgarian Prime Minister Boiko Borissov on Thursday called for a special meeting with conservation organizations to try to find a solution to the record number of deaths and said on his official Facebook page that steps are being taken to ban

fishing in areas populated by the protected species.

The number of dead dolphins in 2016 is significantly higher than the 56 found last year and the previous record of 74 in 2012.

Media reports of dead dolphins on Bulgarian beaches have been rife in recent years. In spite of repeated allegations, often with finger-pointing at fishermen, the cause has yet to be established conclusively.

There are three species of dolphins in the Black Sea off Bulgaria: the short-beaked common dolphin, the harbor porpoise and the common bottlenose dolphin. The dolphin population along Bulgaria’s black sea coast is about 15,000, according to environment ministry data.

The penalty for killing a dolphin is a fine of up to \$11,270 and imprisonment for up to five years.

Megaraptor a glimpse of finds to come

Newly discovered dinosaur joins a mysterious family

BY BRIAN SWITEK
WASHINGTON POST

Paleontologists name a new dinosaur species about every two weeks. That’s a hell of a pace. And from that statistic alone, it might seem researchers are soon going to rocket past Peak Dinosaur. The truth of the matter, however, is that fossil hunters have truly only scratched the surface of prehistoric dinosaur diversity, a point driven home by this week’s announcement of a new carnivorous enigma from South America.

The new dinosaur, described in the journal PLOS ONE by paleontologists Rodolfo Coria and Philip Currie, is named *Murusraptor barrosaensis*. The dinosaur’s name is a tribute to how it was found. During an expedition to Sierra Barrosa in northwestern Patagonia, Coria says, team member Sergio Saldivia spotted dinosaur bones

jutting from the 80 million-year-old stone. Because the disarticulated pieces were found in a canyon wall, Coria and Currie combined the Latin words for “wall” (*murus*) and “thief” (*raptor*) to coin *Murusraptor*.

Coria knew right away that this was something special. “We knew since the beginning that it was a new species because no theropods were known from this particular geological formation,” Coria said. And once the dinosaur was cleaned up back at the lab, it turned out to be something of a Cretaceous head-scratcher.

If you’re going to belong to a fierce-sounding family, you could do worse than the megaraptors. This is the group of dinosaurs that Coria and Currie determined *Murusraptor* belonged to — mid-sized carnivores, some of which bore terrifyingly large claws. But then things get a little bit tricky.



COURTESY OF JAN SOVAK | HANDOUT VIA REUTERS
An artist’s rendering of a carnivorous dinosaur unearthed in Argentina shows *Murusraptor barrosaensis*, which lived about 80 million years ago during the Cretaceous Period. It measured about 21 feet long and prowled Patagonia, although fossils of relatives have been discovered in Australia and Japan.

No one can quite agree on who the closest relatives of the megaraptors are. Some experts suggest they’re most closely related to the allosaurs — huge carnivores with teeth suited to slicing flesh — while others have proposed a closer kinship with the famous tyrannosaurs.

Megaraptors cluster together in their own special group, but the lineage from which they sprang is still shrouded. Unfortunately, *Murusraptor* alone won’t solve the mystery. *Murusraptor* and all the other known megaraptors lived around the same time, Coria said, when the group had already differentiated itself from its closest relatives. The dinosaurs that connect

these slashers to their ancestral stock have yet to be found.

“*Murusraptor* provides a new glimpse to the megaraptor diversity in the Late Cretaceous,” Coria said, “but in order to clarify their phylogeny, we need to find more primitive forms.”

This isn’t bad news. If anything, it means there are even more dinosaurs out there. With a targeted search of older rocks (and a dollop of luck), paleontologists eventually will find the creatures that help resolve the identity of these puzzling dinosaurs. *Murusraptor* is another glimpse of what’s still out there awaiting discovery. All in all, it’s not just another megaraptor in the wall.

Birds aid hunters in rare partnership

BY ALISTER DOYLE
REUTERS

OSLO — A small African bird that guides people to bees’ nests hoping to share honey and wax responds to hunters’ special calls in a rare example of a partnership between wild animals and humans, scientists said on Thursday.

Cooperation between the greater honeyguide bird and hunters was first written about by a Portuguese missionary in 1588, but was widely dismissed as pure hearsay. In recent years, however, researchers have found ever more evidence of the bond.

In Mozambique, hunters are far more successful in finding honey when they use a traditional call — a trill followed by a grunt that sounds like “brr-hm”

Scientists documented that honeyguides seek human help by making distinctive calls and flitting from tree to tree to attract attention

— to attract honeyguides, the experts wrote in the journal *Science*.

Once attracted, the birds lead hunters to trees with bees, relying on the humans to subdue the insects with fire and smoke, chop open the trunk, get the honey and then leave behind some beeswax that is a delicacy for the birds.

In the 1980s, scientists documented that honeyguides seek human help by making distinctive calls and flitting from tree to tree to attract attention.

“We’ve found it’s a two-way communication,” lead author Claire Spottiswoode, an evolutionary bi-

ologist who works at Cambridge University and the University of Cape Town, told Reuters. “Humans communicate back to honeyguides as well.”

The “brr-hm” call “signals to honeyguides that they (hunters) are eager to follow. Honeyguides use this information to choose partners,” she said.

The call doubles the chances of getting led by a honeyguide to 66 percent from 33 and increased the probability of finding a bees’ nest to 54 percent from 17, compared to the use of other human or animal sounds to lure birds. Most human cooperation

with animals is with domesticated or trained animals, such as dogs or falcons. The only other known partnership with wild creatures is when dolphins sometimes work with fishermen, according to the study.

Spottiswoode said 20 Yao hunters interviewed in the Niassa National Reserve in Mozambique did not know the origin of the traditional “brr-hm” call. By contrast in Kenya, hunters whistle to attract the birds.

Still, honeyguides are not entirely sweet.

Like cuckoos, they lay eggs in the nests of other birds and baby honeyguides kill their foster siblings by stabbing them with sharp hooks on their beaks. Spottiswoode called them “the Jekyll and Hyde of the bird world.”

The power of blueberries

MAYO CLINIC NEWS
NETWORK

July is National Blueberry Month. Often labeled a superfood, this little berry is bursting with vitamins and minerals — many of which are classified as antioxidants.

Much of the power of blueberries lies in their colors. The deep-blue hue comes from anthocyanin, an antioxidant that could help protect the body from heart disease and cancer, as well as reduce inflammation and increase immune function. Research also suggests the compounds found in blueberries may delay the effects of vascular dementia or Alzheimer’s disease.

“A half-cup serving of blueberries contains 25 percent of the recommended daily value for vitamin C and 3 grams of dietary fiber — and only 30 calories,” says Allie Wergin, a Mayo Clinic Health System registered dietitian nutritionist. “In addition, blueberries are

a juicy fruit, which means they contain mostly water. Juicy fruits are great for weight loss or weight maintenance, because they fill you up quickly with their high water content and minimal calories.”

Whether you’re eating blueberries for the health benefits or you like the taste, or both, blueberries can easily be eaten plain. They also can be added to cereal or yogurt, or incorporated into baked goods for added sweetness and nutrition.

“During these summer months, be sure to take advantage of blueberries when they are plentiful and on sale by purchasing in large quantities and freezing them,” says Wergin. “Just wash and dry the berries, lay them on a pan, and freeze until they’re solid. Package frozen blueberries in freezer-safe storage bags, so they are ready for the winter months. You can easily substitute frozen berries for fresh.”

US doctors plan for baby care as Zika looms

BY JULIE STEENHUYSEN
REUTERS

CHICAGO — As U.S. public health officials try to determine whether Zika has arrived in the country, doctors are establishing guidelines on how to care for the rising number of babies whose mothers were infected with the virus during pregnancy.

Florida this week said it is investigating a case of Zika not related to travel to an area where Zika is active, raising the possibility of local transmission.

So far, more than 400 pregnant women in the continental United States have evidence of Zika infection, up from 346 from a week ago, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported on Thursday. All of those were related to travel or sex with an infected person who had traveled.

Three more babies have been born in the United States with birth defects linked to Zika infections in their mothers, bringing the total to 12, CDC said.

Zika has been proven to cause microcephaly, a severe birth defect marked by small head size and undersized brains that requires a complex network of care providers and social workers to treat and provide support to parents.

But microcephaly is just the tip of the iceberg, according to experts speaking at a CDC-sponsored workshop on Thursday. They said many babies exposed in utero who appear normal at birth may have developmental problems

down the road, including hearing and vision problems.

For example, babies born with a functional sucking reflex may never develop the ability to swallow and will need to be fed through a feeding tube. These infants will have a higher risk of pneumonia, said Dr. Edwin Trevathan, a pediatrician and child neurologist at Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

Less obvious damage to structures on only one side of the brain may cause seizure disorders that do not appear until adolescence, Trevathan said.

Pediatric experts at the workshop are reviewing the potential consequences of Zika infection and plan to make recommendations on ways to treat Zika-exposed infants.

The connection between Zika and microcephaly first came to light last fall in Brazil, which has now confirmed more than 1,600 cases of microcephaly that it considers to be related to Zika infections in the mothers.

The recommendations come as Florida officials investigate what may be the first case of Zika in the continental United States caused by the bite of a local mosquito.

Florida officials will not elaborate on how a resident of Miami was infected and whether the case was related to mosquitoes.

“We continue to investigate and have not ruled out travel or sexual transmission at this time,” Florida spokeswoman Mara Gambineri said in an email on Thursday. However, she said



FOTOLIA | TNS
Florida officials are investigating what may be the first case of Zika in the continental United States caused by the bite of a local mosquito.

the state still suspects the case is not related to travel to a Zika-infected area.

The White House on Wednesday released a statement saying President Barack Obama had spoken to Florida Governor Rick Scott regarding a suspected case of mosquito transmission of Zika and promised more money to fight the virus.

At the Zika workshop, Dr. Marc Fischer, chief of surveillance and epidemiology activity at the arboviral diseases branch of the CDC, said the agency has worked with state health departments to establish strategies to identify possible local transmission in the United States.

“When and if there is a case of local transmission, we work with local health departments to identify additional cases to define the geographic scope of the outbreak,” he said.

CDC has given Florida \$2 million for Zika preparedness, and on Thursday awarded another \$5.6 million to assist the state with Zika as part of an additional \$60 million in Zika funds to states announced on Thursday. U.S. lawmakers so far have not approved any of the White House’s \$1.9 billion request for Zika.

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Ray Haskell
LINCOLN

801 Kennedy Memorial Drive, Oakland, ME 04963
(888) 397-9146 • RayHaskellLincoln.com