



# The World Around Us



“Foreign Correspondent”  
Michael Ludwig reports on  
some interesting goings on  
in the natural world.



## PJ the Cuckoo and his trips across the Sahara

In April this year, PJ the Cuckoo returned to his forest home in Suffolk in the UK and became a record breaker whilst doing so. This special cuckoo is part of a project being carried out by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) to help uncover what might be driving the UK Cuckoo population down; they have lost over two-thirds of their breeding Cuckoos in the UK as a whole and almost three-quarters of them in England during the last 23 years.

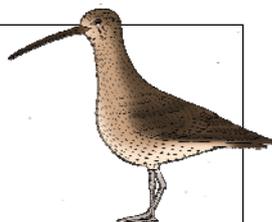
PJ was fitted with a satellite tag in June 2016 in King’s Forest, Suffolk, and has been providing scientists at the BTO with valuable information ever since. His arrival back in the forest saw him complete his fifth annual migration cycle to, from and within Africa since he was tagged, amassing a distance travelled of well over 50,000 miles (80,000 km) and making him the only satellite tagged Cuckoo to have achieved this since the project began in 2011. During this time he has crossed the Sahara desert ten times alone, not counting all of his sea crossings and navigating the Atlas Mountains in Morocco and the Pyrenees on the Spanish/French border. PJ was one year old when tagged, so this summer he will be six years old, taking him to within a year of the British longevity record for a ringed cuckoo, which stands at six years and eleven months for a bird found dead in 1983.

## Curlew Path

The Dublin Bay Birds Project carries out year-round waterbird surveys in Dublin Bay. These include focused surveys of particular species, combined with colour-ringing, radio-tagging and GPS-tracking of a selection of key wader species.

In May, the Project got word that a female Curlew (‘FH74868’) ringed back in 2014 in Dublin Bay, had been spotted on the breeding grounds near Jokisilta, Tyrnava in Finland for the second year in a row. This is the only international resighting the Project have ever received of a Curlew ringed in Dublin but it shows that Finland is an important breeding site for Curlews that overwinter in Ireland and Britain. To find out more about the Dublin Bay Birds Project and Birdwatch Ireland visit:

<https://birdwatchireland.ie/category/project/dublin-bay/>



## Nest Boxes

Calvin Jones, of Ireland’s Wildlife, has produced an excellent video for the Sherkin Island Tidy Islands Group on how to help birds in our gardens by providing nest boxes. You can watch it on:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZbwijVg2cc>

Calvin also dedicated a page on his website to Garden Bird Nestbox Resources. Check it out if you are interested in attracting birds to your garden.

<https://irelandswildlife.com/nestboxes/>

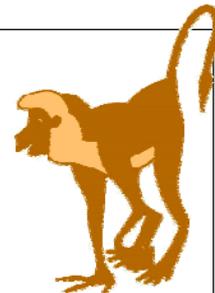


## Covid Waste Killing Wildlife



An unexpected consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic has been the necessity to use so much Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), such as masks and latex gloves. Unfortunately, single use waste of this type is not always been disposed of properly and it is making its way into the environment. Not only can discarded rubbish be unsightly, it can also be harmful to wildlife. A recent study of posts on social media, led by biologists Auke-Florian Hiemstra from Naturalis Biodiversity Center and Liselotte Rambonnet from Leiden University in The Netherlands, found that it is becoming a huge problem for wild and domestic animals, with many becoming entangled in this type of waste or ingesting it. While PPE is necessary, it must be disposed of properly.

## Speed Bumps



Speed bumps on the road are designed to slow traffic in areas where pedestrians may be crossing the road. However, they are now also being used to help protect one of the world’s most endangered primates, the Zanzibar red colobus monkey. These monkeys are found only on the island of Zanzibar, off the coast of Tanzania, with over half the population of approximately 6,000 inside the Jozani Chwaka-Bay National Park. Scientists have found that speed bumps significantly reduce the numbers of monkeys killed on a road that cuts across the park—a leading cause of death for them. The Zanzibar red colobus monkey seems oblivious to the dangers of traffic and have been recorded sauntering across the road, even when there is oncoming traffic. So by slowing the traffic, drivers are better able to react when they see a monkey.