BBC

SPRINGWATCH SPECIAL

Read about Gillian's exciting encounter, and more, inside

Wildlife

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BEAUTIFUL OWLS

Pictures it took a photographer 13 years to shoot

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LAMLASH BAY - 10 YEARS ON

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Page 20

06 >
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MARINE NEWS

The surprise return of spiny lobsters to Cornwall

LEMON SHARKS

Scientific superstars that make friends and learn tricks

ASIAN ELEPHANTS

How attitudes are changing in Thailand

BEHAVIOUR

LOOK SMART

Being clever is an advantage in life. But for ring-tailed lemurs, it's also advantageous to be seen to be clever.

New research has shown that lemurs that worked out how to extract food hidden in apparatus received social favours from others that had watched them do it.

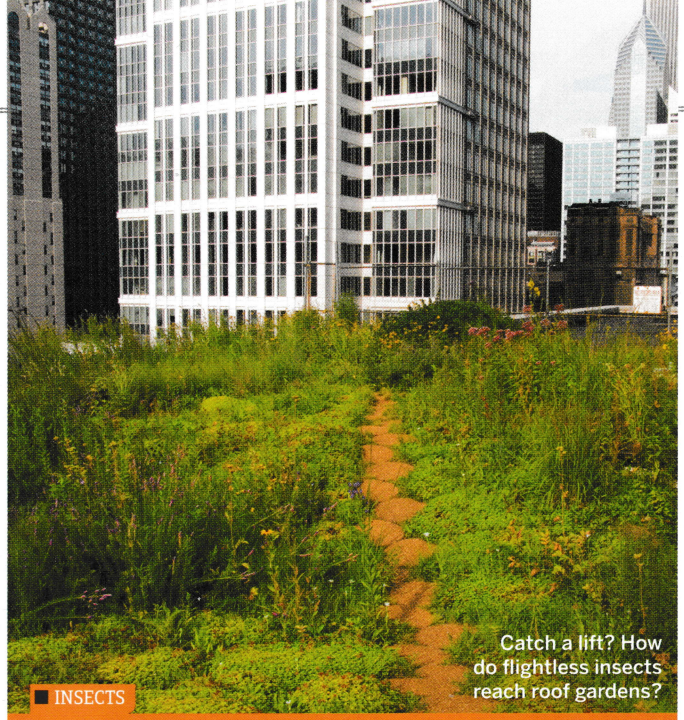
"I was quite impressed that the frequently observed lemurs received more affiliative behaviours, such as grooming, without adjusting their own social behaviour," says Ipek Kulahci of Ireland's University College Cork.

"In most primate species, grooming tends to be mutual; it relies on reciprocity between the groomer and the individual being groomed," she adds. "So it's a pretty striking pattern that the frequently observed lemurs received lots of grooming without providing more grooming to others."

In which case, what's in it for the observers? The biologists found that, by initiating social contact, they are more likely to learn the task for themselves.

Ring-tailed lemurs recognise intelligence, and show appreciation of it, in others.

SOURCE *Current Biology*
LINK https://bit.ly/2HwczgW



Catch a lift? How do flightless insects reach roof gardens?

INSECTS

ISLAND HOPPING

Green roofs are effectively islands in the sky. And like real islands are notoriously hard to colonise, especially for flightless species. But colonise they do, and new research shows how.

Until now, it wasn't clear whether soil organisms such as springtails and mites were imported with building materials and plants during construction or if they arrived under their own steam. It turns out that many species are indeed brought in during construction, but that most of these non-specialists quickly die off in the harsh conditions.

"This means that green roof soil species must arrive via another method, such as by hitching lifts on birds or coming in the aerial plankton," says Heather Rumble, a biologist at the University of Portsmouth.

Rumble recommends that the biodiversity of green roofs could be boosted further by seeding them with appropriate species in the first place.

SOURCE *Applied Soil Ecology* LINK https://bit.ly/2Hs62bg

The EXPLAINER

Scientific terms put into plain English for the rest of us.

PHILOPATRY AND DISPERSAL

Just as some humans are homebodies while others have wanderlust, animals vary in their inclination to travel or stay put. Among mammals, for example, males tend to disperse from their birthplace while females are more philopatric. In birds, it's the other way around. Males birds tend to attract mates by defending territories, so it pays to stay put and inherit land from their parents. Male mammals, though, defend females directly, so they need to go and find them.

Malleefowl pairs pick and defend a territory.

NEW SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

EXPLODING ANT

WHAT IS IT? It's not just a name. These ants, now officially described as *Colobopsis explodens*, do, quite literally, explode. Certain workers in the colony specialise in this form of self-sacrifice in the face of danger, spattering assailants with sticky, toxic glandular secretions that are stored in their abdomens.

WHERE IS IT? The ants live in tree-hole nests, often high in the canopy, in Borneo. Other worker castes are equipped with large, plug-shaped heads, which they use to block nest entrances against intruders.

SOURCE *ZooKeys* LINK https://bit.ly/2r2oE6v

Extreme measures: exploding ants defend their colony by tearing themselves apart.