



The St Francis Messenger

The Quarterly Newsletter for Compass Education Ltd

Edition 18 – Winter2011/12

Happy New Year to you all and welcome to edition 18 of the Messenger. What a busy year 2011 turned out to be! There are several exciting developments to report in the form of our new website, new courses, more accreditation of existing courses and other improvements that support our continued expansion and will provide yet more opportunities for our students in 2012 and beyond.

Since our humble start 13 years ago Compass has grown every year and despite the worldwide economic climate there are no signs of this growth slowing both within the UK and internationally. We thank the thousands that have studied with us over the years and wish all students, past present and future, the very best of luck for the forthcoming year.

More Accreditation for Compass

In our constant drive to provide the best possible service to our students we have now achieved the NCFE Investing in Quality Licence having met the stringent requirements during an audit in December. This marks another step forward with our already impressive list of accreditation by independent awarding bodies that is unmatched by any other similar course provider and further reassures students and employers that the education we deliver is of the highest possible quality. Many of the courses already achieve NCFE certification and we are now embarking on a process to ensure that the majority will follow.



NCFE is a National Awarding Organisation recognised by the qualification regulators, it has a strong heritage in learning stretching back to 1848 and has a passion for providing exceptional customer service.

www.ncfe.org.uk

BVNA Congress lecture sponsorship



Last year's annual BVNA Congress held in October was attended by one of our tutors, Joanne Martin MSc who helped with the launch of the new Burgess Excel-Compass Veterinary Nursing for Rabbits CPD course. Compass also sponsored Dr Anne McBride's lecture on Dog Behaviour.

A month after the Congress Joanne and the Burgess team met up again to promote the course at the London Vet Show.



Practical Marine Biology



For those with an interest in marine biology Compass is teaming up with St Hilda Sea Adventures to offer the opportunity to study the marine environment first hand. The 54ft classic vessel St Hilda is equipped with microscopes and computers and cruises the sheltered waters and coast of South West Scotland. Up to six students can be accommodated on each environmentally friendly trip. For more information please see:

www.sthildaseaadventures.co.uk

* New Courses *

Along with the **Veterinary Nursing for Rabbits** course we have just launched the **Foundations of Canine Behaviour Management Diploma**. This course is aimed at those who have some experience of working with dogs and aim to complete our much acclaimed Advanced Diploma programme but would benefit from some preparatory studies. Both these courses are NCFE accredited. In addition we have also launched two further short Certificate courses, these are **Reptile Care** and **Amphibian Care** which together will create a **Herptile Care Diploma**.

This brings the choice of courses available to 53, a wider selection than is available through any other course provider in this field.

Annual visit to the UK Wolf Centre

The day at the U.K Wolf Centre started with an interesting talk about wolves; conservation, the wolves at the centre and the history and ideals of the centre. We were then given a short talk about safety when walking with the wolves and how to go about touching them.

After this we walked around a large field with two of the wolves: Mosi and Torak (both born in 2006). The wolves were very relaxed about this and I was told that they had done it all their lives. They enjoyed being out; sniffing, scent marking and rolling.

As the handlers had said that eye contact with the wolves was alright, I asked about this and was told that, unlike

dogs, wolves will evaluate the eye contact given and react appropriately; it would not be a good idea to treat a wolf to a hard stare but they are more able to interpret the meaning behind eye contact than domestic dogs.

We then walked a different route with two older wolves; both female: Duma (born 1998) and Lunca (born 1999). These wolves took much more interest in the people watching them and we stopped on the walk on two occasions so that we could all stroke them, under the careful eye of their handlers!

After lunch we were given another lecture, this time on communication, with several videos of the wolves' interactions. Then filled sacks were given to groups of wolves – some filled with straw and meat and some with just straw (for those likely to fight over the meat).

The weather was good and it was a very enjoyable day.

Article and photos submitted by our tutor Wendy Knights



* New Website *

In order to keep up with student requirements and technological advances Compass now has a new website. It has taken a while to develop and is still evolving thanks to Neoteric Design who will continue to maintain the site. Analysis of site visits shows an incredible variation of readers with over 4500 new visits from 122 different countries worldwide in the last 10 weeks since launching and more recently an average of around 150 hits a day. The most significant addition is the ability to register and pay online, a facility that is long overdue. For anyone reading a hard copy of the newsletter please note that past editions are available to view on the site. Please keep an eye on the site because we will be using it more and more to keep you all up to date with new developments such as new courses.

Hounds for Heroes

You may remember that Compass supported the Hound Association of Scotland in their aim to raise £1000 for Hounds for Heroes. As it was such a success they have organised a repeat of the event for 2012 and Compass are pleased to support such a worthy cause again.

We will report more fully on how the Association gets on in the next edition but if anyone would like to come along to the 27th Annual Hound Association of Scotland Show and support them you would be very welcome.

Entry fees from a special class called the Hounds for Heroes Stakes all contribute to the funds collected along with any donations received. Compass have already donated £150. The charity provide assistance dogs for injured members of the armed forces and civilian emergency services.

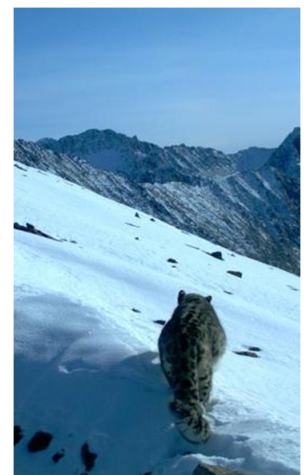


Snow leopards photographed in Siberia for the first time

Students on the Big Cats course will be interested in this article.

Cameras equipped with motion sensors have captured the first images of elusive snow leopards in a remote mountain range in Siberia. The cameras captured photos of two snow leopards in October as they walked along a ridge in the Altai Mountains along the Russia-Mongolia border. "To get a picture is really a big deal," said Dr. James P. Gibbs, a conservation biologist with the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF) in Syracuse, New York. "The signs that the species is in this region are definitive but a picture is irrefutable."

The photos were taken at an altitude of about 4,000 metres at a location called Chikhachyova Ridge in the Altai Republic, a semiautonomous region in southern Russia. Gibbs said the animals are probably part of a larger population that extends into Mongolia. It is good news for the species because numbers might be greater than first thought.



Fish that spends all day holding its breath

Scientists have discovered that a unique fish species has adapted to a hostile environment poisonous to most other organisms, managing to survive in an oxygen-free environment. The Benguela-goby, or bearded goby, is found only on the anoxic continental shelf outside Namibia and South-Africa, but since the collapse of the sardine fisheries, this goby has become the new predominant prey species for larger fish, birds and mammals in the region.

Scientists from Norway, South Africa and Namibia have discovered how this little survivor copes in an environment that kills other fish. About 9,000 square kilometres of the continental shelf off Namibia lack oxygen, as a result of a thick layer of rotting mud. Methane gas and hydrogen sulphide build up in the sediment, causing frequent gas eruptions that strip the entire water-column of oxygen.

Previously the belief was that fish could not survive in an environment of sulphide rich mud or between stinging jellyfish. But the bearded goby has become tolerant to these extreme environments.

During the day the goby stays on the anoxic or oxygen-free seabed, where it appears to 'hold its breath' while still eating the mud and associated small organisms. Later, under cover of darkness, the goby swims up to the more oxygen-rich surface waters in order to restore its oxygen debt and to digest its food. When gobies swim up to shallower waters at night, they associate with jellyfish. This is a night-time shelter from predators, as well as a food source. The scientists' study showed that goby predators avoid jellyfish, but that gobies are largely indifferent to them, staying close and even swimming in-between their stinging tentacles.



The bearded goby.

12 new species of frogs discovered in The Amazon

The diversity of frogs in the Amazon Basin is much greater than previously recorded, according to a new paper by Colorado State University and Ecuadorian biologists that could lead to greater understanding of how to save the frogs from extinction.

Chris Funk, assistant professor in the Department of Biology at



Colorado State, and his team found a diversity of one- to two-inch-long tree frogs and toadlets that was anywhere from 150 percent to 350

percent greater than originally estimated, according to the paper published today in Proceedings of the Royal Society B.

The scientists sampled specimens in six countries within the Amazon Basin but focused their research in Ecuador. They found an estimated 12 new species. More significant, Funk said, is the percentage increase of new species found using DNA sequences and recordings of frog calls to more accurately identify species.

Marmot Populations Growing

Longer summers are causing large mountain rodents called marmots to grow larger as well as improving their survival rates, according to a 33-year study published recently in Nature.

The research, carried out by scientists at Imperial College London and collaborators in the UK and USA, looked at a population of yellow-bellied marmots (*Marmota flaviventris*), which are large ground-dwelling 'squirrels' that live at around 3000 metres in the Colorado Rocky Mountains.

Regional changes in the climate have created longer summers and have led to marmots waking up earlier from hibernation, giving them more time to reproduce and gain weight before the next hibernation period. The study shows that the marmots are growing fatter and healthier as a



Two adult yellow-bellied marmots (photo by Ben Hulsey)

result. Longer summers also mean that individual marmots are reproducing earlier and their offspring are more likely to survive the upcoming winter, so the marmot population is increasing in size. Yellow-bellied marmots are adapted to living in environments with a short summer and a long winter by hibernating for seven to eight months of the year. Failure to gain enough weight before the colder months can be life-threatening, as a marmot loses around 40 percent of its body mass during hibernation.

The study is the first study of any species to show that a shift in seasonal timing can cause changes in body mass and population size simultaneously. The research was carried out by scientists from Imperial College London, the University of Sheffield, University of Florida, University of Kansas, University of California, Los Angeles, and Stanford University. It was funded by the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), the Wellcome Trust, National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Institute of Aging (NIA).

Creature Comforts

This story came in from someone who was visiting Zimbabwe and we thought you would find it amusing. They had been away at a game park during the day and on the first evening they were sat at the bar when in walked a fully grown warthog. He walked over to the bar and without a word the barman handed him a pillow. He took the pillow went over to the fire, lay down with his head on the pillow and went to sleep. This where he chooses to spend the cold nights and if the barman is not there he will simply take a cushion from one of the chairs!



Good luck to the (not so little) fellow

Two miracle rescues by a hippo



We believe this might be the first ever recorded rescue of a baby zebra and wildebeest by the same hippo on the Mara River close to Lemala Mara camp. Both were rescued within space of 10 minutes as they crossed over from the Lamai side. The photos and videos were captured by Michael Yule and other guests as they were watching a major wildebeest crossing at the time. The hippo was watching as the wildebeest herd swam past. As soon as the calf jumped in, the hippo swam up to it and pushed it along all the way across until it had reached safety on the other side. It then went back and did the same for a zebra foal just minutes later. The wildebeest and zebra are now moving down in large numbers from the Masai Mara across the Lamai plains and crossing the Mara River. Guests of Lemala Camp are witnessing crossings every day. Some of the herds have arrived north of Lobo.

Chimp from 1930s Tarzan Movies, Dies aged 80

A Florida animal sanctuary says Cheetah the chimpanzee sidekick in the Tarzan movies of the early 1930s has died at age 80! The Suncoast Primate Sanctuary in Palm Harbor announced that Cheetah died Dec. 24 of kidney failure. Sanctuary outreach director Debbie Cobb said that Cheetah was outgoing, loved finger painting and liked to see people laugh. She says he seemed to be tuned into human feelings. Cheetah appeared in the Tarzan films that starred American Olympic gold medal swimmer Johnny Weissmuller who then cared for Cheetah until he died, Cobb says Cheetah came to the sanctuary from Weissmuller's estate sometime around 1960.



Johnny Weissmuller, right, as Tarzan, Maureen O'Sullivan as Jane, and Cheetah the chimpanzee, in a scene from the 1932 movie Tarzan the Ape Man.

Wolf caught on camera trap in Belgium

After some sheep were killed near the Belgian town of Gedinne in July, a TV camera crew set up a camera trap to see if, as suspected, a lynx had killed the sheep. Much to their, and everyone else's, surprise, what they caught on camera was not a lynx, but appeared to be a wolf.

The last known Belgian wolf was seen in 1898, though there was a recent sighting in the Veluwe National Park in Holland of a lone wolf. This could potentially be the same wolf, or one from the same family. Either way, on the assumption that this wolf/wolves originated in Germany, they would have to have crossed several large motorways and rivers.

An alternative is that wolves are making a come back to Belgium, we do wonder what sort of a welcome they are likely to receive.



Wild dogs in steep decline worldwide

A report released by the world's leading wildlife conservation organizations, details the increasing threats and plunging populations of rare canids living in the wild. Faced with a striking loss of habitat and prey due to over-development of land and direct killing by poachers and others who see them as a threat, wild dogs like the Ethiopian wolf and bush dog face an uncertain future. A snapshot of the report's findings include:

There are fewer than 500 Darwin's Fox living today. The animals are found only in Chile and their restricted distribution makes them highly vulnerable to extinction. The gentle and curious canids are not fearful of people which is a bad news for a wild animal, however timber exploration and land development are the two biggest factors that have pushed the animals to the brink.



Fewer than 500 Ethiopian wolves remain with more than half found in the Bale Mountains. The highly social animals live in packs which makes them especially vulnerable when their populations decrease. Entire packs are wiped out by rabies outbreaks, while those that survive face rapid loss of habitat.

Search Dogs used for Conservation Work

Wagtail UK – the UK's leading specialist detection dog training company - has launched a new wildlife division.

Conservation Dogs – is the first UK based dog training organisation to pioneer the concept of using detection dogs to sniff out rare animal species, or rather their signs (scats or

droppings or carcasses or nests), in the field to aid researchers in their goals of ecological research, management, and conservation.

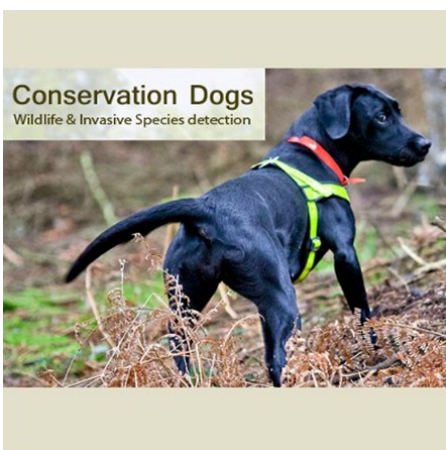
The dogs' incredible sense of smell and their ability to discern individual scents, even when they are masked by other odours, are some of the reasons why Louise Wilson, founder and director of Conservation Dogs, started to diversify into this area.

Louise commented: "By collecting scat samples, we can help charities and organisations achieve a species population count for a certain location. This allows them to formulate an estimate for a much larger area."

Scat training is also proving highly successful for a growing number of commercial organisations. For example, a pest control company keen to establish its 'green credentials' has turned to dogs to sniff out entry and exit points for problem mice infestation cases.

Wind farm sites, seeking to establish the extent of bat mortalities through turbine impact, can use dogs to sniff out the small carcasses. Here, dogs provide an accurate and more detailed insight into the resulting bat mortality rate without demonstrating any bias.

www.conservationdogs.com





First Dogs Came from East Asia, Genetic Study Confirms

The debate about the origins of the domesticated dog has taken a turn as researchers at Sweden's KTH Royal Institute of Technology say they have found further proof that the wolf ancestors of today's domesticated dogs can be traced to southern East Asia -- findings that run counter to theories placing the cradle of the canine line in the Middle East. Dr Peter Savolainen, KTH researcher in evolutionary genetics, says a new study released Nov. 23 2011 confirms that an Asian region south of the Yangtze River was the principal and probably sole region where wolves were domesticated by humans.

Data on genetics, morphology and behaviour show clearly that dogs are descended from wolves, but there's never been scientific consensus on where in the world the domestication process began. "Our analysis of Y-chromosomal DNA now confirms that wolves were first domesticated in Asia south of Yangtze River -- we call it the ASY region -- in southern China or Southeast Asia," Savolainen says.

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/11/111123132937.htm>

PAWS – Pet dogs help children with Autism in Liverpool

A new set of PAWS workshops, devised by charity Dogs for the Disabled, which aim to help parents with a child with autism explore the potential of a pet dog in assisting their son or daughter's development, are to be held in Merseyside. The charity says there are still places available and urges parents from across Liverpool to come along and find out more. If your child has autism, their clinical condition can mean that those sorts of challenges can take on an altogether more serious and demanding perspective. In extreme cases it can be exhausting, demoralising and impact hugely on your relationships and other children in the family.

The PAWS project (Parents Autism Workshops and Support) was set up by Dogs for the Disabled in 2010 and since then over 200 families across the UK have benefitted from taking part. The next set of workshops is about to be held at the Dogs Trust Centre in Merseyside. To find out more and register visit www.dogsforthe-disabled.org and click the 'PAWS' link.



Dogs for the Disabled

Classified



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www.naughty-dogs.co.uk

If any of our readers would like to place an advert for their services or events please contact the office and it will be considered.

Forthcoming Events

Mark Bekoff
9th and 10th June 2012
Craiglockhart Campus, Napier University, Edinburgh

Exploring the emotional and moral lives of wild and domestic dogs

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