

RANDOM SAMPLES

Edited by Adrian Cho

Be Fruitful and Divide

Without spotting a single new animal, researchers have identified five new species of lemurs—small nocturnal primates from the forests of Madagascar. The behavior, morphology, and genetics of the two known populations of the giant mouse lemur suggest they are in fact separate species that diverged 2 million years ago, Peter Kappeler and colleagues at the German Primate Center in Göttingen conclude in the current issue of *Primate Report*. Genetic analysis also revealed that the researchers' control group of lemurs, known simply as mouse lemurs, likewise contained a distinct new species. The two new species joined three new species of lepilemurs, also discovered by studying animals thought to be the same species and described on 10 August at the Congress of the European Federation of Primatology in Göttingen. Kappeler says the new classifications will help explain speciation among these rare animals.



Mirza zaza is a new species of lemur.

concluded that human activity plays little role in global warming. The meeting was summarized in a four-page advertisement, paid for by the ministry, in the 24 July issue of the Catholic weekly *Famiglia Cristiana*. The ad has ignited the fury of Italian climate researchers, who say they were not invited to the seminar.

According to the ad, Paolo Togni, director of communications for the environment ministry, called for an approach to environmental issues that would recognize that human activity can benefit the environment. Togni did not respond to requests for further comment. The ad also quotes Fabio Pistella, president of the Italian research council (CNR), as saying, "The phenomena of current climate changes are almost certainly natural and not due to man."

The ministry is "trying to discredit the scientific community," says Franco Miglietta, an ecologist at the Biometeorology Institute in Florence. More than 70 scientists have signed a statement calling for an open scientific debate on climate change. Meanwhile, the ministry is planning 15 more meetings on environmental issues and says it has bought advertising space for all of them.

Birthday Blowout

MONTSERRAT—In an ominous birthday surprise, a slumbering volcano awakened even as researchers gathered to commemorate the 10th anniversary

of its first eruption in centuries. In July 1995, the Soufrière Hills volcano on the Caribbean island of Montserrat exploded to life. Over the next few years, it rendered two-thirds of the island uninhabitable, forced thousands into exile, and killed 19 people. On 25 July, as nearly 100 researchers gathered here at a conference to mark the anniversary of the volcano's rebirth, the capricious peak

suddenly belched roiling clouds of gray ash and gases into the azure sky.

The volcano had snoozed for nearly 2 years, so the renewed rumblings, which began in June, have islanders on edge. "We thought we could start moving back to some of the houses we abandoned," says John Wilson, Montserrat's minister of public works and communications. "Now I'm afraid it's going to start all over again." However, predicting what the volcano will do is difficult, says Sue Loughlin, a geologist and director of the Montserrat Volcano

Observatory. And although the ash falls are annoying, she says, they are not dangerous as long as masks are worn when sweeping them up.

Ministry Scorches Italian Climate Researchers

Officials at the Italian environment ministry must like the heat. On 20 June in Rome, the ministry held a public meeting featuring climate-change skeptics who

New Age for Stonehenge Research

Despite centuries of investigation, the mystery of who built Stonehenge and why remains unsolved. Even a precise date for the prehistoric complex of stone circles, ditches, and burial mounds on England's Salisbury Plain has eluded researchers, although it's known that it was built between about 3000 and 1500 B.C.E. Now, archaeologists have proposed a new research framework to answer the many unresolved questions surrounding Stonehenge.

Much of the archaeological research carried out on Stonehenge in the 19th and early 20th centuries was of poor quality, says David Miles, chief archaeologist at English Heritage, the British government's advisory body for historical sites. This month, the organization released a report that outlines gaps in current data and proposes ways to fill them. For example, laser scanners could reveal carvings hidden by weathering and lichen, says David Batchelor, an archaeologist with English Heritage.

English Heritage has not put a time frame or price tag on the proposed research and hopes individual researchers and organizations will drum up the funding. Archaeologists may never know why Stonehenge was erected, as its builders left no written and few pictorial records of their motives, says Batchelor: "It's always going to be a bit of a mystery."

