

## Third minke whale found dead on UK shores

Three minke whales have washed up dead on UK shores in just a week (to Nov 26) due to unknown causes, prompting scientists to carry out a postmortem investigation on the third body. A small common female minke whale (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*) was discovered at Sea Palling, Norfolk, just four days after another larger, 7.6 metre-long female minke was found nearby on Cromer East beach. A 9 metre-long minke was also found dead on a County Londonderry beach. Including these three, there have been 14 minkes reported as stranded in the UK this year, the Natural History Museum said.

Source: <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2013/nov/26/minke-whale-found-dead-uk-sea-palling-norfolk>

## Green Spaces can save £ Billions

The Woodland Trust's chief executive has said increasing people's access to green spaces could cut billions of pounds from the NHS healthcare bill. Sue Holden said it had been calculated that the NHS could save £2.1bn a year if everyone had access to green spaces. She made the comments at an event to mark the culmination of the five-year Visit Woods project. Ms Holden added that only an estimated 14% of the UK's population had "easy access to trees". "It has been calculated, for example, that £2.1bn of healthcare costs could be saved if everyone had access to green spaces."

Source: <http://www.outdoor-learning.org/Default.aspx?tabid=118&Id=557>

## Emissions of CO2 driving rapid oceans 'acid trip'

The world's oceans are becoming acidic at an "unprecedented rate" and may be souring more rapidly than at any time in the past 300 million years.

In their strongest statement yet on this issue, scientists say acidification could increase by 170% by 2100.

They say that some 30% of ocean species are unlikely to survive in these conditions.

The researchers conclude that human emissions of CO2 are clearly to blame.

The study will be presented at global climate talks in Poland next week.

In 2012, over 500 of the world's leading experts on ocean acidification gathered in California. Led by the International Biosphere-Geosphere Programme, a review of the state of the science has now been published.

This Summary for Policymakers states with "very high confidence" that increasing acidification is caused by human activities which are adding 24 million tonnes of CO2 to oceans every day.

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### Acidifying Oceans

- The oceans are thought to have absorbed up to half of the extra CO2 put into the atmosphere in the industrial age
- This has lowered their pH by 0.1
- pH is the measure of acidity and alkalinity
- It usually ranges from pH 0 (very acidic) to pH 14 (very alkaline); 7 is neutral
- Seawater is mildly alkaline with a "natural" pH of about 8.2

The authors warn that the economic impact of the losses from aquaculture could be huge - the global cost of the decline in molluscs could be \$130bn by 2100 if emissions of CO2 continue on their current pathway.

Source: <http://www.outdoor-learning.org/Default.aspx?tabid=118&Id=561>

### Merseyside red squirrels show signs of pox resistance

Red squirrels at a National Trust reserve in Merseyside have shown signs of resistance to the pox virus that has blighted the species, say researchers.

Scientists from the University of Liverpool have studied the squirrels at the Formby site for four years.

They found that 10% of its squirrels had pox antibodies in their blood.

These antibodies are chemical tags that allow the body to recognise and respond to an infection quickly. This strongly suggests that the squirrels have encountered the pox virus previously and recovered from it.

The UK population of red squirrels has been in decline since grey squirrels were introduced from North America by the Victorians.

As well as displacing red squirrels from their habitat, grey squirrels also carry the squirrel pox virus, which they have spread to the reds.

Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-25034405>

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