

ference in Beijing on 10 January.

The government introduced a regulation in 2009 requiring health ministry approval of stem cell clinics. But it has been widely flouted, says Douglas Sipp, an expert on stem cell ethics and policy at the RIKEN Center for Developmental Biology in Japan. While Sipp is skeptical that the latest announcement will be thoroughly enforced, Deng Hongkui of Peking University's Laboratory of Stem Cell and Generative Biology in Beijing says the plan is a "good sign." "In the long run, this action will push stem cell trials in China to follow international standards," he says.

Quito 5

Rainforest Conservation Effort Passes Hurdle

After receiving pledges totaling more than its goal of \$100 million by a year-end deadline, the Ecuadorian government has announced that it will move forward with its Yasuni-ITT Initiative. This innovative plan aims to leave untapped more than 900 million barrels of crude oil beneath a pristine Amazonian nature reserve in exchange for annual international donations (*Science*, 26 November 2010, p. 1170). Last summer, many in the conservation community



Protected. One of Yasuni Forest's birds.

feared that Germany would back away from a nearly \$50 million pledge to the effort. But now \$116 million in contributions have been collected from that nation, other foreign governments, foundations, and individual donors, according to Ivonne Baki, the head of the initiative. "We've created amazing momentum," says Baki. That momentum will be needed as the Ecuadorian government has set a new goal of securing \$291 million in contributions in both 2012 and 2013 to keep the initiative going. <http://scim.ag/YasuniITT>

Madrid 6

Government Takes Aim At Science Funding

Warning of unemployment and a "brain drain," Spanish scientists are anxiously waiting to hear exactly which programs will be affected by another round of belt-

tightening. A package of austerity measures announced late last month by Spain's new, conservative-leaning government seeks to cut about €600 million from the nation's science budget. That amounts to nearly a 7% decrease from 2011 spending levels.

Many scientists have raised concerns that Spain's national research centers, which have absorbed a significant part of past funding cuts, will be hit again. The National Research Council (CSIC), for example, has already seen delays and cancellations in some programs.

Adding to researcher's apprehensions, the Spanish government also abolished the Ministry of Science and Innovation. The country's new top scientist, biochemist Carmen



Vela

Vela, has taken on a leadership role under the new Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness. Vela, who has gained the ire of some Spanish conservatives for her support of socialist political candidates, moved to reassure the scientific community. "The panorama is difficult," she told the Spanish press. But "we are going to do the impossible." <http://scim.ag/VelaSpain>

Washington, D.C. 7

Reshuffle Would Shift NOAA To Interior

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) would move to the Interior Department under a White House plan announced last week that would eliminate the Department of Commerce. President Barack Obama said the proposed changes, which include a new agency focused on trade and business development, would save \$3 billion over 10 years and make government more efficient. >>



Meet the World's Smallest Vertebrate

Drop a dime in the middle of an eastern New Guinea rainforest, and you might squash a newly discovered frog species. *Paedophryne amauensis* has taken the top spot as the world's smallest vertebrate. Adults attain an average size of 7.7 millimeters in length, less than half the diameter of a U.S. dime. That beats out the former record holder, an Indonesian fish from the carp family whose females grow to about 7.9 millimeters. The new frog species lives in rainforest leaf litter, likely dining on springtails, mites, and ticks, the researchers report online in *PLoS ONE*. Miniaturization is nothing new for frogs. The 29 smallest species all come in under 13 millimeters. The researchers propose that the repeated evolution of extreme small size in frogs, coupled with their exclusivity to moist habitats, has allowed them to exploit the nooks and crannies in the vegetation of the rainforest floor. <http://scim.ag/DimeFrog>