



**Week ending Friday, September 18, 2020**

### **Avian Tragedy**

Scientists are trying to determine what caused untold thousands of migratory birds to fall from the sky dead or dying across parts of the Southwestern U.S. The songbird fatalities could be linked to the thick pall of wildfire smoke they flew through en route from Alaska and Canada to their winter grounds in Central or South America. Or they could have used up their fat reserves trying to fly around it before they perished in New Mexico, Colorado, Texas, Arizona and parts of Nebraska. Some fear the smoke damaged their lungs. “They’re literally just feathers and bones,” New Mexico State University graduate student Allison Salas wrote on social media.

### **Earthquakes**

Residents across central and eastern Nepal were shaken by a relatively strong tremor.

- Earth movements were also felt in central New Zealand, northeastern Japan, Russia’s Kamchatka Peninsula and northern Iceland.

### La Niña Emerges

Sea-surface temperatures across the tropical Pacific have cooled to the point in recent weeks that weather agencies have officially recognized the phenomenon as a new La Niña. The opposite of an El Niño, La Niña also develops about every three to five years with its own set of weather disruptions, including the chance of more and stronger tropical cyclones in the Atlantic basin. It also can bring wetter weather to northern Australia, Indonesia and the Philippines, along with drier weather for western South America and cooler-than-normal temperatures for western Africa. NOAA predicts the new La Niña has a 75% chance of persisting into next year.

### Eaten Live

A mosquito population boom in the wake of Hurricane Laura's fury in late August along the Gulf Coast has led to deer, cows, horses and other livestock being killed by the insects. Animals as large as bulls have been drained of their blood and stressed to fatal exhaustion, according to veterinary experts at Louisiana State University. The pests became so pervasive that several Louisiana parishes launched aerial spraying operations. Similar swarms occurred after Hurricane Lili in 2002 and Hurricane Rita in 2005.

### Firefighting Express

An Australian foundation is backing plans to use satellites, sensors and drones to detect and douse bushfires within an hour to curb the chance of major disasters. The Minderoo Foundation says there are already data networks developed outside Australia that can detect a wildfire within three minutes, and its goal is to expand from detection to actually extinguishing the blazes. "We want to push the boundaries of science and technology," said Adrian Turner, the chief executive of the foundation's Fire and Flood Resilience plan. The first step is to identify possible ignition points and predict which have the potential to become disasters.

### Wayward Migration

Three humpback whales on their way to Antarctic waters made a wrong turn into a

crocodile-infested river in far northern Australia.

While two appear to have turned back, one continued swimming upstream, where wildlife experts say it has little chance of being attacked by the much smaller reptiles. But there was concern that the lone whale could get stranded in a very remote area miles upstream where rescue efforts would be impossible, and it would then become “croc bait” as it foundered.

### Tropical Cyclones

Five tropical cyclones spun simultaneously across the Atlantic for only the second time in recorded history.

The most threatening was Hurricane Sally, which caused severe flooding from Louisiana to the Florida Panhandle as it crept ashore from the Gulf of Mexico.

- Power was knocked out across Bermuda by Hurricane Paulette’s high winds.
- Typhoon Noul was taking aim on central Vietnam late in the week.

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