



Week ending Friday, October 30, 2020

Arctic Losses

Sea ice surrounding the North Pole was at a record low extent for October due to unusually warm Arctic Ocean temperatures, according to Danish researchers. They say the ice has been slow to reform following the past summer's melt, and coverage was at the lowest of the past 40 years of satellite observations. "It's a trend we've been seeing the past years, with a longer open water season making the sun warm the sea for a longer time, resulting in shorter winters so the ice doesn't grow as thick as it used to," said Rasmus Tonboe of the Danish Meteorological Institute.

Measurements show an 8.2% downward trend during the past 10 years.

Earthquakes

Central and northwestern Iran were jolted by two separate temblors that were widely felt.

- Earth movements were also felt in southern Scotland, northeastern Taiwan, New Zealand's

North Island and the Himalayan Indian state of Sikkim.

Night Bites

Artificial light is causing some disease-carrying mosquitoes to track down and bite humans more frequently outside their usually active periods, researchers say. Writing in the *American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, scientists say that *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes, which normally fly and bite in the early morning and during the afternoon, will now bite at night in illuminated areas. They warn that increasing levels of light pollution could increase the chance of infection in humans with diseases such as dengue fever, yellow fever, chikungunya and Zika. Unlike other species that may emerge from the forest to feed on humans and animals, *Aedes aegypti* evolved with humans and prefers to feed on them.

Galapagos Bounty

Ecuador's Galapagos National Park says populations of the archipelago's penguins and flightless cormorants have seen a record increase since 2019, reaching the highest levels since 2006. Galapagos penguins are the only ones that live on the equator. They have grown in numbers from 1,451 in 2019 to 1,940 this year. The flightless cormorant population has increased from 1,914 to 2,220 during the same period. The park says La Niña conditions have helped provide more food for both species, allowing their populations to increase.

Isotope Warning

Plans to dump more than a million tons of contaminated water from Japan's Fukushima nuclear power plant disaster into the ocean are being highly criticized. Greenpeace warns in a report that the water stored after the 2011 meltdowns at the facility has such high levels of the isotope carbon-14 that it could damage human DNA if released into the Pacific. The move has also been strongly opposed by local fishermen. The Greenpeace report says that carbon-14 has a half-life of 5,370 years and would become "incorporated into all living matter" over time if released into the wild. But Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga says the dumping can't be postponed forever.

Kamchatka Kill

The massive deaths of sea creatures along the eastern coast of Russia's Kamchatka Peninsula are being blamed by officials on a natural bloom of toxic algae and not on man-made pollution. Images of dead seals, octopuses and other marine life started appearing on social media in early October, accompanied by reports of local residents complaining of being sickened as well. Russia's Investigative Committee said the deaths were entirely due to natural causes. But initial tests found levels of oil products and phenol, used to make plastics, in the water.

Tropical Cyclones

The northern Philippines was lashed by high winds and flash floods as Typhoon Molave formed over the region. The storm later killed at least 35 people and worsened Vietnam's months-long flood crisis.

- After drenching Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula, Hurricane Zeta raked Louisiana as the fifth named storm to hit the state so far this year.

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