



Week ending Friday, December 4, 2020

Record Heat

The U.N. weather agency predicts that 2020 will come in as almost the hottest year on record, just behind the current record-holder, 2016. Global weather data now put this year as the second-warmest ever, with its heat waves, devastating tropical cyclones and firestorms. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres told an audience at New York's Columbia University that manmade greenhouse gas emissions are to blame, and that world leaders have yet to adequately confront the climate crisis. "To put it simply, the state of the planet is broken," said Guterres. "Humanity is waging war on nature. This is suicidal."

Earthquakes

Nevada's most powerful quake since 1954 was felt widely from Las Vegas and Reno westward to central California.

- Earth movements were also felt in south-central Kansas, the Alaska Peninsula, northeastern Taiwan, the central Philippines, southeastern Turkey and around the Greek capital of Athens.

Frayed Edges

The world's biggest iceberg, which threatens to blockade wildlife on Britain's South Atlantic island of South Georgia, is showing signs of disintegrating under the influence of the warmer waters it is encountering. The British Antarctic Survey says that Iceberg A68a is now riddled with cracks as it is battered by waves, shedding countless tiny icebergs around its edges. Images from SkySats orbiting spacecraft, which can reveal details as small as 20 inches across, show that the iceberg is now in the shape of a hand with an outstretched index finger. A68a broke off from Antarctica in 2017. It has surprised scientists by managing to stay intact for so long.

Tropical Cyclones

The 2020 Atlantic hurricane season ended with a record-breaking 30 named storms and the second-highest number of hurricanes ever observed. Among them were the greatest number of storms to make landfall in the continental United States. Climate scientists say that the unprecedented hurricane season had an undeniable link to the deepening global climate crisis.

- Far southern India and neighboring Sri Lanka were raked by new tropical storm-force Cyclone Burevi.

Tagged Giraffe

The world's only known white giraffe is now sporting a GPS tracking device so Kenyan park rangers can receive hourly updates of its location to protect it from poachers. The juvenile has a rare genetic condition called leucism, which causes it to lose skin pigmentation. Since it is believed to be the last of its kind, wildlife officials fear it could be poached like its relatives, a female and her 7-month-old calf with a similar condition. They were found dead in the same region of eastern Kenya where the white calf currently lives alone. Giraffes are the world's tallest mammals and are designated a vulnerable species, with an estimated global population of 68,293.

COVID Companions

Researchers say that pets have truly been lifesavers during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing much-needed comfort to their human companions through hugs, cuddles and their physical presence. Writing in *The Journal of Behavioral Economics for Policy*, a team from the University of South Australia documents how pets have played a crucial role while typical human-to-human interactions sometimes proved to be life-threatening. “Touch is an understudied sense, but existing evidence indicates it is crucial for growth, development and health, as well as reducing the levels of the stress hormone cortisol in the body,” the researchers write.

Eruptions

Falling ash and sulphur killed livestock and blanketed several villages around Java’s Mount Semeru following a powerful blast.

- It came two days after Mount Ili Lewotolok shot out columns of hot clouds high above the island of Lembata, in Indonesia’s East Nusa Tenggara province.

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