



Week ending Friday, December 11, 2020

La Niña Persists

U.S. forecasters predict there is a 95% chance the current moderate La Niña episode will prevail until at least March, triggering a unique set of global weather shifts. They add there is a chance it will peak in the strong range during January. While El Niños typically last just one year, La Niñas often fade, then redevelop the following year. Australian meteorologists say the ocean-cooling across the tropical Pacific can probably be linked to a cyclone-like storm that was lashing the coast of Queensland in mid-December. The deepening climate crisis is also said to be a factor in that storm and accompanying floods.

Earthquakes

At least nine light tremors rattled residents in parts of Wichita, Kansas, for a second week without inflicting damage.

- Earth movements were also felt in the San Francisco Bay Area, Hawaii's Big Island, northeastern Japan, India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands, southeastern Pakistan and the Russian republic of Chechnya.

White Penguin

The Galapagos National Park reports a white penguin that appears to have a rare genetic condition is living along the northern coast of Isabela Island. Park scientists say the leucism responsible for the white appearance of the Galapagos penguin differs from albinism because the bird has normal eye color.

Etna Eruption

Sicily's Mount Etna produced a dramatic and colorful eruption that coated parts of nearby Catanian villages with ash. Glowing lava spewed from the mountain's southeastern flanks, illuminating the area during an overnight eruption that lasted several hours. One lava fountain appeared to shoot up almost 300 feet above the summit at the peak of the eruption. Residents the following morning had to wash the volcanic debris from their cars, streets and balconies.

Towering Relocation

Two of eight giraffes marooned on an island in Kenya's Great Rift Valley were very carefully moved by barge to a new home where they will be free to roam. Rising lakes have stranded giraffes and other wildlife on islands, forcing officials to launch relocation efforts. "Moving a giraffe is a delicate process. It took a whole day just to move one giraffe, with the barge taking at least two hours to get to the mainland," Jackson Komen, a warden for the Kenya Wildlife Service in Baringo said. "The remaining, including some pregnant females, will be moved a little later," Komen added.

Roman Invasion

Rome's iconic umbrella pine trees are under siege from a tiny insect known as the pine tortoise scale. Originally from North America, the invasive *Toumeyella parvicornis* has an oval shell that makes it look like a tortoise. It first appeared in Naples to the south five years ago, ravaging that city's stone pines. Agronomists say it can kill trees within just two or three years by operating like a vampire, sucking sap then coating trees with a fungus that blocks photosynthesis. They are looking at natural predators to control the infestation since it is not practical to use pesticides in the bustling Italian capital. "In Europe, our pines have never seen this insect and have no defense mechanism," entomologist Antonio Garonna said.

Tropical Cyclones

Category-5 Cyclone Yasa was predicted to cut a path through the heart of Fiji late in the week, triggering flash flooding as well as destroying structures and crops.

- Tropical Storm Zazu raked Tonga with damaging winds and powerful thunderstorms.

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