



Week ending Friday, February 12, 2021

Ocean Noise

The racket of human activity beneath the ocean surface is drowning out the natural noises made by marine creatures, which researchers say is as harmful as overfishing, pollution and climate change. A University of Exeter team made the conclusion after reviewing more than 500 studies on marine noise. The review says while military sonar and oil exploration blasts are obvious sources of distress and deafness in the ocean, noise from shipping has increased by 32 times in the past 50 years. The study says the din of offshore wind farms, bottom trawling and other sources are drowning out the calls many species use to communicate, spawn and migrate.

Earthquakes

A powerful undersea tremor south of Vanuatu generated a small South Pacific tsunami.

- Earth movements were also felt in the far southern Philippines, Taiwan, Armenia and Georgia, the Virgin Islands, northern Oklahoma, the San Francisco Bay Area and Portland, Oregon.

Eruption

Explosions within Guatemala's Pacaya volcano sent plumes of ash high into the sky south of the capital city and streams of lava flowing down its southern flank. Officials issued a yellow alert to aviation due to the ash, which also fell on nearby communities and farms. The eruption was not a threat to populated areas other than from the falling volcanic debris. Pacaya is the most active of the 32 volcanic cones that dot the Central American nation. A powerful eruption in May 2010 killed a TV journalist who was covering Pacaya's rumblings.

Saharan Red

One of the strongest in a series of powerful winter storms raging across parts of Europe drew in a massive plume of Saharan dust, which coated Pyrenees and Alpine ski resorts with an orange hue. The airborne particles also triggered respiratory problems in humans from Barcelona to southern France. Originating in Algeria, the dust turned skies red as far north as the German city of Stuttgart. The dust contained particles of calcite, ferric oxide, quartz and clay.

Rodent Invasion

Parts of southeastern Australia have been overrun by a massive infestation of mice, with untold numbers of the ravenous rodents swarming into people's homes and threatening crops. The center of the infestation is in rural New South Wales, but the pests have also spread into parts of Queensland, Victoria and South Australia. Researcher Steve Henry blames abundant rainfall and a good harvest for allowing mice to spike in numbers starting last year. He says all that is needed to start killing the mice off is a cold, heavy rain to flood their nests in the ground.

COVID Climate

New research points to man-made climate change as a key component in the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, and warns of other such animal-to-human transmissions of new

pathogens in the future. Scientists found large-scale changes in vegetation driven by climate change across China's Yunnan province over the past century allowed 40 new bat species to move into the area, carrying 40 new types of viruses. "As climate change altered habitats, species left some areas and moved into others, taking their viruses with them," zoologist Robert Beyer of the University of Cambridge wrote. With the human population growing and expanding into the new bat habitats, it becomes more likely people will encounter those animals and their viruses, the study concludes.

Tropical Cyclones

Cyclone Faraji briefly attained Category-5 force as it looped in the central Indian Ocean.

- Tropical Storm Twenty formed briefly south of Fiji.

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