



Week ending Friday, July 23, 2021

Climate Disasters

Atmospheric experts concede that they were shocked by the intensity of the recent European floods and the North American heat dome, saying their computer models are not yet able to project such extremes. Some scientists say the next official predictions due out in August by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change will already be outdated when released due to the rapidly intensifying climate emergency. Freak weather events are now happening with greater frequency, ranging from the heaviest rain on record in parts of Japan and China this month to the record-breaking June heat across parts of India, Pakistan and Libya.

Earthquakes

Costa Rica and Panama were jolted by what some described as the strongest and longest quake to be felt there in years. • Earth movements were also felt in Pakistan's Punjab province, northern Mongolia, southwestern Iran, the far southern Philippines and northwestern California.

Acidic Infestation

Unusually heavy summer monsoon rainfall over the southwestern U.S. has brought out an acid-squirting creature in Texas' Big Bend National Park that a Houston Chronicle reporter described as a "land lobster from hell." Officials in the park say the vinegaroons, or whip scorpions, can shoot well-aimed but nonpoisonous vinegar acid from their tails if threatened. They also have large pincers, but are typically nocturnal and can't see very well. Park visitors are advised not to worry too much about the vinegaroons unless they happen to annoy one.

Flamingo Tragedy

The dried-up lake bed of central Turkey's Lake Tuz is littered with the remains of thousands of flamingos that became the victims of a devastating regional drought and what some say were reckless irrigation practices this summer. Environmental advocates say a canal that usually feeds the shallow lake was redirected for use by farmers. Typically, as many as 10,000 flamingo chicks hatch at Lake Tuz each year, but most of the 5,000 that hatched this year died. Visitors to the UNESCO-protected lake say not a single live flamingo could be seen.

Baboon Raids

Ferocious baboons are terrorizing farmers in western Kenya with such intensity that conventional weapons such as clubs and spears cannot keep the marauders at bay. The Nation reports that some of the primates have invaded homes to scavenge for food without fear of humans. This has forced some farmers to gather packs of dogs to protect their crops and other property. "My dogs sometimes sustain serious injuries," Nicanor Odongo told the daily. Other farmers complain that the Kenya Wildlife Service is not doing enough to protect them from the baboons, but local officials say the agency is making plans to relocate the aggressive animals to a game park.

Nuclear Monitors

A new study finds that a species of snake native to Japan's Fukushima nuclear disaster zone can be used to monitor the level of radioactive contamination 10 years after the world's worst nuclear disaster there. Writing in the journal "Ichthyology & Herpetology," researchers from the University of Georgia and Fukushima University say rat snakes travel only short distances, have long life spans and can accumulate high levels of radionuclides from contaminated soil. The researchers say this makes the snakes better monitors for radioactive contamination than the more mobile species like East Asian raccoon dogs, wild boar and songbirds.

Tropical Cyclones

Typhoon In-fa lashed some of Japan's southernmost islands as a Category-2 storm.

- Typhoon Cempaka soaked far southern China after making landfall in Guangdong province.
- Hurricane Felicia weakened as Tropical Storm Guillermo formed off Mexico.

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