



Week ending Friday, October 8, 2021

Earth Dimming

Global heating during the past two decades has caused the planet to appear dimmer from space, scientists say. Less low-lying cloud cover over parts of the warming oceans is said to be the main cause of a 0.5 percent drop in the amount of light reflected by the planet. Most of the dimming observed by satellites was across the vast Pacific and during the last three years of the 1998-2017 study. Scientists at the Big Bear Solar Observatory in New Jersey write in *Geophysical Research Letters* that the changes in Earth's reflectiveness did not match changes in the sun's brightness during recent solar cycles.

Historic Eruption

The eruption of the La Palma volcano in the Canary Islands became the most destructive in Spain's history after parts of the massive volcanic dome collapsed, sending thick lava cascading into the Atlantic. Nearly 1,000 homes have been lost in the 10 percent of La Palma hit by the

lava.

Heat Islands

Heat stored in buildings, roads and other man-made objects is causing the nearly quarter of the world's population that lives in cities to suffer increased health hazards and economic hardships caused by global heating. And researchers write in the "Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences" that as metropolitan areas grow larger, they will become even greater heat traps. During the past 40 years, hundreds of millions of people have moved from rural areas to cities in search of a better life. The heat there worsens preexisting health conditions and the ability to work, the report says. About 40 major cities in the United States alone saw exposure to extreme heat grow "rapidly," mainly in the Gulf Coast states from Florida to Texas

Tropical Cyclones

The remnants of Tropical Storm Gulab, which earlier lashed India's Bay of Bengal coast, regenerated into Cyclone Shaheen over the Arabian Sea. It then triggered dust storms and severe flooding from southern Iran to Oman. At least 36 people were killed by the cyclone from India to the Saudi Peninsula. • Typhoon Mindulle brought heavy rain and gales to the east coast of Japan. • Bermuda was pounded by heavy surf from passing Hurricane Sam, which still maintained tropical storm force as its remnants eventually skirted Iceland.

Rodent Resurgence

Australia's disastrous mouse plague is growing rapidly again as the country leaves wintertime and approaches the summer growing season. Following a lull in recent months, experts warn that farmers could again be forced to destroy their crops if they become contaminated by the pests' droppings or decaying bodies. The losses and emotional toll inflicted last autumn by untold hundreds of millions of the marauding mice created economic and mental health crises for many growers. Wildlife experts say that the poisons used by farmers to help control the ravenous hordes have also killed large clusters of cockatoos and other creatures.

Water Warnings

Much of the world appears unprepared for the hazards that global heating will bring, with increased flooding, hurricanes and drought. A new report by the World Meteorological Organisation says that well over half of the 100 countries surveyed need better weather forecasting systems to cope. The report documents that since 2000, flooding disasters rose by 134 percent compared with the last two decades of the 20th century. Drought-related disasters rose by 29 percent during the same period. Asia suffered most from increased flooding, while African nations recorded the most drought-related deaths. A quarter of all cities around the world already experience water shortages.

Earthquakes

At least 20 people were killed and hundreds injured when an overnight temblor wrecked mud homes in central Pakistan. • Earth movements were also felt in northern Afghanistan, metropolitan Tokyo, northeastern Japan, the Big Island of Hawaii, the northwestern Philippines and southwestern Switzerland.

Earthweek: Diary of a Changing World

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Friday, 22 October 2021 04:29

Dist. by: Andrews McMeel Syndication©MMXXI Earth Environment Service

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