



**Week ending Friday, April 1, 2022**

### **Early Birds**

A new study reveals that some birds in the American Midwest are now laying their eggs about a month earlier than they did a century ago, with a steadily warming climate pointed to as the cause. Led by Chicago's Field Museum, a team compared century-old eggs preserved in the museum's unique collection with recent avian observations. Each egg is accompanied by a label, noting the kind of bird and precisely where and when it was collected. A third of the 72 species studied around Chicago now lay their eggs about 25 days earlier than they did a century ago. The gradual shift to an earlier spring has resulted in large impacts on animal and plant life cycles. Scientists believe this is responsible for the steep decline in bird populations since the 1970s.

### **Earthquakes**

In an unusually quiet week for seismic activity in populated areas of the world, mild tremors shook northeastern Borneo and metropolitan Tokyo.

### Blood Plastic

Dutch researchers say that for the first time, microplastics have been found in human blood samples. Writing in the journal *Environment International*, they document how a small study detected traces of the plastic pollutants in the blood samples of 17 out of 22 volunteers. The study suggests the PET plastic and polystyrene particles were likely inhaled or ingested before winding up in the bloodstream. The substances are found in plastic bottles, polyester fibers and other products. The researchers also emphasize that more studies are needed to determine if the man-made substances pose a public health risk.

### Rumblings

Swarms of volcanic tremors in Portugal's Azores archipelago have farmers and officials there worried that an eruption similar to Spain's La Palma last year is imminent. The rumblings on lush São Jorge have already prompted the evacuation of some elderly and disabled residents near where the seismic activity has been centered. The last eruption there occurred in 1808.

- More than 4,000 people were evacuated from around the Philippines' Taal volcano as an eruption intensified.

### Reef Bleaching

Areal surveys of Australia's Great Barrier Reef reveal that there is now so much new dead coral that scientists believe a serious coral bleaching event is developing. The worst bleaching has been observed north and south of Townsville. Mild or moderate bleaching has been seen in the far north of the reef. Rising ocean temperatures due to climate change are blamed for the more-frequent bleaching, which also occurred on a large scale in 1998, 2002, 2016, 2017 and 2020. But this bleaching event is occurring during a La Niña ocean-cooling event, which typically helps cool the reef. Experts say that climate change is now overpowering that process and leaving the reef under constant thermal stress.

### Crypto Energy

Bitcoin mining by massive arrays of servers around the world consumes an oversized amount of electricity as its network verifies secure transactions with extremely complex puzzles. It is estimated that the process already consumes as much energy as Sweden, and its drain on global power grids is growing. But Greenpeace and other environmental groups say that a coding switch could greatly reduce Bitcoin's energy consumption. The campaign, Change the Code Not the Climate, points to the coding soon to be adopted by rival cryptocurrency Ethereum that will slash its power consumption by 99%. Campaign spokesman Michael Brune says energy demand from bitcoin mining has been responsible for dirty coal plants and gas power plants being revived at a time when the world is struggling to reduce its carbon footprint.

### Tropical Cyclone

Cyclone Halima briefly reached Category-4 force as it looped across the central Indian Ocean.

## Earthweek: Diary of a Changing World

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