

Week ending Friday, July 31, 2020

Global Quieting

The plunge in human activities worldwide in recent months due to the pandemic has brought the longest and most pronounced quiet period of seismic noise in recorded history. An international team of scientists write in the journal *Science* that the relative quiet has allowed them to detect previously concealed earthquake signals, which could help us more accurately tell the difference in the future between man-made and natural seismic noise. The typically quiet periods around Christmas, New Year's and the Chinese New Year have been eclipsed by the decline of industrial production, transport and service industries brought on by COVID-19.

Earthquakes

One of the strongest of 23 tremors to hit far eastern India's Mizoram state in five weeks triggered landslides and damaged a water supply pipeline.

- Earth movements were also felt in northeastern Taiwan and the southern Philippine island of Mindanao.

Expecting Again

An orca mother that made global headlines in August 2018 by carrying her dead calf on the ocean surface for 17 days is pregnant again, scientists say. "Tahlequah" and a community of 71 other killer whales live and breed in the Pacific off of Vancouver Island and Washington State. And while females of the species have been known to carry their dead calves for up to a week, Tahlequah's epic mourning two years ago broke the record. Researchers say she and another female in the group are now pregnant. Orcas typically give birth after 17 to 18 months.

Fiery Eruption

Fountains of lava erupted from the summit of Guatemala's Pacaya in a colorful display that was clearly visible from the country's capital 12 miles to the north. The eruption is expected to last for at least a few months as magma rises from beneath the conical volcano. No populated areas have so far been threatened. A decade ago, Pacaya produced a much stronger eruption that disrupted life around Guatemala City and resulted in the death of a television journalist who was exposed to toxic gases from the volcano.

Cooling Dilemma

While air conditioners will undoubtedly become more and more necessary as the planet warms further in the decades ahead, U.N. officials say the devices need to become more efficient and use different coolants to help combat global heating. Two U.N. agencies report that cutting the use of climate-warming refrigerants, such as hydrofluorocarbons, could prevent 0.7 degrees Fahrenheit of warming by 2100. They add that doubling the energy efficiency of air conditioners by 2050 would eliminate the equivalent of the emissions of all coal-fueled power plants in operation during 2018 across China and India.

'Tropical' Siberia

The second unprecedented hot summer in a row across the Arctic has brought temperatures warmer in Siberia than in some parts of Florida. Norway's Arctic archipelago of Svalbard also just recorded its hottest temperature on record with a reading of 71 degrees F. The U.N. weather agency blames the northward swing of the jet stream under global heating for blowing warmer air into the polar region. Russian scientists say they are now looking at the possibility of planting soybeans in areas where the thawing permafrost is turning the Siberian landscape into fertile soil.

Tropical Cyclones

Hurricane Hanna left a trail of destruction across far southern Texas and northeastern Mexico.

- The Hawaiian Islands were skirted by record-breaking Hurricane Douglas, which took a more northerly path than any other such storm.
- Tropical Storm Isaias brought heavy rain to islands from the eastern Caribbean to the Greater Antilles.

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