



Week ending Friday, November 6, 2020

Light Pollution

Humanity's pervasive use of artificial light is causing widespread impacts on the world's animals and plants, and researchers say it should be limited where possible. Writing in the journal *Nature Ecology and Evolution*

, University of Exeter scientists say their analysis of more than 100 studies reveals light pollution causes changes to animal behavior and physiology, especially hormone levels and patterns of waking, sleeping and activity. They say even low levels of artificial light can have profound effects. "In effect, we need to view light like any other pollutant," wrote researcher Kevin Gaston.

Earthquakes

More than 115 people perished in southwestern Turkey and the Greek island of Samos from a powerful temblor on Oct. 30.

- Earth movements were also felt in India's Jammu and Kashmir territory, northeastern India's Meghalaya state, around Indonesia's Banda Sea and islands of the eastern Caribbean.

Brazilian Blazes

The number of wildfires blackening tracts of Brazil's Amazon rainforest surged last month, reaching a level 25% higher from January through October than in the same period of 2019. And the 17,326 hot spots observed this October were more than double the number during the same month last year. Brazil's National Institute of Space Research also observed a record number of blazes farther south in the Pantanal, the world's largest tropical wetlands, which extends across Brazil's borders with Paraguay and Bolivia. The World Wildlife Fund and other environmental organizations blame the blazes on the policies of President Jair Bolsonaro, who promotes opening both regions of the country to logging and farming.

Tropical Cyclones

At least 24 people perished when Category-4 Typhoon Goni hit the Philippine islands of Catanduanes and Luzon as the strongest named storm on the planet this year.

- Hurricane Eta, one of the strongest to ever hit Central America, killed five people as it brought devastating floods and wind damage on its slow passage across Nicaragua and Honduras.
- Tropical Storm Atsani formed to the northeast of the Philippines, as Tropical Storm Odalys spun up briefly to the west of Mexico.

Collision Course

The world's most massive iceberg appears to be taking dead aim on a remote British territory in the South Atlantic, where it could have devastating consequences for the island's wildlife. Iceberg A-68A, roughly the size of Cyprus, broke off from Antarctica's Larsen Ice Shelf in 2017 and is predicted to run aground in the shallow waters surrounding South Georgia in less than a month. Scientists from the British Antarctic Survey warn the massive chunk could block foraging routes for many thousands of the three penguin species that populate the island. This could threaten their chicks, as well as seal pups on the island, with starvation.

Overpowering Heat

The U.N. weather agency says 2020 could wind up as one of the hottest years on record even with the current La Niña ocean-cooling across the Tropical Pacific. World Meteorological Organization Secretary-General Petteri Taalas says that while La Niña produces a cooling effect on the planet, it is now more than offset by global heating and the climate crisis it is driving.

Dirty & Dangerous

Many of the world's oldest and most-polluting vehicles are not winding up in scrap-yards but are instead being "dumped" on the roadways of poor countries where they continue to spew high carbon emissions. A report by the U.N. Environment Program (UNEP) says that from 2015 to 2018, about 14 million outdated cars were exported from Europe, Japan and the U.S., with most winding up in Africa, Latin America and Asia. One of the UNEP report authors says about 80% of those vehicles aren't roadworthy and don't meet European emission standards.

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