



Week ending Friday, November 13, 2020

COVID-Susceptible

Canadian researchers warn that whales and other marine mammals could become infected with COVID-19 through inadequately treated sewage effluents.

While no such cases have been reported, scientists at Dalhousie University say their genomic mapping determined that almost all whale, dolphin and porpoise species have the same or higher susceptibility to the coronavirus as humans. “Many of these species are threatened or critically endangered,” said Dalhousie’s Graham Dellaire. “In the past, these animals have been infected by related coronaviruses that have caused both mild disease as well as life-threatening liver and lung damage.”

Earthquakes

A rare tremor in southern Massachusetts was felt widely across New England and caused some structural damage.

- Earth movements were also felt in Jamaica, North Macedonia, western India’s Gujarat state, south-central Alaska, southeastern Utah and West Texas.

‘River’ Damage

Strengthening rivers of relatively warm and moist air blowing southward from the middle latitudes are melting huge patches of sea ice around Antarctica, new research reveals. Diana Francis at Khalifa University in Abu Dhabi and her colleagues found that these atmospheric rivers are now making the storms that rage around Antarctica more powerful by fueling them with more water vapor. The storms help churn up nutrients for marine life. But when amplified by the atmospheric rivers, they accelerate climate change by breaking up the sea ice and opening up large patches of darker ocean water. These openings, known as polynyas, reflect less solar energy back into space than the white ice, allowing the water to heat up.

Tropical Cyclones

After leaving approximately 200 people dead from floods and mudslides in Central America, Hurricane Eta swamped Cuba then made landfall in Florida twice as a tropical storm, causing local floods.

- Tropical Storm Theta made 2020 a record year for the number of named storms in the Atlantic Basin.
- Typhoon Vamco killed at least 11 on Luzon Island as the 21st named storm to hit the Philippines this year.
- Tropical Storm Etau formed briefly over the South China Sea.

New Colony

Scientists in South Africa are trying to save from extinction the only penguin that breeds in

Africa by establishing a new colony at a protected site about 140 miles southeast of Cape Town. More than 1 million pairs of what was once South Africa's most abundant seabird thrived back in the 1920s. But people began harvesting their eggs for human consumption, helping to cause the populations to plunge to around 13,000 breeding pairs last year. Dwindling fish stocks and climate change have also contributed to the decline. About 50 hand-raised juvenile birds, abandoned by their parents, will be released each year to try to establish a colony at the De Hoop nature reserve.

'Zombie' Batteries

The pervasive dumping of discarded batteries from personal electronics and other devices is causing hundreds of fires a year at recycling and waste sites in the United Kingdom, officials say. The Environmental Services Association warns that battery types such as lithium-ion and nickel-metal hydride can explode or ignite when damaged, and are known to spark fires in nearby material if not disposed of properly. "Batteries in household waste and recycling can lead to large-scale and protracted fires. These incidents are often very challenging for fire services," said Mark Andrews of Britain's National Fire Chiefs Council.

Java Eruption

Hundreds of villagers around Indonesia's Mount Merapi fled their homes as the volcano spewed lava and ash during a weeklong increase in activity.

A major eruption in 2010 killed more than 300 people and forced nearly 400,000 others to evacuate.

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