



Week ending Friday, November 27, 2020

Warming Bites

Warmer temperatures may be causing blood-sucking ticks to shift their feeding preference from dogs to humans in a potentially growing threat to public health. This finding is alarming because ticks carry and can transmit deadly Rocky Mountain spotted fever. Experiments conducted at the University of California, Davis School of Veterinary Medicine placed a human in one box and a dog in an adjacent one. The researchers watched at various temperatures as the ticks sniffed out which mammal would bring their next blood meal. While at 75 degrees Fahrenheit the ticks showed a distinct preference for the dog, they became 2.5 times more likely to prefer humans at around 100 degrees.

Earthquakes

Russia's Bellingshausen Antarctic research station was rocked by a magnitude 6.0 temblor off the Antarctic Peninsula.

- Earth movements were also felt in central Chile, Guam, northeastern Japan and southeastern Spain.

Greenhouse Rise

The U.N. weather agency says that while global carbon emissions fell by as much as 17% globally at times during the COVID pandemic, the levels of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere have continued to rise to even higher records this year. “The lockdown-related fall in emissions is just a tiny blip on the long-term graph,” World Meteorological Organization chief Petteri Taalas said. “We need a sustained flattening of the curve.” He added in a statement that such a rise in carbon dioxide levels as observed over the past four years has never been seen before, either in direct measurements from the atmosphere or in ice-core samples that reveal CO2 concentrations from up to 800,000 years ago.

Returning Giants

Critically endangered blue whales, the largest creatures ever known to have existed, are returning to Britain’s sub-Antarctic island of South Georgia. U.K. scientists say the whales appear to be growing in numbers around the island after being nearly wiped out by whaling 50 years ago. While only a single blue whale was seen there between 1998 and 2018, 58 were spotted in a survey in February of this year. Another recent study found that humpback whales are also returning to the same waters.

Regal Death

The oldest lion in Kenya's Maasai Mara Game Reserve died peacefully and with dignity after a 16-year reign in the park. Olorpait had sired many offspring while shuttling between five separate prides, according to the reserve. "It was a celebrity lion that was a darling to tourists," Chief Warden James Sindiyo told the *Nairobi News*. It reports that as soon as word went out that the famous lion had passed, hundreds of tourists and wild cat lovers who had interacted with him sent condolences. The lion was said to have been injured when younger territorial lions attacked him a few weeks ago.

Lofty Plastic

Scientists report they have found the uppermost-recorded microplastic pollution on the planet near the summit of Mount Everest. An international team organized by England's University of Plymouth says it collected "substantial quantities" of polyester, acrylic, nylon and polypropylene fibers at an elevation of 27,690 feet. The team says that while some could be from material carried up Everest by climbers, much of it could have been blown there by the powerful winds that often impact the mountain's higher slopes. Plastic pollution has been found in recent years from the world's highest mountain to its deepest ocean trench.

Tropical Cyclones

Somalia was raked by Category-2 Cyclone Gati, which killed at least four as the strongest such storm on record there.

- India's Tamil Nadu state was raked by Category-1 Cyclone Nivar.

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