



Week ending Friday, January 29, 2021

Record Melt

Earth has lost an estimated 28 trillion metric tons of ice due to global heating since the mid-1990s as the rate of melting accelerated at a record pace. This is in line with the worst-case scenarios experts with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change have warned of in earlier projections. Writing in the journal *The Cryosphere*, lead author Thomas Slater said the melt will contribute to significant rises in ocean levels. “Sea level rise on this scale will have very serious impacts on coastal communities this century,” Slater said.

Earthquakes

The strongest in an intense swarm of tremors that shook Spain’s Granada province for days cracked buildings, tossed items off shelves and sent residents fleeing their homes.

- Earth movements were also felt in Cyprus, South Asia’s Hindu Kush region, China’s Yunnan province, the Antarctic Peninsula, Fiji, west-central Colombia, northwestern Ohio and coastal Southern California.

Disappearing Bees

About a quarter of all known bee species haven't been seen since the 1990s even though efforts by scientists and amateurs to survey them have increased by about 55 percent since the turn of the century. Eduardo Zattara and Marcelo Aizen of Argentina's National University of Comahue found that the decline isn't the same for all bee populations, and the lack of sightings for those missing doesn't mean the species have gone extinct. The researchers say it just means those bees are now rare enough that people who tend to report bee sightings aren't coming across them. The destruction of natural habitats, heavy use of pesticides and climate change are likely to be causing the decline, according to Zattara.

African Cyclone

Unprecedented Tropical Cyclone Eloise killed at least 21 people across five southern African countries after raking Madagascar the previous week. Eloise submerged large tracts of southern Mozambique before producing widespread severe flooding across Zimbabwe, Botswana, Eswatini (Swaziland) and South Africa. Its flooding created chaos in areas farther south in Africa than any other such storm on record.

Dwarf Giraffes

Two separate giraffes with a condition that makes them about half the height of an average giraffe have been spotted thousands of miles apart in Uganda and Namibia — the first time dwarfism has been observed in giraffes. Their discovery in recent years was just published in the *British Medical Journal*. The one discovered in Uganda, Gimli, measured 9.3 feet in height, while the Namibia dwarf, Nigel, was only 8.5 feet tall. Their diminutive size is caused by skeletal

dysplasia, which affects humans and domestic animals, but the report points out that it is rarely observed in wildlife.

Snowless Fuji

Japan's iconic Mount Fuji, the highest mountain in the country and visible on clear days from parts of Tokyo, has only a scant snowcap this year in a development that is concerning climate experts and average citizens alike. Satellite images reveal that the snow cover in December was the lowest in 20 years, with average daily snowfall only about 10 percent of normal this winter. While Fuji received a modest amount of snow from a storm in late December, it soon melted or was blown away by high winds. A warming climate in the last four decades has also caused the 12,388-foot mountain's timberline to expand upslope about 100 feet.

Java Eruption

Indonesia's most active volcano sent a wide stream of lava and pyroclastic clouds flowing down its slopes in the heart of densely populated Java. It was the strongest eruption since officials raised Mt. Merapi's danger level in November.

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