



Week ending Friday, February 26, 2021

Open Arctic

Global heating has melted so much of the thick multi-year ice off the coast of Siberia that Russia has for the first time been able to navigate a cargo ship from Asia to a home port on the Arctic Ocean in winter. By using the newly opened Northern Sea Route instead of the traditional path around Asia and the Middle East, through the Suez Canal and around Europe, the Sovcomflot shipping company saved millions of dollars and days of travel time. Traffic through the NSR has exploded during summer in recent years but has remained closed from November until July. Russia now has plans to use its expanding fleet of civilian nuclear-powered icebreakers to make the path available year-round.

Earthquakes

Iceland's capital of Reykjavik was jolted by a strong quake and several sharp aftershocks.

- Earth movements were also felt in northeastern New Zealand, central Costa Rica and along the Kansas-Oklahoma border.

Porcine Gamers

Researchers have found that pigs can be trained to play video games, using only their snouts to manipulate a joystick in front of a computer monitor. Scientists at Pennsylvania State University tested two Yorkshire pigs named Hamlet and Omelette, and two Panepinto micro pigs, Ebony and Ivory. They found that the highly intelligent swine plowed through levels of difficulty to excel at the game. But Hamlet and Omelette were forced to retire after 12 weeks because “they had grown too large to stand long enough to complete sessions.” The Penn State team plans to expand its research by using touchscreens and other technology to test the pigs’ abilities.

Orange ‘Juice’

Seville is launching a project to generate electricity from the thousands of bitter oranges that frequently litter the Spanish city’s streets. *The Guardian* reports that about 35 tons of the fruit will be added to the other organic matter currently generating energy to fuel the city’s water purification plants. It’s hoped that the methane put out by the fermenting fruit can also generate enough surplus energy to be put into the power grid, powering about 73,000 homes. “We hope that soon we will be able to recycle all the city’s oranges,” Benigno López of the Seville water utility said.

Power Line Hazard

The electrocution of 11 giraffes from low-hanging transmission lines in a Kenyan conservation area has the country’s power company promising to raise the cables and check its entire network for safety. Conservationists demanded immediate action after three rare Rothschild’s giraffes were killed in the Soysambu Conservancy within three days. Only about 1,600 of the species, which do not have spots on their legs, roam freely in the wild. The Soysambu Conservancy currently hosts about 125 giraffes.

Meltdown Legacy

Written by Gallupsun Staff
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Scientists have discovered more and different highly radioactive particles were released into the environment around Japan's Fukushima nuclear power plant when meltdowns occurred after the March 2011 earthquake and subsequent tsunami. While it was known that particles containing radioactive cesium were widely distributed at the time, reaching as far away as Tokyo, larger such particles from the hydrogen explosion of reactor unit 1 were deposited within a narrow zone. Little is known about the environmental and human health impacts of these particles. But an international team of scientists says that because of their large size, they are likely to mainly pose a threat when they come in sustained contact with skin.

Pacaya Eruption

Guatemala's Pacaya volcano continued its latest eruptive phase with blasts that sent ash soaring high into the sky south of the capital and blanketing nearby villages.

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