



Week ending Friday, March 12, 2021

Space 'Hurricane'

Scientists say they have observed a hurricane-like feature spinning in the highest levels of the atmosphere. An international team of scientists analyzed 3D satellite data from 2014 and found a cyclone of plasma swirling above the polar ionosphere and magnetosphere that resembled a hurricane at the surface. But the 650-mile-wide feature, hundreds of miles above the North Pole, rained electrons rather than water. The space hurricane had multiple spiral arms and lasted almost eight hours before gradually breaking down. "Until now, it was uncertain that space plasma hurricanes even existed, so to prove this with such a striking observation is incredible," said Mike Lockwood of the University of Reading.

Tropical Cyclones

Cyclone Niran skirted New Caledonia as a Category-3 storm.

- Tropical Storm Iman formed briefly south of Reunion and Mauritius while Cyclone Habana churned the remote central Indian Ocean with Category-4 force.

Geriatric Mom

The world's oldest known wild bird has hatched yet another chick at the ripe old age of at least 70. The Laysan albatross known as Wisdom was first tagged in 1956 and is believed to have had at least 30 to 36 chicks during her lifetime. Since the species mates for life, it's believed Wisdom has outlived previous partners before mating with Akeakamai ("lover of wisdom" in the Hawaiian language) in 2012. Wisdom's latest hatchling emerged in February at the Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge in the mid-Pacific, where Wisdom and Akeakamai are feeding and caring for it jointly.

Earthquakes

A brief Pacific-wide tsunami alert was issued after a magnitude 8.1 temblor rocked New Zealand's remote Kermadec Islands, but only small rises in sea level were observed.

- Another sharp quake just off northeastern New Zealand triggered a brief local tsunami alert on the North Island.
- As tremors continued to indicate rising magma near Iceland's capital of Reykjavik, the prime minister assured residents that any eruption that may follow would be minor and would not endanger the population or critical infrastructure.

Rat Recovery

The ecology of a remote Alaskan island once known as Rat Island has quickly recovered from the damage inflicted by the invasive rodents just over 10 years after a coordinated effort eradicated them. Writing in the journal *Scientific Reports*, University of California San Diego researcher Carolyn Kurle reveals that native species on what is now known as Hawadax Island have since thrived and are restoring the landscape's natural balance. Rats were introduced there by a Japanese shipwreck sometime before 1780, and they quickly ravaged native birds and other wildlife.

Greenhouse Surge

Global carbon emissions have already rebounded to levels higher than before the pandemic, according to a report by the International Energy Agency. The Paris-based independent intergovernmental organization says worldwide emissions during December 2020 were up two percent from December 2019. “The rebound in global carbon emissions toward the end of last year is a stark warning that not enough is being done to accelerate clean energy transitions worldwide,” Fatih Birol of the IEA said in a statement. There was a four-point-nine-percent fall in emissions worldwide in 2020 due to the pandemic.

Eruptions

Mount Etna’s colorful eruption continued with lava flowing down its flanks and ash raining down.

- Four blasts from a sudden eruption of Nicaragua’s San Cristóbal volcano blanketed some nearby villages and crops with a layer of ash.
- Guatemala’s Pacaya volcano remained very active, tossing lava bombs and spewing ash from its crater.

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