



Week ending Friday, October 15, 2021

A Very Close Call

A Canadian woman says she is lucky to be alive after a meteor crashed through her roof and wound up on a pillow next to her head. Ruth Hamilton of Golden, British Columbia, said she was sound asleep the night of Oct. 4 when a loud crash and the feeling of debris falling on her face caused her to leap from her bed. A large stone and smaller bits were scattered on her bed. "Everything about the story was consistent with a meteorite fall, and the fact that this bright fireball had occurred basically right at the same time made it a pretty overwhelming case," astronomer Peter Brown said.

Earthquakes

A magnitude 6.1 quake after dark on Oct. 7 near Tokyo injured more than 20 people and caused scattered damage. • A powerful temblor centered near the Big Island was felt widely across Hawaii. • Earth movements were also felt in the Alaska Peninsula, the Spain-Andorra border area, Crete, islands of the Molucca Sea and central New Zealand.

Cyclone Refuge

Scientists have new insight into how birds and insects become trapped inside the eyes of hurricanes. Ship logs as far back as the 19th century detail how vessels became resting places for birds, exhausted from such entrapments. But studies by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln of weather radar “bioscatter” echoes during hurricanes show in detail how the storms can turn a free bird into a whirlybird. Researchers found that the stronger the hurricane, the more birds appeared to be in the eye. And with the increasing intensity of the storms, the more difficult it will be for the birds to leave the relative safety of the eye. That could mean they need to spend as much as a week flying in circles across thousands of miles.

Coldest Cold

The U.S. Snow and Ice Data Centre says that the last six months in Antarctica, most of it spent in the southern winter’s polar darkness, were the coldest on record. It calculated that the average temperature during the period was minus 60.9 degrees Celsius. The Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station also recorded its second-coldest June-August period on record, behind only 2004 in the station’s 60 years of weather records. The chill was due to two periods of very strong winds encircling the continent, and a strong polar vortex.

Volcanic Destruction

The ongoing violent eruption of Spain’s La Palma volcano saw chunks of lava the size of buildings spewed from its craters. Erratic and powerful lava flows forced an additional 800 residents from their homes as molten rock approached their municipalities. Nearly 7,000 people have evacuated since the Canary Island volcano began erupting on Sept. 19. Lockdowns have been imposed when toxic gases from the eruption have threatened to blow over populated areas. Lava has destroyed more than 1,400 buildings on La Palma, including homes, farms and a cement factory.

Climate Impacts

Nearly all of the world’s population may already be affected by the climate emergency, according to an analysis of tens of thousands of scientific studies. Researchers from Berlin’s

Mercator Research Institute and Climate Analytics say they used machine learning to comb through vast amounts of research between 1951 and 2018. After teaching a computer to identify climate-relevant studies, they gleaned results that include changes in butterfly migration, heat-related deaths, loss of forest coverage and other changes. They say data covering 80 percent of the globe shows 85 percent of the human population is already being impacted.

Tropical Cyclones

Landslides and floods from Tropical Storm Kompasu killed at least 19 people in the Philippines. It later lashed China's Hainan Island, on a path similar to Tropical Storm Lionrock's just days earlier. • Northwestern Mexico was drenched by late-season Hurricane Pamela. • The Pacific was churned by Tropical Storm Namtheun.

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