



Week ending Friday, December 24, 2021

Arctic Beavers

Beavers are slowly migrating farther north into the Arctic due to the warming climate, producing what a new U.S. government report says is a “significant impact” on the landscape. NOAA’s Arctic Report Card 2021 says western Alaska has seen a doubling of its beaver population to more than 12,000 during the past 20 years, compared to none between 1949 and 1955. Their dams are increasing surface water and adding to the rate of permafrost melt, which in turn releases the greenhouse gases methane and carbon dioxide. The ponds are also said to be helping new fish and invertebrate species move in.

Earthquakes

A temblor along the Laos-Thai border cracked a 425-year-old statue of Buddha. • Northwestern California was jolted by an offshore quake that caused minor damage and landslides. • Earth movements were also felt in south-central Alaska, northern Arizona, southwestern Iceland, northern Italy and Fiji.

Deforestation Heat

Workers in the tropics have increasingly been exposed over the past 15 years to heat that makes their outdoor labors unhealthful and even hazardous. Scientists say this is due to a combination of deforestation and climate change. But Luke Parsons of Duke University found that the most challenging conditions for outdoor workers are occurring in areas where forests have been felled. “The trees in the tropics seem to limit the maximum temperatures that the air can reach. Once we cut those trees down, we lose that cooling service from the trees, and it can get really, really hot,” Parsons says. He adds that the increased heat and humidity in deforested areas increase the risk of heat-related illnesses, including deadly heat stroke.

Unrelenting Heat

Simultaneous heat waves are now seen seven times more frequently in summer around the Northern Hemisphere than in the 1980s. Washington State University scientists found that concurrent heat waves the size of some medium-size countries also grew hotter and larger during the period. The team said the heat waves occurred on almost all of the 153 warm days from May through September somewhere in the middle and high latitudes.

“More than one heat wave occurring at the same time often has worse societal impacts than a single event,” Cassandra Rogers said.

True Millipede

A new species of millipede was unearthed 60 metres beneath the surface in a mining region of Australia’s Eastern Goldfields province, sporting a total of 1,306 legs. While all but one of the 7,000 known species of millipedes worldwide don’t come close to having 1,000 legs, *Eumillipes persephone* has far more. Writing in the Nature publication “Scientific Reports,” scientists say its body has up to 330 segments and can measure 96 mm in length. Its new scientific name, “*Eumillipes*” translates into “true-thousand-foot” while “*persephone*” references the Greek goddess of the underworld.

Tropical Cyclones

Super Typhoon Rai left a humanitarian crisis across central and southern provinces of the Philippines after carving out a path of destruction as one of the deadliest typhoons ever to strike the country. At least 375 people perished, with dozens more left missing. Outer bands of the storm later lashed coastal parts of Vietnam and South China. • An unnamed tropical depression unleashed catastrophic flooding as it passed over peninsular Malaysia, displacing more than 21,000 people from their homes.

Java Eruptions

Indonesian officials warned Java's Mount Semeru volcano could still produce further deadly blasts after a sudden eruption on Dec. 4 killed 48 people and left 36 others missing in areas buried beneath volcanic debris. Subsequent explosive eruptions have occurred since then, but earlier evacuations prevented additional fatalities.

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