

Earthweek: Diary of a Changing World

Week ending Friday, September 4, 2020

By Steve Newman

Wounded Ice

This summer's record heat around icy areas of the Northern Hemisphere has left a "deep wound" in the planet's cryosphere, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) says.

It said the damage to the icy landscape came amid record Arctic heat, dwindling polar sea ice and the fracturing of what had been Canada's last fully intact ice shelf.

WMO spokeswoman Clare Nullis called the Arctic heating at twice the global warming average a "vicious circle" that influences warming elsewhere.

"The rapid decline of sea ice in turn contributes to more warming, and so the circle goes on and the consequences do not stay in the Arctic," said Nullis.

Earthquakes

Northern Chile was jolted by a magnitude 6.8 temblor and more than a dozen aftershocks.

• Earth movements were also felt in the eastern Caribbean, the India-Myanmar border region, far northern New Zealand and the mid-Mississippi Valley.

La Niña Return

The U.N. weather agency says that even with the chilling effect of a possible La Niña ocean cooling in the Pacific later this year, the deepening climate crisis will still bring above-normal atmospheric temperatures.

The World Meteorological Organization says there is a 60% chance a weak La Niña will appear between September and November.

"2020 remains on track to be one of the warmest years on record, with much extreme weather, ranging from scorching temperatures and wildfires to devastating floods and marine heatwaves," said WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas.

Dolphin Frolic

A pair of dolphins was observed and photographed off the coast of Scotland engaging in sportful feats that included acrobatic flips and even moves that resembled playing fish volleyball.

Images that photographer Zaneta Blaszczyk captured of the marine mammals at play off the Black Isle Peninsula went viral.

"It almost looked like they were playing volleyball or something similar, but instead of a ball they used a fish, that kept flying in the air from one dolphin to another before it was finally consumed," said Blaszczyk.

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Spill Legacy

The 1,000 tons of fuel oil that spilled around Mauritius from a grounded Japanese tanker in July appear to have left at least 40 dolphins dead. Dead fish, turtles, whales and crabs were also observed.

Fishermen say they saw a mother dolphin using the last of her energy in a futile attempt to keep her faltering calf alive.

While the country's fisheries minister said that at first glance, the deaths didn't appear related to the spill, local oceanographer Vassen Kauppaymuthoo told reporters the dead dolphins smelled of fuel.



Photographer Zaneta Blaszczyk said the warm light of the setting sun gave her a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to capture this amazing image.

Tropical Cyclones

Category-2 Typhoon Maysak ravaged the South Korean coast near the country's second-largest city of Busan before inundating an already-waterlogged Korean Peninsula.

• The same region was threatened by developing Typhoon Haishen, which was predicted to attain Category-4 force before making landfall.

• Tropical storms Hernán and Iselle churned the Pacific near the southern tip of Baja California.

• Hurricane Nana doused Belize, Honduras and Guatemala while Tropical Storm Omar formed briefly off the U.S. eastern seaboard.

Mud Eruption

Four villagers in Central Java were recovering from fumes they inhaled during the sudden eruption of a mud volcano that killed nearly 20 of their cattle.

A toxic mixture of mud, methane, carbon dioxide and nitrogen spread widely across the landscape surrounding the eruption site.

Scientists say the spewing mud was the result of seismic activity and not drilling.

