

Week ending Friday, February 7, 2020


Arctic Greening

Their new study reveals that snow is melting earlier and plants are bursting into leaf much sooner in spring than in the historical record.

The warming is also allowing tundra vegetation to spread into new areas and grow taller in places where it had already existed.

The international team of 40 scientists from 36 institutions has found the greening at high latitudes of the Northern Hemisphere is far more complex and varied than previously thought.

Earthquakes

 China's quake-prone Sichuan province was soundly jolted by a magnitude 5.2 quake.

- Earth movements were also felt in the southern Philippine island of Mindanao, eastern Romania, eastern Turkey, northern Israel, Puerto Rico and the Big Island of Hawaii.

Forever Toxins

It is becoming nearly impossible to avoid exposure to a class of “forever chemicals” used in manufacturing that are causing a growing public health crisis.

The synthetic per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) used in fabrics, Teflon, Scotchgard, dental floss, eyeliner, carpeting and even food packaging accumulate without breaking down, especially in water.

Exposure to them has been linked to such ailments as cancer, cardiovascular disease, autoimmune disorders and kidney disease.

The Guardian reports PFAS are frequently found in rainfall, foods and the sludge that farmers spread on their crops as fertilizer. It's estimated that they can now be found in the blood of almost all Americans.

Many popular countertop filters don't remove all of the PFAS from tap water.

A Hot Start

The European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service says January 2020 was Europe's warmest January on record, topping January 2007 by two-thirds of a degree Fahrenheit.

The month was also the hottest for the entire planet by a tiny fraction of a degree above the previous record set in January 2016.

Last month's warmth was especially noticeable in Scandinavia, where the capitals of Helsinki, Oslo, Stockholm and Copenhagen were virtually snow-free as freakishly warm daytime temperatures rose to above freezing every day.

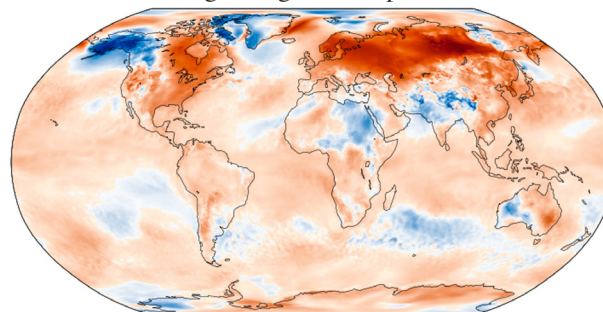
- Wild Food Ban

A network of environmental groups from 74 countries has urged China to make permanent its new ban on the sale of wildlife for food in public markets to help prevent future animal-borne pathogens from infecting people.

It is believed the Wuhan coronavirus made the leap from wildlife to humans in that city's market, where the flesh from dogs, turtles, bats, snakes, giant salamanders, crocodiles, hedgehogs and marmots was sold.

Experts believe the outbreak originated from human exposure to an infected snake or bat from the market.

The Friends of the Earth and Friend of the Sea also point to the overall environmental damage that the public markets are causing through their exploitation of wildlife.



Only Alaska, parts of northern Canada and Greenland were significantly cooler than normal during January 2020. Image: Copernicus

- Volcanic Detour


Dense ash from an eruption of Mount Shindake, on a small, sparsely populated island in far southern Japan, forced an Air New Zealand flight from Auckland to Tokyo to divert to Guam for a refueling stop.

Two other flights between Japan and New Zealand were either rescheduled or canceled due to the ash.

The approximately 100 residents of Kuchinoerabu Island were unaffected by the superheated volcanic debris cast out by the eruption.

The entire population was briefly evacuated to Yakushima Island, about 7 miles to the east, following a series of explosive eruptions in May 2015.

Tropical Cyclones



Strengthening Cyclone Damien was nearing Australia's remote northwestern coast late in the week.

• Tropical Storm Francisco became the second such weak cyclone to form near the Mascarene Islands within the past two weeks. The storm passed over the open waters east of Rodrigues.

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