

# Earthweek: Diary of a Changing World

Week ending Friday, July 3, 2020

By Steve Newman

## Bee Recovery

Beekeepers across the U.S. report that their colonies have rebounded from the losses suffered last year.

While the deadly 2018-2019 winter season saw a record 37.7% of the colonies die off, there was only a 22.2% loss last winter, the smallest in the last 14 years.

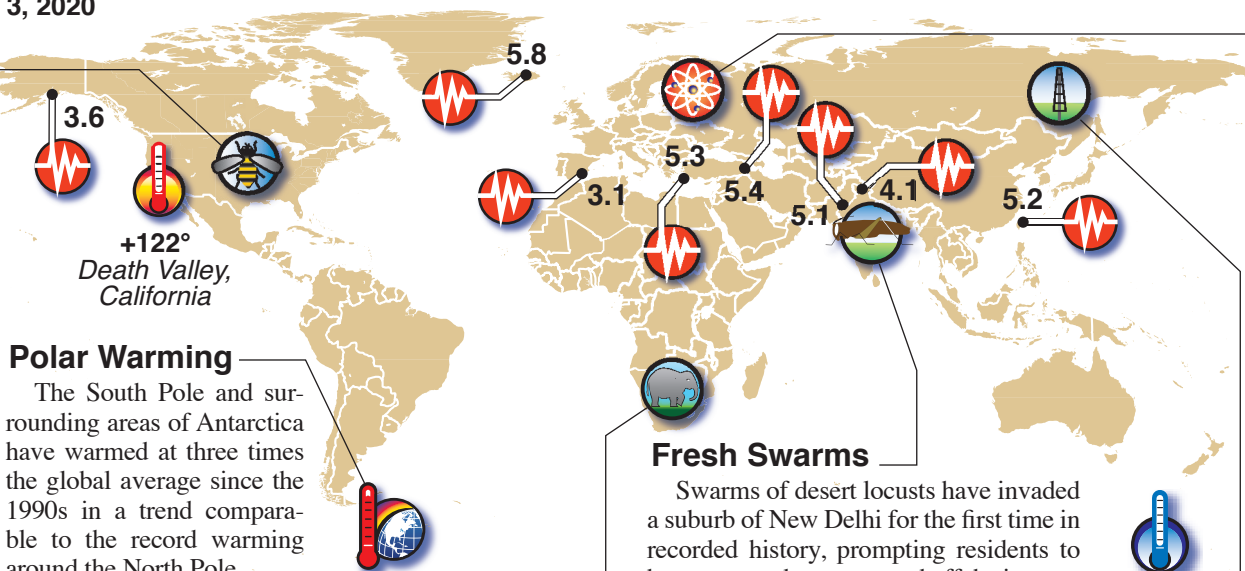
But losses had continued through the summer of 2019, when beekeepers reported a 32% death rate — much higher than the average for summer losses.

Honeybees are threatened by mites, diseases, pesticides and climate change, which experts say are part of the new normal the bee industry must cope with.

## Earthquakes

Five people were injured and dozens of homes were damaged when a temblor rocked eastern Turkey's Van province.

• Earth movements were also felt in the Greek island of Rhodes, southeastern Spain, northern Iceland, the central India-Pakistan border region, India's Jammu and Kashmir state, Taiwan and Anchorage, Alaska.



## Polar Warming

The South Pole and surrounding areas of Antarctica have warmed at three times the global average since the 1990s in a trend comparable to the record warming around the North Pole.

Writing in the journal *Nature Climate Change*, researchers say the Antarctic warming is driven by rising surface temperatures across the western tropical Pacific Ocean, which are at least partially linked to a natural cycle that occurs there over decades.

This has resulted in the ocean warmth being propelled into Antarctica by cyclones swirling across the Southern Ocean.

The scientists add that while carbon emissions have played some part in the warming, the strong naturally occurring cycle is masking much of their effect.

## Elephant Die-off

Wildlife experts in Botswana say they are baffled by the mysterious deaths of more than 350 elephants during the past two months in the northwest of the country, describing the losses as a “conservation disaster.”

All of the carcasses have been found intact, leading officials to believe the animals were not poached for their ivory. No evidence of poisoning by anthrax or humans has been found so far.

Some elephants have been seen walking around in circles and falling down on their faces as they died.

## Fresh Swarms

Swarms of desert locusts have invaded a suburb of New Delhi for the first time in recorded history, prompting residents to bang pots and pans to ward off the insects.

Neighboring Pakistan has battled infestations for weeks. But since the insects arrived between the last harvest and the next planting season, there have so far not been any reports of significant crop losses.

A new generation of the ravenous insects is now devastating crops that are emerging in East Africa.



Scientists estimate that the source of the mysterious cloud of radiation detected in Scandinavia could be anywhere from the North Sea to western Russia. Data: Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization

## Radiation Mystery

Russia has denied it is responsible for a cloud of radioactive particles detected at monitoring stations across northern Europe. Officials in Finland, Norway and Sweden say that one of the isotopes, Iodine 131, does not occur in nature and is created by nuclear fission. Cobalt, ruthenium and cesium were also detected in Finland.

While the amount of the radiation is considered tiny and not dangerous, its presence has led some experts to believe it may be from the testing of Russia's new cruise missiles, which are said to be propelled by on-board nuclear power plants.

## Russian Leaks

Satellite data have detected massive plumes of methane gas leaking from Russia's Yamal pipeline, which carries natural gas from Siberia to Europe.

The Paris-based Kayros energy consultancy said one leak was gushing 93 metric tons of methane each hour, with the same greenhouse gas effect as the exhaust of 15,000 cars in the United States during a full year.

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