

Earthweek: Diary of a Changing World

Week ending Friday, October 31, 2025

By Steve Newman

Bird Flu Rebounds

Avian influenza is spreading rapidly across the Northern Hemisphere as migratory birds carry the highly pathogenic H5N1 strain in Europe and North America.

Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands have recently culled hundreds of thousands of chickens, ducks and geese, while France has ordered all poultry indoors after raising its alert level to high.

Migrating cranes have been infected for the first time, heightening risks that wild birds will transmit the virus to farm flocks.

The United States and Great Britain have also reported new H5N1 cases, forcing additional culls and restrictions as authorities warn that bird flu has become a year-round global threat.

Earthquakes

A strong temblor in western Turkey collapsed several buildings while injuring 22 people.

• Tremors were also felt in Italy's Avelino province, Japan's Hokkaido Island, northeastern New Zealand, the Leeward Islands and from islands of the Banda Sea to Darwin, Australia.

Climate Imperative

With days to go before the COP30 climate summit in Brazil, the U.N. warned that most countries have failed to submit new carbon-cutting pledges, leaving the world far off track to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Just 64 nations, representing about 30% of global emissions, have delivered new climate plans, far short of the targets set under the 2016 Paris Agreement.

U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres said overshooting the 1.5 degree Celsius warming goal is now "inevitable."

Meanwhile, more than 2,000 European scientists urged European Union leaders to adopt a 90% emissions reduction goal by 2040, arguing that ambitious climate policy would not only protect the planet but strengthen Europe's economy as well.

Blocked Migration

Prehistoric elephant migration routes that once stretched freely across East Africa are being choked in parts of Kenya by roads, railways, farms and electric fences, triggering fatal conflicts between humans and the pachyderms.

Conservationists say more elephants are dying from clashes with people than from poaching for ivory, as expanding infrastructure and settlements block the animals' historic access to food and water.

Farmers have learned to protect their fields from the elephants with beehives and chili pepper bombs.

Deep Discoveries

Far beneath the waves off Western Australia, light flickers from a tiny shark's belly — an example of life's persistence even in the ocean's darkest reaches.

Scientists working on the research vessel *Investigator* say they have discovered two new species: a lantern shark that glows nearly 2,000 feet below the surface and a porcelain crab, barely half an inch long, that hides among coral fronds filtering food from the water.

Both creatures illustrate the adaptability of deep-sea organisms, evolving to survive where sunlight can't reach.



One of the blue-tinted feral dogs recently observed in Ukraine's Chernobyl nuclear disaster exclusion zone. Photo: Clean Futures Fund

Chernobyl Blue

Several dogs living in Ukraine's Chernobyl exclusion zone have mysteriously turned blue, baffling veterinarians with the Dogs of Chernobyl program.

The group, which sterilizes and monitors about 700 descendants of pets abandoned after the 1986 nuclear disaster, discovered at least three bright blue dogs during a recent trapping mission.

Experts theorize the coloring could have come from the animals rolling in a leaking chemical, possibly blue toilet fluid, rather than any radioactive contamination.

The group said the dogs appeared healthy and active, and that it intends to capture and test the canines.

Tropical Cyclones

Super Hurricane Melissa ravaged western Jamaica as the most powerful storm ever to strike the country. Melissa then weakened before pounding Cuba, the Bahamas and Bermuda.

• India's central Bay of Bengal coast was drenched by Tropical Storm Montha.

• Tropical Storm Sonia formed in the eastern Pacific.

