

Earthweek: Diary of a Changing World

By Steve Newman

Week ending Friday, July 30, 2021

Earth's Vital Signs

An international coalition of more than 14,000 scientists has signed an initiative declaring that world leaders are consistently failing to cope with the main causes of climate change and the deepening climate emergency.

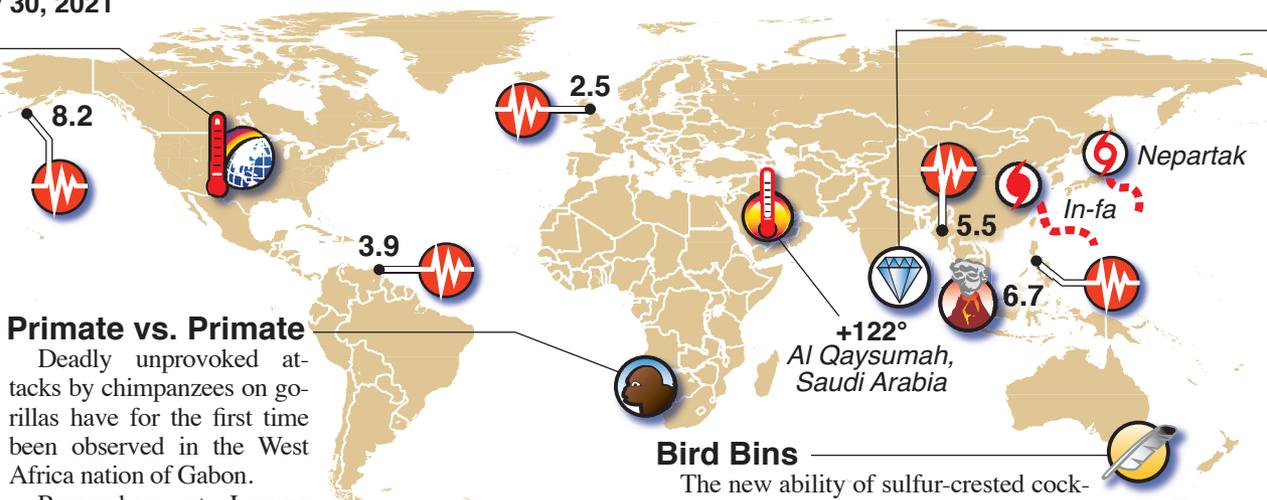
Writing in the journal *BioScience*, the group calls for the elimination of fossil fuel use, the slashing of pollutants, the restoration of ecosystems, a switch to plant-based diets and the stabilization of the planet's human population.

They say the planet's vital signs are deteriorating at a record rate, and also call for climate change to be included in core curricula in schools for the generation that will have to cope with the hotter decades to come.

Earthquakes

An 8.2 magnitude tremor caused violent shaking on the Alaska Peninsula and triggered a brief tsunami warning. Only a small tsunami was reported.

• Earth movements were also felt in northern Myanmar and neighboring Thailand, south of Manila, Trinidad and Edinburgh, Scotland.



Primate vs. Primate

Deadly unprovoked attacks by chimpanzees on gorillas have for the first time been observed in the West Africa nation of Gabon.

Researchers at Loango National Park say two dozen chimps went after five gorillas in December 2019. An infant separated from its mother didn't survive the assault.

Writing in the journal *Nature*, the scientists say more research is needed to determine what is behind the new lethal behavior.

"At first, we only noticed screams of chimpanzees and thought we were observing a typical encounter between individuals of neighboring chimpanzee communities," author Lara M. Southern said in a statement. "But then, we heard chest beats, a display characteristic for gorillas, and realized that the chimpanzees had encountered a group of five gorillas."

Tropical Cyclones

Typhoon In-fa swamped communities and uprooted trees in China's Zhejiang province and brought shipping, transport and most other outdoor activities to a standstill in Shanghai.

• Tropical Storm Neparatak mainly spared the competition at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games when it shifted northward from its earlier predicted path directly into Tokyo. The storm later soaked parts of northern Honshu Island.

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Bird Bins

The new ability of sulfur-crested cockatoos to open trash bins in search of food appears to be spreading to more cities across southeastern Australia because the birds are copying each other's behavior.

The complicated process was first observed in 2018 and has since spread around metropolitan Sydney. It has been seen by citizen observers and researchers alike in 44 suburbs, where the birds are causing a growing mess by flinging out the rubbish they don't want to eat.

The birds have learned to grab a bin lid with their beaks, pry it open, then shuffle far enough along the edge to cause the lid to fall backward, revealing the tasty trash.



Barbara Klump / Max Planck Institute

Sapphire Bonanza

Workers digging a well in Sri Lanka for a gem trader unearthed a massive sapphire cluster worth at least \$100 million.

The 1,000-pound pale blue cluster, dug up in Ratnapura, has been dubbed the "Serendipity Sapphire" and is 39 inches long and 28 inches wide.

It measures 2.5 million sapphire carats and is the largest such cluster ever found.

Sri Lanka is a major source of sapphires, and experts say the find is likely to bring in a fifth of the country's annual gem income.

The BBC reports that the gem trader informed authorities about the find eight months ago, but it took until now to remove mud and other impurities before it could be analyzed and certified.

Sumatran Eruption

Indonesia's Mount Sinabung erupted for 12 minutes with a massive column of ash that soared above North Sumatra province. Residents were told to remain outside a 3-mile zone that has been evacuated since the mountain reawakened in 2010.