

# Earthweek: Diary of a Changing World

By Steve Newman

Week ending Friday, September 17, 2021

## Oil Untouched

A new study says that oil and gas production around the world must fall by 3% each year, with 58% of known petroleum reserves remaining in the ground, to hold global heating to the 1.5 degrees Celsius goal in the Paris Agreement.

“There’s a good likelihood the rates of decline are going to have to be even larger, and the total amount of carbon that’s going to stay in the ground is also going to be larger,” said James Price at University College London, involved in the analysis.

While some oil companies have cut their plans for future oil and gas extraction as they transition to low-carbon energy, Price says the outlook is bleak for cooperation from countries that rely on revenue from oil and gas.

## Earthquakes

At least three people were killed by a powerful temblor in China’s Sichuan province.

• Earth movements were also felt in the northern Windward Islands, northern Pakistan, Taiwan, northwestern Argentina, interior Alaska and Los Angeles.

## Tropical Cyclones

Former Category-5 Typhoon Chanthu skirted the far northern Philippines, Taiwan and mainland China before drenching a long stretch of Japan as a tropical storm.

• Category-1 Hurricane Nicholas drenched parts of coastal Texas and neighbouring Louisiana with more than a foot of rainfall.

• Newfoundland was pounded by Category-1 Hurricane Larry, which downed trees and knocked out power before its remnants moved on to produce blizzard conditions in southern Greenland.

• The southern tip of Baja California escaped serious damage when Hurricane Olaf briefly made landfall.

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## Bug Food

Finnish researchers say Europe can reduce global warming associated with its food consumption by switching, at least in part, to edible insects, such as crickets, flies and worms.

The team from the University of Helsinki and LUT University, Finland, proposes eating them fresh or drying and processing them into flour for bread and pasta.

It adds that directly eating the insects will contribute less to climate change than using them for livestock feed instead of soy.

The expanding use of soy in animal feed has led to rampant deforestation around the world to meet the demand.

## Ape COVID Tests

Experts in Malaysia’s part of Borneo conducted antigen tests on 30 orangutans to see if the endangered primates had been infected with the coronavirus.

All of the samples collected by vets wearing protective suits came back negative, but the team says it will continue to monitor the apes and test them regularly.

Some domestic animals have become infected with COVID-19, and the Atlanta zoo just announced several of its gorillas had tested positive.



This calf was successfully trained to urinate in an enclosure where the urine could be collected and treated. Image: *Current Biology*

## Bovine Urinals

A team of German and New Zealand researchers say they have successfully “potty trained” a herd of cows in an attempt to slash greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental damage linked to the ruminant animals’ excreta.

Using a system of reward and mild punishment, 11 cows were taught to urinate in an assigned area, where the pee could be collected and treated.

The ammonia produced in untreated cow urine is converted by microbes in the soil into nitrous oxide — the third-most significant greenhouse gas after methane and carbon dioxide.

Other nitrates produced in the process often wind up in rivers and streams through runoff from the soil.

## Popo Blasts

Mexico’s Popocatepetl volcano produced a series of moderate to strong blasts that sent ash soaring above the state of Puebla.

Observers say fountains of lava bombs could be seen spewing from the crater as superheated debris cascaded down “Popo’s” slopes.

