

# Earthweek: Diary of a Changing World

By Steve Newman

Week ending Friday, April 17, 2020

## Rodent Hunger

Desperate rats, deprived of their usual food sources outside shuttered restaurants and other sources of snacks, have begun to invade nearby rodent colonies, eating the flesh of their own species.

While food supplies have pretty much remained the same for vermin living near human households, rodentologist Bobby Corrigan told NBC News that those living near eateries, malls and airports have resorted to cannibalism, rat battles and infanticide to cope with their starvation diets.

The crazed rats are also threatening the homeless population, according to New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell.

A viral video posted in March showed areas in the French Quarter overrun by rats taking to the streets in search of food.

## Lone Cyclone

Tropical Storm Jeruto spun up from an area of disturbed weather over the central Indian Ocean, far from any land areas. Jeruto was a threat only to shipping lanes.

## When Pigs Fly

China began to repopulate the country's swine farms, decimated by a rampant African swine fever outbreak that reached its peak last year, by flying in more than 4,000 high-quality breeding pigs from France aboard six jet aircraft.

Tens of millions of hogs, including 60% of China's sow herd, were either put down to halt the spread of the disease or died.

Pork is exceedingly popular on Asian dinner tables, and the shortage has caused prices for the commodity to soar.

The pigs being imported must undergo a month of health checks before leaving France, along with another 30 days in quarantine under Chinese supervision. Once they arrive in China, they spend another 45 days in quarantine to guarantee they are free of disease.

## Avian Tragedy

Thousands of migrating swallows and swifts were found dead across parts of Greece during the first week of April after they were killed by freak high winds and downpours. Others were found gravely injured.

The country's ornithologist association blamed currents that blew the birds from northern Africa into the strong winds from the north of the Aegean Sea, especially around the Greek Islands.

The association warned residents to take care not to drive or walk over exhausted birds that may have landed after flying for many hundreds or thousands of miles.

## Sunda Eruption

Indonesia's Anak Krakatau, or Child of Krakatoa, produced its strongest and longest eruption since its crater collapsed violently in 1883.

The latest blasts sent ash soaring 50,000 feet above the Sunda Strait, between Java and Sumatra. But it was mild compared to the violent 1883 collapse, which triggered a deadly tsunami that killed 439 people.

Anak Krakatau emerged from the caldera of the notorious Mount Krakatoa, which produced a cataclysmic eruption in 1883 that triggered a period of global cooling.



The collapse of Anak Krakatau's crater in 2018 reduced the volcano to a quarter of its former size. Photo: Antara



## Pets or Food?

Dogs are no longer officially classified as livestock in China and are instead considered merely pets in new guidelines issued by Beijing due to the global coronavirus crisis.

Dog meat has long been a delicacy in China, but the fear of new cross-species diseases emerging in the wake of COVID-19 is prompting bans on the sale of flesh from wild animals.

And as dogs have become more common as companion animals, eating them has grown increasingly unpopular. The Humane Society calls China's canine reclassification a potential "game changer" in animal welfare.

## Earthquakes

A relatively mild but rare tremor centered beneath New Delhi's northern suburbs sent residents across the Indian capital rushing from their homes.

- Earth movements were also felt in Istanbul, western Syria, northern Italy, the far southern Philippines, Salt Lake City and along the California-Nevada border.

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