




Secret Gardeners

 Australia's Great Barrier Reef is being helped to survive the ravages of tropical cyclones by a clandestine, and technically illegal, practice of underwater gardening. Several tour operators acknowledge that their diving staff turn live coral upright after it has been flipped over during a cyclone. The practice has been widespread recently in the wake of Category 4 Cyclone Yasi. Since coral needs sunlight to feed its photosynthetic algae, it would die if a storm's reorientation prevented it from facing the sun. Reef officials say they take a pragmatic approach to the activity, objecting only if the coral is removed or moved somewhere else. Tour industry spokesman Col McKenzie told the *Cairns Post* that coral flipping is a compassionate as well as practical gesture. "You wouldn't leave it to die. It would be like leaving an animal on the side of the road and ignoring it."


The King of Stink

 Humans stink more than any other members of the animal kingdom, at least according to mosquitoes. The discovery was made by researchers trying new approaches to combat mosquito-borne diseases like dengue, malaria and yellow fever at Holland's Wageningen University. While humans may think their dogs stink far more than they do, mosquitoes can sniff out human body odor from a great distance. The human olfactory attraction is far greater to the insects than with any other animal. People stink not only because of their own metabolisms, but also because of smells that come from bacteria and other creatures living on and within them. But the mosquitoes appear to be most attracted to "sweaty" smelling carboxylic acids, which humans emit far more of than any other animal.

Artificial Snow

 The head of the China Meteorological Administration assured concerned residents that the agency's attempts to create artificial snow to ease a record drought this winter have not polluted the environment. Zheng Guoguang told the *People's Daily* that the dry ice, liquid nitrogen and other catalysts being released from aircraft to seed clouds in the affected areas vaporize into carbon dioxide and nitrogen — all natural components of the atmosphere. He added that the small amount of silver iodide also used is in such low concentrations as not to be an environmental hazard. China's agriculture ministry announced that recent snow and rain in the country's northern wheat-growing regions helped to ease the crippling drought.

Earthquakes

 The most powerful quake to strike Arkansas since 1969 was felt widely across the state, as well as in neighboring Oklahoma, Tennessee, Missouri and Mississippi. No damage was reported.

- The New Zealand capital of Wellington was jolted by a 4.5 magnitude tremor as aftershocks continued to keep nerves on edge around the heavily damaged city of Christchurch.

- Earth movements were also felt in Crete, central Japan, the coast of central Chile and eastern Mexico.


Northern Light Show

 A stream of charged particles from the sun rushed into Earth's upper atmosphere on March 1, sparking a day-long geomagnetic storm that ignited a breathtaking display of the northern lights. Sky watchers in Scandinavia, Northern Ireland, Canada and Alaska reported seeing bright ribbons of green dance through the night sky.

Dusty Aftermath

 Search and rescue efforts in New Zealand's Christchurch earthquake disaster zone were hampered by huge dust clouds, whipped up by powerful late-summer winds. Workers were forced to don respirators as they searched for more bodies in rubble left by the Feb. 22 temblor. Officials rushed to distribute emergency supplies of face masks, stockpiled in case of a flu pandemic, to Christchurch residents who needed to venture outside during the dust storm. Officials feared the winds could also stir up health hazards from human remains yet to be recovered.

Mistaken Identity

 A very confused elephant in South Africa's Pilanesberg Game Reserve passionately mistook a Volkswagen Passat for a female pachyderm, giving two tourists inside the ride of their life. The amorous bull, known in the park as Amarula, "started to rub himself against the car, breaking the wing mirrors and cracking the windows," said Irishman John Somer. It was only after the car had been flipped over and shoved wheels up into the bushes that the elephant seemed to realize his jumbo-sized mistake. Amarula then chased a photographer who had been snapping photos of the intimate encounter before eventually wandering off into the bush. Somer and his female passenger were mainly unharmed by their terrifying taste of elephant ardor. Park officials said Amarula is one of the largest bull elephants in the reserve and had been in musth, a period when a rush of hormones had made it aggressive and compelled to mate.

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