



Dispatches From The Wild, Weird World Of Humanity And Its Biosphere

June 9 2021

Turkey



In one of the more unexpected outcomes of climate change, Turkey's [Sea of Marmara](#) (between the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus, linking the Mediterranean and Black Seas, with Istanbul on its shores) has been choked by a phenomenon commonly known as "[sea snot](#)." The algae in the Sea of Marmara were overloaded with nutrients due to hot weather and pollution from nitrogen-rich sewage, which caused them to rapidly produce and expel polysaccharides in such numbers that they amalgamated into vast stretches of a gloopy, foul-smelling, greyish-khaki phlegm-like substance, formally known as "marine mucilage" (pictured). The fishing industry in the Sea of Marmara has been ground to a halt as the sea snot clogs nets and impedes boats, while species including fish, oysters, mussels, sea stars, and coral are being enveloped and suffocated

en masse. Sea snot is a rare and little-studied phenomenon, and this is likely the biggest outbreak in history. The good news is that this is such a weird and undeniable event that the Turkish government has been spurred into rapid action, with a [300-member team](#) being dispatched to investigate sources of pollution on the shoreline. Furthermore, Environment Minister Murat Kurum [announced on June 7th an in-development plan](#) to prevent future sea snot outbreaks, with measures including designating the entire Sea of Marmara a protected area and introducing new wastewater and pollution controls which, if fully enacted, should reduce nitrogen levels in the sea by 40%. This great Turkish sea snot outbreak is a classic instance of "global weirding": the major changes to Earth's atmosphere and biosphere taking place in the Anthropocene tend to result in strange and unexpected abnormalities in addition to expected shifts like rising temperatures. Fascinating news!



Brazil

Brazil, and the Brazilian Amazon in particular, are in a state of utter societal and ecological chaos-and unbelievably, it seems to be getting worse by the week.

[Amazon deforestation in the month of May hit a fourteen-year high](#), with over 1,180 square kilometer-twenty Manhattans-of forest cut down. The wildfire season has started again, with [nine major fires since May 19](#) in the state of Mato Grosso-likely set by humans to clear land.

Illegal gold miners [set fire to the homes of indigenous leaders](#) in the Munduruku Indigenous Reserve. Similar land conflicts have reached a record high in Brazil, with [1,576 cases](#) (over 40% involving indigenous people) recorded in 2020. Waste from the massive, ultra-valuable [Pitinga tin mine](#) has been running into rivers in the Waimiri-Atroari Indigenous Territory, [contaminating the water supply of 22 villages](#) and causing fish and turtle die-offs.

And Brazil's notoriously anti-environment Environment Minister, Ricardo Salles, is [currently facing two separate court investigations](#) for his apparent participation in illegal timber exporting schemes and attempts to obstruct police investigations into the same.

Brazil's official toll from COVID has risen to [over 16 million cases and over 470,000 deaths](#), with over 1,800 new deaths per day-while President Jair Bolsonaro [massively screws up the vaccine rollout](#), refuses to get vaccinated himself, and "jokes" that the Pfizer vaccine could [turn people into crocodiles](#).

Unsurprisingly, [tens of thousands of protesters](#) have marched in over 200 Brazilian towns and cities to demand Bolsonaro's impeachment.

Brazil's best shot at this point is for Bolsonaro to lose reelection in [October 2022](#)-hopefully to his current most prominent rival, [ex-President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva](#), under whose previous presidency from 2003-2010 [deforestation decreased greatly](#) and [over 20 million Brazilians rose out of extreme poverty](#). Since Trump's defeat, Bolsonaro is likely the most environmentally destructive leader on the planet. Here's hoping the Brazilian people kick him out!



Fossil Fuels Falling

Like the death throes of a lumbering, city-destroying kaiju, the fossil fuel industry continues its fall.

Amazingly, tiny impact investors group [Engine No.1](#) managed to [confirm a third climate-smart nominee](#) to Exxon's board of directors, with the support of major pension funds and asset managers. That's now [3 out of the 12](#) seats on the board of directors of one of the world's major carbon emitters held by climate activists. Excellent news!



On May 27th, [the deadline passed for the Texas state legislature to renew an arcane property tax exemption](#) that has historically served as a \$10 billion subsidy to large corporations, with fossil fuel behemoths the biggest winners. That's right, the *Texas* state legislature, currently controlled by the extreme far right and pushing insane and un-American anti-voting rights and anti-LGBT people bills, didn't take the chance to continue shoveling cash to the fossil fuel industry. This is a great sign!

And a UK company, [Hybrid Air Vehicles](#), has announced its plans to begin selling and operating short-haul city-to-city flights with their hybrid-electric, helium-filled (i.e. non-flammable) blimp-like airships. According to HAV's plans, their "[Airlander 10" vehicles](#) will carry 100 passengers with 90% less emissions than a commercial airliner. The company plans to have the first airships flying by 2023 and be carrying the first passengers by 2025. As with any corporate plan, this may or may not actually end up happening, but it's a great example of the vitality and dynamism in the electrification space!

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