



the weekly anthropocene



dispatches from the wild, weird world of humanity and its biosphere

By Sam Matey, July 1, 2020

France. The second round of France's municipal elections were held on June 28th- and it was a historic "vague verte," or Green Wave. France's Green Party, Europe Ecologie-Les Vertes (EELV) won power in city halls across the Republic. EELV or EELV-allied mayors won in the major French cities of Lyon, Bordeaux, Strasbourg, Poitiers, Tours, Besançon, and Annecy, held on to the mayoral seat in Grenoble, took a majority of seats on the city council in Marseille, France's second-largest city, and were part of a winning coalition in Montpellier and Paris. Paris' case particularly is worth noting: the climate-smart incumbent mayor, Anne Hidalgo (pictured) of the Socialist Party, allied herself with EELV and easily won reelection.



She will now be able to move forward her ambitious, world-leading plans to transform Paris into a city oriented around walking and bicycling, including having a cycle path on every street and bridge and removing 72% of on-street parking spaces. This victory is already greatly influencing national politics: the day afterwards, June 29th, centrist President Emmanuel Macron pledged 15 billion euros more in funds to combat climate change over the next two years, accepted all but three of 149 recommendations on climate change action from a citizens' convention, and said he would support a referendum to make "ecocide," severely damaging the natural world, a crime. This shift seems to be part of a worldwide groundswell of support for environmentally sane politicians that has emerged over the past few years, from the Democratic surge in the House of Representatives and state governorships in the USA in 2018 to the rise in support for green parties in the European Parliament elections in 2019 to the South Korean Democratic Party's victory on a Green New Deal-like platform in April 2020. Here's hoping that this surge for sanity continues through the rest of the year, the decade, and beyond! For more, see <https://tinyurl.com/EELV2020> and <https://tinyurl.com/MacronJune29>.

Ireland. After months of negotiations, Ireland's Dáil Éireann (legislature) agreed to a three-way coalition government between the Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Green parties. Micheál Martin of the Fianna Fáil assumed office as the Taoiseach, or prime minister, on June 27th. The Green Party's inclusion of the coalition pushed Mr. Martin's new government to make ambitious climate pledges: the coalition agreement promises to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 7% per year, reach 70% renewable energy by 2030, define economy-wide five-year carbon budgets with a cap on how much each sector can emit, reach net-zero emissions by 2050, retrofit 500,000 homes for better energy efficiency by 2030, scale up offshore wind development in Ireland, ban new petrol and diesel cars from 2030, and ban new oil and gas drilling. This is all excellent, and the right scope of action for these times. If this can be passed into law and put into practice, Ireland will become a world leader in the fight against climate change! For more, see tinyurl.com/IrelandClimate.



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Lyft. On June 17, major ridesharing company Lyft pledged to reach 100% electric vehicles on the Lyft platform by 2030. Notably, there was no hedging or doublespeak: all branches of Lyft, from their rental car program to their emerging autonomous vehicle work to their drivers' personal cars, are pledged to go all-electric. This should become the norm: electric cars are becoming cheaper every year, and the world needs to ditch the internal combustion engine as fast as possible. "Now more than ever, we need to work together to create cleaner, healthier, and more equitable communities," said John Zimmer, co-founder and president of Lyft. "Success breeds success, and if we do this right, it creates a path for others. If other rideshare and delivery companies, automakers and rental car companies make this shift, it can be the catalyst for transforming transportation as a whole." Great news! For more, see tinyurl.com/Lyft2030.

Thailand. Some time ago, the Wildlife Conservation Society set up two camera traps near a small watering hole in Thailand's Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuary, part of the Western Forest Complex. In just a month, they recorded an amazing variety of wildlife, including Asian elephants (*Elephas maximus*), Asiatic black bears (*Ursus thibetanus*), sun bears (*Ursus malayanus*), wild cattle-like banteng (*Bos javanicus*), sambar deer (*Rusa unicolor*), long-tailed macaque (*Macaca fascicularis*), and an entire family of tigers (*Panthera tigris*, pictured)! WCS country director Anak Pattanavibool noted that this was thanks to years of heroic conservation efforts, saying "This amazing footage of a protected area in Thailand teeming with wildlife would not have been possible without the wildlife officers and rangers on the ground who have put their lives on the line, with some killed or severely wounded by poachers." For more-and a video!-see tinyurl.com/WondrousWateringHole and tinyurl.com/WildlifeJacuzzi.



Pangolins. Research by watchdog NGO the Environmental Investigation Agency found that contrary to widespread international reporting, by the BBC, The Guardian, and this newsletter's June 17 edition among others, China has not actually banned the use of pangolin scales in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). While pangolin scales were dropped from the official TCM pharmacopoeia's main list of key ingredients, as reported, they are still listed as ingredients in specific recipes, meaning that the Chinese government is still condoning and providing a market for mass trafficking of these creatures. The fight continues. For more, see tinyurl.com/PangolinsStillAtRisk.