

# PLANETARY HEALTH WEEKLY



CURRENT NEWS ON ECOLOGICAL WELLNESS AND GLOBAL HEALTH

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Hi,

Walking through a nearby park in Toronto the other day I came across several trees with huge exposed roots. It made me think, seeing just how incredibly anchored these big trees are, that we too grow and develop deep roots. Roots in ways of doing things, roots in expectations and in relationships, and roots in keeping things going when the going is good. For so many of us, our lives are full of many pleasures and we assume their security, another type of root. But in acknowledging the millions of refugees around the world, or the coastal inhabitants of SE Australia who have just seen their homes and lives go up in smoke, let alone to try to comprehend 1 billion animals dead, roots are almost becoming like fake news. The Australian fire smoke is even disrupting a major tennis tournament, and it has now reached South America, causing problems there, and now there's concern that it will even reach Antarctica where it will contribute to more melting, rising seas and who knows what else.

Roots are so important, not only for trees, but us too. It's just so sad that we are entering an era, likely to be a seriously prolonged one, where what we have established is being challenged and so many lives are being uprooted. Not that this is new; do we remember the millions of displaced and wandering souls during and after WWII? Social conflicts currently plague several countries, but we are all now experiencing a whole new phenomena.

In today's **Planetary Health Weekly** (our third of 2020) there are stories of uprooting and more, including:

- A perilous glacier the size of Florida about to change the world,

- Global heating related to early childbirth,
- Feeling guilty flying?
- Trump's latest environmental blunders,
- Haiti's legacy ten years later,
- Putting farmers in their rightful place,
- 5G's health effects,
- Coffee preventing type 2 diabetes,
- Costa Rica bans selfies,
- First Nations becoming climate refugees,
- A photo journey into Amazonian spirituality,
- Microplastic rain,
- Some history of Ayurvedic medicine,
- A new book of climate crisis, new words for a new world,
- Deciding to go to grad school, and more.

Please do take a look and pass them on too, so that greater awareness can be created. It's hard to imagine the changes we need considering the still low level of public awareness.

Best, david

David Zkus, Editor and Publisher



Credit: David Zukus

BEING ROOTED  
HIGH PARK, TORONTO

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**A Glacier The Size Of Florida Is On Track**

# To Change The Course Of Human Civilization



Credit: Carolyn Beeler/The World

Thwaites glacier in West Antarctica is enormous and is often referred to as the most dangerous glacier on Earth. It has also been dubbed the Doomsday glacier. The glacier holds two feet of sea level but, more importantly, it is the “backstop” for four other glaciers which hold an additional 10-13 feet of sea level rise. When Thwaites collapses it will take most of West Antarctica with it. According to researchers at the University of Washington back in 2014, Thwaites is already collapsing. “The simulations indicate that early-stage collapse has begun,” notes their news presser. [Read more at Daily Kos](#)

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## Global Heating Raises Risk Of Early childbirth



Credits: Andrya Hart

Hot weather increases the risk of early childbirth, which in turn is linked to worse health and developmental outcomes for children, a major new study has found. The report could have fresh implications for the impact of global heating on human health. In the US, about 25,000 babies were born up to two weeks early each year as a result of heatwaves between 1969 and 1988, according to new research published in *Nature Climate Change* (NCC). [Read more at National Observer](#)

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## How Guilty Should You Feel About Flying?



Credit: Matt Campbell/EPA, via Shutterstock

The Swedes call it “flygskam,” or “flying shame,” the movement that encourages people to stop taking flights to lower their carbon footprints. But should we really be ashamed of getting on a plane to see grandma for holidays? The short answer: Probably not. If your flights are purely a luxury, though, that’s another matter. [Read more at The New York Times](#)

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## Trump Rule Would Exclude Climate Change In Infrastructure Planning



Credit: Andrew Burton/Getty Images

Federal agencies would no longer have to take climate change into account when they assess the environmental impacts of highways, pipelines and other major infrastructure projects, according to a Trump administration plan that would weaken the US's benchmark environmental law. The proposed changes to the 50-year-old National Environmental Policy Act could sharply reduce obstacles to the Keystone XL oil pipeline and other fossil fuel projects that have been stymied when courts ruled that the Trump administration did not properly consider climate change when analyzing the environmental effects of the projects. [Read more at The New York Times](#)

**[See also on BBC: Trump EPA Approved 100-plus Products Including Pesticides Banned Elsewhere or Slated for U.S. Phaseout](#)**

**[See also on New York Times: Science Under Attack: How Trump Is Sidelining Researchers and Their Work](#)**

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**'They Put A Few Coins In Your Hands To Drop A Baby In You' – 265 Stories Of Haitian Children Abandoned By UN Fathers**



Credit: Michelle D. Milliman/Shutterstock

Marie was 14 years old and enrolled in a Christian school when she met and became involved with Miguel, a Brazilian soldier working in Haiti as a UN peacekeeper. When she told him that she was pregnant with his baby, Miguel said he would help her with the child. But instead, he returned to Brazil. Marie wrote to him on Facebook but he never responded. [Read more at The Conversation](#)

[See Also: A Decade After The Earthquake, Haiti Still Struggles To Recover](#)

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## How To Put Farmers In Control Of Food Systems Transformation



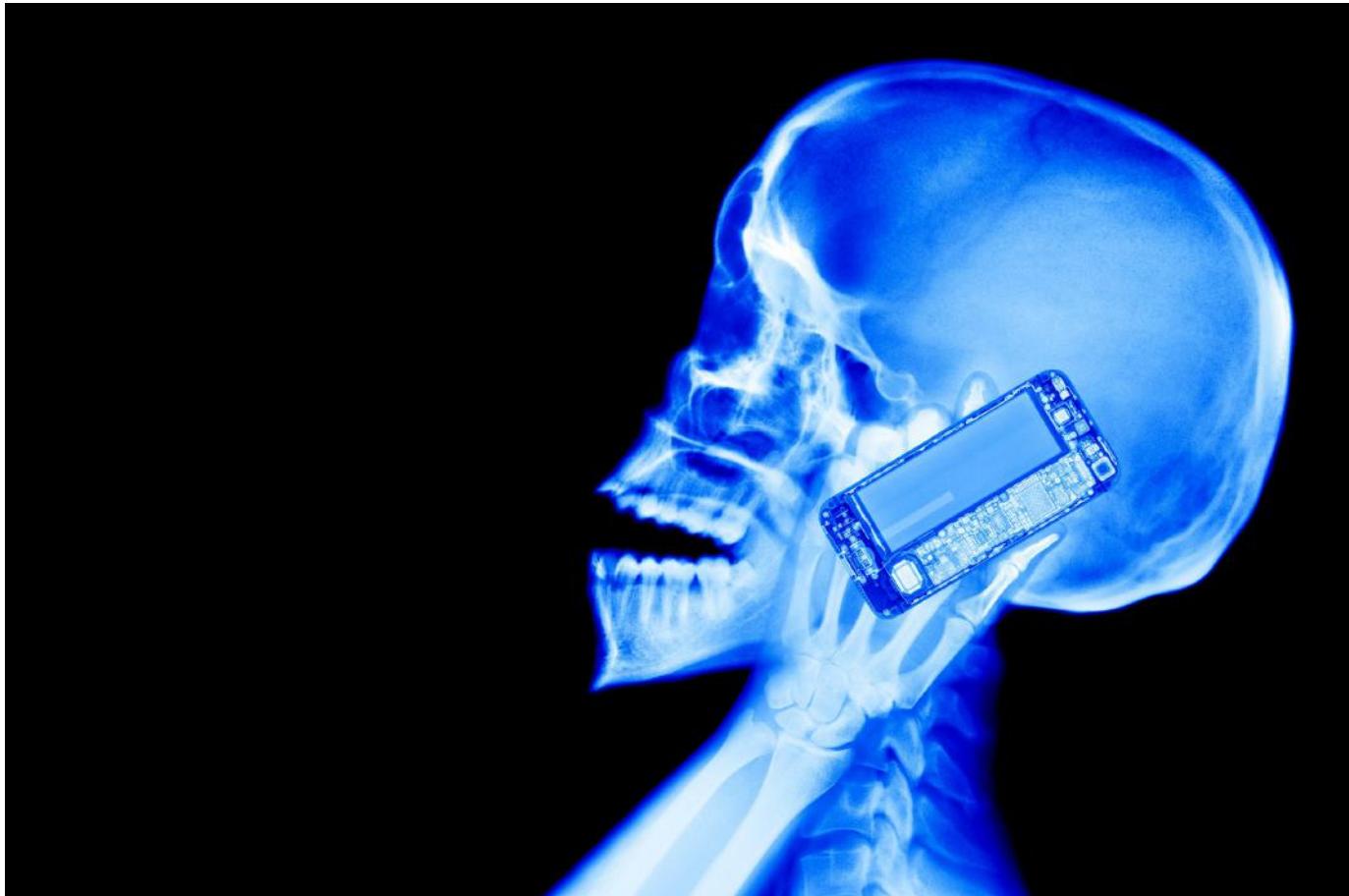
*Credit: REUTERS / Navesh Chitrakar*

Depending on how it is pursued, the global shift toward more climate-resilient agriculture and food systems could vilify farmers and disrupt their livelihoods, or it could put them at the forefront of building better systems than exist today.

Policymakers and advocates are trying to understand what the components of that “just transition” would be and to draw on lessons from other sectors that have seen top-down policies spark public backlash. [Read more at Devex](#)

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## Good News: Worried About 5G's Health Effects? Don't Be



Credit: PETER DAZELEY/GETTY IMAGE

Even as carriers around the world race to build 5G networks, some government officials are reaching for the throttle, citing fears that the new generation of wireless technology could pose health risks. Earlier this year the Portland, Oregon, city council passed a resolution asking the Federal Communications Commission to update its research into potential health risks of 5G. (In 2013, the American Academy of Pediatrics made a similar request to the FCC about its research on cell phone use more generally.) [Read more at Wired](#)

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## More Good News: Filtered Coffee Helps Prevent Type 2 Diabetes, Show Biomarkers In Blood Samples



Credit: Kristoffer Paulsen

Coffee can help reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes -- but only filtered coffee, rather than boiled coffee. New research from Chalmers University of Technology and Umeå University, both in Sweden, show that the choice of preparation method influences the health effects of coffee. [Read more at Science Daily](#)

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## OPINION

# The Last Decade Gave Us A Preview Of The Climate Crisis Ahead, And It's Definitely A Horror Show



Credit: Getty Images

As 2020 begins, Australia is on fire, leaving dozens dead and thousands displaced. Meanwhile, just a thousand miles to the north, Indonesia is dealing with record flooding that has left ... dozens dead and tens of thousands displaced. Both of these disasters are driven by the same factor: global warming causing the human-created climate crisis. [Read more at Daily Kos](#)

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## SPOTLIGHT ON POLICY

# #stopanimalselfies: Costa Rica Wants You To Stop Taking Irresponsible Photos With Animals



Credit: DREAMTIME

You may want to think twice before taking a selfie with a wild animal on vacation. At least, that's what the Costa Rican government, civil society organizations and tourism companies want. The new #stopanimalselfies campaign, promoted by these stakeholders, is trying to inform consumers about the ramifications of taking selfies and photos that involve direct contact with animals in the wild. Such ramifications include being exposed to biting, attacks and diseases, as well as the fact it's cruel to the animals. [Read more at The Star](#)

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## SPOTLIGHT ON INDIGENOUS WELLNESS

# Too Hot For Humans? First Nations People Fear Becoming Australia's First Climate Refugees



Credit: Mike Bowers

Last summer was the hottest on record, and the driest in 27 years in central Australia. Five per cent of the town's street trees died. A heat monitoring study showed that on some unshaded streets the surface temperature was between 61C and 68C. "We can't keep going on the way we're going," says Douglas, who is manager of policy and research at the Central Land Council. "Central Australian Aboriginal people are very resilient. They have evolved to cope with the harsh and variable desert climate, but there are limits. [Read more at The Guardian](#)



## Quote Of The Week

**“Courage is willingness to take the risk once you know the odds. Optimistic overconfidence means you are taking the risk because you don’t know the odds. It’s a big difference.”**

**Daniel Kahneman, Nobel Prize-winning psychologist who pioneered the modern study of decision making under uncertainty**

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## Upcoming Events

- January 22nd: [UBC and BC Children's Hospital: Global Health Conference 2020](#) (Vancouver, Canada)
- February 19th - 20th: [2nd World Congress on Primary Healthcare and Medicare Summit](#) (Paris, France)
- March 31 - April 2: [World Public Health Nutrition Congress 2020](#) (Brisbane, Australia)
- April 6th -7th, 2020: [17th World Congress on Paediatrics and Neonatology](#) (Tokyo, Japan)
- April 18th -20th, 2020: [CUGH Conference 2020: Global Health in a Time of Worldwide Political Change](#) (Washington, D.C., USA)
- April 24th - 26th, 2020: [PEGASUS IV Migration - Climate Change - Sustainable Development](#) (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada)

# Pëëkë'ya (Lagarto Cocha) Photo Journey To Our Spiritual Origin



Credit: Ribaldo Piaguaje

In August of this year, over 50 women, men, elders and youth from the Siekopai (Secoya) nation of the Ecuadorian Amazon embarked on a historic five-day canoe journey and paddled 160 kilometers (100 miles) to the sacred lagoons of Ñakomasira, the heartland of their ancestral territory – Lagarto Cocha – on the border between Peru and Ecuador. In this story, indigenous photographers Jimmy Piaguaje and Ribaldo Piaguaje from the Siekopai nation share photographic moments and memories from their incredible journey within this mega-diverse labyrinth of blackwater lagoons, flooded forests and rolling hills.

See more at [Amazon Frontlines](#)

FYI #2

# Revealed: Microplastic Pollution Is Raining Down On City Dwellers



Credit: Getty Images

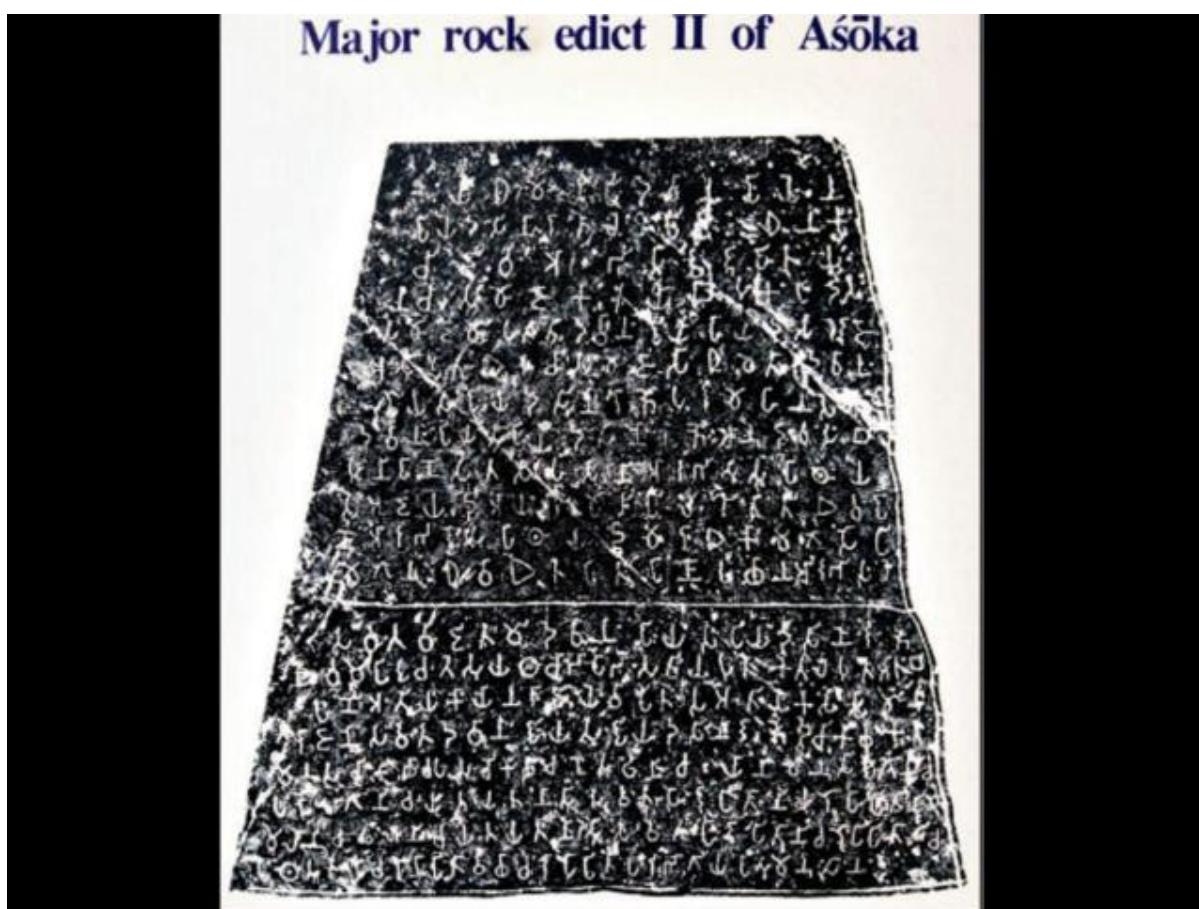
About 335m tonnes of new plastic is produced each year and much of it leaks into the environment. New research, published in the journal *Environment International*, collected the microplastics falling onto the roof of a nine-storey building in central London. This ensured that only microplastic from the atmosphere was collected. Microplastics were found in all the samples, with deposition rates ranging from 575 to 1,008 pieces per sq metre per day, and 15 different plastics were identified. Most microplastics were fibres made of acrylic, most likely from clothing. Just 8% of the microplastics were particles, and these were mostly polystyrene and polyethylene, both commonly used in food packaging.

The serious health damage caused by the pollution particles emitted by traffic and industry are well known. A comprehensive global review earlier in 2019 concluded that air pollution may be damaging every organ and virtually every cell in the human body. But the potential health impacts of inhaling plastic particles from the air, or consuming them via food and water, are unknown. People eat at least 50,000 microplastic particles per year, according to one study. Microplastics are also found in drinking water and in August an assessment by the World Health Organization found no evidence to date of harm but said more research was needed.

Read more at The Guardian

## FYI #3

# Epigraphy Expo Throws Light On Ayurveda's Spread



Credit: Healthworld.com

Ayurveda has a history of thousands of years. But the earliest reference of ayurvedic treatment in India dates to the 3rd century BC and Emperor Ashoka. An inscription from the Maurya kingdom, which was recovered from Junagadh district in Gujarat by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), lists the public services made available by Ashoka, including medical treatment for men and cattle ('manusachikichcha' and 'pasuchikichcha'), plantation of herbs, roots, fruit-bearing trees, shade-giving trees, etc, not just in his dominion but also that of the Cholas and the Pandyas.

Read More at Economic Times

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**FYI #4**

## **Changing The World From Behind The Camera**



Credit: Steve Woods Photography

Avid diver, adventurer, conservationist and underwater photographer Steve Woods has been fascinated with the underwater world, and sharks, from a very young age.

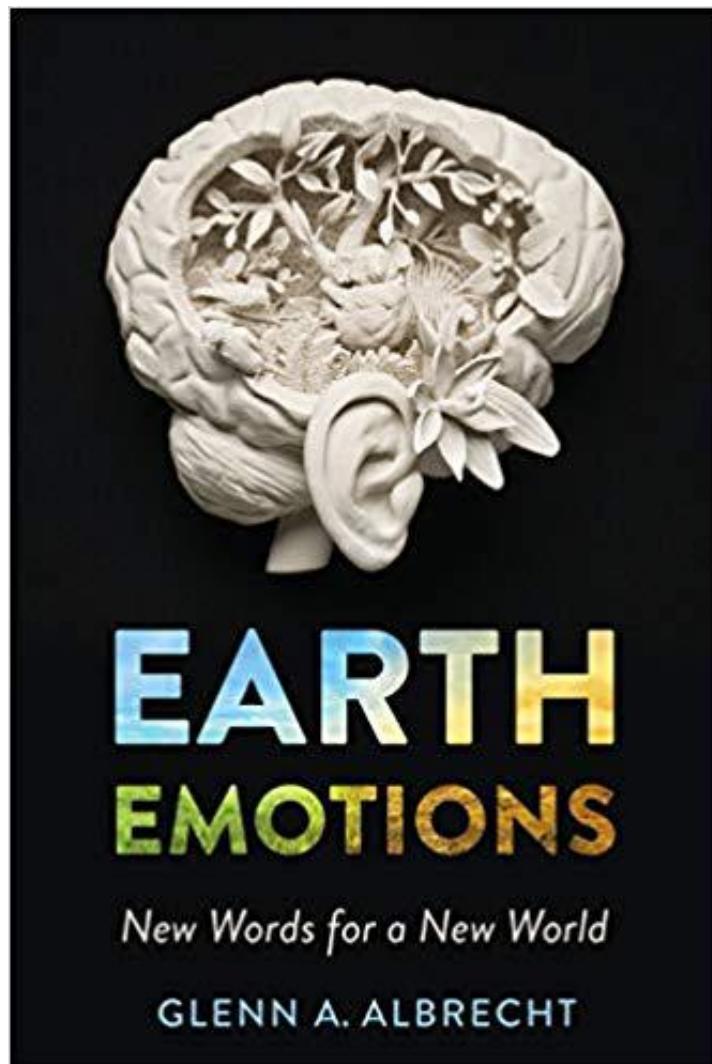
Joining the Suunto D5 photo shoot in Raja Ampat he took a moment to share his passion for changing human habits and minimising impacts on the marine environments.

[Read more at Suunto](#)

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### FYI #5: WINTER READING

## Are You Climate Homesick? He's Got A Word For That



You're at home with your family on the sofa. Despite being surrounded by loved ones, melancholy is rising within you. Why? Outside the weather is no longer how it used to be. The seasons hardly resemble themselves. You turn on the television and it's the usual: The Great Barrier Reef is in a state of crisis; polar ice caps are melting. Home in both the immediate sense and the whole planet is changing. How do you feel? Isolated? Depressed? Longing for a different time? There's a term for this: You're feeling *solastalgic*.

[Read more on Ozy](#)

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## FYI#6: SPOTLIGHT ON EDUCATION

# Should You Go To Graduate School?



Credit: Troy House/Getty Images

In the U.S., the number of graduate students has tripled since the 1970s, and according to some estimates, 27% of employers now require master's degrees for

roles in which historically undergraduate degrees sufficed. What, then, are the motives you should be considering if you are trying to decide whether or not to enroll? How can you determine if the time — and especially the money — required to pursue a graduate education will actually pay off or not?

Read more at Harvard Business Review

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## END SHOTS

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### BARED ROOTS

HIGH PARK, TORONTO, ONTARIO

JANUARY 12, 2020









Credits: David Zakus



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