



CURRENT NEWS ON ECOLOGICAL WELLNESS AND GLOBAL HEALTH

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Hi,

Starting a new year is always a great feeling, and I just witnessed something quite odd and interesting. While cross-country skiing with friends last Saturday (see Endshots) we came across, right in the middle of snow covered trail, a very slowly moving spotted salamander. Well, I can only remember having seen a salamander once before in Ontario, in the summer. But now to see one crawling over the snow in winter was totally unexpected. The metaphorical opportunity, however, didn't escape me, having just read so many stories about how slowly our world is addressing its climate crisis: glaciers now melting and moving faster than thought (just as this poor little creature will if it survives), and all too many unexpected crisis resulting from our CO2 waste. We're moving too slowly. How to speed up? Certainly adding heat won't help us!

Sadly, too, in this issue is a story that strikes me personally. That Honduras, the country where I got my global health start 40 years ago in a community nutrition and agriculture program and where my son was born, is suffering a deadly dengue outbreak, killing hundreds. It is an unbelievable tragedy. I can only suspect that the lack of socio-political progress since then and the rise of drug gangs are at the root of it.

Also in today's **Planetary Health Weekly** (#2 for 2020) are other telling stories, such as:

- How gender affects potential geoengineering of our atmosphere,
- How Toronto and surrounding area are falling short of their green goals,
- An epidemic of diabetes in China,

- Some dying Florida Keys,
- The importance of soil, but it's running out,
- Good news wildlife stories and making ink from air pollution,
- Getting serious about nuclear power; and is it worth the risk?
- Declaring war on microplastics,
- Cancer deaths downstream from Alberta oil sands,
- Mark Carney's new UN climate change appointment,
- A deadly global fungus,
- US automakers faltering on electric vehicles,
- A new book by Rachel Maddow on global greed,
- A roundup of global development law programs, and a bit more.

I hope you'll take a look below.

Best, david

David Zakus, Editor and Publisher

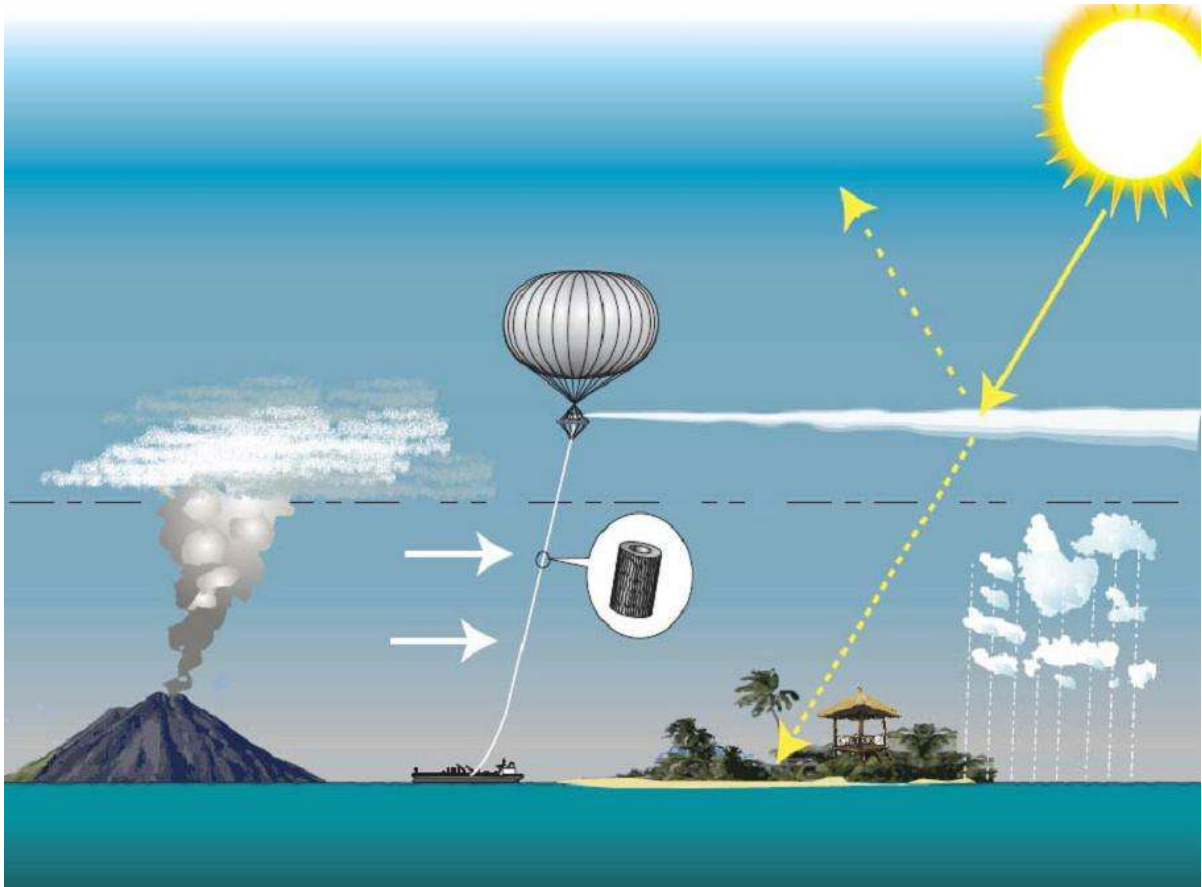


Credit: David Zakus

## Going It Slowly

A Spotted Salamander On A Hylands Nordic Ski Trail

## That Geoengineering Gender Problem



Credit: Hugh Hunt

A group of British scientists had a plan for a groundbreaking geoengineering test. Working from a disused military airstrip in Norfolk, UK, they would attach a 3,000-foot hose to a helium balloon, pump water into it, and spray the liquid into the atmosphere, where it would evaporate, all in an effort to reduce solar radiation coming to Earth. Scientists bickered over it, newspapers ran negative headlines, and a Canadian NGO launched a campaign to urge the UK government to cancel the trial. Within months, the project was dead. Some researchers argue the lack of diversity affects both which geoengineering projects get discussed—Indeed, the UK scientists were overwhelmingly white and male. Part of the problem is the underrepresentation of women in science, where systemic failures amount to fewer women in tenure-track positions. Another reason might be that geoengineering is still a very abstract, speculative science—despite its growing prominence in climate discourse. “If you diversify that group you might ask different questions, and get different answers,” explains Stilgoe, whose experience with the project led him to publish a book on responsible governance of geoengineering. [Read More at National Observer](#)



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## 'Yawning Gap' Between Green Goals And Progress Of Toronto And Surrounding Cities



Credits: Pexels

There is a “yawning gap” in Ontario, Canada between what Toronto, Hamilton and the cities in between are doing to reduce emissions and what needs to be done. And it's not a good news gap. The Atmospheric Fund, a regional climate agency, released its carbon emissions inventory on Monday and it shows the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) is a long way from meeting its emissions targets. The six municipalities that make up the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) emitted 49.2 megatonnes (Mt) of carbon emissions in 2017, the Atmospheric Fund's latest inventory shows. “And above all else, we must honour our climate declarations and targets by acting with urgency and commitment befitting a deepening planetary emergency,” the Fund’s Purcell said. [Read More at National Observer](#)

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## As China Puts On Weight, Type-2 Diabetes Is Soaring



Credit: Andrea Ucini

More than 30 years ago, doctors in the northern city of Daqing began a pioneering long-term study into the prevention of type-2 diabetes, a disease which was then thought to affect about 1% of Chinese. When doctors, academics and officials convened there this autumn to discuss the conclusions and promote prevention work, they faced a very different reality. About 11% of Chinese adults now have the condition, nearly the proportion in America and twice the level in Britain. Type-2 diabetes is becoming more common globally, but in recent years its prevalence has been growing fastest in China. [Read More at Economist](#)

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## Climate Change And Political Chaos: A Deadly Mix In Honduran Dengue Epidemic



Credit: Daniele Volpe/The New

York Times

Rising temperatures are increasing the range of disease-bearing mosquitoes globally. But in Honduras, the effects are compounded by government dysfunction and criminal gangs. More than 400 people died last year as one of the worst dengue epidemics on record swept through Central America — a type of outbreak that some scientists and public health officials are warning is likely to become more frequent and more widespread because of climate change. Dr. Dinorah Nolasco, the regional health director in Cortés, acknowledged that one of the main factors contributing to the epidemic's spread was the shortage of trained personnel focused on prevention, education and response. "In the face of the virus and its speed, we weren't prepared," she said. [Read More at New York Times](#)

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## Florida Keys Deliver A Hard Message: As Seas Rise Some Places Can't Be Saved



Credit: Angel Valentin/NY Times

Officials in the Florida Keys have announced that as sea levels continue to rise, some parts of the islands will be too expensive to save. Current estimates put the costs of elevating streets in the keys at \$25 million to \$60 million a mile, depending on the elevation. This makes elevating streets in less populated areas cost prohibitive. [Read More at New York Times](#)

See Also at New York Times: [Barge With 600 Gallons of Diesel Sinks Off Galápagos Islands](#)

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## Soil Is Our Best Ally In The Fight Against Climate Change—But We're Fast Running Out Of It





Credit: Dan Evans

Maintaining soil ecosystem services will become more important over the next few decades. By 2050, the global population is estimated to soar to more than 9 billion, and that will mean a much greater demand on the world's soil. In business, when demand for a product grows, you increase its production. But for soil, it's a different story. In sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean, the threat of soil erosion is high and soil functioning is considered to be deteriorating. Soil erosion is a global issue, so conversations between people with different backgrounds and skills are essential. But the message that emerged from a recent symposium was relatively simple. For a decent future for all, we must save the world's soils. And the clock is ticking. [Read More at FPC Fresh Talk Daily](#)

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## Wildlife Wins: 7 Good-News Stories From 2019





Credit: BEVERLY JOUBERT, NAT GEO IMAGE COLLECTION

Demand for wildlife and wildlife products—such as pet turtles, lion bone, and shatoosh, scarves made from the fleece of rare Tibetan antelopes—is thought to be on the rise. But largely thanks to conservationists and animal advocates, there were success stories too, especially when it comes to protecting wildlife from crime and exploitation. Here are some ways wildlife benefited in 2019:

1. **At the global conference on wildlife trade, more species received protections.**
2. **Vaquita babies have been spotted off the coast of Mexico.**
3. **Chinese insurance will no longer cover pangolin scales.**
4. **African elephants can only rarely be caught and sent to faraway zoos.**
5. **International officials cracked down on wildlife crime.**
6. **The Russian government released the final group of animals from the notorious “whale jail.”**
7. **Technological developments are helping track animals and block the illegal wildlife trade.** [Read More at National Demographic](#)

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## How This Innovative Startup Is Transforming Air Pollution Into Ink



Credit: Air-Ink

Air-Ink is one of Solve's eight Circular Economy Solver teams. In this Q&A, hear from Co-Founder and Lead Scientist Anirudh Sharma on creativity, innovation and bold ideas to tackle air pollution. When there's a problem and people are complaining about it, there's a way to intervene. Sometimes people question us, saying, hey, you are monetizing pollution, so you are appreciating pollution. We also want to collaborate with people who really understand our target customers, like designers and printers. Air pollution is such a huge problem that there must be more than one solution. At the end of the day, tackling air pollution is about individual choices that we make, and we should all be mindful of how much we consume. [Read More at Solve](#)

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## OPINION

# It's Time To Get Serious About Nuclear Power



Credit:TTSTUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK

A recent study by Pushker Kharecha and Makiko Sato, of Columbia University, found that if Japan and Germany had reduced coal power, instead of nuclear, they could have prevented 28,000 premature air-pollution-induced deaths and twenty-four hundred million metric tons of cumulative carbon-dioxide emissions. In Germany, pausing its nuclear phaseout would be the equivalent of removing about two hundred million passenger cars from the road for an entire year. It would also prevent an additional sixteen thousand premature deaths. Unfortunately, there is no way to obtain that much power from a source that fits inside a thimble without the possibility of tragedy. Managing this trade-off comes down to good governance, and to layers and layers of safety checks and contingency plans. Of course, people will inevitably make mistakes. And yet, over the last few decades, most of the world has grossly underestimated the threat of climate change while, in some cases, overreacting to nuclear's risks. [Read More at OZY](#)

**See Also: [Is Nuclear Power Worth The Risk?](#)**

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## SPOTLIGHT ON POLICY

# 2019 Is The Year Humanity Declared War on Microplastics





Credit: Getty Images

Microplastic pollution isn't particularly new to science—researchers have been monitoring the problem for decades. But new technologies and techniques are making it easier to test environments for tiny pieces of plastic, say Deonie Allen and Steve Allen, environmental scientists (and spouses) studying such pollution at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, Scotland. Thanks to these new tools, it's now apparent that microplastics are absolutely everywhere. We'll never phase out plastics entirely—they're just too useful, particularly in medicine. So what we do need to use must be recycled, which just isn't happening at the moment because it isn't profitable. "Government is going to have to step up and support recycling until it becomes financially viable," says University of Michigan eco-toxicologist Allen Burton, who also studies microplastics. [Read More at Wired](#)

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## SPOTLIGHT ON INDIGENOUS WELLNESS

# Downstream Of Alberta Oilsands, Death By Cancer Comes Too Often



Credit: Arctic Eider Society

It's been more than a dozen years since the metaphorical alarm was first sounded, and yet the residents of Fort Chipewyan, Alberta still don't know what's killing them. What they do know is that there are still elevated rates of cancer in the northern Alberta community. They also know that nothing's been done to address the issue, despite community leaders asking for further investigation for years. "It's like a silent killer. You don't know what it is that's out there, what's causing you to get sick," said Chief Allan Adam, leader of Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation. Adam was in Ottawa last week campaigning, once again, to get answers for his community. Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, Mikisew Cree First Nation and the hamlet of Fort Chipewyan are all situated near the mouth of the Athabasca River, where it flows into Lake Athabasca, in Alberta's upper northeast. [Read More at National Observer](#)

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Credit: GAGE SKIDMORE

## Quote Of The Week

**“Maybe, just maybe, instead of spending \$1.8 trillion a year globally on weapons of destruction, [we can] pool our resources and fight our common enemy, which is climate change.”**

**2020 U.S. Presidential candidate Senator Bernie Sanders**

[Read More at Futurism](#)

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## Upcoming Events

- February 19th - 20th, 2020: [2nd World Congress on Primary Healthcare and Medicare Summit](#) (Paris, France)
- March 31 - April 2, 2020: [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)
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## FYI#1 SPOTLIGHT ON MEDIA (13 Minute Podcast)

# Antarctica Is Melting 6x Faster Than 40 Years Ago—Interview w/Eric Rignot—Radio Ecoshock



Credit: Dr. Eric Rignot

Here is the latest shocking headline in this age of climate change: “Antarctica losing six times more ice mass annually now, than 40 years ago”. To explain the breaking

science we are joined by Dr. Eric Rignot, Chair of Earth System Science at University of California, Irvine, and Senior Research Scientist at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena. Show by Radio Ecoshock, reposted under CC License. Episode details at <https://www.ecoshock.org/2019/01/glob...>

Just 10 years ago we were told "don't worry about Antarctica". Sea ice there was actually expanding. We thought snow was piling up deeper in the interior of the continent. But satellite measurements show Antarctica is losing mass. Ice must be peeling off into the ocean faster than snow can accumulate. In 2014, Eric and his team shocked the world when they reported that melting in a section of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet is "unstoppable". Their observations challenge the traditional view that the East Antarctic Ice Sheet is stable and immune to change. After an exhaustive survey, this team found in the 1990's, ice loss from Antarctica more than tripled from the previous decade. It's gone up again every decade since. We also discuss the role of the ozone hole and climate change.

See More at Youtube

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**FYI #2**

## **Mark Carney Appointed UN Envoy For Climate Action**



Credit: AFP

Former Bank of England governor Mark Carney has been appointed United Nations Special Envoy for Climate Action and Finance. Mr. Carney said the recent COP25 UN climate change conference "provides a platform to bring the risks from climate change and the opportunities from the transition to a net-zero economy into the heart of financial decision-making. To do so, the disclosures of climate risk must become comprehensive, climate risk management must be transformed, and investing for a net-zero world must go mainstream." Mr. Carney will be tasked with mobilizing private finance to take climate action and help transition to a net-zero carbon economy for the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP) meeting in Glasgow in November, 2020. This will include building new frameworks for financial reporting and risk management, as well as making climate change a key priority in private financial decision making.

[Read more at BBC](#)

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**FYI #3**

## **The Deadly Global Fungus**





Credit: Adam Hale, The Daily Splice

In 2009, medical researchers in Japan examined the infected ear of a 70-year-old woman and found a curious new pathogen – a drug-resistant fungus that no one had ever identified. The researchers christened it *Candida auris* (*auris* is Latin for “ear”) and published a paper about it. “We’re uncovering fundamental biology. How do these organisms become drug resistant? How do they cause disease? What kind of molecules can we use to perturb those processes? Do these molecules and their targets in fungal cells influence interactions with host cells? We’re interested in going all the way to translate those discoveries into new therapeutic strategies,” says Cowen, a co-founder of Bright Angel Therapeutics in Toronto, which develops treatments for drug-resistant fungal infections. “We think in the next few years we’re going to see at least a couple of new classes of antifungals come on board,” Cowen says.

[Read More at UToronto](#)

# As Electric Vehicles Proliferate Globally, The U.S. Big 3 Are Idle



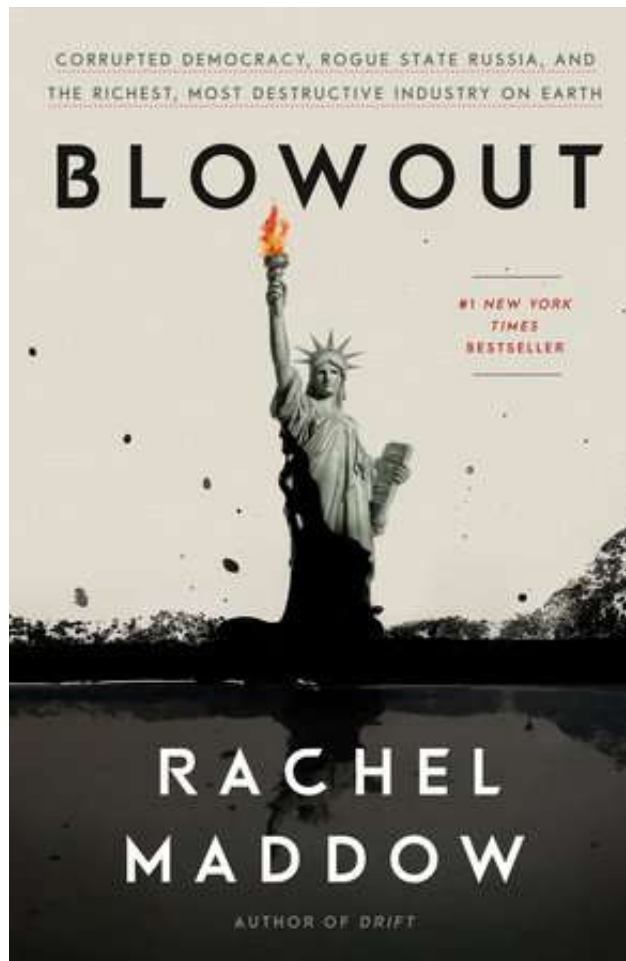
Credit: Tesla

Electric vehicles have been around for some time, but global automakers have been reluctant to migrate because doing so represents the biggest technological revolution since the Ford Model T. This revolution entails scrapping a century of incremental investments in the internal combustion engine and replacing it with a 100% different set of propulsion technologies, along with all the requirements to design their vehicles differently. This means it would take many years for automakers to recover their investments in electric vehicles (EVs), all while there are big profits to be made on conventional pick-ups and SUVs. While North America's automakers have been sluggish to respond, manufacturers elsewhere are prepared to comply with Chinese and European Union requirements for a migration to zero- and low-emission vehicles.

[Read More at National Observer](#)

## **FYI #5: WINTER READING**

# **Blowout - Corrupted Democracy, Rogue State Russia, And The Richest, Most Destructive Industry On Earth**



Credit: Rachel Maddow

With her trademark black humor, Rachel Maddow, an American television news program host and liberal political commentator, takes us on a switchback journey around the globe, revealing the greed and incompetence of Big Oil and Gas along the way, and drawing a surprising conclusion about why the Russian government hacked the 2016 U.S. election. She deftly shows how Russia's rich reserves of crude have, paradoxically, stunted its growth, forcing Putin to maintain his power by spreading Russia's rot into its rivals, its neighbours, the West's most important alliances, and the United States. Chevron, BP and a host of other industry players get their star turn,

most notably ExxonMobil and the deceptively well-behaved Rex Tillerson. The oil and gas industry has weakened democracies in developed and developing countries, fouled oceans and rivers, and propped up authoritarian thieves and killers. But being outraged at it is, according to Maddow, “like being indignant when a lion takes down and eats a gazelle. You can’t really blame the lion. It’s in her nature.”

*Blowout* is a call to contain the lion: to stop subsidizing the wealthiest businesses on earth, to fight for transparency, and to check the influence of the world’s most destructive industry and its enablers. The stakes have never been higher. As Maddow writes, “Democracy either wins this one or disappears.”

[Read More on Penguin Random House](#)

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## **FYI#6: SPOTLIGHT ON EDUCATION**

# **Roundup Of Law Programs For A Global Development Career**





Professionals with legal expertise play a critical role in the global development sector. They provide technical advice to implementing organizations, ensure compliance of programs with international laws, and work with governments, multilateral organizations and local organizations to promote the rule of law. A number of master's degree programs now focus on law in the context of global development. These programs cover a wide range of relevant issues — from water law and Islamic law to the rule of law in conflict prevention and peace building. In addition to academic requirements and previous work or volunteer experience, most programs also expect applicants to demonstrate proficiency in English.

Whether you are already practicing law and looking for a career change or you are interested in how law can be applied to support the Sustainable Development Goals, here's a roundup of master's degree programs that could help advance your global development career. While this list highlights some of the key programs in this field of study, there are many more law programs that offer at least some modules on development issues.

[Read more at Devex](#)

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## END SHOTS

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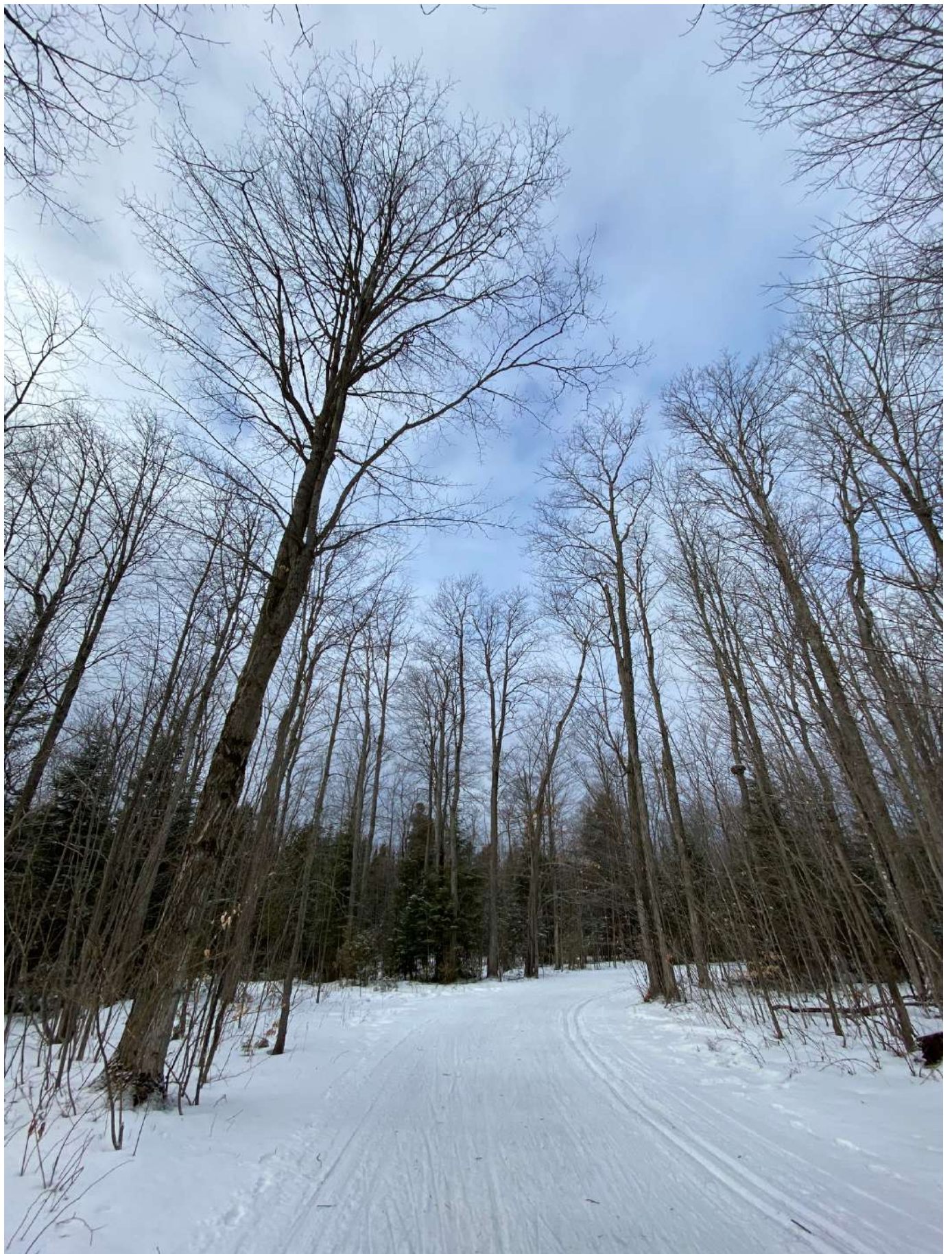




















# PLANETARY HEALTH WEEKLY



Credits: David Zakus

**Highlands Nordic Ski Day**

Near Collingwood, Ontario

January 4, 2020



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