

Heat dome brings extreme temperatures to East

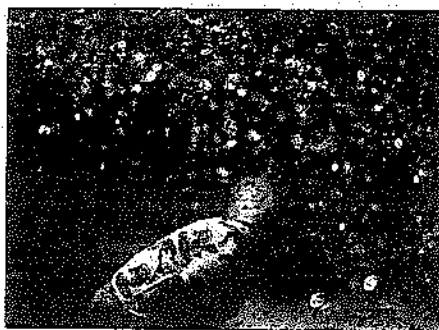
What happened

An unusually early heat wave scorched the Midwest and Northeast this week, breaking temperature records from Michigan to Maine and auguring a sweltering summer that may prove the hottest in recorded history. As a heat dome settled over the eastern U.S., some 270 million Americans baked under 90-plus degree temperatures—15 to 20 degrees above historical norms—with heat index readings expected to top 100 in many locations. The National Weather Service issued its first-ever excessive heat warning in northern Maine, where temperatures were expected to reach 96 degrees, while Chicago broke a daily temperature record as it hit 97 degrees. The heat dome—a high-pressure system that traps air in place and bakes it with sunshine for days on end—follows record-breaking temperatures earlier this month in parts of California and the Southwest. Meteorologists forecast that this summer may be hotter than that of 2023, which itself was the Northern Hemisphere's hottest in 2,000 years.

In California, firefighters battled at least six major wildfires. In Northern California, firefighters fought a blaze that spread over nearly 16 square miles; another fire north of Los Angeles forced the evacuation of 1,000 people and scorched more than 15,000 acres. "It's very early for a fire of this magnitude," said L.A. County Fire Department spokesman Craig Little. Meanwhile, in southern Florida, cleanup was underway after severe storms dumped more than 20 inches of rain in 48 hours. Neighborhoods in Miami, Fort Lauderdale, and other cities were left waist-deep in water. The aftermath "looked like the beginning of a zombie movie," said Miami tow-truck driver Ted Rico. "Every year it's just getting worse."

What the columnists said

Heat waves don't "topple buildings" or flood cities, but they're federal disasters and should be treated as such, said Mark Gongloff in *Bloomberg*. More than 30 environmental and health groups and trade unions petitioned the Federal Emergency Management Agency this week to classify heat waves as disasters qualifying for federal relief, and "the agency should listen." Extreme heat is a killer that contributed to the deaths of a record 2,300 Americans last year. Federal disaster money would help local governments to build cool-



Trying to cool down in Washington, D.C.

ing centers, reach out to vulnerable citizens, and more, saving "countless lives."

In Florida, "the rain has become political," said Lori Rozsa in *The Washington Post*. The science is clear: A warmer atmosphere holds more moisture, leading to more rain and more extreme weather events. But Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis pushed back against the idea that climate change helped fuel the recent storm, saying the downpour "is not unprecedented." Last month, DeSantis signed a bill that eliminates references to climate change from state documents. "We don't want our energy policy driven by climate ideology," he said.

Meanwhile, "Miami is entering a state of unreality," said Mario Alejandro Ariza in *The Atlantic*. Meteorologists call last week's storm "a once-in-200-years event," but it's the fourth such deluge to swamp the region in as many years. And as "the sea keeps rising," sunny-day flooding has increased fourfold since 1998. Miami has spent millions of dollars to install pumps and otherwise upgrade its infrastructure, but as conditions worsen, it seems less and less equipped to ward off "creeping catastrophe."

"Climate alarm bells" are ringing everywhere, said Ishaan Tharoor in *The Washington Post*. Pre-summer heat waves have "already slammed disparate stretches of the planet, from Bangkok to Barranquilla." In Asia, temperatures rocketed as high as 120 degrees Fahrenheit "in an arc from the Philippines to India." A decade ago, scientists put the odds of the planet warming 2.7 degrees higher than in preindustrial times—"the threshold that spells climactic disaster"—by 2020 at nearly zero. Now the odds of that happening by 2028 are estimated at 8 in 10.

Remember this in November, said Paul Waldman in *MSNBC.com*. President Biden has taken unprecedented action against climate change, enacting over 100 new environmental regulations and passing legislation that boosts clean energy and more. A President Donald Trump would roll back that progress. Biden's "climate fanaticism will need a whole-of-government unwinding," declares Project 2025, the blueprint for a second Trump term drafted by his allies. As the globe broils, climate denialism "is no longer tenable." Now American voters "have to decide whether they want to do anything about it."

It wasn't all bad

■ Daniel Wright and Gaar Lausman were at a Colorado River beach in Utah when they saw a 40-year-old man and his two children, ages 8 and 10, fall into the water when their kayak capsized. Lausman quickly got onto his paddleboard and went after the two kids—one of whom had been flipped face down by his flotation device. After rescuing the kids, Lausman saw that their dad had been swept downstream. Fortunately, Wright then arrived on his jet ski and managed to reach the father, who was nearly underwater. Both father and kids got back to shore with no serious injuries.

■ Residents of Palo Alto have embraced a gray miniature donkey named Perry, who served as the model for the donkey character in the 2001 animated movie *Shrek*. The 30-year-old Perry, who lives in a pasture in a local park along with two other donkeys, suffers from severe arthritis and a hormonal disorder, and the community has stepped up to care for him. Perry has smitten



Perry at his 30th birthday

many locals since he was donated to the park in 1997—including Rex Grignon, an animator who brought a team to study Perry while working on *Shrek*. Perry and his fellow donkeys "have brought people lots of joy," said Jenny Kiratli, their lead handler. "There is something about looking into a donkey's eyes that's very therapeutic."

■ Seven Przewalski's horses are once again roaming in their native Kazakhstan for the first time in 200 years. Horses are thought to have been domesticated in the central Asia region about 5,500 years ago, but hunting and road construction nearly drove these animals to extinction in the wild in the 1960s. The four mares from Berlin and two mares and a stallion from Prague were transported on a 30-hour plane journey. Over the next five years, 40 horses will be transported there. "This is the beginning of a whole new chapter in the story of the last wild horse on the planet," said the Prague zoo's director.

Getty Images/Pat Downey Project