

Best of Last Week: Patterns in mass extinctions, cause of ice ages, blood vessel damage in children from COVID-19

December 14 2020, by Bob Yirka

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It was a good week for Earth science as a trio of researchers from Japan, the U.K. and Sweden ran [artificial intelligence applications that found surprising patterns in Earth's biological mass extinctions](#)—Jennifer

Hoyal Cuthill, Nicholas Guttenberg and Graham Budd also found that productive periods were rarely connected to mass extinctions. Also, a pair of biologists at Monash University found evidence that suggested [Charles Darwin was right about why insects are losing the ability to fly](#)—Rachel Leihy and Steven Chown found that insects that fly on islands tend to get blown out to sea. And an international team of researchers wondered [what caused the ice ages](#). In their study, they discovered that tiny ocean fossils offer key evidence.

In technology news, QuantumScape announced that after a decade's worth of effort, they have developed [a solid-state automotive battery that could transform the EV industry](#)—they claim their lithium-metal battery can travel 80% farther than those equipped with lithium-ion batteries, last longer and maintain more than 80% of their capacity after 800 recharges. Also, Nordic Harvest [opened a giant vertical farm in Denmark](#)—they expect it to produce almost 1,000 tons of produce annually when running at full capacity. And a team at Ecole Normale Supérieure de Lyon and Central European University developed [a deep neural network to study the socioeconomic inequalities that arise from urbanization](#). And a team of researchers affiliated with a host of institutions in China announced that they had developed [new 2-D Ruddlesden-Popper-layered, perovskite-based solar cells](#) that can be produced using renewable resources.

Also, a team at Iowa State University found evidence that [diet modifications—including more wine and cheese—may reduce cognitive decline](#) as people age. And a combined team from Hokkaido University and Amoeba Energy, both in Japan announced that their '[electronic amoeba](#)' [found an approximate solution to the famous traveling salesman computer problem](#) in linear time.

And finally, if you are a parent worried about your child being infected with COVID-19, you may want to check out the work done by a team

at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia—they found [elevated biomarkers for blood vessel damage in all the children infected with SARS-CoV-2 that they tested.](#)

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