

Best of Last Week: Sea levels rising faster, a robot guide dog and inexpensive COVID-19 vaccine

May 3 2021, by Bob Yirka

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It was a good week for earth science as a team of researchers at Harvard University found evidence suggesting that [Antarctic ice sheet melting is likely to lift sea levels higher than previously thought](#)—a new calculation

for the water expulsion mechanism showed more water being pushed into the ocean due to rising bedrock. Also, a team with members from the U.S. and Canada discovered [cave deposits that showed a surprising shift in permafrost over the last 400,000 years](#)—they found it has been much more stable.

In technology news, a team of computer scientists at the University of Virginia School of Engineering discovered [a new vulnerability that affects computers globally](#)—a line of attack that can get past current Spectre defenses. Also, Scott Hardman and Gil Tal, a pair of researchers with the Institute of Transportation Studies at the University of California, Davis looked into [why some electric car owners revert back to gasoline-powered vehicles](#). And a combined team from Northwestern University and the University of Hong Kong announced that they had developed [a new brain-like computing device that simulates human learning](#). Also, a team with the University of California Berkeley's Hybrid Robotics Group developed [a robotic guide dog to assist blind individuals](#).

In other news, a team of researchers from the Salk Institute and the University of California San Diego showed that [the novel coronavirus spike protein plays an additional key role in the illness](#)—also confirming that COVID-19 is a vascular disease and not a respiratory disease. Also, officials with NASA announced that [the Mars helicopter Ingenuity made a successful fourth flight and because of that will get an extra month of flying](#). And a team in the Department of Ethology at Eötvös Loránd University determined [which dogs more often establish eye contact with humans](#).

And finally, if you are among those who cannot be vaccinated for COVID-19 because of the cost, you might want to check out work done by a combined team from the University of Virginia and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University—they developed [a new](#)

[vaccine that could provide universal protection against all of the COVID variants](#) and would cost less than US \$1.

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