

Best of Last Week – Drone sails into a hurricane, robot that can navigate sidewalks, a pill to treat COVID-19

October 4 2021, by Bob Yirka

NOAA and Saildrone Inc. are piloting five specially designed saildrones in the Atlantic Ocean to gather data around the clock to help understand the physical processes of hurricanes. Credit: Saildrone

It was a good week for earth science as a team of researchers at the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, captured [footage](#)

[from inside of a hurricane using an ocean drone](#). Called Saildrone, the surfboard-shaped craft and its special sail survived winds of over 120 mph. A small international team found that [the Earth is dimming due to climate change](#)—the albedo was found to be approximately a half-watt less per square meter than 20 years ago due to decreases in low-lying clouds over the oceans. Two Stanford-led studies revealed [the potential of an overlooked climate change solution](#): reducing the amount of methane that is being released into the atmosphere.

In technology news, a combined team from the Georgia Institute of Technology and Stanford University developed [a new robot that could efficiently navigate sidewalks in urban environments](#). Called AlienGo, the quadruped robot can follow specific routes generated by publicly available maps while keeping to sidewalks and avoiding collisions with obstacles or humans. And another combined team from the University of Birmingham and the University of Surrey found vulnerabilities in Visa and Apple Pay that [left iPhone users open to payment fraud](#). Also, a team at Hokkaido University developed [an autonomous, forearm-supported walker for assisting patients in nursing facilities](#). And an international team [identified and cleared efficiency hurdles holding back the use of organic solar cells](#) by fixing a loss pathway.

In other news, a team at Imperial College London, found that [seven symptoms could be used to predict a COVID-19 diagnosis](#): change of taste perception, change of olfaction, new persistent cough, fever, chills, muscle aches and appetite loss. Also, a team at Technion-Israel Institute of Technology developed [a way to reveal the quantum nature of the interaction between photons and free electrons](#).

And finally, a team at the pharmaceutical company Merck developed [a pill that they claim reduces the risk of death and/or hospitalization from COVID-19 by half](#).

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