

# **Best of Last Week—giant trees in the UK, removing plastic from water, using gene therapy to treat brain cancer**

March 18 2024, by Bob Yirka

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Redwood Trees at Wakehurst Horsebridge Woods. Credit: Visual Air RBG Kew

It was a good week for biological research, as a team of botanists found that [giant sequoia trees](#) are thriving in the U.K.—the trees were imported to the U.K. starting approximately 160 years ago and now serve as an excellent carbon sink. Also, a team of entomologists and engineers at the Georgia Institute of Technology report that [cicadas' unique urination process](#) has unlocked a new understanding of fluid dynamics. And a team of climate and food researchers led by a group at Macquarie University studying snakes held in commercial python farms in Southeast Asia found that the [snakes can offer a high-protein diet](#), potentially serving as a major food source for areas in need.

In technology news, a team of engineers at the University of Waterloo developed a new technology to [remove microplastic from water sources](#) with 94% efficiency. The process uses thermal decomposition. And a team at Ecole Polytechnique Federale de Lausanne found that large language models trained in English [use the language internally](#), even for prompts in other languages. Also, a team of engineers at the National Institute for Materials Science, in Japan, developed the world's first [N-channel diamond field-effect transistor](#) for CMOS integrated circuits. And a team of roboticists at the University of Michigan demonstrated SKOOTR, [a tri-pedal skating robot](#) that can efficiently move in its surroundings without flipping over.

In other news, a team of bio and healing convergence researchers at Konkuk University, in South Korea, found that interactions with dogs can [increase the number of brainwaves](#) associated with stress relief and heightened concentration. Also, an astrophysicist at the University of Ottawa challenged basic physics theories, reporting evidence that [the universe contains no dark matter](#)—he suggests there is no room for it.

And finally, several medical research centers in the Boston area conducted a clinical trial finding dramatic and rapid [regression of glioblastoma](#) from a next-generation CAR-T therapy.

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