

Hello Nature readers,  
Here's our pick of today's science stories.



New Zealand is part of what some scientists argue should be a new continent

NEWS

## Geologists spy an eighth continent: Zealandia

Beneath the waves in the southwest Pacific Ocean lies a mostly hidden realm — dubbed Zealandia — that deserves to be called a continent, geologists say. They've been making the case for decades, but just published a more technical synthesis. It's unclear how much traction their argument will get, because there is no international body in charge of designating official continents.

Nature | 12 min read  
(GSA Today [research papers](#))

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## Collapse of Aztec society linked to catastrophic salmonella outbreak

One of the worst epidemics in human history, which devastated Mexico's native population in the sixteenth century, may have been caused by a deadly form of salmonella from Europe. One study extracted bacterial DNA from Mexican burials of the time, which points to a specific salmonella strain. That same strain was circulating in Europe in the twelfth century, another ancient-DNA study found.

Nature | 12 min read  
(bioRxiv [research papers](#))

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## Watch these robo-insects run

Insects could run faster if they kept just two legs on the ground at any one time, a study of six-legged insect-inspired robots shows. Fruit-flies and other insects actually keep at least three legs in contact with the ground; that's slower, but creates a more stable 'tripod' base for scrambling over rough terrain.

Nature | 12 min read  
(Nature Communications [research papers](#))

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## Giant crack in Antarctic ice shelf spotlights advances in glaciology

A giant 175-km long crack in the Antarctica's Larsen C ice shelf has grown by 10 kilometres since January and could release an iceberg twice the size of Luxembourg into the Weddell Sea within weeks or months. Scientists say it is another sign that global warming is destabilizing ice on the Antarctic Peninsula. But the studies also illuminate how far glaciology has come since the collapse of the nearby ice shelves Larsen A in 1995 and Larsen B in 2002.

Nature | 12 min read

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## The race to map the human body — one cell at a time

Germany is planning what may be the most ambitious Arctic research expedition ever. In 2019, it plans to allow the research vessel Polarstern to become locked in Arctic ice and drift across the pole. During the year-long mission, scientists will be able to use the sensor-packed ship as a base and take measurements from across the pole.

BBC | 12 min read

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COMMENT & ANALYSIS

## US Republican idea for tax on carbon makes climate sense



A group of senior US Republicans has proposed an entirely sensible climate policy: put a substantial and steadily rising tax on carbon, and then send the proceeds back to citizens to offset the economic pain of higher energy prices.

Nature | 12 min read  
Science paper

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## Roger Penrose and the vision thing

Penrose is still defining the way we see the universe. But, in today's world of ultra-specialised science, could a thinker of such breadth ever emerge again?

Prospect | 12 min read

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### Thought for the day

**“To prevent further breakdown of the EU, scientists must shout from the rooftops that many of our problems today can be solved only at a European, or even a global, level.”**

Belgian microbiologist Herman Goossens, in Nature

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