Helping Puffins

Learn how kids are rescuing the seabirds.
By Brian S. McGrath

The worst effects of climate change could happen sooner than expected.

That’s the warning of a report released October 8 by the United Nations’ scientific panel on climate change. The panel included 91 scientists from 40 countries. They analyzed thousands of studies.

The Earth has warmed by 1.8°F since industrial coal burning started in the 1850s, the report says. At the current rate, the temperature will reach 2.7°F above preindustrial levels by 2040. That slight increase could expose tens of millions more people worldwide to heat waves, wildfire, food and water shortages, and coastal flooding. Entire ecosystems could be wiped out.

“For some people, this is a life-or-death situation, without a doubt,” says climate scientist Natalie Mahowald, one of the lead authors.

The report urges world leaders to act. To prevent 2.7°F of warming, carbon dioxide pollution would have to drop by nearly half in the next 12 years. By 2050, it would have to be zero. The scientists advise governments to set a cap on carbon emissions or tax industries that pollute.

The report also says the use of coal, oil, and gas would need to be drastically cut. Use of wind and solar power would need to increase.

“We have a monumental task in front of us, but it is not impossible,” Mahowald says. “This is our chance to decide what the world is going to look like.”

By Shay Maunz

A new study shows that meeting three benchmarks for health can strengthen kids’ brains. The benchmarks are getting nine to 11 hours of sleep each night, exercising at least 60 minutes a day, and spending less than two hours a day on recreational screen time.

The study was published September 27. It examined the habits of more than 4,500 children in the United States from ages 8 to 11. Only 5% of them met all three health benchmarks. Nearly 30% met none.

The kids were given tests to measure memory, attention, language skills, planning, and mental processing. Children who met all three benchmarks scored highest. The study’s authors wrote that the findings show “the importance of limiting recreational screen time and encouraging healthy sleep.”
"DADDY! I FOUND A SWORD!"

said SAGA VANECEK, an 8-year-old girl, after finding a sword in a Swedish lake in July. Saga and her father turned the sword over to Sweden’s Jönköpings Läns Museum. On October 2, the museum announced that the sword dates to the 5th or 6th century. That is before the time of the Vikings.

That was the final vote in Supreme Court nominee BRETT KAVANAUGH’S confirmation hearing before the Senate on October 6. After a controversial confirmation battle, Kavanaugh was sworn in the next day. The last time a Supreme Court confirmation vote was this narrow was in 1881.

is the number of structures dating back to the MAYAN CIVILIZATION discovered recently in northern Guatemala. They were found during archaeological scans of the region’s forests.

There are four species of puffins. Read the chart to learn how each breed sizes up. Then turn the page to read about a group of kids who are working to save the seabirds.

ATLANTIC PUFFIN
Length: 10–11 inches
Weight: 11–20 ounces

RHINOCEROS AUKLET
Length: 11 in.
Weight: 12–22 oz.

HORNED PUFFIN
Length: 14–16 in.
Weight: 17–23 oz.

TUFTED PUFFIN
Length: 14–16 in.
Weight: 18–33 oz.

is the diameter of a newly discovered dwarf planet named GOBLIN. It is 2,300 times farther from the sun than Earth is. It was discovered around Halloween 2015 but announced earlier this month.
Children in Iceland are helping scientists rescue lost puffins.

Atlantic puffins spend most of their life at sea, floating in the open ocean. When it’s time to lay eggs, the birds gather in colonies on seaside cliffs, burrowing into the ground to build nests. After a puffling, or chick, hatches, it spends six weeks in the nest, feasting on fish supplied by its parents. But then the young bird must fend for itself. It leaves the nest and flies out to sea.

At least, that’s what’s supposed to happen. But on Heimaey, an island off the southern coast of Iceland, human-made hazards have disrupted the chicks’ trek from nest to ocean, threatening the lives of many birds. Luckily, they are getting help from the children of Heimaey.

KID HELPERS

Heimaey is a small island of just 4,200 people. But with its neighboring islands, it hosts the world’s largest puffin colony. Each spring, more than 1.5 million puffins go to the islands to breed. Around August, puffin chicks make their way to the ocean. That’s when the trouble begins.

Instinct tells pufflings to leave the nest at night and follow the light of the moon to the sea. But they are confused by Heimaey’s bright lights. Each year, a large number of them end up lost—or worse. Often, stray birds are hit by cars or preyed on by cats.

Enter the Puffling Patrol. Each breeding season, the children of Heimaey embark on their own middle-of-the-night adventure. They band together to form search parties and take to the streets of Heimaey carrying...
flashlights and cardboard boxes. (Adults are there to supervise.) “When you see a bird, you try to corner it and herd it into the box,” Eldur Hansen told TIME for Kids. Eldur is 14. He has caught several puffins this way. No one knows exactly when or how the Puffling Patrol got its start, but each year it rescues thousands of chicks.

Kids take rescued birds home. The next morning, they take them to the beach for release. Over the years, kids have even developed a gentle technique. “You do not throw them like a baseball,” Eldur says. “You hold them in both hands, crouch down, and put them in between your legs. Then you stand up, extend your arms in front of you and let go, so the bird gets as much momentum as it can.”

PUFFINS IN PERIL

Before releasing rescued pufflings, their rescuers make a pit stop at the local aquarium, where the birds are weighed and tagged, for tracking purposes. This helps scientists learn more about puffins.

In 2005, puffin colonies around the world went into decline. Atlantic puffins are now listed as a vulnerable species, meaning they are likely to become endangered. The main reason is that the ocean’s supply of small fish is dwindling. The change is tied to overfishing and rising ocean temperatures. Puffins rely on the fish for food.

Erpur Hansen is with the South Iceland Nature Research Center. (He’s also Eldur’s dad.) Hansen says the Puffling Patrol is more important than ever. “We scientists are lucky to be able to partake in the children’s rescues,” he says. Thanks to data gathered with kids’ help, researchers have learned that puffin chicks now weigh less than in previous years. That means they have a lower chance of survival.

Scientists worry puffins will die out entirely if ocean temperatures continue to rise. But the kids of Heimaey inspire Stephen Kress. He is the director of Audubon’s Project Puffin, a conservation effort in the United States. “The message is that people can make a difference,” he says. “Each time these kids help a bird get back to the ocean, they show us that.”

—By Shay Maunz
An iconic painting by a mysterious artist sells for $1.4 million at auction. Then it self-destructs.

Nothing seemed unusual at an October 5 art auction at Sotheby’s in London, England. Then the unthinkable happened. A work by Banksy—a famous British street artist whose identity is a mystery—had just sold to an anonymous buyer for nearly $1.4 million. Moments later, the painting began to slip through its ornate frame, the bottom half shredding into strips. Onlookers gasped.

“It appears we just got Banksy-ed,” Alex Branczik, Sotheby’s head of contemporary art in Europe, said at a news conference. “I’ll be quite honest: We have not experienced this situation in the past, where a painting is spontaneously shredded.”

The spray paint–and-acrylic canvas, Girl with Balloon, was a 2006 version of one of Banksy’s most iconic works. The artist originally spray-painted the image on a London wall in 2002.

PULLING IT OFF

Banksy isn’t new to pulling pranks. In fact, his work is known for taking the world by surprise. In the dark of night, he transforms ordinary urban walls into spray-painted masterpieces. The artist’s graffitied images deliver hard-hitting political commentary. They have appeared all over the world.

Although Banksy’s identity is unknown to the public, it’s certain that he was behind the stunt. After the auction, he posted a picture of the shredded canvas on Instagram with the caption “Going, going, gone . . .” He also posted a video that partially explains how the prank was pulled off. “A few years ago, I secretly built a shredder into a painting in case it was ever put up for auction,” a caption in the video says. The video doesn’t explain how the shredder was activated.

Some art experts think the piece could be worth even more in its shredded state. Joey Syer cofounded a website that buys and sells art, including many of Banksy’s works. He told the Evening Standard that he thinks the partly shredded Girl with Balloon could now be worth 50% more than it just sold for.

Pierre Koukjian is a Geneva, Switzerland–based artist who witnessed the stunt unfold. He calls the new owner of the piece “very lucky,” reports the Associated Press. “What [Banksy] did is really shocking, in a good way,” Koukjian says. “I think it will be historic, and people will talk for a long time about it.”

—By Rebecca Katzman

**Power Words**

- **commentary** noun: an expression of an opinion
- **iconic** adjective: widely recognized or respected
- **ornate** adjective: elaborately or excessively decorated
Basketball star LeBron James opens the I Promise School for students in Akron, Ohio.

Teachers at a new public school in Akron, Ohio, welcomed students on opening day with applause, high fives, and big smiles. But perhaps no one had a bigger grin than basketball great and hometown hero LeBron James.

“This is a huge moment in my life,” James said at the July 30 opening. The I Promise School (IPS) is his parting gift to Ohio. This summer, he announced he was leaving the Cleveland Cavaliers to play for the Los Angeles Lakers.

IPS kicked off the school year with 240 students in grades 3 and 4. By 2022, it will serve children in grades 1 through 8. Students receive free uniforms, bikes, and meals. When IPS kids graduate from high school, they’re promised a full scholarship to the University of Akron.

The school is unique in other ways too. For one thing, it has a longer school day. Students are in class from 9 to 5. That’s because they need extra help. Many IPS kids struggle with assignments. Some have had behavior problems. Others have worries at home that keep them distracted. IPS works to help students overcome such challenges.

“LeBron really believes in education,” Michele Campbell told TIME for Kids. She is executive director of the LeBron James Family Foundation. The group partnered with Akron Public Schools to develop IPS. “LeBron was a public school kid, so helping kids just like him was very, very important to him,” Campbell says.

LEBRON FAMILY VALUES

James grew up poor in Akron. He and his mother moved frequently. In fourth grade, he missed 83 days of school. Support from the community helped him get back on track.

IPS aims to support kids in much the same way. Every day at IPS begins with an “I Promise circle.” This gives kids a chance to talk through what might be bothering them. The school also has a food pantry and resources to help parents find jobs.

“All of these things combined create an atmosphere where students feel loved and valued at school,” Nicole Hassan says. She is the Akron Public Schools liaison to IPS.

Student Erialle Turner, 9, told TFK she is already happier at I Promise. “I feel thankful. This school helps me be a better person.”

What’s more, Erialle says, IPS has one feature she thinks is especially cool: “It has all of LeBron’s game shoes.”

—By Constance Gibbs

Stop and Think!

How does the headline influence you even before you begin to read the story?
An angry pumpkin, scary garden gnomes, and a gang of giant gummy bears are just a few of the creepy curiosities in the new movie Goosebumps 2: Haunted Halloween. The film, based on the popular Goosebumps books by R.L. Stine, hit theaters October 12. It follows siblings Sarah and Sonny Quinn and Sonny’s best friend, Sam. When a ventriloquist dummy comes to life, the three set out on a spooktacular adventure to save their town.

Actor Jeremy Ray Taylor (pictured) plays Sonny. For him, the scariest part of the movie involves an enormous gourd. “There is a giant pumpkin, and we have a little bit of an encounter with him,” Jeremy told TFK Kid Reporter Will Holland. “It’s terrifying. I would not like to run into that in real life.” Yet the chilling scenes in Goosebumps 2 are balanced by many humorous moments. “It is a pretty good combination of scary and funny,” Jeremy says. “I don’t think you can find many movies like that these days.”

The Vickery twins have lived in the same house for as long as they can remember. Lee lives in the west wing with their mother, who works for Memory. Felix lives in the east wing with their father, an apprentice to Death. Because of an old agreement, their parents can never see each other. But on Halloween, outcast Gretchen Whipple recruits them to help her solve a mystery and the trio discovers that something is terribly wrong in Poplar Wood.

Author K.E. Ormsbee (pictured) talked to TFK about her inspirations for The House in Poplar Wood: “I’ve always been interested in how death is personified in folklore and myths.” She adds, “This story is about following your own path and depending on friends to guide you through difficult times.” —By Kio Herrera