

NOVEDADES COVID-19

Hello *Nature* readers,

Today we learn how COVID-19 can damage the brain, look at lessons from our failure to reach any of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and take a visually sumptuous tour of the latest dinosaur discoveries.

Some evidence that SARS-CoV-2 can infect the brain comes from 'organoids' — clumps of neurons created in a dish. (Erik Jepsen/UC San Diego)

[How COVID-19 can damage the brain](#)

Confusion, disorientation, agitation and even psychosis can be symptoms of COVID-19. Accumulating research is making the [connection between infection with the virus and neurological symptoms](#). Researchers are pinning down possible physiological mechanisms, such as brain inflammation, that might be causing the symptoms. But the answers to key questions, including why some of those infected suffer neurological damage but most do not, elude researchers. Scientists want to know whether the virus itself is causing the damage, or whether an overactive immune response is to blame. “The neurological symptoms are only becoming more and more scary,” says neuroscientist Alysson Muotri.

[Nature | 7 min read](#)

[World fails to meet every UN biodiversity goal](#)

We have [not met any of the 20 United Nations biodiversity targets agreed on by almost 200 nations in 2010](#) in Aichi, Japan. There are hopeful signs to build on: in the last ten years, the rate of deforestation has fallen globally by about a third, and good fisheries-management policies have paid dividends. And 44% of key biodiversity areas are now protected, compared with 29% 20 years ago. These must inspire us to make “a significant shift away from ‘business as usual’ across a broad range of human activities” heading into the next Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) summit, says the report. One area that is ripe for reform is government subsidies for harmful agriculture, fossil fuels and fishing practices. “We are still seeing so much more public money invested in things that harm biodiversity than in things that support biodiversity,” says David Cooper, the report’s lead author.

[The Guardian | 7 min read](#)

Read more: [CBD executive secretary Elizabeth Mrema on fighting for nature amid a](#)

[pandemic](#) (Nature | 6 min read, from May)
Reference: [Global Biodiversity Outlook report](#)

[Sweden sticks with ‘sustainable’ strategy](#)

Sweden’s controversial light-touch approach to the COVID-19 lockdown might be bearing fruit. It seems to have avoided, so far, the second wave of infections that threatens many of its European neighbours (although its number of COVID-19 deaths, particularly in care homes, remains among the highest in Europe). The country’s top epidemiologist, Anders Tegnell, [says the reason is that the approach is sustainable over years, unlike strict national lockdowns](#). “We have really tried to focus on places that we have known are going to be really dangerous,” says Tegnell, who shies away from the fame — and infamy — he has gained during the pandemic.

[Financial Times](#) | 11 min read

Features & opinion

[We’re in a golden age of dinosaur discovery](#)

Scientists are discovering dinosaur species at a break-neck pace and using cutting-edge techniques to analyse them. The result is a [rewriting of much of what we thought we knew about these captivating animals](#). From iridescent feathers to sinuous swimming, *National Geographic* takes a visually sumptuous tour of the latest on the ravishing reptiles.

[National Geographic](#) | 25 min read

[Why COVID-19 remains a health-policy riddle](#)

Part of the reason that health-policy officials have struggled in the face of the COVID-19, writes behavioural scientist Neil Lewis Jr., is that [it’s very hard to know what interventions will motivate people to change their behaviours — and why](#). For example, do people who won’t wear masks think the virus isn’t risky, because they don’t think masks work, or just because others aren’t wearing them? To make matters worse, surveys or studies often represent only a portion of the population — often white and wealthy — leaving those most at risk underrepresented. “Data can be instructive, but it does not speak for itself,” writes Lewis. “Behind every data

point is a person. And with something like the coronavirus, where people are so deeply affected, we have to think about the ethics of intervening in people's lives.”

[FiveThirtyEight | 8 min read](#)

[Is hubris hurting COVID-19 response?](#)

The United States, the United Kingdom, Brazil and Chile ranked among the world's most prepared for a global health crisis — yet they are among the hardest-hit by COVID-19. “One thing these countries have in common is ‘exceptionalism’ — a view of themselves as outliers, in some way distinct from other nations,” [argues anthropologist Martha Lincoln](#). She outlines how the pandemic might provide a natural experiment on the public-health effects of hubris.

[Nature | 4 min read](#)

[This is no time to cut ERC funding](#)

Europe's flagship science agency, the European Research Council (ERC), is a rare success story in multilateral research funding and will be essential to tackling the pandemic and its aftershocks. But, buffeted by political cross-winds and reeling from turbulence in its leadership, [the ERC is facing a significant funding cut](#). The research community must step up to support the ERC before the European budget is finalized by the end of this month, argues a *Nature* editorial.

[Nature | 5 min read](#)

From the archive

[Big plans to visit Venus](#)

News of [phosphine in Venus's atmosphere](#) has raised the thrilling question of whether the molecule might be a sign of life on the planet. Let's go check it out! Happily, nearly every space agency in the world is working on a plan to [explore our long-neglected neighbour](#) — and we wrote about them all last year.

[Nature | 14 min read](#) (from June 2019)

[Download the full double-page infographic as a PDF.](#)

Quote of the day

[“Societies that seek to erect barriers — for example, by restricting the flow of ideas — will find it tougher to withstand sudden shocks than will those that are open to sharing what they know.”](#)

As some countries begin to raise barriers to international collaboration, scientists in the S20 engagement group are right to keep them down, [argues a Nature editorial](#).

Today, I learnt that you should [definitely not post a photo of your airplane boarding pass](#) on social media, especially if you are a former Australian prime minister.

Tell me what life lessons you've learnt recently — plus any feedback on this newsletter — at briefing@nature.com.

[Flora Graham, senior editor, Nature Briefing](#)
With contributions by David Cyranoski

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