

The Year in News

2010 was a busy year for science and science policy. Here are some developments that tested the limits of our knowledge and influenced thinking about the global research enterprise

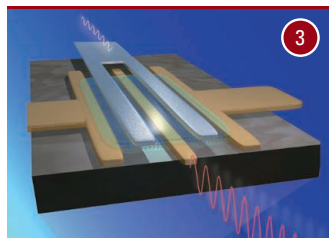


1

January: A magnitude-7.0 earthquake in a long-recognized seismic zone kills more than 200,000 people in a highly vulnerable population.

February: A magnitude-8.8 quake results in fewer than 500 deaths thanks to quake-resistant building construction and an offshore epicenter.

2



3

February: IBM researchers create graphene transistors that switch on and off at 100 billion times per second.



16

October: Four people die in helicopter crash involving employees at the French Polar Institute Paul Émile Victor.

April: Arizona State University agrees to return DNA samples to the Havasupai tribe following questions about informed consent.

4

April: Explosion of *Deep-water Horizon* drilling platform triggers release of 205 million gallons of oil in the Gulf of Mexico—and research on effects that could last for decades.

5



6

April: Researchers evaluate the first data from the NEPTUNE project, an undersea cable network of sensors.

May: J. Craig Venter's group incorporates a synthetic genome into a microbe.

7

August: Federal judge blocks U.S. government funding of stem cell research.

8



9

9

9

Summer/Fall: What may prove to be the worst coral bleaching on record devastates reefs in the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean, and the tropical Pacific.



10

September: Historian uncovers a syphilis study in Guatemala from the 1940s, and the U.S. government apologizes for its ethical lapses.

September: The U.S. and European governments sharply restrict use of the diabetes drug Avandia because of safety concerns, capping a long controversy.

11

11



12

October: Explosive cholera outbreak erupts and spirals out of control.

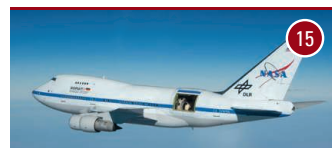


13

October: Construction completed on prototype site for NEON, an ecological observatory network to monitor long-term change on continental scales.

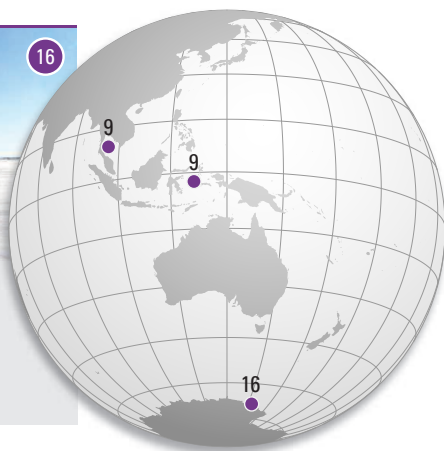
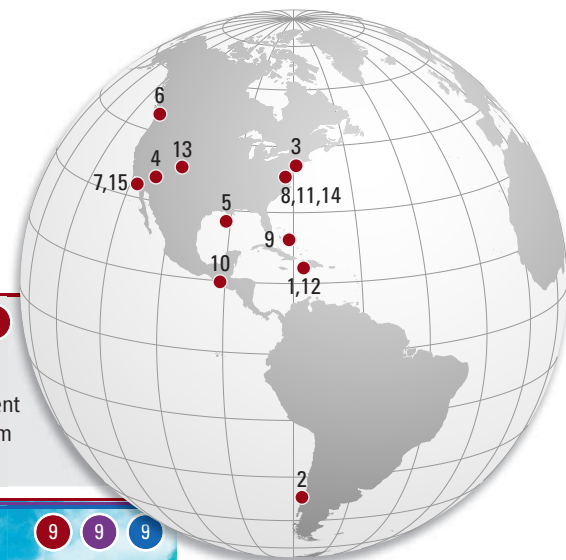
November: Study finds that CT exams cut death from lung cancer 20% among smokers—but screening has major costs.

14



15

November: Long-delayed NASA Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy (SOFIA) completes first science flight.



January: The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change offers “regrets” about overstating the rate of glacier melting in the Himalayas. 17

February: Government rejects commercial release of genetically modified brinjal (eggplant). 18



March: Eruption of Eyjafjalajökull volcano leads to the greatest disruption to air travel since World War II. 19



March: New species of human discovered from ancient DNA. 20

March: Science ministers declare 2011–2020 as the “Decade of Science in Africa.” 21

April: Research center opens to develop technologies for a post-ITER fusion reactor. 22

April: Chinese Family Panel Studies survey, the largest long-term social science study in the developing world, begins. 23



May: Neandertal genome sequenced. 24



June: The Hayabusa spacecraft capsule lands in Australia with dust from asteroid Itokawa. 25

September: China’s one-child policy turns 30. 29



October: Results of the first Census of Marine Life presented. 32

October: U.K. science avoids sharp cuts in government research spending. 33



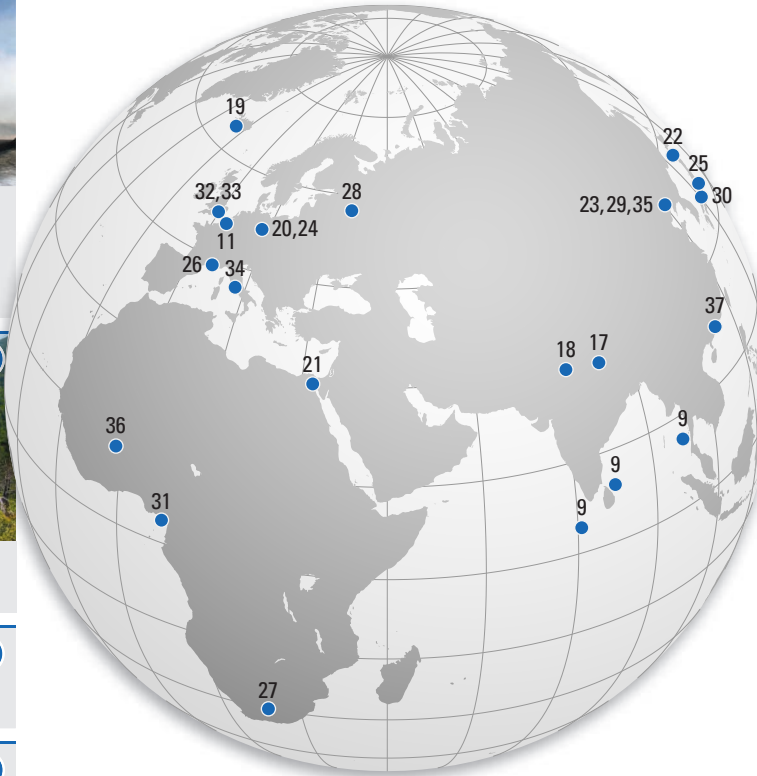
October: The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization proclaims end to rinderpest, a deadly cattle disease. 34



November: China unveils world’s fastest supercomputer. 35

December: Launch of new, affordable meningitis vaccine to protect 450 million people. 36

Ongoing: BGI-Shenzhen enhances its reputation as world’s largest sequencing center, deciphering an ant, a paleo-Eskimo, the human methyloome, and a gene catalog of the human gut microbiome. 37



July: Funding profile approved for ITER fusion reactor project. 26

July: First positive HIV microbicide results from South Africa announced at international AIDS meeting. 27



August: Wildfires across Russia reach the region heavily affected by the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, raising fears that they could spread radiation. 28

October: Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity adopt new targets to protect biodiversity and urge caution on geoengineering. 30



October: Plan to honor presidency of Teodoro Obiang with UNESCO science prize is put on ice after human rights protests. 31

—JEFFREY MERVIS

CREDITS (TOP TO BOTTOM): AP; WHIT WELLES/WIKIPEDIA; GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO; AP; THINKSTOCK; JOHANNES KRAUSE; AP (2); EL SIDRON RESEARCH TEAM; WIKIPEDIA