



Second Nature 068 (July 2026)

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Welcome to new subscribers John and Martin from Cambridge, Fenella from East Renfrewshire, Maurice from Dronfield, Richard from Bristol, Stephen from Cardiff.

In this issue: extreme weather is the new normal, most UK media reports on the heatwave don't mention climate, cars keep on getting bigger, Antarctic tourism, cruising, carbon capture and storage, council net zero, don't bank on coal, small actions.

Heat

Weather that was once considered extreme is the "new normal", according to a Met Office report on the UK's climate. The hottest day of the year in the south of England is now typically 4.5C warmer than it was in 1961-1990.

[Climate we had in 20th Century 'has now gone' - Met Office](#) | Georgina Rannard in BBC News, 15 July

[State of the UK Climate](#) | Met Office 15 July

Most UK media reports on the June heatwave did not mention the climate crisis or net zero, according to The Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit. This surely is like writing about the Titanic and not mentioning the iceberg, or writing about Pompeii and not mentioning the volcano.

The ECIU read almost 2,500 articles in the Express, the FT, the Guardian, the

Independent, the Mail, the Mirror, the Sun, the Telegraph and the Times, from 22 to 28 June.

The FT scored highest on relating extreme heat stories to the climate, with 50 out of 78 stories linking the two. The Guardian came next, with 64 articles out of 131. The Independent had the most heatwave stories over the period, 783, of which 304 – roughly 39% – mentioned the climate. About a fifth of the Mail's more than 300 heatwave stories referred to global heating, and about one in eight of the 400-plus stories in the Express. The Mirror had more than 300 heatwave stories but only 9% of them mentioned the climate. The Sun had 69 heatwave stories of which only 6% mentioned the climate.

[Most UK media reports on June heatwave failed to mention climate crisis](#) | Fiona Harvey in the Guardian, 14 July

If you're not happy with the way that your paper covers the climate, write to them and tell them so.

Carspreading



New cars in Europe are on average a centimetre wider every two years, according to

Christian Wolmar in the Guardian, so now fewer than half of new cars in the UK can fit into a conventional parking space. 30% of cars in England's cities are SUVs, compared with just 3% 20 years ago. The photo shows my own small car next to what appears to be a military vehicle. (Yes, it's a petrol-driven car: I am an adviser, not a role model).

You may need an SUV if you are a farmer a country vet or a volunteer for mountain rescue, but I don't understand why so many of my North London neighbours have ditched their car for a truck. And then we all grumble about the potholes.

[Britain's cars and SUVs are growing bigger – but there is a way to stop 'carspreading'](#) | Christian Wolmar in the Guardian, 12 July

The penguins had maybe a few hours' break ...

... during the night. Otherwise there were hundreds of people walking through the colonies non-stop.

Antarctic tourism is growing fast, with over 120,000 visits in 2025-26 and up to 450,000 expected each summer within a decade. An article in The Conversation reveals how Antarctic tour guides grapple with bringing more and more people to an ecologically vulnerable area, and helping cause some of the highest CO₂ emissions of any form of tourism. The authors interviewed 25 former Antarctic guides who decided to quit: they *say these guides couldn't align their morals with the effects of tourism they were witnessing day after day.*

While tour operators often argue that visiting Antarctica can heighten tourists' awareness of environmental issues, former guides were struck by guests' ignorance of human impacts.

[Why Antarctic guides quit their dream jobs](#) | Zdenka Sokolickova, Christy Hehir, and Elizabeth Cooper in The Conversation, 21 July

[Mind the gaps: the moral journey of tour guides who quit](#) | Zdenka Sokolickova, Christy Hehir, and Elizabeth Cooper in Annals of Tourism Research, Volume 120, Sept 2026

Chasing the grey pound

The topic of cruising also came up after the York Festival (I didn't go myself - all those ukeleles!). One of the regular contributors to the Climate Group Leaders Facebook group was unhappy about the choice of Ambassador Cruise Lines as the sponsor. She posted this link:

[Can cruise ships ever be sustainable?](#) | Isabelle Gerretsen for BBC Future, 28 June 2024

Gerretsen writes *cruises are a particularly carbon-intensive way to travel compared with many other types of holiday. The average CO2 emissions of a passenger on a cruise around Seattle are eight times higher than those of a tourist spending their holiday on land in Seattle, an analysis by Friends of the Earth concluded.* (If you would otherwise be driving around in your SUV you can probably reduce that factor of eight a bit).

[Cruising Versus Land Vacationing](#) | FoE, undated

I wrote to TAT asking for comment about the Festival sponsorship, and got a response:

Thank you for your email and for taking the time to share your concerns.

We recognise that many members hold strong views on environmental issues and climate change, and we value the diversity of opinions across the u3a movement. It was great to see these perspectives represented at the Festival, including through a dedicated exhibition stand [Climate Matters had a stand at York], and to hear that members took the opportunity to raise their views directly with Ambassador.

At the same time, we know that our members have a wide range of interests and lifestyles, including a strong interest in travel. This is reflected in the engagement we see with travel-related content and advertising in u3a Matters. We therefore believe it is important that members are able to make their own informed decisions about how and where they spend their leisure time.

Ambassador was one of several sponsors of the Festival, and we are grateful for the support provided by all our sponsors, which helps us deliver events that can be enjoyed by a large number of members. Sponsorship does not imply endorsement of a

company's products, services or business practices. Rather, it reflects a commercial arrangement that supports our charitable activities and enables us to provide opportunities and experiences for members.

We do, however, take sponsorship and advertising partnerships seriously. We have an Editorial Policy that sets out the types of organisations and activities that would not be appropriate for advertising in u3a Matters or for wider collaboration with u3a. These decisions are guided by our charitable purpose, mission and reputation.

I appreciate that this may not fully address your concerns, but I hope it provides some reassurance about the considerations that inform our approach.

The most important word here of course is *informed*. Unfortunately being informed doesn't just happen, it takes time and effort.

Perhaps though we are sometimes too quick to criticise cruise lines and airlines and AirBnb when they are just the worst examples of what our appetite for travel and tourism is doing to the world. If we had the power, what would we ask these companies to do - close down, or green up? Maybe we should ask for a credible plan to get to net zero, based on SBTi (say). Holidaying in the UK may help but it just moves the overtourism problem from Barcelona to St Ives and Ambleside. I get depressed by the number of newly-retired folk who tell me that they plan to travel more. *Please don't* I feel like saying; *stay at home, take up gardening. Collect stamps.*

Contd

In SN067 I linked to comments from George Monbiot and from ProPublica about Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS). Prof Myles Allen and others responded to Monbiot in a letter to the Guardian:

George Monbiot suggests that we can solve climate change without CCS. Physics says otherwise. The world is going to generate more CO₂ than we can safely dump into the atmosphere, and we can't rely on our stressed biosphere and oceans to mop up the excess. Stopping global warming will therefore require capturing and durably disposing of CO₂ on a huge scale, which right now means injecting it back underground.

[The great carbon capture con](#) | George Monbiot, 8 July

[Carbon capture is vital in tackling the climate crisis](#) | Myles Allen and others, 12 July

It seems to me though that the two commentators are barking up different trees. Monbiot's main point is that almost all the projects in the government's first tranche of CCS projects are for fossil fuel-based schemes - in effect extending the life of fossil fuel burning industries; Allen is saying that to tackle climate change we will need to capture and bury CO₂. He uses the letter to push his favourite scheme, under which new gasfield or oilfield licences (such as Jackdaw) would be conditional on an obligation to store a rising fraction of the CO₂ that the field will generate.

Polar bears are not extinct, their numbers are increasing. The Maldives hasn't sunk. In short, there is no climate emergency.

In [SN066](#) I noted that **Sunderland** City Council has repealed its 2019 climate emergency declaration. Wakefield has now taken similar action:

[Wakefield Council to scrap climate pledges](#) | Tony Gardner, Local Democracy Reporting Service, 15 July

I suspect that these actions, like the original declarations, are largely symbolic. Wakefield will cut its climate budget by £170,000, which must be a tiny fraction of its total spend.

Subscriber **Jane** also sent me this link about Essex County Council;:

[Council leader scraps 'stupid' net-zero policies](#) | Lewis Adams and Simon Dedman for BBC News, 29 May

The man in question, Cllr Peter Harris, is quoted as having said *climate change happens, it's been happening for millions of years. Is it man-made? Is it just a routine of the world?* [sic] *A natural event? I'm not a scientist, I don't know that.* A few hours on the Internet would set Cllr Harris straight: he could start with the BBC's [really simple guide to climate change](#). If your political representatives are as ignorant as Cllr Harris, email them this link.

Linda from Kingston upon Thames emails to say that her council has [called for urgent national funding to help protect communities from climate change](#). It will write to the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government, and to the Secretary of State

for Energy Security and Net Zero, to highlight the need for dedicated national investment.

Don't bank on coal

The Bank of England has quietly announced that from October it will no longer accept bonds linked to the thermal coal industry as collateral when commercial banks borrow money from the central bank. The policy suggests that these bonds are now too risky to sit on its balance sheet, as a shift away from fossil fuels towards green energy could wipe out their value. This is encouraging news from an unexpected source.

[Bank of England to stop accepting bonds linked to coal for key loans](#) | Kalyeena Makortoff in the Guardian, 19 July

Small Actions

Although small actions might not solve the climate crisis, they remind us that we are intrinsic parts of the world and its ecosystems.

- *Kimberley R Miner*

Natalie Turner in Which? discusses [how to use grey water in the garden](#).

In The Conversation, Réka Tölg and Ingrid Haugsrud suggest [five ways to make your clothes last longer](#).

There is a longer list of small actions [on the website](#). One nanokelvin at a time.

Sources

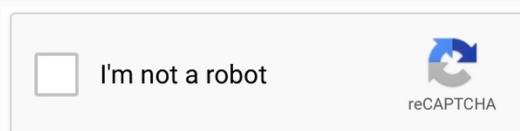
SN068 recycles or links to content from Annals of Tourism Research, BBC Future, BBC News, The Conversation, FoE, the Guardian, the Local Democracy Reporting Service, the Met Office, Third Age Trust, Which?, and subscribers Jane and Linda. All of this material is gratefully acknowledged.

At time of writing 389 people have opened the previous issue of this newsletter. If you are one of them, thank you; if not, you can always find it and other back issues [here](#). The most popular link in that issue was, for the second time, the Conversation article by Profs

Hawkins and Fowler [We recreated the legendary heatwave summer of 1976 in today's climate – here's what we found.](#)

Feedback

All feedback is welcome, if it is constructive (or instructive). Emails sent to u3asecondnature@gmail.com may be used here or on the website, unless you make it clear when you email that you don't want me to use your content. I may edit the material to save space, but I take care not to change its meaning. I won't share your contact details. I keep your emails in a Gmail folder to which only I have access, and delete them when I don't need them any more.



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