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Thursday Throwdown: Taal rumbles, real time Yellowstone, Ambrym's lava lake and more!

Erik Klemetti on September 30, 2010, 2:29 PM



Try #3 on this post (let's not get into it):

Taal and Mayon rumble: [PHIVOLCS](#) reports that [two of the more hazardous volcanoes in the Philippines are experiencing increased seismicity](#): Taal and Mayon. Some of you may remember [earlier this year when the alert status at Taal](#) was raised due to fears that the caldera system might be reawakening. During September, Taal has had ~10 earthquakes/day, but over the last few days, that has [increased to ~17 earthquakes/day](#). However, there is has been no changes in the thermal or fumarolic activity at the volcano, so PHIVOLCS does not think a change in alert status is warranted. No details were provided about the increased seismicity at Mayon, but the volcano did have a significant eruption [at the end of 2009](#).

Real-time hot spring data for Yellowstone coming soon: The USGS announced today that [a network of hot spring monitoring devices will soon stream real-time temperatures](#) on some of the multitude of hot springs of the caldera. The first will be the hot springs of the Norris Geyser Basin that will go live in the next few weeks. Looks like you will all have something else to watch now, eh?

New GVP Report: Today saw [a shiny new Weekly Volcanic Activity Report](#) from our friends at the Smithsonian/USGS Global Volcanism Program. Lots of news in it from Indonesia, in particular. As I [mentioned](#)

[earlier this week](#), there were signs of increasing unrest at [Karangetang](#). Well, I guess it was more than signs as the latest report mentions lava flows and strombolian activity at the volcano for much of September. This comes at the same time as increasing seismicity at [Merapi](#) and a lowering of the alert status at [Sinabung](#) from 4 to 3.

Shameless self-promotion: I'm not very good about calling attention to myself most of the time, but if you're interested what I think about blogging and the future of geoblogging and citizen science, check out [the post I wrote](#) for the American Geophysical Union's [Plainspoken Scientist blog](#). I get into the Eyjafjallajökull eruption, how blogging fits into academics and talking science with the public.

The volcanoes of Buffalo: I know that when I mention volcanoes, the first thing that pops into your mind is upstate New York ... OK, well, probably not. However, in the future, it very well might. The University of Buffalo is starting a new volcanic research station as part of the Center of Geohazard Studies. You can [check out an interview](#) with the director, [Dr. Greg Valentine](#), where he talks about what sort of work will be done at the station and why they need 700 acres to house it.

Descending into Ambrym's lava lake: Finally, you should definitely [check out the video posted by James Reynolds](#) about the [active lava lake](#) (well, really "boiling lava cauldron") at Vanuatu's Marum Crater on [Ambrym volcano](#). James mentions that "the plan was to abseil into the pit to document the lava lake up close (myself and the expedition leader are documentary cameramen.) Unfortunately the 900m of rope and technical climbing equipment we had was still not sufficient to get to the bottom." Yup, James and his colleagues did things that I always tell my students not to do in an actively-erupting volcano, but hey, for footage like that, someone is bound to do it, right?

Top left: A shot of spatter from one of the vents of Ambrym volcano. [Click on the link](#) to see the original version.

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[The Bobs](#) on September 30, 2010, 2:55 PM

Holy cow! That guy is crazy. Extreme camping indeed! I wonder if they actually slept there. Isn't there quite an SO₂ flux from this volcano?



[Henrik Le Rédoutable](#) on September 30, 2010, 3:22 PM

Fantastic AGU entry, Erik. Definitely **not** a case of "shameless self-promotion". I am reminded of John Brashear, a millwright and amateur astronomer who was dissatisfied with the non-availability of affordable telescopes of decent quality and set out to teach himself how to grind, polish, figure and silver-coat high quality optics. He became so successful that his was the method used to put the finishing touches to the World's then largest and most important telescope, the Mt Wilson 100" reflector. - / / / - I hope more scientists will follow your lead.



[Ed Kohut](#) on September 30, 2010, 4:08 PM

Well, the Yellowstone apocalypse watches will now have something else to obsess over ;) In your AGU piece I think you hit the nail on the head in the last paragraph. I find the general public to be very interested in geology,

which of course is to be expected as we interact with it on a daily basis. But I think that academic geoscientists are still locked into the 18th century upper-class drawing room mindset that gave birth to the science. I have to lay the blame directly at the feet of the leaders of the field, who seem to not be concerned about the decrease in funding, closing of departments, dismantling of government surveys and dumbing down of the university if it does not directly impact them. Geological sciences (in all aspects) is a bargain compared to Hubble Telescopes and super-colliders and I think the public would be supportive. But it will never happen if no one engages them.



[Erik Klemetti](#) on September 30, 2010, 4:22 PM

@Ed: The comparison to astronomy is apt - they have done an excellent job of marketing their research to the general public and (most important) getting the public involved in the science ... and that sort of stuff helps get funding for big telescopes and the like. Geosciences could learn from the astronomers.



[Henrik Le R doutable](#) on September 30, 2010, 4:41 PM

@ Erik. Have you come across this story about the discovery of a new type of pulsar?

<http://www.skyandtelescope.com/community/skyblog/newsblog/100908269.html> Apparently, people can sign up for a network - Einstein@home - where their excess processor capacity is used to plough through Arecibo data. The story was that this new-to-science pulsar was discovered in home basements in Iowa and Mainz, Germany. Indeed a wonderful way to involve the public in real science!



[Lurking](#) on September 30, 2010, 4:48 PM

Heh... interest in geosciences. About the only thing exciting around here is an odd accumulation of petrochemicals in the sand and that after learning of a mezozoic era transfer fault running through the area I noticed an odd lineament on a topographic chart that I had never gotten my attention. I would go look at it except that it's buried under 8 to 10 km of sediment and people in that area don't take kindly to strangers...



[Jon Frimann Jonsson](#) on September 30, 2010, 5:00 PM

There might not be volcanoes in New York today. But 50 million years from now. There are going to be volcanoes there. See here, <http://www.scotese.com/future.htm>

[mike don](#) on September 30, 2010, 5:19 PM

Erik and EKoh; I don't think geologists should take ALL the blame. Thing is geoscience doesn't have any of the really big, media-grabbing ideas that so benefit astronomers, high-energy physicists and biologists. It's not going to produce a TOE, find extra-terrestrial life or solve the mysteries of human consciousness. OK we've got the dinosaurs, but, well, that's just funny-looking animals. Isn't it? (being ironic) Most people think of geologists as just working stiffs, looking for oil or ore deposits etc. And the media isn't interested in working stiffs. Of all branches of geoscience, volcanology should have an advantage, its subject matter has the spectacular and dangerous edge that the media love (cf the Ambrym video!) Unfortunately the most telegenic and/or passionate popularisers of recent years (Haroun Tazieff and the Kraffts) suffer from the double disqualification of being (a)

French-speaking and (b) dead.///BTW, and on another topic entirely, Ambrym would be a great subject for a future volcano profile. A pyroclastic shield with ferociously active basaltic (apparently) lava lakes...how come?



[Holger N California](#) on September 30, 2010, 5:21 PM

@Jon Frimann: Well, if this blog is still around at that time, we definitely are going to watch for those volcanos..... A subduction zone along the eastern side of the American continents would also mean volcanos on the eastern coast of Brazil. Renato are you reading this?



[bruce stout](#) on September 30, 2010, 5:53 PM

Mike, lol. loved that double punch. though I tend to disagree. Of all the sciences, biology excluded, geosciences might have the most relevance of all for the human condition. look at the impact of earthquakes, floods, eruptions, not to mention agricultural output, minerals and mining, etc.

[mike don](#) on September 30, 2010, 6:13 PM

Bruce; I agree with you, but the problem is in finding a 'hook' for the media who have their own ideas on what's important (ie what sells papers/attracts viewers etc) And in finding someone in the geoscience field who is not only an able scientist - that goes without saying- but is sufficiently extrovert and telegenic to become geoscience' answer to Stephen Hawking or Richard Dawkins



[Greg Greg](#) on September 30, 2010, 6:16 PM

I went to Ambrym earlier this year, but I didn't put the silver suit on I just filmed it lol

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYhKQZit33U>



[Alyson](#) on September 30, 2010, 7:10 PM

Hi Erik - I enjoyed your piece on blogging and setting up the Eruptions Website and it got me thinking about how blogging links with research. Conversely I was thinking about e-books the other day and considering how blog threads such as this could change the way e-books are written. The point I am trying to make is that research builds on previous work done by experts in the field and references have to be accurate. If research could be published as e-books with links providing short-cuts to actual source material, new research could be built onto briefer synopses based on tighter links.



[Doug C](#) on September 30, 2010, 8:07 PM

Technically, since my vocation is public radio, I am part of the media. However, commercial media is what it is: commercial. When an enterprise's objective is to make money, were I a stakeholder I would expect them to do just that. But I won't deny their coverage of the earth sciences is inadequate; and what coverage there is borders on sensationalism (e.g. Erik's favorite: supervolcanos.) However, since I also have an advanced degree in education, I am wondering if Earth Science educators could not do a better job of bringing out the forest, at the

expense of the trees? Take, for instance, a college freshman who is "undeclared" and happens to take Intro to Geology. Then, they go geology lab and for the most part they are all going, "Why am I looking at these stupid rocks...?" Why indeed? If that connection is not made, an opportunity has been lost and another liberal arts major has been created. I am not criticizing any particular educator or institution, but one of the ways to generate more interest in science would be to make introductory courses more sexy, instead of turning them into a rote-memorization, weeding-out process. Biology and chemistry are just as guilty.



[Erik Klemetti](#) on September 30, 2010, 8:46 PM

@Doug C: Being someone who is currently teaching a geoscience intro class, I've tried to cut all the memorization out for more of the "big picture" questions. And as opposed to a "weeding" class, we need the intro to recruit majors, but I'm also at a small liberal arts school, so we play the game differently. But an excellent point on your part.



[Guillermo](#) on September 30, 2010, 10:11 PM

Returning to volcanic posts, the view of Villarrica at night from the webcams are amazing, looks like big flames are coming out from the crater; after a long time we are able to see Chaitén again with clear weather, and is still steaming, how long it will be doing that? Some day it will finish;OVDAS is 'cleaning the house' on its page; and about Jon Frimann future of the Earth, it's interesting seeing Antarctica half ice, half taiga?



[Guillermo](#) on September 30, 2010, 10:36 PM

OT: Nice summary of Chile quakes: <http://www.lun.com/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?dt=2010-10-01&PaginaId=2&bodyid=0>



[Raving](#) on September 30, 2010, 11:04 PM

@Jon Re: +50 mya hence ... Does this mean that Iceland is doomed?



[Renato Rio](#) on September 30, 2010, 11:56 PM

@Holger NCa, @Jón, @everyone: Just coming back from a hard day's work and happened to find enough motivation for Geological sciences studies to be improved. At least here in Brazil. All you have to do is to place a picture of Ambrym side by side to Jón's "+50 mya hence map" on the first page of "O Globo" and the title: "Rio de Janeiro some years from now." They did that with the movie "2012", with a huge picture of the statue of the Redeemer being destroyed by a 8.5 EQ. The deception was later, when watching the film, the scene portrayed was actually a little side image on a TV screen at the bottom of the frame. Ended up the film wasn't the announced blockbuster. But still, Brazilian church found a way to sue the producers for "misuse of the religious symbol of the nation." *sigh* ----- @Guillermo: no justice is granted to Chile 50 mya from now. Your people could use some break from volcanic activity. But my great grand children probably will run a successful blog like Erik's.



[Renato Rio](#) on October 1, 2010, 12:07 AM

BTW on USGS: 4.9 2010/09/30 23:30:47 -7.924 -71.306 630.8 km AMAZONAS, BRAZIL. -----
--- We can do better than that...



[Raving](#) on October 1, 2010, 1:15 AM

Peter Gzowski, a famous Canadian broadcasting personality, had a style wherein he would come across as being a guest on his own show. You project a comparable persona and succeed with *Eruptions* for similar reasons. ----
----- A Thursday Throw-down could not be better than the back-to-back topics you have selected to juxtapose together. That savvy of knowing what works is quite amazing. ---- Also it seems to take a particular mind set to be able to think like a geologist. I myself haven't caught on to the perspective that assembles the big picture. I'm not sure that it is within my ability to 'assemble in such a manner.



[Renato Rio](#) on October 1, 2010, 1:55 AM

Piton de la Fournaise back in the realm of an eruption: "A week after the seismic crisis last Friday, all signs of possible eruption are again present. The Volcano Observatory recorded a magnitude 3.3 earthquake in the night from Tuesday to Wednesday. Yesterday, the County was considering the possibility of a new crossing warning "within hours or days to come."

[Stephen Tierney](#) on October 1, 2010, 2:50 AM

Just another brief mention of kilauea, Its lava stands in the open vent are getting higher and higher, great pictures at night... The pu o o cone is exceptionally clear during the day if you would like a peak into is crater... You can see how constant lava intrusions are gradually filling it. The incandescence at night is also worth a look..All the best regards....



[Claude GRANDPEY](#) on October 1, 2010, 3:29 AM

After a few days of quiescence, the Piton de la Fournaise is showing new signs of unrest. Seismicity if high and numerous rockfalls (33 per day) occurred inside the Dolomieu Crater. Thus, it is likely the volcanic system is being fed again. On September 29th, the Observatory recorded 33 volcano-tectonic earthquakes with a maximum magnitude of 1.7. The focuses are still right below the summit of the volcano. The volcanic edifice is inflating again, mainly to the east.



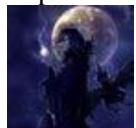
[Claude GRANDPEY](#) on October 1, 2010, 3:38 AM

I was in Yellowstone National Park last June and made temperature measurements of the hot springs. They showed a real stability compared with my previous results three years ago. However, the seismic swarms that occurred during the winter probably affected the aquifers below the Mammoth Hot Springs. Very little water is currently flowing on the terraces whose colours are far less dramatic than before.



[Birgit Austria](#) on October 1, 2010, 4:28 AM

Even though i dont post very often, i devotedly follow ever entry on Eruptions on a daily basis. Thanks Erik for creating this wonderfull place for volcanophiles..... Just in case we need a webcam to watch, i just found a list of volcano webcams. (Some links dont work) but still...
http://www.globocam.de/service/intern/webcams/index.php3?land=Vulkane&such_typ=land



[Shérine France](#) on October 1, 2010, 6:25 AM

En effet Claude, it moves again, and in the eastern part of the crater href="http://www.clicanoo.re/11-actualites/volcan-28/259178-le-volcan-a-nouveau-pret-a-entrer.html">Dolomieuit appears to be a flow increase of fumaroles



[Shérine France](#) on October 1, 2010, 6:27 AM

[link](#)



[David Snow](#) on October 1, 2010, 7:14 AM

Wow ! big steam plume from Nevado de Huila

http://intranet.ingominas.gov.co/webcam/popayan/webcam_Huila.html



[birdseye](#) on October 1, 2010, 8:24 AM

raises periscope, sees volcanoes still exist, feels better, goes back under - 7.5" rain so far in 24 hrs., not the Carolinas, but more than plenty for here.



[Renato Rio](#) on October 1, 2010, 8:28 AM

@Shérine: thanks for the link. The webcam is covered with clouds and we can see nothing - gas emissions?

@David: stunning plume from Huila. Do they have any kind of lens filter? Images from Huila always seem to be taken at sunset. ----- @Boris, any news from Etna? I did some pictures this morning and it looked so beautiful with all the steam and sunrise!



[Raving](#) on October 1, 2010, 8:58 AM

@Renato I agree about Etna. There seems to be change in the seismograph. Not a pattern I have seen before in my very recent interest in it.

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