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Home > 2 free articles from February issue of EARTH! #mondaymotivation

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Two new articles in the February issue of EARTH Magazine are available to read without a subscription:

In April and May 2015, a bloom of toxic algae spanned more than a thousand miles of Pacific coastline, from Santa Barbara, Calif., to British Columbia. Marine organisms were poisoned throughout the food web, disrupting coastal ecosystems and economies for months. Similar events are expected to become more frequent as the oceans and atmosphere adjust to a warming climate. In the February issue of EARTH Magazine, read how scientists are working to better understand the 2015 Pacific bloom, hoping to apply lessons learned in responding to future events.

It makes for a dramatic narrative: roughly 250 million years ago, a mass extinction event killed up to 96 percent of marine life, earning an infamous name in the geologic record: “the Great Dying.” However, a new study suggests that this cataclysmic number has been overestimated. In the February issue of EARTH Magazine, read how a University of Hawaii paleontologist is improving our understanding of mass extinction events by exploring the effects of natural variability on background extinction levels, revealing a clearer signal in the noise.

The February issue of EARTH Magazine is now available online. Read about new research that finds that grass and cropland fires produce more nitrogen pollution than wood-burning fires. Or learn how a multiagency study led by the U.S. Geological Survey is mapping the threats posed by solar storms to the domestic power grid. For these stories and more, subscribe to EARTH Magazine.

Tags:

- geotimes, environment, coastal systems, extinction
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