

IMAGES OF THE YEAR

2018 will go down in history as a scorcher: deadly wildfires and droughts raged from California to Cape Town. The year also brought advances in cloning and imaging — and a bleak reminder of the fragility of some of Earth's rarest species. Here are the striking shots from science and the natural world that caught the eyes of *Nature's* editors.

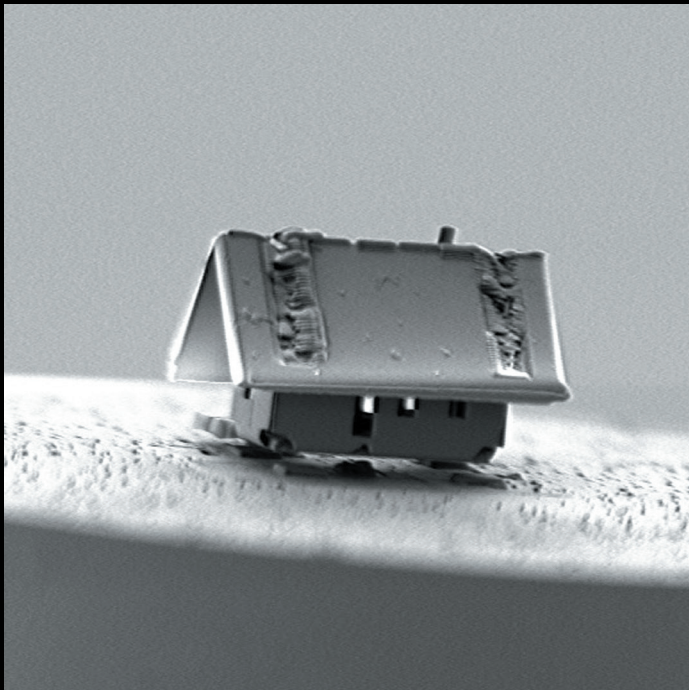
Images selected by *Nature's* art editors
Text by Mico Tatalovic



365 DAYS:
the year in science

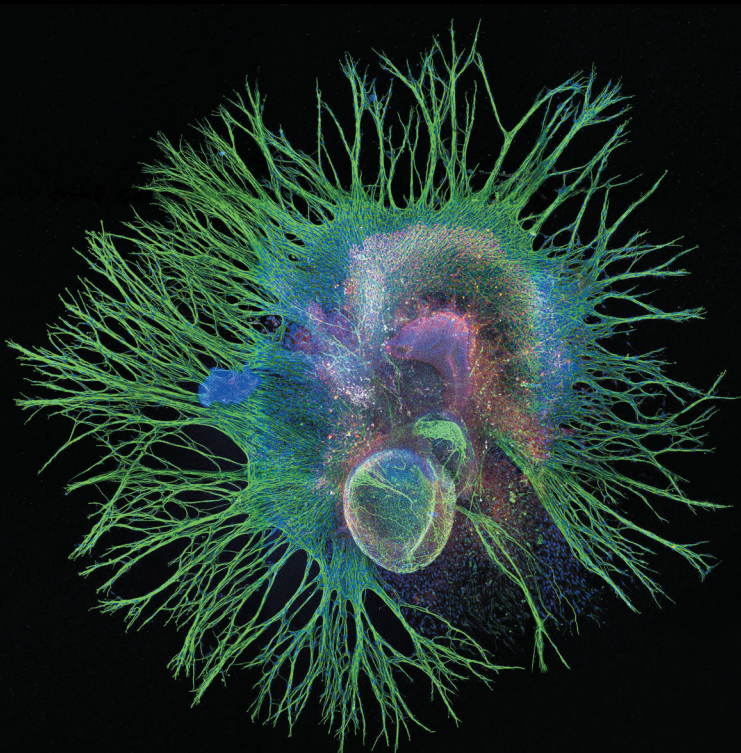
EXTREME DOWNSIZING

In May, a team at the Femto-ST Institute in Besançon, France, used nanoassembly tools — a focused ion beam, a gas-injection system and a tiny, manoeuvrable robot — to build this 20-micrometre-long house from silica.



SOUND SYSTEM

Cell biologists Stephen Freeman and Laurence Delacroix at Liège University in Belgium won distinction in the Nikon Small World Photomicrography Competition with this image of neurons in a mouse's inner ear. The neurons are cultured *in vitro* to study how neurons mature and become damaged.



STORM AND SWIRL

NASA's Juno spacecraft, now in the eighth year of its mission to Jupiter, offered rich data and spectacular images of the gas giant. Swirling clouds and a large storm — the white oval — are seen here in the planet's dynamic northern hemisphere.



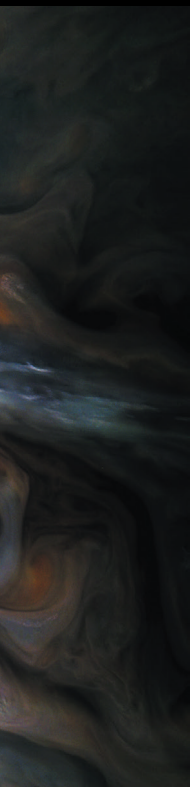
TO INFINITY

US company SpaceX continued its dominance in the commercial spaceflight arena, making a suite of rocket launches and landings. This February's launch from California carried a radar satellite and two Starlink satellites — part of the firm's ultimate goal to provide Internet worldwide.



X-RAY VISION

In September, ecologist W. Leo Smith at the University of Kansas in Lawrence, published a new imaging technique, used on this roosterfish (*Nematistius pectoralis*). The method involves stripping away an organism's muscles and staining its bones.



DYING DAYS

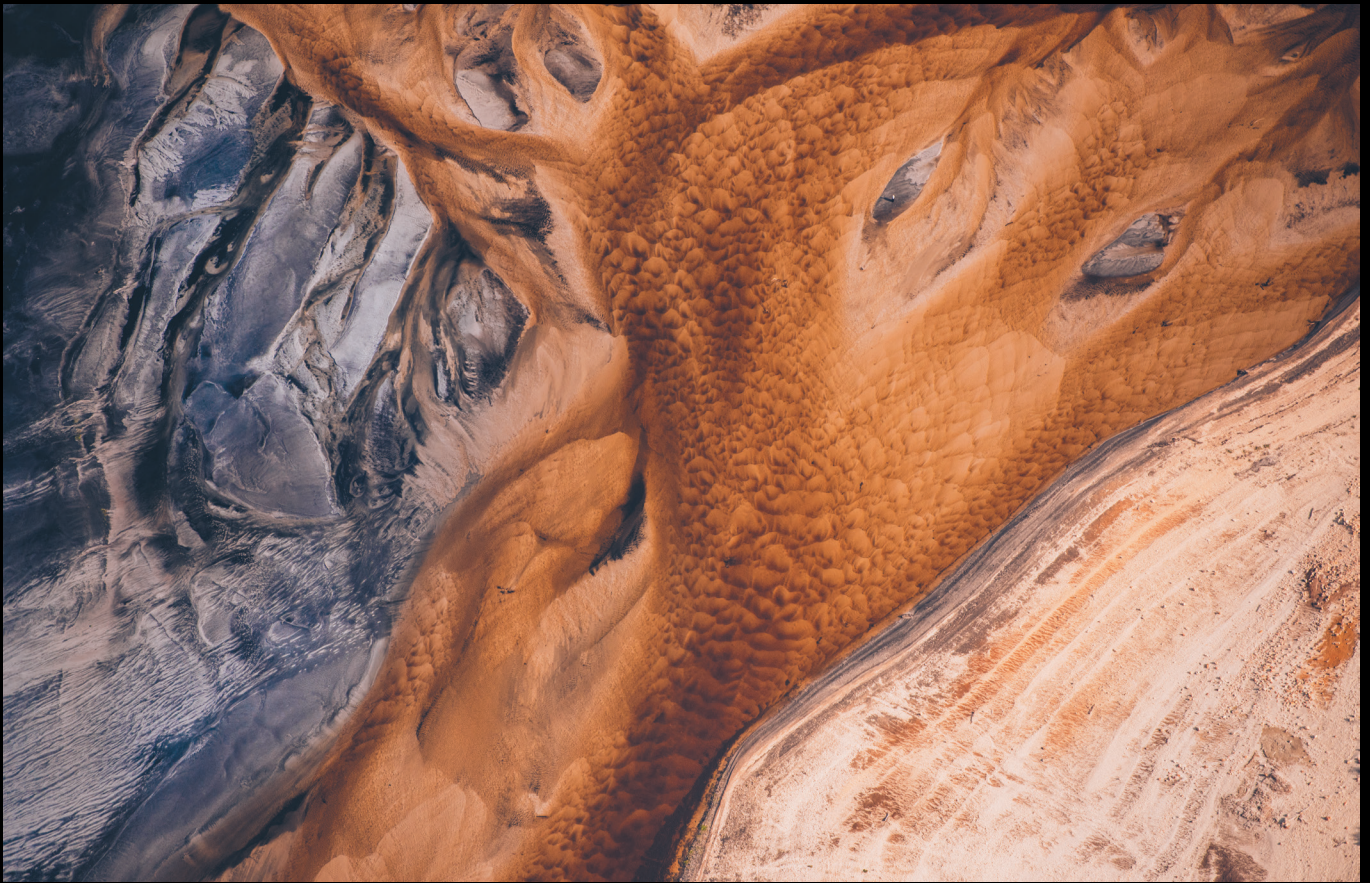
The world's last male northern white rhino, Sudan, died in March in Kenya. Only two females survive — and researchers are exploring ambitious *in vitro* fertilization techniques to save the subspecies (*Ceratotherium simum cottoni*).



THE SCORCHED STATE

California's wildfires — some of the state's largest on record — dominated headlines in 2018. Here, an aeroplane drops fire retardant in an area north of San Francisco in August. Authorities evacuated thousands of people.





SOUTH AFRICA'S CRIPPLING DROUGHT

Three years of record-breaking drought in South Africa prompted officials in Cape Town to consider a dramatic move: shutting off taps completely. City resident and photographer Kelvin Trautman captured the scale of the crisis in this image of an empty reservoir at Steenbras Upper Dam.



SMALL-WORLD SPORES

This 10x-magnified ultraviolet image of a fern sorus — the structure that produces and contains the plant's spores — won Rogelio Moreno Gill second place in the Nikon Small World Photomicrography Competition.

TWO OF A KIND

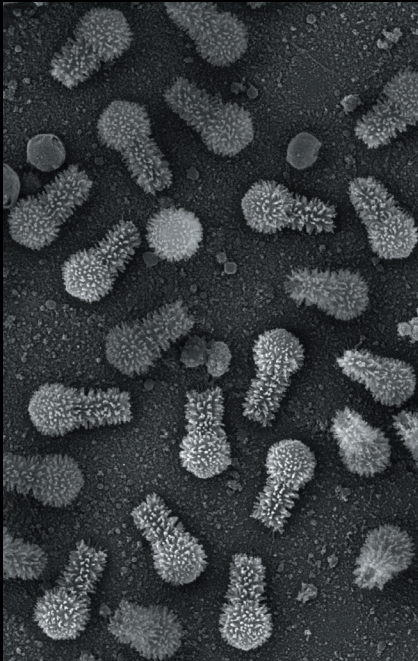
Meet Zhong Zhong and Hua Hua. The macaque twins, introduced to the world by Chinese researchers in January, were the first primates to be born using a cloning technique similar to that used to produce Dolly the sheep. Primates had proved difficult to copy using standard techniques.



WILDFIRE AIRDROP: MARK MCKENNA/ZUMA PRESS/PA. TINY HOUSE: FEMTO-ST/CATERS. SPACEX LAUNCH: SPACEX. X-RAY FISH: MATTHEW G. GIRARD. MOUSE NEURON: STEPHEN FREEMAN AND LAURENCE DELACROIX/NIKON SMALL WORLD 2018. JUPITER STORM: NASA/JPL-CALTECH/SWRI/MSSS/GERALD EICHSTADT/SEAN DORAN. WHITE RHINO: AMI VITALE/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CREATIVE. SA DROUGHT: KELVIN TRAUTMAN. SMALL-WORLD SPORES: ROGELIO MORENO GILL/NIKON SMALL WORLD 2018. CLONED MONKEYS: JIN LIWANG/XINHUA VIA ZUMA. GIANT VIRUS: J. ABRAMHO E ET AL./NATURE COMMUN. ICE FOOTBALL: MARIUS VAGNES VILLANGER/KYSTAKTEN/SJOFORSVARET/NTB SCANPIX VIA REUTERS. DIVING BIRDS: GREG LECOEUR/UPY 2018.

GIANT GENOME

A newly discovered giant Tupanvirus, found in amoebae, has both the longest tail and the largest set of genes involved in protein-making of any known virus.



WARMING UP

An Arctic game of football is a risky business. During a match in March on an ice floe near Greenland, armed guards watched for polar bears while scientists from Norway's Institute of Marine Research and crew from a naval ice-breaker played.



DEEP DIVE

Gannets in Scottish waters dive to hunt for mackerel and other fish. The birds drop from a height of 30 metres, achieving speeds of 100 kilometres per hour. The image won third place in the behaviour category of the Underwater Photographer of the Year Competition.