

## THE WORLD



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BY YVONNE GORDON

## A dolphin disappears, and Ireland mourns

Dingle Bay's beloved Fungie wowed locals and tourists for 37 years



NUTAN/GAMMA-RAPHO/GETTY IMAGES

**TOP: A woman walks past a boat tour office in western Ireland's County Kerry. Fungie, a bottlenose dolphin known for his playfulness, powered the local tourism industry. ABOVE: Fungie made it into the Guinness Book of World Records as the oldest solitary dolphin. He hasn't been seen in over a week despite multiple search-and-rescue missions.**

DUBLIN — Fungie the dolphin is missing, and his disappearance has much of Ireland caught in a kind of collective grief.

For 37 years, Fungie has been a star, escorting fishing boats in and out of Dingle Bay in County Kerry. His interaction with them — particularly his jumps and playfulness — powered a local tourism industry. His longevity got him into the Guinness Book of World Records as the oldest solitary dolphin.

But suddenly, he's gone. There has been no sign of him for more than a week, despite search-and-rescue missions and teams of divers checking the seabed. The intense activity and speculation have seemed more apropos of a high-profile missing-person case, with headlines about searches being “stood down due to bad weather” or “called off for the night.” On Thursday, some claimed “reported sightings” (all unverified).

The timing of this has felt especially cruel, coming on the eve of a second pandemic lockdown brought on by Ireland's increasing number of coronavirus cases. Since midnight Wednesday, everyone has been ordered to stay within five kilometers of home. Nonessential shops are closed.

Maybe Fungie sensed the upcoming lockdown, some people have wondered in jest, and decided to make a run for it if he was going to have no visitors. A satirical news website repeatedly suggested that a series of bottlenose dolphins played his character over the years, at times demanding better pay and improved working conditions.

Marine biologist Kevin Flannery, director of Oceanworld Aquarium Dingle, says locals are upset for both emotional and economic reasons.

“We're a small town of 2,000 people in the west of Ireland and virtually dependent on the tourist industry,” he noted Thursday. “Now, along with the pandemic, we have the disappearance of one of the biggest attractions.”

Fungie's departure may be age-related, Flannery said. He was playing with humpback and minke whales at the mouth of the harbor on one of the last days he

was seen. “They catch and scatter a lot of food, and it might have been easier to go with them. He might have then joined up with another pod of dolphins.”

Few of his fans want to consider another explanation. Dolphins lose agility as they grow old and are not as able to easily track food, the scientist explained. If Fungie's ability to feed himself was compromised, that would be the end.

Another Flannery, Jimmy, was 12 when Fungie arrived in the bay. He launched the first Dingle Dolphin Tours in 1987. He saw Fungie most days each year between February and October. This spring, during the nation's first lockdown, Flannery got official clearance despite the stay-at-home order to regularly check on Fungie and keep him company. “The time was very special, he says.

He's not sure if not knowing what has happened to the dolphin is better or worse.

“I always said that this was probably the best outcome we could have wished for, that Fungie would just slip away and disappear, that we wouldn't have to watch him getting sick or the body washed up and dissected,” Jimmy Flannery said Thursday. “But that doesn't make it any easier. It is like losing one of the family.”

The tour operator plans to continue running boat trips to show people the wildlife in the waters around the Blasket Islands. Bottlenose dolphins are common there and as for friendly, named ones, the country has had Dony of Dunquin, Dusty of Doolin (a.k.a. Sandy) and Duggie of Tory. But none of them stuck around as long.

Simon Berrew of the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group, a conservation and research organization, thinks Fungie's fate may remain a mystery. He estimates that the beloved marine mammal was at least 40 years old, which is senior status for his kind. The formal searches have ceased. Bottlenose dolphins rarely wash up on shore.

“We will probably never see Fungie again and never really know if he's dead or moved, but maybe that is the best way to go,” Berrew said.

If so, he leaves quite a legacy. According to Kevin Flannery, about half a million people a year saw Fungie. He delighted tour boat guests, kayakers, surfers, fishermen and others.

“This guy conquered the hearts of many millions,” drawing attention to the bay and the ocean beyond and the fragile future both face, Flannery said. “He has changed the mind-set of thousands of people. It's amazing that one creature could do that.”

foreign@washpost.com

## Protests in Poland over court ruling on abortion

BY REUTERS

WARSAW — Thousands protested across Poland on Friday despite novel coronavirus restrictions, a day after the top court in the Roman Catholic country banned almost all grounds for abortion.

The Constitutional Tribunal's ruling Thursday to ban abortions involving fetal defects ended the most common of the few legal grounds for abortion and set Poland further apart from the European mainstream.

Thousands took to the streets in Poznan, Warsaw, Wroclaw and Krakow, footage from private broadcaster TVN showed.

“Women are not respected in this country. No one is listening to us,” said Magda, 34, who showed up to a protest in the northern city of Gdynia.

More than 1,000 gathered near Law and Justice ruling party leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski's house in Warsaw for a second night of protest Friday, carrying banners that read, “You have blood on your hands.” Dozens of police were present wearing riot gear.

“I was initially scared, but I figured, too bad if I catch coronavirus, I'm scared for my daughter, but I think we don't have a choice. Someone took this away from us against our will,” said Emilia Gwiazda, 46, who attended protests in Warsaw.

Fifteen people were detained late Thursday, and police used pepper spray during a demonstration near Kaczynski's house Thursday night after protesters tried to break through a police cordon.

“We were hoping there would be no need to go into the streets,” said a lawmaker allied with the centrist Civic Coalition grouping, Klaudia Jachira. “We feel helplessness, anger.”

Attempts by the Law and Justice party to curb the already very restrictive abortion rules in recent years had ignited a public outcry, forcing the party to roll back legislative proposals.

Poland will close restaurants and bars for two weeks and limit public gatherings to five people across the country starting Saturday, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki said, after new coronavirus infections hit a daily record of more than 13,600 on Friday.

Under current restrictions, gatherings of up to 10 people are allowed in Warsaw and up to 25 in some parts of Poland that have seen fewer coronavirus infections.

Law and Justice lawmakers welcomed the Constitutional Tribunal's decision but rejected accusations by the opposition that they had influenced it.

The court was among institutions included in the Warsaw government's sweeping overhaul of the judiciary in recent years, which the European Commission says has led to a politicization of courts and undermined democratic norms.

## DIGEST

## NIGERIA

## 51 civilians killed in unrest, president says

At least 51 civilians have been killed in Nigeria's unrest following days of peaceful protests over police abuses, the president said Friday, blaming “hooliganism” while asserting that security forces have used “extreme restraint.”

President Muhammadu Buhari's comments in a statement released late Friday are expected to further inflame tensions after Amnesty International reported that soldiers shot and killed at least 12 protesters Tuesday as a large crowd sang the national anthem.

Buhari said 11 police officers and seven soldiers had been killed by “rioters” as of Thursday, and “the mayhem has not stopped.” He said 37 civilians had been injured. He was speaking to a special meeting of former heads of state and other officials on the way forward after some of Nigeria's worst turmoil in years.

In a national address Thursday, Buhari didn't mention the shootings that sparked international outrage, and resentment lingered with the smell of charred tires Friday in

Nigeria's relatively calm streets. Soldiers remained in parts of Lagos, Nigeria's largest city, as a 24-hour curfew continued.

— Associated Press

## BOLIVIA

## For Arce, a big win in presidential race

A final official vote count released Friday gave leftist Luis Arce a smashing victory in Bolivia's presidential election, a vindication for the Movement Toward Socialism party of ousted President Evo Morales, who was barred from running.

The Supreme Electoral Tribunal said Arce won 55 percent of the vote against six rivals, easily avoiding a runoff. The runner-up was centrist former president Carlos Mesa with just under 29 percent.

Conservative Luis Fernando Camacho, one of the leaders of the protest movement that helped drive Morales out of the country a year ago, received only 14 percent of the vote.

The Movement Toward Socialism also won majorities in both houses of the congress. Arce served as economy minister under Morales, Bolivia's first Indigenous president. He



CLEMENS BILAN/EPA-EFE/SHUTTERSTOCK

**German soldiers** in a Marder tank cross the Elbe River at a point between the villages of Storkau and Hohengöhren, west of Berlin. The crossing occurred on their way to the Altmark training area for the NATO exercise “Heidesturm,” part of preparation for a NATO mission in Lithuania. The transfer to Lithuania is set for early 2021.

has downplayed speculation of a major role in his administration for Morales, whose popularity was dented in his later years as president by a perceived growing authoritarianism. Last year's presidential election was annulled after protests broke out over alleged fraud by Morales.

— Associated Press

## PERU

## Amid the pandemic, concern over dengue

As Peru grapples with one of the world's worst coronavirus outbreaks, another virus is starting to raise alarm: dengue. Health officials have reported

more than 35,000 cases this year, largely in the Amazon. The rise comes amid an overall dip in new daily coronavirus infections, though authorities worry that a second wave could strike as dengue cases rise.

In the city of Pucallpa, in the rainforest of eastern Peru, doctors say they are already encountering patients with both illnesses. They said dengue symptoms such as fever and muscle aches tend to dominate, though the combination with covid-19 can prove deadly.

“There is more risk,” said Rosmary Rojas, a physician at a public hospital she said is seeing 120 dengue patients a day.

Rojas and others said this year's dengue figures are already three times those seen in 2019.

Throughout the Americas, there were more than 3.1 million dengue cases last year, the highest number on record, according to the Pan American Health Organization.

— Associated Press

## Hero of 'Hotel Rwanda' to remain in detention:

A court in Rwanda has ordered that Paul Rusesabagina, whose story inspired the film “Hotel Rwanda,” remain in detention for 30 more days to allow

prosecutors to gather evidence ahead of his trial on terrorism-related charges. Rusesabagina faces 13 counts that include financing terrorism, complicity in murder, recruiting child soldiers and forming a rebel group. The Belgian citizen and U.S. permanent resident denies the charges. He faces a maximum of 25 years in prison if convicted. He has been denied bail pending trial after disappearing during a trip to Dubai and then appearing in handcuffs in Rwanda on Aug. 31. His family and the legal team that seeks to meet and represent him have expressed concern about the 66-year-old's health.

## Czech health minister targeted for alleged shutdown violation:

Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis moved to fire his health minister for holding a meeting in a restaurant closed under government restrictions as the country combats Europe's fastest spread of the coronavirus. Health Minister Roman Prymula rejected calls to resign, including from Babis and his junior coalition partner, and said the meeting with two other officials took place in a private room and no regulations were broken.

— From news services