



A special year-end publication

The Darwin award winners (tie):

Eugene



Eugene is the co-winner of this year's ignominious "Darwin electricity award": he decided to climb a transmission tower in his back yard and repel down one of the lines on a piece of rope. He accidentally touched a 46,000 volt line, leading to a huge electric shock and a long fall. Eugene survived but charged with trespassing by his local police department.

Patrick



Patrick, the other co-winner, was a licensed pilot. During takeoff, he noticed that aviation fuel had leaked into the cockpit and was sloshing around his feet. He contacted air traffic control and asked what he should do. They said, "*Stop flying the aircraft!*" Patrick ignored the advice because he had "just purchased the brand new plane."

Note: This award is given in honor of Charles Darwin, the father of evolution; the Darwin Award commemorates those who don't understand or fully appreciate the power of energy.

Oddest venture capital "investment" of 2021



Founder's Fund has an impressive climate-tech portfolio. So why did the firm move its headquarters from Silicon Valley into a trendy new office location, [80 SW 8th St, Miami, Florida](#) ... just 4 blocks from the beach and right along the Miami River (aka, an estuary). As sea levels rise, their front doors will be [under water](#) about the time their climate-tech investment portfolio delivers a positive rate of return. (Was it a short-term lease at a cheap rate?)

Oops. Other venture firms moved to Miami, too, like: Point72 Ventures (78 SW 7th St, Miami), Thoma Bravo (830 Brickell Ave, Miami), and G Squared (777 Brickell Ave, Miami). The [Gartner Hype Cycle](#) is in full force.

Hmm. It's not just venture capitalists. Americans are moving in [record numbers](#) to regions ill-suited for the changing climate.

Who had the "best year" in energy?



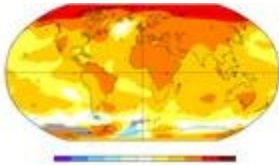
The global mining sector. Coal prices are up, exports are up, and prices for Rare Earth Metal's have achieved stratospheric heights, especially elements and metals necessary for batteries (i.e rhodium from \$640 an ounce five years ago to \$21,900 an ounce this year; lithium prices rose 11% to \$10,000 per ton).

Related ... who had the best year in energy geopolitics?



Dear United States and China,
You better be nice to us, or we'll cut off your [Rare Earth Metals](#).
Sincerely, **Australia**

A "No Good Very Bad Year"



The climate (again), especially the [Arctic](#), the fastest warming region in the world.

Honorable mention: Keith McCoy, senior Exxon lobbyist, who [said on tape](#) that the oil giant "only came out in favor of a carbon tax for public relations reasons."

The worst year in energy politics: Ohio



Somehow Ohio [House Bill #6](#) went into effect in 2021 even though it had essentially no supporters. The new law doesn't require utilities to use renewable energy and guts energy efficiency standards. It's one of the all-time worst state-level energy policies ... ever. No, it's worse than that. HB6 also involves a \$61 million bribery scandal.

Best quote in energy politics



"When Kermit the Frog sang 'It's Not Easy Bein' Green' I want you to know he was wrong. It's not only easy, it's lucrative and it's right."

- Boris Johnson, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

Political flip-flop of the year: Germany



Not so long ago the German government and US President Donald Trump were engaged in a political battle over the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline — the Trump administration categorically opposed it while Merkel's government insisted that it would not compromise its support. Fast forward to the present, **Germany very**

quietly [suspended](#) the certification process for the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline.

Honorable mention I: President Joe Biden acknowledged that "it seems like an [irony](#)" that he is asking energy-rich nations to boost oil production as he implores the world to tackle climate change.

Honorable mention II: Norway, once the leader in the energy transition to renewables, is now producing [record amounts](#) of oil and gas.

The most historic energy day in 2021: May 26



- The Hague Court of Justice in the Netherlands ordered Royal Dutch Shell to cut CO2 emissions to 45% by 2030;
- Chevron shareholders voted to drastically cut the emissions its products generate;
- Activist investors at Exxon Mobil secured two seats on the board of directors and demanded climate action.

Best marketing campaign in 2021



1st place: Will Ferrell's "[Norway's out EV'ing us](#)" campaign for GM's new electric vehicles.

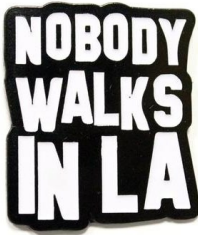


2nd place: Tom Brady "[Let's Go](#)" campaign for Hertz purchasing 100,000 Tesla EVs. (Since when does Tom Brady come in second place?)

Worst marketing campaign in 2021



1st place: The German automaker claimed (on April Fool's Day) that it was changing its name in the US to "Voltswagen" in a nod toward the company's heightened commitment to EVs. They even issued a fake press release and a new logo. The problem: they were caught actually lying before, so pretending to lie isn't funny coming from them.



2nd place: The anti-sustainability marketing campaign, *Nobody Walks In LA*, is still active.

Best YouTube video about energy: 'The Grid,' by John Oliver



"[The grid](#) is probably something that you probably don't think much about until it goes down — which, unfortunately, has been happening more and more in recent years.... The truth is, it's not failing us — we are failing it by asking it to do something it was not designed to do in conditions that it was not designed to handle." (Note: the video has profanity.)

Best energy cartoon of 2021



"How else would I keep my solar panels in the sun all day?"

Best energy/environment satire: [The Shovel](#)



"A Sydney man has set an ambitious target to phase out his alcohol consumption within the next 29 years, as part of an impressive plan to improve his health. The program will see Greg Taylor, 73, continue to drink as normal for the foreseeable future, before reducing consumption in 2049 when he turns 101. He has assured friends it will not affect his drinking plans in the short or medium term.

To assist with the transition, Taylor has bought a second beer fridge which he describes as the 'capture and storage' method."

Best Dad joke of 2021



3rd place: What do you call London during the summer electricity crisis? Londoff.

2nd place: We haven't found a solution for climate change yet, but ... we're definitely getting warmer.

1st place: Never argue about climate change ... it always turns into a heated debate.

Words fail ... NRDC



The NRDC study, [Issues With Tissues](#), evaluated 44 toilet paper brands, and found that P&G does a "crappy" job on sustainability and that the winning brand, Who Gives A Crap, uses 100% recycled paper. (Yes ... recycled toilet paper.)

Greatest Pyrrhic victory



The anti-coal campaign. Closing coal mines was supposed to be a big win for climate activists, but the Pyrrhic victory has become a case study for unintended consequences; the remaining mines have far less competition in a growth-hungry coal market. In other words, the industry is stronger and more profitable than ever.

Feedback loop award: air conditioners



CFC refrigerants used in air conditioning are the most potent greenhouse gasses, which cause warmer temperatures, which leads to greater demand for air conditioners. (*Note*: every hour, 10,000 new air conditioners are sold.)

(*Note*: Credit to manufacturers of air conditioners like Trane and Carrier who publicly supported and lobbied for the Biden administration's legislation that phases out CFCs air conditioning refrigerants.)

The melodrama award



First place: "If current fishing trends continue, we will see virtually empty oceans by the year 2048." — Ali Tabrizi, director and narrator of the documentary *Seaspiracy*

Second place: "A major shale oilfield was discovered in the Daqing Oilfield cluster with expected reserves of 1.27 billion tons of oil." — A press release by the Daqing Oilfield Corp. of China. ([Tons?](#) Nobody measures oil in "tons.")

The "duh" award



The US Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) released a joint report on the impact of the winter ice storm ("Uri") that caused widespread outages in the south-central US. The [report](#) concluded that the catastrophic failures of the power grid caused by the ice storm were due to freezing temperatures.

Quicksand award



Jackson, Mississippi. The capital of Mississippi (population 170,000) has a \$2 billion infrastructure deficit (electricity, water, sewer, etc.), a \$300 million annual budget, and a median household income of \$39,000/year.

Worst energy acronym



Honorable mention: The Cybersecurity Manufacturing Innovation Institute ([CyManII](#), pronounced sī-man-ē)

The reigning champion for worst acronym of all time is still **US President Jimmy Carter** and his inspired call for public mobilization in pursuit of energy independence: *Moral Equivalent Of War ...* aka "[MEOW](#)."

Fast & slow awards



Fast: **US electricity use**, which declined during the COVID-19 pandemic, has already returned to 2019 levels.

S-l-o-w: Use of **public transportation/mass-transit** around the world has not returned to 2019 levels, and some thought leaders believe that it may never.

Wishful thinking award



Ukraine's Energy Ministry sponsored a marketing campaign: "Україна неч УКРЕНЕРГО"
(*Translation:* Ukrainian "[energy independence](#)."

Since Ukraine shares a border with Russia, a more appropriate public service message would have been: "желаемое за действительное."
(*Translation:* "wishful thinking.")

Too big to comprehend



1st place: The Brazilian Amazon now releases more CO2 than it absorbs.

2nd place: This summer, temperatures in parts of Siberia reached 118 degrees Fahrenheit (48 degrees C).

3rd place: US utilities are attacked by ransomware every 11 seconds.

Zzzzzzz award

(Least popular topic/story in AES publications, based on reader analytics)



[Nord-Stream 2 pipeline](#)

Apparently, nobody cares. And the pipeline won't have much of an impact on European power markets.

Worst projection



"LNG shipping exports will surge and exceed pipeline exports in Q4 2021." — The IEA in Q1 2021.

The IEA forecasters clearly didn't anticipate the supply-chain crisis.

Funny/Not Funny award



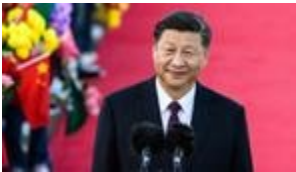
Finland's subarctic Lapland region submitted a bid to host the 2032 Summer Olympics.

The B.S. award



1st place: "We are not using natural gas as a weapon. Even during the hardest parts of the Cold War Russia regularly fulfilled its contractual obligations and supplied gas to Europe."

— Russian President Vladimir Putin



2nd place: "China will push its own carbon neutrality goals."

—China President Xi Jinping

The "please stop!" award goes to all billionaires in space



Billionaires who claim climate leadership should not also be celebrated for [space tourism](#).

The annual Elon Musk Award goes to ...



Elon Musk (for the 4th year in a row!)

This time for moving the headquarters of [Tesla](#) to Texas, a US state where Teslas cannot be sold directly to consumers.

The "that's not funny" award goes to ...



US Representative Sean Casten from Illinois. Rep. Casten stood on the US Congressional House floor with a poster of "Hot Girl Summer" propped against a display easel beside him. The poster had been photoshopped to replace "Girl" in the title with the logo for one of the government's un-funny agencies: the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, or FERC. "I rise today to recognize the start of *hot FERC summer*," said Casten. "Why, you might ask? Well, to paraphrase Miss Stallion: Because now that FERC has put in all that work, it's time for them to be the MVP." *What is Representative Casten talking about?!?! His gimmick makes no sense, isn't funny, wasn't effective, and was definitely not appropriate; for one, no one should ever reference the Hot Girl Summer [music video](#) (NSFW) on the House floor.*

"G.o.T." award



Winner: Western Europe invested heavily in renewables (especially wind and solar), but weather patterns in 2021 significantly reduced output. European natural gas prices soared and several European utilities turned to coal to secure electricity supply in spite of record high coal and emission prices. Now, food prices are also starting to rise. It got so bad (aka panic), that Sweden restarted an oil-fired power plant even though it had no shortage of electricity.

Dumb and Dumber



The Oakland Raiders moved to Las Vegas because of declining attendance at its football games ... Las Vegas is already well on its way to becoming uninhabitable. (Note: the average daytime temperature when Las Vegas football season starts is 94.5 degrees; its average daily temperature has gotten 6 degrees hotter in the last two decades, and the [forecast](#) is hotter still.)

Dumber: Based on census data, a significant number of Americans continue to move out of areas that may be the best refuge from the most extreme effects of climate change and are moving to the regions most at risk.

One more Darwin award winner...



People will eventually have to adapt to the changing climate, whether they want to or not. It won't be easy. This summer at the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino in South Lake Tahoe, the nearby Caldor wildfire was raging, ash rained down, and air quality reached 334 (the AQI base is 100; below is good and above is bad). And still, *customers continued playing slots and blackjack*, many of whom had portable oxygen tanks for respiratory problems.

A few lessons from 2021...

1. Listen to science
2. Act early and quickly
3. Respect diversity and humanity
4. Value resiliency

What is the best single word to describe 2021?

Our word for 2021 is ... **fragility**.

Not just as it relates to energy security, but also the environment, geopolitics, the supply-chain, democracy, facts, trust in the scientific method, justice....

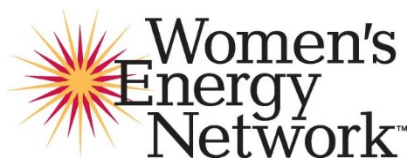
Please [share](#) your one-word for 2021.

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