

To the Editor

Dolphins and Porpoises

Sir:

The article on dolphins (SN: 8/26) states that the bottlenose dolphin is a member of the Cetacean family "that includes the great whales and porpoises." At the end of the article, when mentioning the specimens utilized, the terms "Amazonian River dolphin and the common porpoise" are used. These statements indicate to me that the porpoise and dolphin are two distinct species, and must be different in some way. The authors of an article in the September 1966 issue of National Geographic think differently on this matter. On page 403, it is stated that the terms "dolphin" and "porpoise" are interchangeable. It is mentioned further on that "porpoise" is more generally accepted in biological terminology.

"Why, then, did you persist in calling this animal a dolphin, and treat him as just a close relative of the porpoise, when they are really one and the same?"

Peter L. Edwards
Flushing, N.Y.

(The bottlenose dolphin, Tursiops truncatus, and the common or harbor porpoise, Phocaena phocaena, are two genus of the Delphinidae family. Delphinidae are part of the order of Cetacea which also includes the whales. The term "porpoise," is often used, though incorrectly, as a synonym for dolphin.—Ed.)

Water Loss

Sir:

It is common knowledge that water is being lost from the top of our atmosphere into space. Some planets have already lost all or most of theirs: Mercury, Venus, Mars and earth's twin, moon.

John J. Griggs
Bend, Oreg.

Vitamin C and Colds

Sir:

The article (SN: 9/2) concerning vitamin C's ineffectiveness against the common cold tends to confirm my own suspicions in the matter. Yet it is possible that the vitamin, through its antioxidant qualities or other mechanisms, while not acting upon the cold viruses directly, may, nevertheless,

mildly inhibit their pathogenic influx into the respiratory system. This may be especially true of some common sore throat viruses.

I would like to mention also that there is research indicating that a substantial decrease in postoperative complications accompanied the administration of massive doses of vitamin C.

Finally I wish to mention a perhaps causal immunity to poison oak allergy which I personally experienced shortly after I began to use vitamin C. This immunity could be due to any of the countless other factors, but it is interesting that there is a literature, admittedly somewhat faddist, in this direction.

John F. Leahy
Gonzales, Calif.

(The postoperative therapeutic qualities of vitamin C are reasonably well documented; its effectiveness in preventing colds is not. Ed.)



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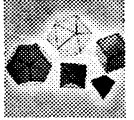
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