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Incorporating Science News Letter

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COVER: Scientist-philosopher Jacob Bronowski and two BBC television film crews journeyed to 27 countries in the preparation of the series "The Ascent of Man." The programs survey human history as recorded in the intellectual achievements that shaped cultural evolution. See pp. 362 and 364. (Photo: Bronowski at Sultaniyeh in Iran/BBC-TV)

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to the editor

A peregrine sighting

In a recent environmental science note the statement is made that the American peregrine falcon is almost gone and that "no peregrines in the wild are left east of the Rockies" (SN: 11/10/73, p. 295).

On Oct. 5, 6 and 7 at Block Island, R.I., four peregrine falcons were observed by persons attending the Block Island weekend conducted by the Audubon Society of Rhode Island.

Lewis E. Dickinson
Past President of the Audubon Society
of Rhode Island
Barrington, R.I.

Physics for nonscientists

I was very surprised by some of the comments made by Senior Editor Dietrick E. Thomsen in the off-the-beat article "Physics is as physics does" (SN: 11/3/73, p. 284). He starts out in his first sentence, "The recent survey that shows (again) that students dislike physics and physicists. . . ." The article he was commenting on (SN: 10/13/73, p. 230) didn't simply show that students in a survey disliked physics and physicists, but what it did state was that between 1950 and 1970 the percentage of high-school students taking physics dropped from about 25 percent to less than 20 percent. The authors concluded that relating physics to people by stressing historical and philosophical ideas, as in the Harvard Project Physics, seemed to offer the best chance of countering this trend. It seems to me this is a situation well worth countering. The fact that students are turning their back on physics in high school has deeper implications than merely the willingness of young voters and taxpayers to support scientific research. In a democratic society in which the public is assuming, if not an increasing role, an increasing voice, in the technological application of science, such as in oil pipelines, clearcutting, supersonic transports, strip mining, space exploration, nuclear power plants, etc., it is essential that, not only future voters and taxpayers, but also future politicians, teachers, journalists and businessmen have some exposure to the basic laws of the physical sciences.

High school is not the place for specialization and departmentalism. Nor is it the place to cultivate only those well talented

in mathematics and keenly interested in higher physics, and weed out the nonscientists from the natural sciences. Otherwise, we cannot hope to prevent illogical arguments and emotionalism from influencing public decision on government projects, and student interest often turning to pseudo-science and magical-fantasy theories.

Paul A. Zerzan
Portland, Ore.

Twice a week?

SCIENCE NEWS is the greatest. I wish it came out twice a week. It's that interesting.

I liked your article on the X-24B lifting body. I only wish you had published photos of the X-24A, as its description suggests it could be taken for a UFO, quite easily. I also liked the article on: "The Supercritical Wing." I wonder if its advantages could be applied to boat hydrofoils.

Robert Schiller
Denmark, Wis.

'Scrubbing' volcanic gas

In response to the item on "Sulfur dioxide from volcanoes" (SN: 11/17/73, p. 314), and in line with national pollution control goals, I urge readers to write to their Congressmen asking that emission "scrubbers" be placed on the South American volcanoes indicated. By listing the "scrubbers" as a foreign aid appropriation, Kissinger's program for betterment of relations with our southern neighbors can be accelerated at the same time as our domestic atmospheric SO₂ concentration is reduced by stopping the 10 percent emitted in South America from drifting north across the equator.

Carl Mason
Rahway, N.J.

Natural resources

I have recently subscribed to SCIENCE NEWS. I would like to compliment you on the publication. The cover on the Oct. 27 issue was especially gratifying to see. Depiction of natural resources is an excellent means of communication.

Bernard L. Berger
Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C.

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