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**COVER:** Ice-covered Antarctica, the only continent set aside by international treaty for scientific research, is under study this year by scientists from nearly a dozen nations, including 175 from the United States. See p. 43. (Photo: Sentinel Range looking north toward 16,786-foot Mt. Tyree/U.S. Geological Survey)

**Publisher** E. G. Sherburne Jr.  
**Editor** Kendrick Frazier  
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**Physical Sciences** Dietrick E. Thomsen  
**Senior Editor and**  
**Behavioral Sciences** Robert J. Trotter  
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**Production Manager** Davida Daemon  
**Books** Margit Friedrich  
**Circulation Manager** Lawrence Cope  
**Advertising** Scherago Associates, Inc.  
11 W. 42nd St., New York, N.Y. 10036  
Fred W. Dieffenbach  
Sales Director

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**Subscription Department**  
231 West Center Street  
Marion, Ohio 43302

Subscription rate: 1 yr., \$10; 2 yrs., \$18; 3 yrs., \$25. (Add \$2 a year for Canada and Mexico, \$3 for all other countries.) Change of address: Four to six weeks' notice is required. Please state exactly how magazine is to be addressed. Include zip code.

Printed in U.S.A. Second class postage paid at Washington, D.C. Established as Science News Letter in mimeograph form March 13, 1922. Title registered as trademark U.S. and Canadian Patent Offices.

Published every Saturday by SCIENCE SERVICE, Inc., 1719 N St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. (202-785-2255). Cable SCIENSERV.

## Year-end review of science

I wish to compliment SCIENCE NEWS for its new feature "Science News of the Year" (SN: 12/22-29/73). It is a very useful device for the scientific community in general, to serve as a briefing of outstanding developments in science during the past year, and for individual scientists to check up what has been done in the field of some particular studies and research by other scientists.

Anatol J. Shneiderov  
Arctic Institute of North America  
Washington, D.C.

## Interest in physics

There may be deeper reasons for the decline of interest in physics (SN: 10/13/73, p. 230).

Several decades ago, we saw brilliant ideas in quantum theory and relativity confirmed by ingenious experiments. Nuclear energy and transistors have also opened vast new areas in technology. In recent years, however, big research budgets have produced many big machines but not many big results. In contrast to the earlier successes in the theoretical predictions and experimental confirmations of photons, positrons, mesons, etc., we have seen futile searches for quarks, monopoles, gravitons, tachyons, etc. Hence physics has acquired a reputation of being a difficult subject, but not necessarily exciting, with poor job opportunities.

At present, there is more financial reward in medicine or law, more research glamour in molecular biology, and more outdoor living in oceanography. The decline of interest in physics is therefore not unexpected.

L. Stevenson  
College Park, Md.

Both Senior Editor Dietrick E. Thomsen and Paul A. Zerzan, in their discussion of causes of the decline in physics enrollments in high school, seem unaware of a basic change in science education.

When the 1950 survey of enrollment and attitudes was made, practically all junior high school pupils had either three semesters or three years of general science.

In 1970 junior high school pupils had either one semester or one year each of

biology, earth science and physical science. The latter course includes more physics than chemistry.

My guess is that when pupils are required to take the physical science course in concentrated form they simply conclude that what they have had is all or more than they want.

Victor C. Smith  
(Retired general science textbook author)  
Monmouth, Ore.

## Peregrines just passing through

Lewis E. Dickinson (SN: 12/8/73, p. 355) comments upon the sighting of four peregrine falcons on Block Island as refuting SCIENCE NEWS' report that "no peregrines in the wild are left east of the Rockies."

The peregrines Dickinson refers to are from the high Arctic and were at the time of sighting migrating through Block Island. Within recent memory, far more than four peregrines should have paused at the island in the three October days he cited.

Within Dickinson's lifetime, he need not have awaited uncertainly for peregrines of passage to cross his island. Indeed, he could have visited a half dozen active peregrine nests within neighboring Massachusetts. But, for the record, SCIENCE NEWS was correct in its statement that peregrines no longer exist in the wild east of the Rockies in the United States. Existing requires more than flying—some of us feel that breeding is an indispensable facet of existing.

Wayne Hanley  
Editor  
Massachusetts Audubon Society  
Lincoln, Mass.

## Disgusted about ESP

I would like to second the position of P. M. deLaubenfels of Corvallis, Ore., concerning the disgusting ESP article in your fine magazine (SN: 12/15/73, p. 371). I would like to add, as a long time observer with a fair background in science myself, that the earth is flat.

Stephen Marcus  
Goleta, Calif.

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Washington, D. C. 20036

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