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## Letters

### Bioreligion

The defeat of Darwin in Texas (SN: 1/28/84, p. 59) inhibits publishers and curtails the availability of unbiased biology textbooks nationwide. Scientists can still make discoveries, but to publish them, they need religion's imprimatur.

Galileo is dead but his persecutors are alive and well.

Joseph Vanhoenacker  
Pittsfield, Mass.

### Naked rat attack?

The brief article "Insect lifestyle in rodent underground" (SN: 1/21/84, p. 39) on naked mole rats was most interesting. It does, however, raise a question regarding the extent to which experimentation with these animals will expand in this country. And in addition, I wonder if adequate safeguards are in place to insure against escape into the environment. We do not need another gypsy moth, walking catfish, or killer bee. A proper balance must be found between legitimate scientific inquiry and protec-

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Cover: The Saltair resort, shown here circa 1930, is one of many establishments currently suffering from the Great Salt Lake's latest rise. The lake is approaching record levels and inundating local residents with a whole range of problems. (Photo: Utah State Historical Society)



## Departments

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tion against potentially damaging colonies of new species on the North American continent.

James W. Hartman  
Cincinnati, Ohio

*There is probably little need to worry. The animals, which are not considered pests in their natural habitat, require a hot, wet climate.* — J. A. Miller

### Names for stars

The article on naming stars ("A Star by Any Other Name," SN: 2/18/84, p. 105) unfortunately confused two naming systems. Greek letters have been assigned to the brightest stars in a constellation since the beautiful atlas of Johannes Bayer in 1603. An alternative scheme, assigning numbers in a given constellation, was advanced by John Flamsteed in his 1725 catalogue. The system of capital letters refers to *variable stars*, stars that change in brightness. The first variable star to be discovered in each constellation was, for the most part, labeled R, as in R Coronae Borealis. The next variable stars were labeled S, T, and so on up to Z. Then the system continues with RR, RS...RZ, SS, ST...SZ...TT...ZZ. Then AA to AZ, BB to BZ, and so

on up to QZ follow. The letter J is omitted, though, since it might have been confused with I in the German script used where the system was worked out in the last century. Additional variables are numbered, as in V1500 Cygni.

Jay M. Pasachoff  
Williams College—Hopkins Observatory  
Williamstown, Mass.

**Three cheers** for Dietrick E. Thomsen's article "A Star by Any Other Name..."

Perhaps the article will help to eliminate the confusion generated by organizations like ISR. But then, when buying star names, like buying anything else, "Caveat emptor" still applies.

Thomas W. Hocking  
Planetarium Director  
Luling, La.

Address communications to  
Editor, Science News,  
1719 N Street, N.W.  
Washington, D. C. 20036  
Please limit letters to 250 words.

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