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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-

This Week

- 164 Soils and Acid Lakes: Finding Common Ground
- 164 Harp seal pups are hunted again
- 165 EPA to limit only smallest particles
- 165 Chipping away at silicon processing
- 166 It's all in the immunoglobulin superfamily
- 167 Spineless predators 'learn': Prey can cause emesis in nemesis
- 167 Bacteria with a sweet tooth for pollutant
- 169 New data change image of poverty

Research Notes

- 170 Biomedicine
- 170 Biology
- 171 Behavior
- 171 Mathematics

Articles

- 172 Bracing for the Flood

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

- 163 Letters
- 168 Off the Beat
- 175 Books

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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
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Luling, La.

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Please limit letters to 250 words.

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163