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Letters

'Earthquake weather'

As a native Californian riding his fifth decade on the Pacific plate, I can confirm that when the dry Santa Ana winds blow we enter "earthquake weather" ("When the winds blow, does the earth quake?" SN: 5/7/88, p.299). Further, when the Santa Ana has blown strongly through the night, we are most likely to have a good shake at early dawn when the sun first vaguely lights the sky.

David C. Kolpacoff
El Cajon, Calif.

Baby doctors?

In "Epileptic PET Probes" (SN: 4/30/88, p.280), Bruce Bower writes, "At age 15 months, neurosurgeons removed the extensive mass of seizure-causing tissue."

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Cover: *Aspergillus*, a common fungus useful in the production of fermented food and chemical products, is one of thousands of microscopic life forms preserved in cold storage at the American Type Culture Collection in Rockville, Md. With its freezers full of bacteria, fungi and other microbial life forms, the collection serves as a sort of "reference library" for researchers around the world. Moreover, recent interpretations of U.S. patent laws suggest that genetically engineered embryos may soon find a place on the collection's shelves. (Photo: Visuals Unlimited)



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Thanks for this new twist on the old joke about baby doctors.

Steven H. Strogatz
Cambridge, Mass.

Poisoned condors

In "Happy birthday, condor chick" (SN: 5/7/88, p.295), the statement that "the birds have soared close to extinction in modern times — partly due to feeding on leadshot-poisoned carcasses abandoned by hunters as well as other hazards" is patently untrue. There has *never* been a verified case of a condor dying from leadshot poisoning.

"Everybody" knows that lead is poisonous and that condors are scavengers. Therefore people assume that condors die from scavenging shot and abandoned animals. This assumption is totally unscientific because it

is stated as fact, as in your article, without accompanying proof.

Michael V. Stratton
New York, N.Y.

According to a report in the Nov. 1, 1986 JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION (Vol. 189, No.9), autopsies of four dead condors revealed that three died of ingested lead; the other died of cyanide poisoning.
—S. Weisburd

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