

SCIENCE NEWS®

The Weekly Newsmagazine of Science

A Science Service Publication
Volume 133, No. 26, June 25, 1988

E.G. Sherburne Jr. Publisher
Patrick Young Editor
Dietrick E. Thomsen Senior Editor/
Physical Sciences
Laurie Jackson Managing Editor
Wendy McCarren Production/Design
Director
Bruce Bower Behavioral Sciences
Richard Monastersky Earth Sciences
Christopher Vaughan, General Science
Stefi Weisburd
Carol Eron, Life Sciences/
Rick Weiss Biomedicine
Ivars Peterson Mathematics/Technology
Janet Raloff Policy/Technology
Jonathan Eberhart Space Sciences
Janice Rickerich Assistant to the
Editor
Laura Beil, Science Writer
Melissa Hendricks Interns
Jane M. Livermore Books
Donald R. Harless Advertising/Business
Manager

Copyright © 1988 by Science Service, Inc.,
Editorial and Business Offices,
1719 N St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.
Republication of any portion of SCIENCE NEWS
without written permission of the publisher is
prohibited.

Subscription Department
231 West Center Street, Marion, Ohio 43305

Subscription rate: 1 yr., \$34.50; 2 yrs., \$58.00.
(Foreign postage \$6.00 additional per year.) Change of
address: Four to six weeks' notice is required. Please
state exactly how magazine is to be addressed.
Include zip code. For new subscriptions only call
(1) 800-247-2160. Printed in U.S.A. Second class
postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional
mailing offices. 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)
ISSN 0036-8423

This Week

- 404 Human Gene-Splice Test Considered
- 404 Galactic views through thick and thin
- 405 AIDS meeting suggests basic research gaps
- 405 HIV panel completes report
- 406 Scheduling science aboard the shuttle
- 406 Growing a fibrous superconductor
- 406 Ancient amphibians found in Iowa
- 407 Neuron selectivity: Down memory lane
- 407 Hairy portals for toxic chemicals
- 407 Birth-control vaccine safe in early tests

Research Notes

- 410 Chemistry
- 410 Earth Sciences

Articles

408 Bug Banking: A Growing Business

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)



Departments

- 402 Science on the Air
- 402 Books
- 403 Letters
- 411 Semi-Annual Index

Science Service Institution for the public understanding of science founded 1921; a nonprofit corporation.
Board of Trustees — *President*, Glenn T. Seaborg; *Vice President*, Gerald F. Tape; *Treasurer*, Willis Harlow Shapley; *Secretary*, Hilleary F. Hoskinson; *Joseph W. Berg Jr.*; *Edward Bliss Jr.*; *Bowen C. Dees*; *David A. Goslin*; *J. David Hann*; *Milton Harris*; *Elena O. Nightingale*; *O.W. Riegel*; *H. Guyford Stever*; *John Troan*; *Deborah P. Wolfe*.

Director: E. G. Sherburne Jr.; Assistant Director: Dorothy Schriver; Business Manager: Donald R. Harless.

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."

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

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

JUNE 25, 1988

403