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Cover: This computer-generated image showing plant distribution is the first attempt to portray the global biosphere. It includes ocean data from the Nimbus 7 satellite and land data from NOAA 7. Ocean colors correspond to concentrations of phytoplankton, the basis of the marine food web. Reds and oranges show high productivity; greens and yellows indicate moderate production. Land colors portray vegetation mass, ranging from dark green rain forests to light green and gold savannas and farmland to yellow deserts. (Image: NASA Goddard Space Flight Center)



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Letters

Two-way species

In "Eggs or live young: A thrips'll try both" (SN: 2/18/89, p.110) you state that animal species either lay eggs or have live young. This is not true, as it is well known that many water animals, including Daphnia pulex and certain strains of Artemia salinas, have winter eggs able to withstand freezing and dessication but have live young in warm weather.

Ralph A. Nichols Kerrville. Tex.

D. pulex and A. salinas do have two reproductive modes, but both modes involve eggs, according to Cornell University ecologist Nelson Hairston Jr. Both D. pulex, which holds eggs in an internal brood pouch, and A. salinas, which carries eggs in an external egg sac, lay two kinds of eggs. One kind hatches immediately upon release, while the other can remain dormant for a year to decades. The thrips, in contrast, appears to have an actual live-bearing reproductive mode in which no eggs are visible internally or externally.

— 1. Wickelgren

Archaeoastronomical psychology

I am so glad Dr. Tom P. Ray repeated the astronomical survey done by Dr. Jon Patrick in 1980 and announced confirming results ("First light at an Irish tomb," SN: 2/11/89, p.88). Dr. Patrick went one step further: He calculated the statistical probabilities and established that the Newgrange orientation to the winter solstice sunrise was intentional rather than due to chance, and that this phenomenon would continue forever regardless of changes in the ecliptic.

Additional research was done at Newgrange and two other megalithic passage/ chambers in 1985-86. I conducted an experiment that involved having archaeologists observe and take pictures inside these structures during the solstice or equinox period to which they are aligned. Certain carved art motifs were found to be spotlighted within general illumination at both Gavrinis and Loughcrew T.

Archaeologist M. Jean L'Helgouach reported that Dissignac, a passage/chamber in his area, is also aligned to the winter solstice.

Dr. Aubrey Burl, English archaeologist and author, reported that West Kinnet and Bryn Celli Ddu are similarly aligned astronomically.

This information has suggested several further hypotheses: (1) the Priteni (this is the name from which "Britain" and "Brittany" derived), the original builders, oriented all such structures to the sunrise or sunset of a solstice or equinox; (2) they intended the buildings to be churches/observatories, not tombs, since large masses of skeletons would have obstructed the carefully arranged lighting effects; and (3) this lumière effect can serve as the starting point for decoding the meaning of the art motifs. It is reasonable to assume that the motifs spotlighted were more important to the builders since they selected them to be spotlighted annually forever.

I am a psychologist, and my particular interest in these structures is in what they can tell us about the behavior, skills and beliefs of these ancient builders.

Jean Hunt Shreveport, La.

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