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Letters

What interests an owl?

Only if we assume that an owl is more interested in "aiming" at a *sound* cue rather than at a simultaneously presented visual cue can we infer, counterintuitively, that the owls in the Knudsens' experiment "relied on their vision [versus their hearing] to locate the source of a sound" ("Owls give a hoot for vision," SN: 10/21/89, p.263).

If we instead assume that an owl is more interested in aiming at a *visual* cue, then the experimental results imply — not surprisingly — that an owl conditioned to expect a visual cue to appear to the right of a sound cue will subsequently look to the *right* of the source of a sound cue when it is presented, but directly at a visual cue.

Jeffrey D. Mueller
Finksburg, Md.

Leeway for life

In "AIDS Predictors" (SN: 11/4/89, p.298), Daniel F. Hoth, director of the NIAID's AIDS

division, states, "The logic is simple: We know that people without T4 cells die. We know that the less T4 cells you have, the more you are at risk of opportunistic infections. It makes sense to say that a drug which delays or prevents this decline is of benefit to the patient."

I can easily agree with the last part of this statement, but I strongly question the first sentence. As a person with AIDS-related complex (ARC) whose T-helper-cell count has been below 5 per cubic millimeter for more than a year and at 0 per cubic millimeter for the past three months, with few problems with opportunistic infections, I suggest a more positive outlook. Is it possible that other cells in the immune system have redundant qualities and can take over at times of need?

The last thing we need to hear is a death sentence made so final as to not allow a little leeway for life.

Jerry E. Keith
San Francisco, Calif.

Pie and other protocols

My wife and I were surprised to learn of the relatively large amounts of residual ethanol present in foods listing distilled spirits among their ingredients ("More than a taste of alcohol," SN: 11/11/89, p.318). Since it is desirable to have independent confirmation of experimental results, we would like to obtain a copy of the protocol for making Brandy Alexander Pie so that we may repeat this crucial study ourselves.

Alan Meeker
Baltimore, Md.

Certainly no true student of the scientific method, as you most clearly are, would attempt to replicate the results of a complex and important scientific work by conducting only one experiment. Therefore, I refer you to that oft-cited volume, the Pillsbury Kitchens' Family Cookbook (1979 edition, Simon & Schuster), in which, I am told, the study's entire series of protocols originally appeared. May you enter into your efforts with spirits abounding.

— P. Young

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