

## Books

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**The American Horticultural Society Encyclopedia of Garden Plants** — Christopher Brickell, Ed. A comprehensive, illustrated guide to more than 8,000 trees, shrubs, vines, flowers, water plants, cacti and succulents. Plants are categorized by size, season, botanical and common names, color, hardiness and disease susceptibility. The section entitled "The Plant Dictionary" contains articles recommending species and cultivars to plant and offers background information on propagation, pruning, pests and diseases. More than 4,000 color photographs help the reader to plan a garden or identify a new plant. Macmillan, 1989, 608 p., color illus., hardcover, \$49.95.

**America's Forgotten Pandemic: The Influenza of 1918, Second Edition** — Alfred W. Crosby. This updated classic chronicles the influenza epidemic that claimed more than 25 million lives between August 1918 and March 1919. Sheds light on how the pandemic evolved, the mistakes that were made and the lessons that were learned, and on what researchers and public health officials can glean from this epidemic when fighting diseases such as AIDS and Lyme disease. Originally published in 1976 as *Epidemic and Peace, 1918* by Greenwood Press. Cambridge U Pr, 1989, 337 p., paperback, \$12.95.

**Parallel Universes: The Search for Other Worlds** — Fred Alan Wolf. This science writer begins by defining parallel universes as "universes that exist side by side with our own and even perhaps occupying the same space as our own." He goes on to show the general reader what parallel universes may reveal about quantum physics, relativity (especially black holes), cosmology, psychology, time and communication with the future. Originally published in hardcover in 1988. S&S, 1990, 351 p., paperback, \$9.95.

**Particles and Forces: At the Heart of the Matter** — Richard A. Carrigan Jr. and W. Peter Trower, Eds. This collection of 12 articles from *SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN*, 1975-1986, serves as a companion to *Particle Physics in the Cosmos*, published in 1989 by the same editors. Looks at tools, ideas and experiments that shed light on the events occurring in the early moments of the universe, as well as the sophisticated instruments that will make further insights possible. Concludes with a discussion of superstrings, colored quarks and leptons. A *Readings from Scientific American Magazine* book. W H Freeman, 1990, 237 p., color/b&w illus., paperback, \$11.95.

**The Practical Ornithologist** — John Gooders. Tips for the beginning birder on what to look for, how and when to look for it and how to record what you see. Covers songs and calls, avian anatomy and birdhouse construction, as well as providing detailed descriptions of bird habitats. S&S, 1990, 160 p., b&w/color illus., paperback, \$14.95.

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### Showers and surf

Concerning oceanographer Stephen A. Thorpe's discovery ("Rain calms the crash of ocean waves," SN: 1/6/90, p.6) that raindrops seem to reduce the number of breaking waves in the ocean and that mid-sized waves are affected first: Any surfer could have told you that.

A good time to go surfing is just after the rain has started, because the chop (mid-sized waves) is suppressed, making the breakers smooth and easier to ride. Over a period of time, the breakers will also begin to get smaller if the rain is hard.

Jeff Sterling  
Rockledge, Fla.

Although Thorpe may have elucidated the mechanism whereby rain reduces the number of large, breaking waves, the mere fact that rain can calm a rough sea has long been known. In *The Sea Around Us* (1961 edition, Oxford Univ. Press), the late naturalist Rachel Carson wrote that "... even a sudden downpour of rain may often turn the surface of the ocean to oiled-silk smoothness, rippling to the passage of the swells."

Andrew Lach  
DeFuniak Springs, Fla.

### Tilted by torque?

There are several possible explanations for "A gyroscope's gravity-defying feat" (SN: 1/6/90, p.15), such as air currents or spin-

induced magnetic or electrostatic fields. The most likely explanation, in my opinion, is that the spinning gyroscope interacts with the Earth's rotation, producing a small precessional torque. This torque could tilt the scale pan the gyro was on, moving its mass closer to or farther from the scale's beam fulcrum and causing an error in measurement. The effect would depend on the speed of rotation and the angular alignment of the gyro's spin axis to the Earth's axis. To minimize the error, simply align the gyro's axis parallel to the Earth's axis of rotation.

Chris Muir  
San Jose, Calif.

### Staying alive

Jerry E. Keith (Letters, SN: 12/23&30/89, p.403) cites his own experience with AIDS-related complex as evidence that a low blood density of T4 lymphocytes does not necessarily herald imminent death. His experience is validated by a placebo-controlled study we recently completed on an investigational immunotherapy for adult males infected with HIV.

In that double-blinded study, a significant percentage of patients receiving the treatment had a sustained increase in T4 counts, and a significant percentage had reduced progression of cutaneous Kaposi's sarcoma, a skin cancer characteristic of AIDS. The correlation between the two, however, was far from perfect. One patient whose cancerous lesions grew smaller had a marked drop in T4 counts. Two other patients had stable skin cancer and rising T4 counts during the study.

In both of those patients, the T4 count dropped again after the study ended. In one, this drop was associated with a worsening of a cancerous lesion. The other patient, however, did not have progression of his skin cancer despite a marked post-study drop in his T4 count.

Although a declining T4 trend line is a poor prognosticator and false hope is inappropriate, Keith makes a valid point in asking that a low T4 count not be deemed a reason to stop living.

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### CORRECTIONS

"Volcanoes on Earth may follow the sun" (SN: 1/28/90, p.47) describes Richard B. Stothers' use of two catalogs listing "more than 55,000 known [volcanic] eruptions since the year 1500." The correct number is "more than 5,500 eruptions," and the listings go back to 8000 B.C., although Stothers focused on moderate to large eruptions occurring since A.D. 1500.

In "The Swat Team" (SN: 2/3/90, p.72), the photo of the mosquito larvae was positioned upside down.

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