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Letters

Dwindling oil production

In the otherwise informative "Uncle Sam's Energy Strategy" (SN: 7/6/91, p.8), Tim Walker writes: "While U.S. oil consumption peaked in 1989 at 17 million barrels per day, domestic production has remained fairly stable at approximately 10 million barrels per day."

Would that we *could* produce so much!

The record high rate for U.S. oil production was 9.6 million barrels per day in 1970. It has since declined to 7.3 million barrels per day for 1990 and is hardly stable. The decrease in 1989 was 550,000 barrels per day, an all-time high. The decline in production rate continued through 1990, with further loss of more than 300,000 barrels per day. This is approximately what is forecast for 1991 as well.

Recognition of this long-term decline is particularly important because it has occurred during the 20-year period that includes record high rates of exploration for domestic oil. This has profound implications concerning the probable success of attempts to increase domestic oil production. It also underscores

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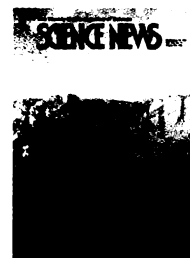
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Cover: Along its margins, Greenland blossoms during summer with enough lush growth to justify its colorful name. But the fertile hues don't appear on the ice cap that blankets Greenland's interior year-round. There, in the desolate middle of the island, U.S. and European investigators are drilling through the thick ice sheet to discover how Earth's climate has behaved in the past and how it may react in the future. (Photo: Richard Monastersky)



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the need for fuel conservation, which is stressed so little in current U.S. energy policy.

*Craig Bond Hatfield
Professor of Geology
University of Toledo
Toledo, Ohio*

Checking out his hometown

"I grew up in this neighborhood, love," may be the message inherent in a male tree frog's pond selection ("Your Pond or Mine?" SN: 7/6/91, p.12). Although the female chooses a pond safe for egg-laying, the male may select a pond similar to the one he survived in as a tadpole. This would enable the female to select a successful mate, who survived amid more predators; by inspecting the ponds of her suitors. Of course, she must then take her prized mate to the safer pond.

As for the males' loud mating calls, these may eliminate rivals that cannot flee, with a jump and a splash, from responding predators.

Apparently, *tested* survivability rules the frog's mating game.

*Eric Eckland
Chapel Hill, N.C.*

Peer fear

In regard to "Peer Review Under Fire" (SN: 6/22/91, p.394), I am aware of cases where a submission was reviewed by a direct rival who automatically nixed it. Anonymity might not work, as one's work might well be recognized.

I suggest that where, for example, three readers are to review a submission, the author be given the names of seven to 10 possible reviewers and the right to veto up to two of them. Who is vetoed and who actually reviews should be confidential.

I would bet that this procedure would cool much of the heat off peer review.

*P.M. deLaubenfels
Corvallis, Ore.*

Adding to the suggestion of peer review through electronic mail, I propose conducting occasional "lotteries" to approve funding and publication of relatively new and unfashionable kinds of research. This random approach would give brainstorming, and thus serendipity, a greater chance to occur.

*Jim McGraw
Gouldsboro, Pa.*

SEPTEMBER 14, 1991

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