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Letters

Advantages of high-flying repair

If two space shuttle missions are planned for Hubble's repair ("Hubble's repair: A second mission needed?" SN: 6/26/93, p.405), why not use the first to bring the telescope to Earth and the second to place it back into orbit? Once on Earth, a complete overhaul could be performed without the difficulties of space-based repairs.

Greg Lanz
Portland, Ore.

Originally, researchers had intended to bring Hubble back to Earth for repairs. However, that alternative is far too costly, and NASA is confident it can make most major repairs in space. In addition, repairs done in space would probably pose less danger to equipment than the rigors of bringing it back and relaunching it. — R. Cowen

Biodiversity: Desideratum or humbug?

In "What is biodiversity, anyway?" (SN:

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Cover: A new plan for saving species takes heed of data showing that wherever people wander, nature gets trampled and large animals disappear. It suggests setting aside large tracts of wilderness off limits to humans. (Photo: Michael J. Miller)
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Science Service, which publishes SCIENCE NEWS, is a nonprofit corporation founded in 1921. It gratefully accepts tax-deductible contributions and bequests to assist its efforts to increase the public understanding of science, with special emphasis on young people. More recently, it has included in its mission increasing scientific literacy among members of underrepresented groups. Through its Youth Programs it administers the International Science and Engineering Fair, the Science Talent Search for the Westinghouse Science Scholarships, and publishes and distributes the *Directory of Student Science Training Programs for Precollege Students*.

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6/26/93, p.410), Elizabeth Pennisi wrote, "... very few people connected the destruction of habitat with the loss of species."

Could anyone tell me what species (by name) have become extinct in the last five years, 25 years, or 100 years from any cause, not just habitat removal?

What, none? So who cares about biodiversity!

Donald T. Torell
Ukiah, Calif.

I have some problems with Stephen Kellert's statement, based on survey responses from people in the United States, that "we tend to overestimate the importance of economic value" in regard to preserving habitats and biodiversity. This is a serious error. As E.O. Wilson points out in his book *The Diversity of Life*, the habitats under greatest threat of destruction belong to some of the poorest peoples in the world.

While economic factors may not be the greatest concern for people in the United

States, if we do not work hard to find and exploit the commercial aspects of the rain forests and other threatened habitats, the people who live there will continue to destroy both habitats and biodiversity in order to feed their families. To end the destruction of the world's natural resources, we must make it profitable for people to preserve those resources.

Elizabeth Clarkson
Wichita, Kan.

Even in the United States, those who are cutting forests talk about jobs and reject ethical arguments as the abstract talk of yuppie backpackers.

We certainly need to educate Americans about biodiversity. We could begin by dropping the bland phrase "loss of biodiversity" and popularizing the attention-getting phrase "mass extinction."

Peter Kelly
Clinton, N.Y.

SEPTEMBER 11, 1993

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