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## Letters

### Concern about chlorine nitrate

Your report "Another cause found for ozone depletion" (SN: 9/11/93, p.167) gives the impression that ozone-destroying chlorine nitrate is a "natural" compound that has nothing to do with chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), halons, and other industrial chemicals that attack the ozone layer.

In fact, chlorine nitrate is formed by a reaction involving chlorine monoxide, a by-product of the breakup of CFCs in the stratosphere. The discovery that chlorine nitrate may contribute directly to ozone depletion should thus serve to heighten concern about the impact of industrial chemicals, not lessen it.

Brad Hurley  
Bellows Falls, Vt.

### Ecocontroversy rages wildly

I was both amused and disheartened to read that biologist Deborah Jensen of the Nature Conservancy in Arlington, Va., considers the

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Cover: Warm, glassy water and rain clouds typify conditions in the equatorial western Pacific. When the warmth and precipitation spread eastward, they create an El Niño that disrupts normal weather patterns around the globe. Forecasters are now developing schemes to predict months ahead of time how such Pacific patterns will alter the climate in the United States and other countries.  
(Photo: Eric J. Lindstrom/U.S. World Ocean Circulation Experiment)



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big and threatening as a "male definition of wildness" ("Conservation's Ecocentrists," SN: 9/11/93, p.168).

This certainly doesn't match the visions of wildness made famous by John Muir, Henry David Thoreau, Edwin Way Teale, Barry Lopez, Aldo Leopold, or Peter Mathiesen. However, it does come close to describing the feeling I got in reading Annie Dillard's *A Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. (I can also recall more than a few female students who have avoided the wilderness for fear of bears, rattlesnakes, and other such "unpleasant creatures.") Is she perhaps referring to executive-club sportsmen and the cult of Hemingway?

In any case, loyal membership in the Nature Conservancy notwithstanding, I think this is one of the wackiest statements I've ever read.

Richard W. Hazlett  
Assistant Professor of Geology  
Pomona College  
Claremont, Calif.

**I struggle to understand how Jensen's sexist characterization found its way into SCIENCE**

News. What would be the reaction to someone characterizing a proposal as, say, "seductive, but weak and unambitious, a very female sort of idea?"

I would hope that such matters could be discussed on their merits and that detractors who attempt to abort the discussion by trafficking in negative stereotypes ("male" = "big and threatening") would receive the reaction their shallow analyses deserve.

Gordon McLean Jr.  
Brookline, Mass.

**Conservationists of all stripes** need to recognize that no set-aside and preservation efforts can withstand the pressure of indefinitely (and rapidly) increasing human population numbers. No long-term plan can be taken seriously unless it speaks loudly to the need to halt the spread of nature's most dangerous predator and competitor.

Robin Ault  
Newtonville, Mass.

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I support the idea of wilderness; let's start by rescinding grazing and mining rights in the public lands. In addition, I would be far more comfortable with the Wildlands Project if it proposed to return the custody and stewardship of the land to those persons, indigenous and otherwise, who wish to restore themselves to a natural (i.e., tribal) state.

Debra Huffman  
Houston, Texas

The Wildlands Project fails to take into account the Fifth Amendment, which requires that "just compensation" be paid by government when private property is taken for a public use. The question of how much should be paid for ecosystem preservation and by whom is not a matter of science but a matter of personal values.

Proponents of the project are incredibly insensitive to the values, freedoms, and property rights of the many millions of people who live in and love the lands that the project would make off-limits or severely restrict for use by people.

If environmentalists wanted to turn large numbers of people into anti-environmentalist activists, they couldn't have come up with a better means of doing so than the Wildlands Project.

Many of us living in the rural West think that the "ecologists" are an arrogant urban elite with a compulsion to live out their fantasy at our expense.

Sandy Shaw  
Nye County, Nev.

The Wildlands Project illustrates all the absurd flaws in the ecocentric mindset — namely, that balanced ecosystems don't include people, that government coercion can override human nature, and that God needs help. Aside from those issues, the ecocentrists are simply wrong — scientifically, historically, economically, and politically.

Peter Vokac  
Tucson, Ariz.

I was elated to read about the Wildlands Project but was disappointed to find no areas of the Great Plains or Midwest identified as potential wildlands. I would think that the Prairie Potholes of the Dakotas, along with the vast sandhills of Nebraska and the Flint Hills of Kansas, would surely merit recognition as components of any kind of large-scale preservation projects.

Christopher Bronny  
Byron, Ill.

The Midwest is not being neglected. Our maps simply showed roadless areas, not proposed Wildlands preserves. The Interior Department is planning to protect oak savannahs that stretch from Minnesota through Texas, and in October 300 buffalo were released onto the 35,000-acre Tallgrass Prairie Preserve in Oklahoma.

— E. Pennisi

Brosard is wrong: 27 representatives — republicans, democrats, and Sanders (I-VT) — make "the left end of the spectrum of what's good for biodiversity" look disabled. Over 50 scientists also support the Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act (H.R. 2638). It's real,

and when it's not even mentioned by name it's not fair to say "political realities have never stopped Dave Foreman."

Steve Kelly  
Bozeman, Mont.

### More on both dying and recovery

Jeffrey I. Slonim suggests, and the editors agree ("Correcting a slip of the pen," SN: 9/4/93, p.147), that Bruce Bower meant to say that the heaviest abusers of alcohol "either died or recovered most often" rather than "both died and recovered." Perhaps he did. But he shouldn't have.

Bower's original statement more accurately captures the intended meaning, which apparently is roughly: Among the heaviest abusers, the percentage of those who died early, as well as the percentage of those who recovered, was greater than the corresponding percentages for the moderate abusers.

The trouble with Slonim's "correction" is that it fails to convey both the higher death rate and the higher recovery rate, since "either . . . or" is true when only one of the alternatives is the case.

Ray Perkins  
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Plymouth, N.H.

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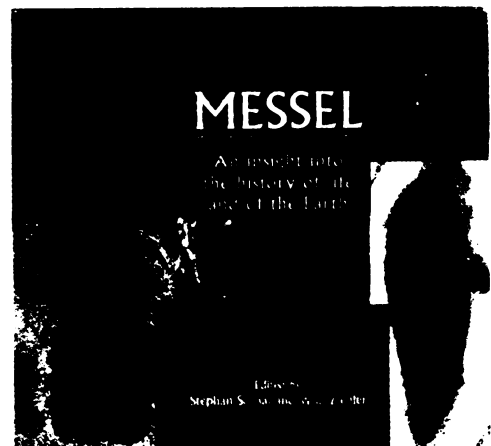


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The Eocene oil shales of Messel, near Frankfurt, are remarkable for the unusually complete and detailed picture they give of life some fifty million years ago. The abundant remains of animals and plants that are found there represent what is virtually a complete ecosystem, in an exceptional state of preservation. Not only the skeletons of the organisms are preserved, but also the soft tissues and stomach contents that are usually lost in the process of fossilization. There are both animals and plants: insects, fish, and amphibians; birds, ferns, conifers, and palms. All these fossils are described and lavishly illustrated in color in this book, and their ecology, biogeography, and evolutionary significance are discussed. There are also chapters on the process of fossilization and the history of the Messel site. This book will be of value not only to paleontologists, but also to zoologists and botanists — and indeed to all who are interested in the history of life on the earth.

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