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Letters

The crawdaddy of us all?

In "Noisy messages for crayfish" (SN: 10/23/93, p.271), the phenomenon of stochastic resonance (in which a certain level of noise facilitates detection of a weak information signal) is reported to occur in this crustacean's neurons. How interesting!

Just yesterday in a college library, I saw many students studying while wearing walkmen whose volumes were so loud they could be heard by one strolling past. Is it possible that the lowly crayfish is the long-sought-after missing link?

P.E. Antonietti
Silver City, N.M.

Some foods full of flavonoids

Raloff states in "Add tea to that old 'apple a day' adage" (SN: 10/30/93, p.278) that flavonoids occur in trace quantities in foods. However, flavonoids occur in many foods in considerable amounts, and mean intake of fla-

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Cover: The impending plunge of Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 into Jupiter's atmosphere has focused attention on the planet's winds and storms. Observations of the impact and its effects may shed light on the Great Red Spot and other distinctive features of Jupiter's atmosphere. (Photo: NASA/JPL)



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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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vonoids in the Netherlands is approximately 25 milligrams per day. This is substantially higher than the normal intake of vitamin E or beta-carotene, two other antioxidants that have been linked to reduced risk of coronary heart disease.

Michaël G.L. Hertog
National Institute of Public Health and
Environmental Protection
Bilthoven, the Netherlands

Righting patent wrongs?

I can't believe the hostility shown by the letter writers responding to attempts to patent the human genome ("What's wrong with DNA patent rights," SN: 11/6/93, p.291).

In order to discover anything about the human genome, the researcher must first spend a lot of money on his or her education. Then someone else must spend a lot of money hiring this researcher and others, equipping a lab, and supporting the research. Finally, if the discoveries are to be something besides a mere intellectual pleasure, someone else will

need to spend a lot of money to turn them into a product useful to the consumer.

The notion that the researcher should do all this *gratis* is absurd.

Thomas W. Daly
North Mankato, Minn.

More benefits of smokeless fuel

I was delighted to read that Eugene Shutz Jr. and Wayne Bragg are investigating smokeless biomass fuel sources for Third World heating and cooking ("Digging up cleaner-burning cooking fuels," SN: 11/13/93, p.309). Bravo to all engaged in this project!

There is a spinoff more important even than smokelessness. Current biomass fuels gathered by native peoples in many areas tend to be slow-growth chaparral and timber. Wood gathering of this sort contributes to deforestation and desertification in many areas of the world. Easily cultivated fuel sources will help take the pressure off our woodlands.

Thom Worthen
Tucson, Ariz.

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