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## This Week

- 84 Mice Show Alzheimer Brain Plaques
- 84 Pathfinding made easier by chemical waves
- 85 New evidence of neutrino oscillations
- 85 Fossil hints at hominids' European stall
- 86 Federal Budget 1996: R&D Would Fall

## Research Notes

- 88 Behavior
- 88 Physics

## Articles

### 90 When Nitrate Reigns

Cover: Trees along this tributary of the Neversink River in New York's Catskill Mountains receive a heavy rain of nitrates and other nitrogenous air pollutants. Such fallout can have a positive, fertilizing effect on the plant communities it touches. But new studies suggest that if delivered in excess — as it is in many industrial nations — this nitrogen can stunt or kill forest systems with its "kindness." (Photo: Gregory Lawrence, U.S. Geological Survey)

### 92 Debugging Blood

## Departments

- 83 Letters
- 95 Books

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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## Letters

### What consensus?

"Consensus reached on climate change causes" (SN: 9/24/94, p.198) quotes Houghton of IPCC as saying, "It is interesting that in this very uncertain area, over a period of 5 years, the essential story remains the same. There's been no evidence that's come to light to destroy those basic findings."

I would like to point out one bit of evidence that impacts rather strongly on the basic IPCC findings — namely, the failure of Earth to warm up as predicted.

The 0.3° to 0.6°C warming observed over the past century, even if caused entirely by greenhouse warming (which it isn't), lies below the range of 0.7° to 1.4°C that models predict we should have seen by 1990. If any particular fraction of the observed warming is assumed to be attributable to increased greenhouse gases, the mismatch is increased by the reciprocal of that fraction. For example, if 25 percent of the observed warming is attributed to added greenhouse gases, the

predicted warming is eight times as great as the observed warming.

The rates of warming show an even greater mismatch. IPCC predicts a warming at the rate of 0.3°C per decade. We now have satellite data showing essentially no temperature change over the past 15 years.

Don't these facts cast some doubt on the basic IPCC findings?

Hugh W. Ellsaesser  
Livermore, Calif.

### What's in a name

We were pleased to read about the naming of element 106 in honor of Glenn T. Seaborg. However, we were sorely disappointed with the IUPAC's recent pronouncements ("Elemental upset," SN: 10/22/94, p.271).

We feel that stripping Dr. Seaborg of this honor was wrong and smacked of politics at its worst. IUPAC's excuse for not allowing living scientists to be honored has destroyed an even more established tradition of letting the discoverers name the elements.

While we do realize that there are many

aspects to weigh when approving a name, we hope that IUPAC will reconsider in favor of seaborgium.

D. Benning and  
48 chemistry students  
River City High School  
West Sacramento, Calif.

### Floods foul fiddleheads?

I belatedly shared "Foul ferns" (SN: 10/8/94, p.239) with a farmer acquaintance who sells fiddlehead ferns, among other things, at the local greenmarket. His opinion is that *Salmonella* was the cause of the digestive upset described.

Fiddleheads grow in moist places, which often flood in spring, and the floodwaters in agricultural districts are often contaminated with animal wastes, a source of the bacteria.

Cooking 2 minutes may not be sufficient to kill the microorganisms, but 10 minutes is enough. The health department probably missed the bacteria.

David C. Locke  
New York, N.Y.

FEBRUARY 11, 1995

83