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Cover: After remaining microscopic for billions of years, life suddenly broke the size barrier between 650 and 540 million years ago, producing this *Dickinsonia costata* and a host of other organisms. Collectively known as the Ediacaran fossils, these impressions were originally classified as the earliest animals. Now, some researchers question whether the organisms were animals at all. (Photo: Bruce Runnegar, University of California, Los Angeles)

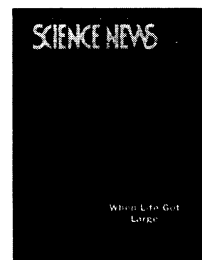
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Science Service, which publishes SCIENCE NEWS, is a nonprofit corporation founded in 1921. It gratefully accepts tax-deductible contributions and bequests to assist its efforts to increase the public understanding of science, with special emphasis 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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Letters

Criminal choices

In regard to "Criminal Intellects" (SN: 4/15/95, p.232), researchers Moffitt, Block, and Pennington provide valuable (though disparate) insights into the origins of delinquency. Indeed, an inclination to commit crimes results from a combination of many elements—including environmental factors, early socialization, personality traits such as impulsiveness, and to some extent, biology.

The bottom line, however, is that criminality is a conscious choice made on an individual basis, irrespective of intelligence or environment. After all, there are many people who are low in IQ but high in probity, as there are many people who live in poverty yet are rich in morality. If not for the element of conscious choice, how could researchers explain why I—a member of Mensa with an upper-middle-class background—am serving a 20-year sentence for committing an armed robbery?

Taking responsibility for the consequences of one's choices should be an integral part of understanding, and curtailment, criminal behavior.

*Alex Friedmann
Clifton, Tenn.*

With regard to the comment that while the average IQ has not declined in the last 30 years, the crime rate has, it seems to me that perhaps what has changed is what one might call relative IQ. As the technical aspects of the average employment have increased, the IQ necessary for productive employment has also increased. Thus more and more individuals in the lower IQ range have been forced out of the job market even though their IQs have not declined.

It seems to me that this is a long-range problem that can only get worse and can only lead to frustration on the part of those affected. For my part, I can see no easy solution.

*Samuel B. Knapp
Silverdale, Wash*

More than one way to save a bird

"Think big to save birds on the edge" (SN: 4/1/95, p.198) leads one to believe that larger old-growth forests are the only hope for neotropical bird survival. We here in central Texas have been faced with the serious problem of nest parasitization of our neotropical birds (the caped vireo and golden-cheeked warbler) by cowbirds. The Kerr Wildlife Management Area has been able to increase its population of these endangered species by controlling the cowbird population.

The hard-working biologists in Kerrville have thus provided a valuable demonstration of how to recover and increase a rare and valuable natural resource in an agricultural area.

*Ken Shilkun
Fredericksburg, Texas*

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