

SCIENCE NEWS®

The Weekly Newsmagazine of Science

Science Service Publication
Volume 148, No. 17, October 21, 1995

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SCIENCE NEWS (ISSN 0036-8423) is published weekly on Saturday, except the last week in December, for \$49.50 for 1 year or \$88.00 for 2 years (foreign postage \$6.00 additional per year) by Science Service, Inc., 1719 N Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. Second-class postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing office. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to SCIENCE NEWS, P.O. Box 1925, Marion, Ohio 43305. Change of address: Four to six weeks' notice is required — old and new addresses, including zip codes, must be provided. Copyright © 1995 by Science Service, Inc. Title registered as trademark U.S. and Canadian Patent Offices. Printed in U.S.A. on recycled paper. ♻️ Reproduction of any portion of SCIENCE NEWS without written permission of the publisher is prohibited.

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Cover: This male bluehead wrasse swimming off Panama's San Blas Islands began its life either as a female or as an initial-stage male with very different looks and behaviors. Many species of fish change sex more than once. During such transformations, they modify their brain cells, color, mating behaviors, and more. (Photo: Ken Clifton/Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, Panama City)
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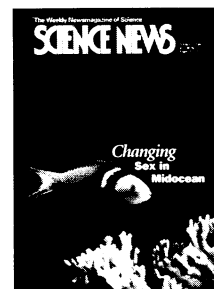
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Science Service, which publishes SCIENCE NEWS, is a nonprofit corporation founded in 1921. It gratefully accepts tax-deductible contributions and bequests to assist its efforts to increase the public understanding of science, with special emphasis 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

Feline nightmare for human sleep?

I am incensed! The researchers are subjecting cats to sleep deprivation for 22 hours ("Tired cats make lipid sleep hormones," SN: 6/10/95, p.356). What incredible cruelty.

I thought the days of torturing animals in the name of research or testing were over. If a sleeping pill is ever derived from this callous treatment of our fellow creatures, be sure to tell us so we can boycott it.

Emily Johnston
Westminster, Md.

As a longtime reader of SCIENCE NEWS, I've become as troubled by the passive, detached tone of such reports as I am by the mindless cruelty inflicted on the animals. To write, casually, that the cats "spent" time on a treadmill, after which they were "tired," as compared to "rested" cats—did the experimenters supply this language?

Lerner and his coworkers would probably say that the ultimate goal of this research is to help people sleep better. That would be ironic.

James E. Hughes
Minneapolis, Minn.

Unstable DNA no boon to organism

"When CAG Spells Trouble" (SN: 6/10/95, p.360) raises a question in my mind: Has there ever been a DNA dynamic mutation that acted in the best interest of the organism involved?

Lou David Allen
Merkel, Texas

Most likely not, say researchers. The point of a dynamic mutation is that the DNA involved is not stable. Even if the resulting mutant gene produced a useful protein in one generation, the advantage would probably be lost in future ones as the gene's DNA continued to expand in size.

— J. Travis

'Nonworking' women slighted

In "Blood pressure lower for working women" (SN: 7/1/95, p.6), the misnomers "working" and "nonworking" referring to women who have paid employment and those who do not may have misled the researchers.

Women with small children are more likely to stay at home than women with no children or older children. Taking care of infants and toddlers full-time is demanding and stressful, and women often neglect their own health during this stage of life. Note that the increased blood pressure was seen only in the younger group of at-home women.

A major change from 1960 to 1980 is that women who stay at home are far more isolated.

Rather than considering only why paid employment decreases blood pressure (and tossing in the healthy worker effect), why not study at-home women to explain their increased blood pressure?

Margaret Ulfers
King George, Va.

OCTOBER 21, 1995

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