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Cover: This marble sculpture represents a mathematical form known as the Costa minimal surface. The creation of this artwork by sculptor and mathematician Helaman Ferguson required the application of a new technology to shape the material and the development of new mathematical equations to describe the form. (Photo: Jon Ferguson)



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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

### Point of clarification on ADHD

In "Imaging hyperactive brains" (SN: 11/25/95, p. 360), the following appears: "Castellanos. . . used. . . MRI to compare the brains of 55 healthy boys and 57 with ADHD." I question the use of "healthy"; "typical" is more accurate and less pejorative.

Bert Carvalho  
Proctor Academy  
Andover, N.H.

### How is a fish like a person?

In "Fishy Sex" (SN: 10/21/95, p. 266), it says that "marine scientists say fish and people actually have enough in common to make the study of fish worthwhile." What are these "in common" things?

Evelyn Coffenberry  
Woodbridge, Va.

*Fish and people have important similarities in their neuroendocrine systems. Also, the*

*areas of the brain and the hormones that appear to differ in homosexual and heterosexual men are similar to the hormones and brain areas Grober and others are studying in fish. Indeed, "there appears to be an evolutionarily conserved mechanism for generating sexual 'flexibility' in all vertebrates," Grober asserts.*

—T. Adler

### Taken to task over nitrate

I was appalled at the response to the letter from Rob Walty (SN: 11/4/95, p. 291). You should have responded that a cation exchange resin will not remove nitrate (NO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup>, an anion). You could also have pointed out that the replacement of one calcium or magnesium ion with two sodium ions in a brine-charged water softener is not necessarily a good exchange, especially in terms of health or environmental responsibility.

Just how am I, an employee of a municipal water supply utility, to respond when a customer tells me: "All you need to take care of

the nitrate in the water is a water softener. I read it in SCIENCE NEWS?"

Steven Lueck  
Tucson, Ariz.

### Eruption error site cited

There appears to be an error in "Small-scale survivors of big blasts" (SN: 12/2/95, p. 378). Arenal volcano is in Costa Rica, not Puerto Rico.

John and Anita Thurmond  
Little Rock, Ark.

### Natural selection and the group

I believe that "Return of the Group" (SN: 11/18/95, p. 328) seriously misreports the current state of evolutionary theory by implying that individual selection is the leading theory, with group selection making a comeback.

In fact, both notions are thoroughly discredited. Natural selection operates only on nearly perfect replicators, and neither indi-

*Letters continued on p. 106*