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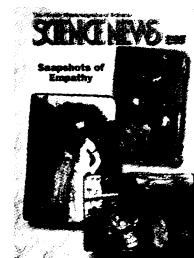
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Cover: One's empathic insight into the thoughts and feelings of strangers, friends, and lovers ebbs and flows in sometimes surprising ways, according to researchers armed with a bit of guile and a lot of videotape. (Illustration: Dan Skripkar)



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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

New uses for old computers

I read with interest "Computer Redux" (SN: 12/23&30/95, p. 424). As a teacher of sixth-grade science in a poor, rural school district, I have just become a happy recipient of a recycled computer through a nonprofit organization in Connecticut called Computers for Kids.

This computer will enable me to make use of the funds I received through a Southern New England Telephone (SNET) Company Telecommunications Incentive Grant. SNET and many other companies channel their outdated computers into Computers for Kids. No money is charged to the schools for the computers.

I wish to publicly thank these companies and to suggest that more companies supply schools with computers. Their time and effort will be rewarded many times over, not

only through tax incentives but also through the investment in our children's, and indeed this country's, future.

Rita Heckman Pyrdol
Plainfield, Conn.

Your article reminded me of a local science fiction convention I attended 2 years ago. A man there was selling clocks made from old disk drives. I now regret not buying one, but I was a bit low on cash at the time.

Patrick J. Murphy
Albuquerque, N.M.

Dismissed for lack of evidence?

"Nesting dinosaur discovered in Mongolia" (SN: 1/6/96, p. 7) raises a fundamental issue with regard to the nature of scientific hypotheses—that of interpreting evidence to fit an attractive hypothesis.

Padian's enthusiastic assertion that this is "probably the most spectacular discovery in terms of behavior since . . . the 1970s" seems

premature, considering the nature and extent of the evidence.

Have alternative hypotheses been ruled out? For instance, could the female have been entombed while laying the eggs or even have died as a result of laying the eggs? Just how "definitive" is her position?

It seems to me that this is a behavioral question that cannot be settled with a single specimen. A female dinosaur in association with her eggs must pass certain tests before she can be declared a nesting dinosaur.

Anthony Guneratne
Bloomington, Ind.

A most unusual time

"The year of the hurricanes" (SN: 12/16/95, p. 415) was remarkable in more than one way. The number of storms apparently shook up the calendar too, since you report the season ended on Nov. 31.

Michael V. Stratton
Ashburn, Va.