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Cover: Climatologists have long warned that greenhouse gases will raise Earth's temperature by significant amounts. Now, public health researchers have started looking at how these warmer conditions would affect the spread of tropical disease and other medical problems. They foresee multiple threats on the horizon. (Illustration: Design Imaging)



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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

### Self-awareness in primates

Scientists who conduct experiments on primates to see how "humanlike" they are are wasting their time ("Probing Primate Thoughts," SN: 1/20/96, p. 42).

We don't understand our own self-awareness well enough to test it in other animals. We still have a lot to learn about primates by observing their behavior in their natural surroundings. And the use of primates in captivity for experiments and observations won't mean anything when it comes to analyzing results—the environment is just too foreign.

David Smith  
Belfast, Me.

**Many experiments designed** by humans to test how nonhuman animals think are flawed by the experimenters' inability to step out of a human mindset. For example, Povinelli concludes that "chimps appear not to understand that the eyes can be deployed to signal a mental state of attention."

Does this conclusion overlook the possibility that the chimps' choices, which appeared "random" to the experimenters, may have been based on other cues? The chimps may have been responding to body posture, subtle facial expression, or nonvisual cues (hearing or olfaction).

As a veterinarian and lifelong animal handler, it has been my experience that animals are much better at reading human body language than people are at reading the body language of animals!

Barbara Corson  
Kennett Square, Pa.

### Where credit's due

"Shocking Rhythms" (SN: 1/27/96, p. 56) did an excellent job of summarizing in a small amount of space our knowledge about the mechanisms of defibrillation. Because of its brevity, however, many investigators performing important research in this area were not mentioned.

For example, the article gave our laborato-

ry sole credit for the development of the biphasic waveform. John Schuder of the University of Missouri in Columbia and Janice Jones of Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., performed studies dealing with biphasic waveforms before we did.

Raymond E. Ideker  
Professor of Medicine  
University of Alabama  
Birmingham, Ala.

### Not so fast, there!

There is one statement in the article on wakefield accelerators (SN: 2/10/96, p. 95) that is somewhat inaccurate. We have not yet accelerated electrons to 1 gigaelectronvolt in 1 centimeter, although we plan to do so in the near future. We have claimed only that we can get that kind of field gradient.

Thus far, we have only accelerated electrons to the megaelectronvolt level (but in much less than 1 millimeter).

Donald Umstadter  
Ann Arbor, Mich.