



Science Service Publication
Volume 152, No. 13, September 27, 1997

Thomas Peter Bennett	Publisher
Julie Ann Miller	Editor
Blair Burns Potter	Managing Editor
Dan Skripkar	Production/Design Director
David Lindley	Associate Editor
Janet Raloff	Senior Editor
Ivars Peterson	Environment/Policy Online Editor
Bruce Bower	Mathematics/Physics
Richard Monastersky	Behavioral Sciences
Kathleen Fackelmann,	Internship Coordinator
Nathan Seppa	Earth Science
Ron Cowen	Biomedicine
Christine Mlot	Astronomy
John Travis	Life Sciences
Corinna Wu	Biology
Sid Perkins	Chemistry/
Meghan Mitchell	Materials Science
Gwendolyn Gillespie	Science Writer Intern
Cait Anthony	Editorial Assistant
Donald R. Harless	Editorial Secretary
	Books/Advertising
	Business Manager

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, 1719 N Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. Preferred Periodicals 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 © 1997 by Science Service. Title registered as trademark U.S. and Canadian Patent Offices. Printed in U.S.A. Republication of any portion of SCIENCE NEWS without written permission of the publisher is prohibited. For permission to photocopy articles, contact Copyright Clearance Center at 508-750-8400 (phone) or 508-750-4470 (fax).

Editorial, Business, and Advertising Offices
1719 N St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036
202-785-2255; scinews@sciserv.org

Subscription Department
P.O. Box 1925, Marion, Ohio 43305
For new subscriptions and customer service, call 1-800-552-4412.

Visit SCIENCE NEWS ONLINE for special features, columns, and references.
<http://www.sciencenews.org>

This Week

- 196 Computer Chips Take a Leap Forward
- 196 New chemistry from tropical corals
- 197 Satellites hint sun is growing stronger
- 197 A gamma-ray burst's enduring fireball
- 198 New treatments for macular degeneration
- 198 Brain region takes a hack at navigation
- 199 Mice smoke out key emphysema enzyme
- 199 Transgenic plants provoke petition

Research Notes

- 200 Astronomy
- 200 Biology
- 204 Behavior

Articles

- 202 The Rise in Toxic Tides

Cover: A large bloom of marine plankton (*Noctiluca scintillans*) dwarfs a boat and tints the water off the coast of Southern California. Although the organism is harmless, related microscopic protists and bacteria produce powerful toxins that have poisoned fish, animals, and people. Problems stemming from harmful blooms have been increasing in the last 2 decades. (Photo: Peter J.S. Franks/Scripps Institution of Oceanography)

- 206 Power Failure

Departments

- 195 Letters
- 205 Books

SCIENCE NEWS is published by Science Service, a nonprofit corporation founded in 1921. The mission of Science Service is to advance the understanding and appreciation of science through publications and educational programs.

Board of Trustees — *Chairman*, Dudley Herschbach; *Vice Chairman*, Gerald F. Tape; *Secretary*, David A. Goslin; *Treasurer*, Willis Harlow Shapley; Joseph W. Berg Jr.; Robert W. Fri; J. David Hann; Shirley M. Malcom; Eve L. Menger; C. Bradley Moore; Ben Patrusky; H. Guyford Stever; Sanford J. Ungar; Deborah P. Wolfe; *Chairman Emeritus*, Glenn T. Seaborg; *Honorary Trustees*, Edward Bliss Jr.; Bowen C. Dees; Elena O. Nightingale; John Troan.

Officers—*President*, Thomas Peter Bennett; *Vice President and Business Manager*, Donald R. Harless.

Letters

Refined explanation of canola

Bob Terry is correct in saying that the word "canola" is a contraction of "Canadian oil," but he is not correct otherwise (Letters, SN: 8/2/97, p. 67). As a builder of equipment that removes and refines oil from both rapeseed and canola, I have come to understand that canola is extracted from a special grade of rapeseed which has been bred for better nutritional characteristics.

The issue is not "toxins" removed by refining—canola is the name of a crop, it is a registered trademark, and canola oil cannot be derived from the standard rapeseed.

George Anderson
Crown Iron Works Co.
Minneapolis, Minn.

Elemental error

In "Communism in trees goes underground" (SN: 8/9/97, p. 87), you refer to the element

"phosphorous." The element is spelled "phosphorus." "Phosphorous" is an adjective referring to the salts of a particular valence form.

H. David Hammond
Flagstaff, Ariz.

Right lung, wrong count

In "Gene tells left from right" (SN: 7/26/97, p. 56), you write, "The right lung has fewer lobes than the left." The last time I looked, the right lung had three lobes and the left lobe had two—presumably to make room for the heart.

Paul Parker
Las Vegas, Nev.

Reducing risks of biocontrol

In "Biological Pest Control Harms Natives" (SN: 8/16/97, p. 100), you give the impression that substantial risks will always accompany biocontrol. There will never be zero risk, but classical biological control can reduce it to near zero.

There is a distinction between research on an organism and the decision to release the organism. The two functions are performed by two different agencies within the Department of Agriculture—the Agricultural Research Service and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), respectively. In the case of the weevil in your story, research bore out the fact that there was some predation of native thistles by the weevil. APHIS decided to release it anyway.

The agency could have made another decision, and probably should have, but this example should not damage the case for biocontrol.

Incidentally, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service must be consulted by APHIS before it releases any organisms that might affect endangered species.

Jacob Sigg
Invasive Exotics Committee
California Native Plant Society
Sacramento, Calif.