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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)
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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
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