

# SCIENCE NEWS®

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## Letters

### Protecting moth modesty

Hey, I thought *Science News* was a family-oriented magazine. Now, I see adult material, as in a picture of an *Olethreutes astrologana* moth and his genitalia ("Why Guys Get Fancy," SN: 8/29/98, p. 141). You should at least have blacked out the moth's face to protect his identity.

*Frederick W. Jamison  
Dallas, Texas*

### When's the celebration?

In "Cars crossing the Pacific" (SN: 9/5/98, p. 155), it says that thousands of toy cars should wash up on North American shores just in time to celebrate the turn of the millennium. The next paragraph says the cars should reach the coast by January 2000. That would mean they have plenty of time to get ready for the celebration because the millennium doesn't turn for another year.

Since years are ordinal numbers, the count began with the first year, 1 A.D. There was no year 0; the year before 1 A.D. was 1 B.C.

Hence, the last of the first 2000 years is the year 2000. The next millennium (and next century and next decade) begins Jan. 1, 2001.

*Jacques E. LaFrance  
Sand Springs, Okla.*

*You're quite literally correct, but most of the world has decided to celebrate at midnight on December 31, 1999. If you wait, you'll miss one hell of a party.*

—R. Monastersky

### Honor and violence

The Cohen study of regional violent behavior appears questionable on its face ("Culture of honor reveals a violent streak," SN: 9/12/98, p. 165).

Undoubtedly, murders resulting from brawls and arguments often involve insults or status challenges—but it would also be relevant to note whether they involved intoxication as a factor and how the incidence of murder correlated to drunkenness.

How much of this behavior traces back to the Scottish lineage of many Southern families and the traditional mores of their ancestry—compared with the Dutch-English-Ger-

man heritage of Northerners?

*Michael J. Dunn  
Auburn, Wash.*

*The latter issue is addressed in Culture of Honor, by Richard E. Nisbett and Dov Cohen (1996, Westview Press).*

—B. Bower

**Flags went up** immediately when I read the culture-of-honor article. Strong national defense is more a measure of common sense than honor. And removing gun control barriers, such as allowing concealed-carry laws, has been proven to be a way to lower crime rates across the country.

In essence, the researchers seem to be saying that we should have no honor (principles), a weak national defense, and gun control—so that a handful of homicides might be prevented. The authors seem ready to leap to conclusions long before the picture is clear. Perhaps, it could simply be that the people in the North have no principles worth fighting for.

*Mike Rouzer  
Sugar Land, Texas*

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**Cover:** These captured chum salmon are a subsistence food source in central Alaska. When government scientists said they didn't have the resources to fully map the fish's unique spawning grounds, the Alaska Boreal Forest Council volunteered. Such science shops are stepping in to study local issues that traditional research institutions ignore. Page 298 (Photo: © Douglas Yates/1998)

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