RANDOM SAMPLES

edited by CONSTANCE HOLDEN

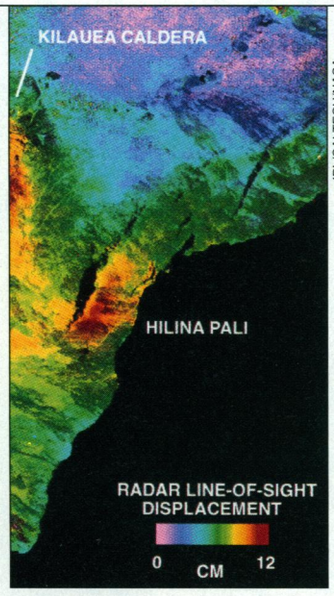
Euro-Animal Users Band Together

A new group devoted to defending research with animals—the European Biomedical Research Association (EBRA)—was launched by scientists from 16 countries on 9 November at a meeting in Strasbourg.

Oxford University anatomist Ray Guillery, who chaired the meeting, says EBRA has two major priorities. One is to create an information network that will allow research groups, scientific societies, and pharmaceutical companies across Europe to share knowledge about research animals and the use of non-animal alternatives. The other goal is to develop a pan-European perspective on animal issues to educate policy makers and the public. EBRA will "work on getting a voice for biomedical researchers" in deliberations by the European Community, says Mark Matfield, head of the U.K.'s Research Defence Society. Currently, "they are not being consulted" on policies affecting research, he says.

Oxford neuroscientist Colin Blakemore, who has been a frequent target of animal rights campaigners, says EBRA is "an important development," particularly in light of the fact that the activists now have a newly expanded audience in the form of scientists in eastern Europe. Guillery adds that "eastern European countries have got to go through the teething problems that [the U.K.] went through" with regard to designing legislation covering animal use.

Guillery sees EBRA as a needed counterbalance to the anti-research policies that European animal rights groups have been pursuing under the European Coalition to End Animal Experiments, which represents groups from about 12 countries. But Donal Crawford of the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection sees EBRA as a tribute to the activists' success in mobilizing public pro-animal sentiment: "We feel the EBRA has been set up in response to that."



JPL/CALTECH/NASA

On the move. Red area is heading seawards at 10 cm a year.

Catching a Landslide In Slow Motion

Last month, radar on the space shuttle Endeavor bounced signals off the Hawaiian coast to map the movement of the south flank of Kilauea volcano. The mountain is sliding toward the sea at the geologically breakneck pace of about 10 centimeters a year.

This first demonstration of radar mapping of a volcano's deformation "is revolutionizing the way we ... look at volcanoes and landslides," says volcanologist Peter Mouginis-Mark of the University of Hawaii. Unlike conventional satellite imagery, which requires clear skies and can't pick up surface movements, radar could catch warning signs of imminent eruption.

The crustal motions were tracked through a comparison of radar signals bounced from the ground 6 months apart, during shuttle passes over Hawaii in April and October. As the shuttle flew within a few hundred meters of the same spot in space each time, the interference pattern of the two sets of radar reflections revealed tiny movements of Kilauea's south flank, at Hilina Pali, where internal pressures are pushing it toward eventual collapse into the sea (*Science*, 29 April, p. 660), and near Kilauea's caldera, which swelled as magma intruded beneath it.

Mouginis-Mark notes that radar mapping of volcanoes could be vital to monitoring dangerous but remote volcanoes like Nyiragongo in Zaire (*Science*, 18 November, p. 1156), as well as global phenomena involving changes in vegetation or other surface characteristics.

Such high-tech snooping does not come cheap. The next shuttle radar flight couldn't come before 1997, says Mouginis-Mark, and would cost at least $250 million. A free-flying radar satellite with a planned lifetime of 2 years would run over half a billion dollars.

History Slights Science

The American Physical Society (APS) has directed a formal blast at the Smithsonian Institution for an exhibit, "Science in American Life," on the grounds that it "trivializes [scientific] accomplishments and exaggerates any negative consequences." Those are the words of APS president Burton Richter of Stanford University, who wrote in a 9 November letter to Smithsonian secretary Michael Heyman of his "profound dismay" with the exhibit.

The exhibit, which opened in April, dwells heavily on the roles of science and industry in pollution, war, and social injustice, critics contend, while it gives short shrift to science's achievements (*Science*, 5 August, p. 729). Indeed, Richter says the exhibit had some "truly startling omissions," such as the subject of semiconductors. In his letter, Richter offered the society's cooperation in working with the Smithsonian to develop "a more balanced portrayal of the impact of science and technology in American life." Heyman has not yet responded.

The Smithsonian exhibit is not the only thing causing heartburn at APS these days. So are the new voluntary standards for teaching U.S. history, developed by a coalition of educators in response to a federal directive. APS Public Affairs Director Robert Park says that, alerted by reports that vital figures such as George Washington and Thomas Edison are omitted from the standards, he searched the text for the word "science." "The only place it turned up in the entire 250 pages was in a list of occupations from which women had been excluded," says Park.

Women in Academic Medicine

Women are steadily increasing their presence in academic medicine, according to the Association of American Medical Colleges. But as the chart below shows, there's a lot of room for improvement. The ranks of women, who now make up more than 40% of entering medical students, get thinner the higher they go. As medical residents they make up 32% of the total; as medical school faculty, 25%. Men are twice as likely as women to become full professors, and they are more than three times as likely to gain tenure. Discrepancies are most marked in the biggest clinical departments—medicine and surgery. For full professors in basic science departments, the sex ratio is only around 10 to 1.