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Vignettes: Psychometric Needs

Those who work in the field say that asking governments and technologists to take care of natural resources is just like asking the fox to guard the chicken-coop; politicians reply that trusting biologists and Indians to preserve the natural populations they are studying and using is no better; both have a part of the truth, because there are people on all sides interested only in their own "progress" and not in humanity's future. Someone needs to invent a "motivometer" in order to discover and unite the honest and altruistic idealists on both sides.

-Hamilton A. Tyler, Keith S. Brown Jr., and Kent H. Wilson, in Swallowtail Butterflies of the Americas: A Study in Biological Dynamics, Ecological Diversity, Biosystematics, and Conservation (Scientific Publishers)

They will be telling us some day of the WEIGHT of the MOON, even to *drams*, *scruples*, and *grains*—nay, *to the very fraction of a grain!*—I wish there were infallible experiments to ascertain the *quantum* of *brains* each man possesses, and every man's *integrity* and *candour*:—This is a *desideratum* in science which is most of all wanted.

—Robert Harrington, in The Death-Warrant of the French Theory of Chemistry (1804), as quoted by Jan Golinski in The Values of Precision (M. Norton Wise, Ed.; Princeton University Press)

isfy scientific inquiry in a sometimes chaotic environment with competing priorities and limited resources."

As a compilation of what over 23 million dollars and thousands of hours of effort by some of our nation's best-trained marine biologists and veterinarians can buy, what does the book tell us was learned? Remarkably little for some species (including most cetaceans), but a significant amount for others, particularly sea otters and harbor seals. In some chapters, the conclusions reached seem feeble, given the data. This may in part reflect concern about litigation, but in most cases the equivocalness of authors can be attributed to the logistical constraints of sampling wide-ranging animals in a large, remote area; to the inadequacy of baseline data; to a lack of preplanning; and to the fact that most marine mammals apparently sink after dying. Despite these difficulties, data presented in several chapters provide empirical support for previously unconfirmed hypotheses and show that researchers obtained significant new information. The observational and anecdotal information presented demonstrates that most marine mammals do not avoid oil and that shoreline cleanup does not prevent pinnipeds from becoming oiled; forensic and behavioral evidence demonstrates that hypothermia is the critical factor leading to death in sea otters. In chapter 13, Williams et al. conclude that if nonendangered pinnipeds are oiled with weathered or the nonvolatile fractions of crude oil, it may be best to leave them alone rather than subject them to the stress of capture, cleaning, and rehabilitation. However, nearly all authors addressing the issue concede that little is known about the long-term or chronic impact of oiling on mammals, and the effect on marine mammals may be further compounded by their long migrations, prolonged fasting, and the physiology of diving. Finally, it is apparent from the data presented in this book that the acute toxicity of newly spilled oil begins to affect animals severely within hours of a spill and that scientific protocols must be already in place if we hope to document these effects.

Roger C. Helm U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Portland, OR 97232-4181, USA

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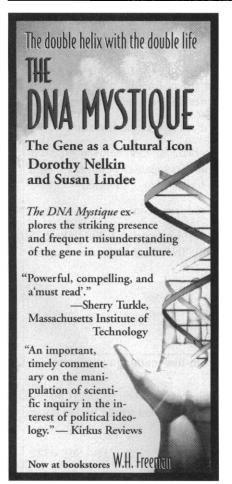
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Funded by the National Science Foundation, the project's Resource Directory of Scientists and Engineers with Disabilities has assisted hundreds of individuals enter and advance in scientific disciplines. The directory helps to connect persons with disabilities and their families with professors, teachers, and counselors who can serve as role models and mentors.

The Resource Directory lists scientists, mathematicians, and engineers from all parts of the country with their disciplines, degrees, and disabilities. Individuals include professionals who were born with a disability, and those who acquired their disability mid-career. Persons listed in the directory are also asked to consult for academia, government agencies, and industry as well as serve on peer review panels and symposia.

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