currently being stored temporarily in more than 800 sites, primarily in urban areas, across California. Each month, California's hospitals, universities, biomedical companies, industrial manufacturers, and electric utilities produce more than 10,000 cubic feet of low-level radioactive waste for which a single, permanent remote site is urgently needed.

The U.S. scientific community should be aware that Ward Valley opponents will go to any lengths to defeat this project, even if it means attacking the credibility of one of this country's oldest and most respected institutions. For those who care about supporting the independence and integrity of the NAS—regardless of the outcome of this study—this is a time to stand and be counted.

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Songbird Ecosystem Function and Conservation

Scott K. Robinson *et al.* (Reports, 31 Mar., p. 1987) recently demonstrated that reproductive success of songbird species in the midwestern United States is positively correlated with the area of the nesting habitat. In light of these results, they advocate preservation and reestablishment of "macrosite" habitats as critical to long-term conservation of songbirds. Their work provides the strongest evidence now available that fragmentation of nesting habitat in temperate regions contributes to declines observed in the populations of numerous songbird species. Robert A. Askins (Perspective, 31 Mar., p. 1956) notes that declines in the populations of songbirds could have negative ecosystem-wide consequences because songbird predation can dampen population eruptions of leaf-damaging insects. We concur with this perspective, but we also emphasize that the ecosystem impacts of songbirds may be more profound than that suggested by Askins. We recently demonstrated (*1*) that songbird predation on leaf-damaging insects enhances biomass production of saplings of economically important tree species, even at endemic population levels of these insects. Our findings, contrary to some previously held views (*2*) of trophic interactions of terrestrial ecosystems, are similar to those reported recently in which wolf predation on moose was shown to positively affect biomass production in trees of boreal forest (*3*). Our results from temperate deciduous forests, together with those from boreal forests, indicate the importance of cascading trophic interactions on terrestrial ecosystem function and processes, and lead us to echo the poetic verse of Aldo Leopold (*4*), "To save every cog and wheel is the first precaution of intelligent tinkering." Macrosite establishment may not be the only management strategy necessary to conserve songbird species, but it is an urgent one.

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