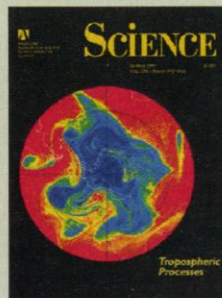


LETTERS

Longitude and longevity

In the wake of a special section about "tropospheric processes," readers discuss the influences of natural events and human activity. Researchers produce data that might "decrease the anxiety" of fathers who sire children before the age of 45. Biologists review the status of "a national biodiversity inventory" in Costa Rica. Scientists revisit the challenge of conducting "expensive, long-term" therapeutic drug research and development. And "the reality" of science administration in Britain is explicated.



Greenhouse Effect—Clouds and Sunshine

In the article "Greenhouse forecasting still cloudy" (News, Tropospheric Processes, 16 May, p. 1040), Richard A. Kerr discusses the uncertainties related to anthropogenic increase of the greenhouse effect interpreted by some of the leading researchers from dominating climate modeling centers in the United States and Europe.

Kerr's news article is succeeded by seven research review articles on atmospheric processes related to the climate issue. None of these contributions refers to the striking correlation between global temperature and solar activity over the last 130 years that was presented previously by E. Friis-Christensen and K. Lassen (Reports, 1 Nov. 1991, p. 698) or to the succeeding paper that extended this relationship several hundred years back in time to the "Little Ice Age" (1).

A recent study "Variation of cosmic ray flux and global cloud coverage: A missing link in solar-climate relationships" (2) suggests that a physical relation might explain the high correlation between solar activity and global climate. The review article by M. B. Baker "Cloud microphysics and climate" (Articles, Tropospheric Processes, 16 May, p. 1072) demonstrates the high sensitivity of the global radiation balance as a function of cloud parameterization, although Baker does not fully discuss cloud microphysics relations with cosmic radiation and ionization.

Improved understanding of the anthropogenic greenhouse effect might thus be obtained by better understanding of the natural climate variations related to solar variation, its influence on cosmic rays, and the possible change in cloud cover.

Lars P. Prahm
Director-General

Danish Meteorological Institute,
DK-2100 Copenhagen, Denmark

References

1. K. Lassen and E. Friis-Christensen, *J. Atm. Terr. Phys.* **59** (no. 8), 835 (1995).
2. H. Svensmark and E. Friis-Christensen, *ibid.* **59** (no. 11), 1225 (1997).

Reading the meeting brief "Contrails may alter climate" by Richard A. Kerr (Research News, 13 June, p. 1649), I was reminded of a personal observation of contrail persistence. Growing up in Germany in the spring of 1945, I watched the daily procession of U.S. bomber formations proceeding to and from their targets. Frequently, these formations would leave massive contrails that sometimes formed into persistent clouds covering a good fraction of the sky. To be sure, we are talking here about many planes—I estimate that at times more than 300 bombers might have been in my view at a time, flying at altitudes between 6000 and 9000 meters. The clouds so formed looked like thick cirrus.

George A. Paulikas

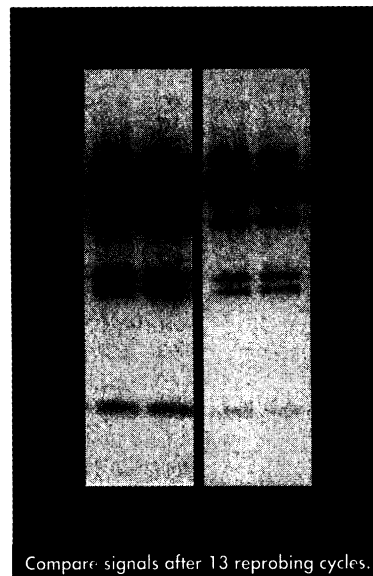
The Aerospace Corporation,
Post Office Box 92957/M1/009,
Los Angeles, CA 90009, USA

When Fatherhood Should Stop?

Constance Holden's piece "The perils of late-age procreation" (Random Samples, 6 June, p. 1503), about our recent finding that daughters of older fathers live shorter lives, has stimulated us to return to this problem and to reanalyze the data for different ranges of paternal ages at reproduction.

IDEAL FOR
SOUTHERN AND NORTHERN
BLOTTING

Keep the noise down!



The New Immobilon™-Ny+ transfer membrane has the highest signal-to-noise ratio.

Reinforced for enhanced durability, this 0.45 µm positively charged nylon membrane is the optimal medium for nucleic acid transfer and detection. The density and uniformity of the positive surface provide maximum sensitivity with minimum background. Sensitivity is optimized with UV fixation. Even subpicogram amounts of DNA can be detected.

For more information on Immobilon-Ny+ and our broad range of transfer membranes for both protein and nucleic acid applications:

Call, fax or e-mail – U.S. and Canada, call Technical Services: 1-800-MILLIPORE (645-5476). In Japan, call: (03) 5442-9716; in Asia, call (852) 2803-9111; in Europe, fax: +33-3.88.38.91.95.

MILLIPORE

www.millipore.com/immobilon
e-mail: tech_service@millipore.com

Circle No. 2 on Readers' Service Card