

# RANDOM SAMPLES

edited by CONSTANCE HOLDEN

## New Law to Protect Galápagos

After a long, bitter struggle, the forces of conservation appear to have prevailed over business interests in the Galápagos Islands. On 6 March, the president of Ecuador signed a new law to curb commercial fishing and strengthen protections for native species in one of the world's most famous biodiversity hot spots.

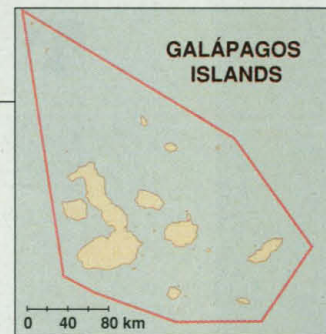
The new law expands from 24 to 64 km the range of coastal waters around the Galápagos in which "industrial-scale" fishing is banned. "Now the seas surrounding the islands are included in the management areas

of Galápagos. This means entire ecosystems are now protected," says Galápagos iguana researcher Heidi Snell. The bill also approves the islands' first inspection and quarantine system to keep out harmful exotic species; tightens requirements for permanent residency on the islands, now home to 10,000 people; and directs that a higher portion of entry fees to Galápagos National Park goes into conservation.

Fishing restrictions won't be implemented for perhaps a year, pending completion of a new management plan. But the law is

a "bold, important step which the conservation community should feel very, very good about," says Johannah Barry of the Charles Darwin Foundation in Falls Church, Virginia, which raises money for the eponymous research station in the Galápagos.

The Galápagos have been the scene of strife in the past few years as overfishing and the tourist industry have threatened native species and introduced harmful exotic ones to the islands, which lie 1100 km off the coast of Ecuador (*Science*, 15 September 1995, p. 1503). "Two or 3 years ago the [Darwin Research] Station and the staff were at the business end of



**Safety zone.** Marine preserve will expand from 24 to 64 km offshore.

a machete," says Barry. But now, says Rodrigo Bustamante, head of marine research at the Darwin station, Galápagueños have reached a consensus—thanks in part to the efforts of a "core group" of residents representing conservation, fishing, and tourist interests who helped draft the new law.

## Porter Scores Cancer Hype

The hype connected with a proposal to give a 5-year, 65% funding boost for cancer in the president's budget is bad policy, says Representative John Porter (R-IL), chair of the appropriations subcommittee for labor and human resources. At a Capitol Hill hearing last week, Porter, whose committee drafts the National Institutes of Health (NIH) budget appropriation, took NIH director Harold Varmus to task for the hoopla over cancer in the president's budget (*Science*, 6 February, p. 796). "It is very bad policy," Porter said, to "earmark any disease as politically important." Porter has long opposed set-asides for specific diseases, including AIDS, which he says jeopardize the system of merit review and stir up unhealthy competition among disease lobbies.

Porter demanded to know whether the idea to promote cancer "came from NIH or the White House?" Varmus responded that since both had written the budget, Porter had posed a

"chicken and egg problem." The cancer increase, he added, was "completely consistent with" the numbers developed at NIH.

## War on Bugs

The global fight against tuberculosis and other infectious diseases got a shot in the arm last week from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). At the International Conference on Emerging Infectious Diseases

in Atlanta, the agency announced a 5-year initiative, starting with \$50 million for fiscal year 1998, to help developing countries combat new and re-emerging diseases. Congress has approved this year's funds, and the agency hopes to get at least \$50 million for each of the next 4 years.

"Bioterrorism is much in the news these days," said Nils Daulaire, USAID's senior health adviser. "But 17 million people

die each year of infectious diseases in an invisible biological war." USAID already spends 4% of its \$7.3 billion annual budget on infectious diseases, most of it on childhood ailments and AIDS.

The new funds will be focused on drug-resistant microbes, tuberculosis, malaria, and improved disease surveillance. Money will also go to strengthening health infrastructures and laboratory capabilities in developing countries.



**Serotonin low.** *Melencolia I* by Albrecht Dürer.

## Prozac Makes the Glass Half Full?

Antidepressants like Prozac may not lift the spirit, but rather allow it to bubble up by reducing the weight of hostility and other negative feelings. The findings, reported in the March *American Journal of Psychiatry*, offer the first pharmacological evidence that negative and positive feelings may arise from distinct biochemical pathways.

Prozac and similar drugs interfere with the reuptake of serotonin by cells that transmit it, thus making more available to receptors. Because low levels of serotonin metabolites in blood or cerebrospinal fluid have been linked to hostility and aggression in animals and people, scientists have assumed that Prozac and other selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) suppress such impulses.

Hoping to tease out just how SSRIs influence positive and negative feelings, scientists in the laboratory of Victor Reus and Owen Wolkowitz at the University of California, San Francisco, studied the effects of a drug called paroxetine over 4 weeks on 51 healthy volunteers. The subjects took standard tests measuring "assaultiveness" and "irritability" as well as "positive affect"—good feelings—and "negative affect," or bad feelings.

The researchers found that paroxetine significantly reduced negative affect—such as fear and anger—while having no influence on positive affect, such as extroversion and optimism. That the drug made this differentiation shows positive and negative affect "might be different in neurochemical terms," says the lead author, psychologist Brian Knutson, now at the National Institute on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse in Bethesda, Maryland.

The research also is in line with observations by Brown University psychiatrist Peter D. Kramer, author of the best seller *Listening to Prozac*, that Prozac seems to affect not only depression but traits in nondepressed people, such as vulnerability to stress and low self-esteem. He says these findings raise visions of a world of "cosmetic psychopharmacology," in which healthy people pop pills for a personality boost.

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