Hidden Lives of Seals

Opening the underwater world of marine mammals to human view is one of the most difficult challenges facing marine scientists. "First glimpse at hidden life of seals" by Richard Stone (Special News Report, "Science in Antarctica," 30 Jan., p. 657) reports on the exciting work of Terrie Williams and Randy Davis, who have managed to attach a tiny camera to the head of an Antarctic Weddell seal (*Leptonychotes weddelli*), thereby recording its environment during deep dives. Setting the stage for underwater work on the Weddell seal were preliminary observations by scuba divers (*1*), observations from an observation chamber below the ice, combined with behavioral and acoustics studies (*2*), and previous use of a camera attached to a seal (*3*).

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Neither Inbred Nor Extinct

A geneticist and staunch monarchist cannot ignore yet another restatement of the hoary misapprehension that "[t]he hemophilia that plagued Europe's royal families in the 1800s is a clear example of how mating with first cousins and other close kin can cripple a gene pool by allowing recessive genes to emerge from hiding" (J. Kaiser, Research News, 3 Apr., p. 35). Most obviously, hemophilia, being an X-linked recessive condition, does not "hide" like an autosomally coded recessive: it is expressed in all the hemizygous sons of a carrier mother (such as Queen Victoria evidently was). Close inbreeding could result in an excess of homozygous, hemophiliac females, but no such cases were reported among the royals, none of whom was the offspring of a first-cousin marriage. Moreover, Victoria herself produced nine children who survived to adulthood and who themselves produced an ample crop of prolific grandchildren and great-grandchildren—hardly a crippled gene pool limping toward extinction!

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Letters to the Editor

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