



## COOL IMAGES

### Thar She Blows

Earning its reputation as the most active volcano in Cook Inlet, Alaska, Augustine has erupted seven times since it was discovered by James Cook in 1778. A particularly violent blast, in 1883, sent a tsunami racing 80 kilometers to the east with waves as high as 9 meters. During the most recent eruption, in 1986, ash rose up to 12 kilometers and disrupted air traffic. Find Augustine's rugged portrait and information on more than 50 other Alaskan volcanoes—including geologic maps and detailed hazard assessments—at the online atlas assembled by the Alaska Volcano Observatory,\* based in Anchorage and Fairbanks. State and federal officials set up the observatory in 1988 to keep close tabs on Augustine and three other volcanoes.

\*[www.avo.alaska.edu](http://www.avo.alaska.edu)

## SITE VISIT

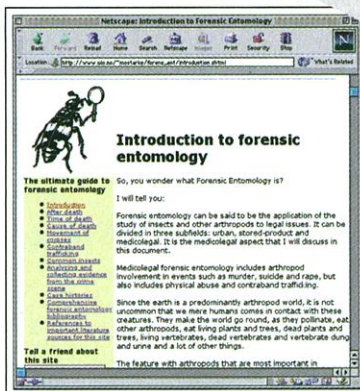
### Crime-Fighting Bugs

A few years ago, a Chicago man was accused of rape. In his apartment police found a ski mask matching the one worn during the summertime assault, but the suspect claimed he hadn't worn the mask since the previous winter. Then a forensic entomologist found live weevil larvae inside two cockleburrs stuck to the mask. Because the larvae do not overwinter, he reasoned, they must have been picked up that summer. Based on this and other evidence, the rapist was convicted.

This is just one of dozens of case histories—many quite grisly—on the Forensic Entomology Pages, International. Not for the squeamish, the site covers the basics of what bugs can reveal about time of death, movement of bodies, and sometimes even the cause of death. (Maggots high on cocaine, for example, apparently develop faster than usual.)

The 6-year-old site was started by Morten Stærkeby, a graduate student in entomology at the University of Oslo, who has worked on about 30 forensics cases since 1996. Stærkeby's initial aim was "just to tell other people about this very interesting use of entomology and to give people some

[www.uio.no/~mostarke/forens\\_ent/forensic\\_entomology.html](http://www.uio.no/~mostarke/forens_ent/forensic_entomology.html)



## NETWATCH

edited by ERIK STOKSTAD

more information about the biological basis of death." (For a window onto other branches of forensic science, see the special News Focus beginning on page 850.) Since then, he's compiled an annotated book list with titles that range from the pedagogical *Entomology and Death*, a *Procedural Guide* to the memoir *A Fly for the Prosecution*. And, heaven forbid you should ever need to contact a forensic entomologist, there's also a directory of professionals, among many other offerings.

## HOT PICKS

**Bioinformatics cornucopia.** Named after the Greek goddess of the harvest, Demeter's Genomes hosts a smorgasbord of plant genome databases, from BeanGenes to SoyBase. Most are geared toward specialists, who can search for genes, chromosome maps, and beneficial traits. Amateur botanists may enjoy digging into databases of Native American plants used for food or medicine, as well as the known ranges of temperature, rainfall, and soil pH for 887 plants. [genome.cornell.edu/index.html](http://genome.cornell.edu/index.html)

**Molecular Monte Carlo.** Although Bunsen burners will never go out of style, chemists are tackling a diverse range of molecular puzzles with random numbers and probability statistics. These stochastic models are known as Monte Carlo methods, for their mathematical resemblance to gambling. The Molecular Monte Carlo Home Page has links to dozens of groups, advanced tools, and tutorials for the curious.

[www.cooper.edu/engineering/chemechem/monte.html](http://www.cooper.edu/engineering/chemechem/monte.html)

**Track the virus.** What with West Nile virus making its way down the East Coast toward AAAS headquarters in Washington, D.C., NetWatch was glad to learn that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. Geological Survey, and other agencies have teamed up to post maps of West Nile virus cases. You can look for cases reported in humans (none yet this year) or birds, and check to see whether your county has chicken or mosquito surveillance. [www.nationalatlas.gov/virusmap.html](http://www.nationalatlas.gov/virusmap.html)



**Pooper scoopers.** What can you learn from ancient feces? Plenty! The Dung File contains an extensive and well-annotated bibliography covering mainly human and mammal deposits, often called coprolites. There's lots to discover about ancient diets, as well as a cringe-inducing cadre of parasites. Conservation biologists might be intrigued to hear about the first occurrences of 20 beetles introduced from Europe to the New World—found in a colonial privy that may date as far back as 1650. Don't turn up your nose at this site.

[www.ualberta.ca/~abeaudoi/stuff/dung.htm](http://www.ualberta.ca/~abeaudoi/stuff/dung.htm)

## ScienceONLINE

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