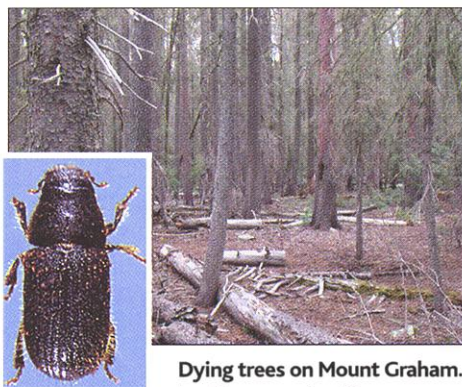


More Trouble on Mount Graham

Forget telescopes. Bugs have turned out to be a more serious threat to the endangered red squirrels on Arizona's Mount Graham, and they could complicate further astronomical expansion atop the 3300-meter mountain.

Environmentalists have long maintained that the removal of any trees for telescopes would harm the squirrels, which are unique to Mount Graham. Now, infestations of caterpillars and beetles are decimating the old-growth spruce fir forest, causing far more devastation for squirrel



Dying trees on Mount Graham. Inset, spruce beetle.

rel habitats than the 1996 clearing of 3.5 hectares for three telescopes.

The first signs of trouble came in 1998, when U.S. Forest Service scientists noticed that geometrid moth caterpillars, also

called loopers, had defoliated 177 hectares of the 800-hectare mountaintop forest. Since then, spruce beetles and Western Balsam bark beetles have moved in, laying eggs under the bark and hatching grubs that live off the vital cambium layer. Already dead

are at least 295 hectares of mature spruce and fir trees, and 16,000 more spruce trees have been invaded this year. All told, at least three-quarters of Mount Graham's summit forest will be dead in a year, says Carol Boyd, a Forest Service pest management specialist. The infestations, whose cause is yet unclear, could not only pinch the red squirrel population but also, as a result, make it more difficult to get construction permits for the four additional telescopes the observatory is planning, says Buddy Powell, associate director of the Steward Observatory. Meanwhile, the threat of fire has added another menacing element to the picture: The spruce "dead zone" of standing dead trees has come within 90 meters of the \$83.5 million Large Binocular Telescope now nearing completion.

The Nobel process is a lottery of a kind. ... The pool from which to choose is now much greater than Alfred Nobel could have imagined. ... Plainly, there is a need [for] reform. ... The prize system should openly recognise that science is, now more than ever, a collective enterprise. ... By extension, prizes should be divided between authors and their institutions. ... [There should be] fewer prizes, not more. Last century there were perhaps a score of discoveries in science—such as the structure of DNA—that changed the way we regard the world. The century ahead will probably bring 50 or more. Why not keep the bulk of the prize money to single out such discoveries, designing each prize to suit the circumstances?

The Nobels: Time For a Change

—John Maddox, editor emeritus of *Nature*, writing in *The Independent* on 11 October.

India's "Temple of Science"

Although most Western nations have deplored India's 1998 resumption of nuclear weapons testing, Russian President Vladimir Putin had little but praise for its nuclear accomplishments this month during his first trip to the country. On a 5 October visit to India's premier nuclear weapons laboratory, the Bhabha Atomic Research Center (BARC) in Mumbai, he addressed some 500 scientists, saying, "Today, I am visiting a temple of science and technology of the 21st century. ... I am impressed by the reactor safety record."

Putin did add, "We would like to see India participating in the comprehensive test ban," asserting that "this should be seen as part of the strategic vision of the country and in the interest of the people." In the photo he stands in front of the "Dhruva" reactor, the main source of India's plutonium, flanked by BARC center director Anil Kakodkar (left) and R. Chidambaram, chair of the Atomic Energy Commission of India.



Putin with Indian nuclear leaders.

Athens on the Potomac

The Library of Congress hopes to help make Washington, D.C., a little more like ancient Athens, thanks to a \$60 million gift to bring in resident scholars to enrich the intellectual atmosphere on Capitol Hill. The benefactor is communications baron John W. Kluge, the 85-year-old chair of Metromedia International and head of the library's private fund-raising council.

Librarian of Congress James Billington says the gift will finance short-term resident chairs for eminent senior thinkers from around the world, as well as post-doctoral fellowships in government and the humanities. On top of that, the library plans to hand out, perhaps every 2 years, a new \$1 million John W. Kluge Prize in the Human Sciences to honor lifetime achievement in areas of study that are skipped by the Nobels—such as art history, philosophy, or sociology.

Billington, who announced the gift this month to celebrate the library's 200th anniversary, says he wants to "help revive [the] traditional American interaction between thinkers and doers," so fellows will be required to meet occasionally with members of Congress. They don't have to make public policy recommendations, says Prosser Gifford, director of scholarly programs; rather, their role will be to expose politicians to "other angles of vision" and "raise unanticipated questions."

The eight "senior chairs" will arrive at the library next year; the first recipient of the Kluge Prize will be named in 2002.