NETWATCH
edited by JOCELYN KAISER

RESOURCES

Science at the Bottom of the World

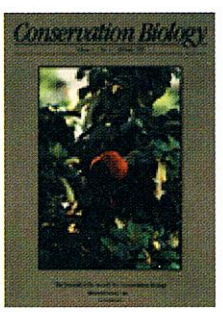
While northerners hunker down for a predicted harsh winter, in Antarctica it's already as toasty as 0°C and the beginning of the field season. The icy continent is a booming place for science on everything from meteorites to Weddell seals, calving icebergs, and microbes that thrive in the hostile Dry Valleys.

No single Web site tracks all this research by at least 18 countries, but one place to get a quick overview is the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research.* Its site briefly describes research projects ranging from glaciology to seals and offers a few factoids (maximum ice thickness: 4776 meters; number of research stations: 44). For more technical info, check out the U.S. Antarctic Resource Center,† where you can see all kinds of maps—zoom in on the nearly water-free Dry Valleys, for example. If it's general information you're after, check out the British Antarctic Survey's recently spiffed-up site.‡ It includes updates on topics such as the ozone hole (which reached record size in September) as well as diaries: For example, a doctor who overwintered this year at Halley station describes auroras, emperor penguins, a camping trip to a crevasse, and the last sunset (in October) before 24-hour daylight.

* www.scar.org
† usarc.usgs.gov
‡ www.antarctica.ac.uk

E-ARCHIVES

A Century of Ecology Journals and *Science*



Weary of combing through dusty library stacks to dig up old print-only articles? If you're an ecologist or botanist, you'll welcome the latest collection from JSTOR, a nonprofit that's building a Web archive of page-by-page scans of journal back issues.* Together with the Ecological Society of America, JSTOR has just unveiled 29 major ecology and botany journals. Some, such as *American Naturalist*, go back as far as 130 years. Most major university libraries subscribe to the database, which can be searched by full text.

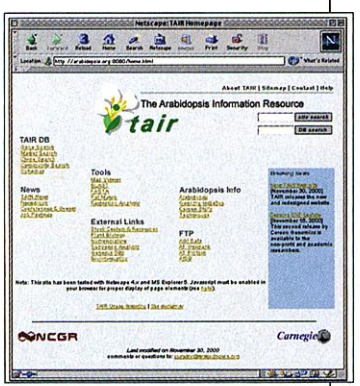
JSTOR recently reached another landmark of interest to this magazine's readers: You can now look up articles in *Science* back to the very first issue in 1895.

* www.jstor.org

DATABASES

Blueprint of a Plant

This week marks a milestone in plant biology: the complete sequencing of a plant genome, a small flowering weed known as *Arabidopsis thaliana* (see p. 2105). The plant's home range on the Web is The Arabidopsis Information Resource* (TAIR), a site built to archive all 117 million bases sequenced by a collaboration of labs around the world. The latest annotation data were still being loaded as *Science* went to press, but within a couple of weeks the site will be "the launchpad" for the genome, says site director Sue Rhee of the Carnegie Institution of Washington at Stanford University. The database can be searched by genetic markers, clones, and people, among other options. A mapper tool compares the sequence with genetic and physical maps. Other TAIR offerings include meeting and job postings. Or follow outside links to analyze proteins, order seeds, or read the rules for naming a gene.



Biologists who want to know more about *Arabidopsis* can check out the December issue of *Plant Physiology*.† Free online, this special issue is devoted to essays, reviews, and research about the promise of the genome.

* arabidopsis.org/home.html
† www.plantphysiol.org

RESOURCES

Roots of Hearing Loss

Hearing specialists expect a surge in deafness as people of a certain age begin to pay for the thunderous concerts and throbbing discos of their youth. Nevertheless, more than half the cases of fading hearing in developed countries are caused by genes rather than ear abuse. The Hereditary Hearing Loss Homepage,* hosted by the University of Antwerp in Belgium, tracks the burgeoning field of hearing loss genetics.

Only about 10 deafness genes had been discovered when two hearing geneticists founded the site 6 years ago. Today, more than 60 genes are thought to cause hearing loss, often through defects in membrane and motor proteins. The site describes known and suspected genes and links to important papers and accounts in the genetics encyclopedia Online Mendelian Inheritance in Man. Separate sections explore broader disorders that involve hearing loss, such as some mitochondrial diseases. Besides links to resources like an ear protein database, there's also a list of mouse models.

* www.uia.ac.be/dnalab/hhh

Send Internet news and great Web site suggestions to netwatch@aaas.org

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