

MOVIES

Down a Black Hole

Ever wonder what it would be like to fall into a black hole? Andrew Hamilton, an astronomer at the University of Colorado, Boulder, has created a series of movies in which you approach, orbit, and fall into a collapsed star. The flicks show gravitational lensing (where light is bent by the warping of space) and other bizarre geometric effects caused by the extreme curvature of space-time near the hole. It can get confusing, but a step-by-step guide reveals what is happening as you fall.

For die-hard physics buffs, there is a section on wormholes, the hypothetical tunnels through space-time that can connect two distant regions in space (above). Science-fiction writers use them to quickly transport spaceships across vast stretches of the cosmos or even into a parallel universe. Unfortunately, Hamilton explains, wormholes probably don't exist, as they are unstable unless stuffed full of exotic matter with negative mass. So until scientists discover that exotic material, this Web site is as close as you can get to seeing a universe other than our own.

casa.colorado.edu/~ajsh/schw.shtml

DATABASES

Bug Collection

The back rooms of natural history museums are often loaded with treasures known only to staff. Here's your chance to rummage through some of the Smithsonian's insect and other entomology holdings, courtesy of its National Museum of Natural History's department of systematic entomology. The 25 databases available here range from a roster of ants in the museum (it holds more than 500,000 specimens) to an address book of the world's systematic entomologists. You can also browse a bulging bibliography on fruit flies—it includes more than 5000 entries, on topics from taxonomy to morphology—or peruse a growing online archive of scientific illustrations.

entomology.si.edu:591/entomology/data.html



NETWATCH

edited by MITCH LESLIE

DATABASES

Proteins Galore

If you're looking for the latest on protein sequences and functions, visit the Protein Information Resource (PIR), a storehouse of data on more than 200,000 proteins run by the National Biomedical Research Foundation at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. Descended from a collection begun in the 1960s, PIR offers not just run-of-the-mill sequence data but also information-packed annotations detailing the properties, important regions, and activities of each protein, complete with PubMed links. Gathering and verifying all this data is a mammoth job, and a feature added last week invites visitors to pitch in by contributing references or other information.

pir.georgetown.edu

RESOURCES

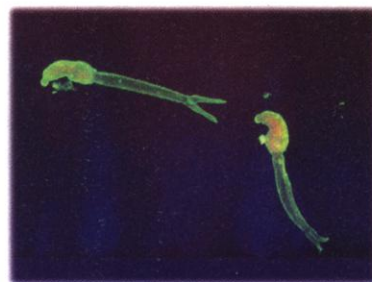
What's Eating You

They want to gnaw your flesh, sup your blood, or maybe set up house in your brain and raise a family. However they make a living, parasites can wreck your health, maim, and kill. This site from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) supplies a good introduction to medically important parasites—from tropical menaces like the tiny worms responsible for schistosomiasis (above) to homegrown bugs like *Giardia*, the culprit in "hiker's diarrhea." Although aimed mainly at medicos, the content will satisfy curious nonexperts as well.

No-nonsense accounts detail geographical distribution, symptoms of infestation, and the intricate life cycles for *Giardia* and more than 100 other body invaders. The site boasts a suitably gruesome gallery, along with the lowdown on treatments. And if you need help identifying a puzzling specimen, submit a photo to CDC experts.

www.dpd.cdc.gov/DPDx

Send great Web site suggestions to netwatch@aaas.org



IMAGES

Eye On Earth

A crooked tentacle of electricity reaches for the ground during a September 1999 thunderstorm outside Des Moines, Iowa (left). Summer is high season for lightning strikes, which kill more people than any weather event except floods. This striking image is one of the offerings at the Earth Science Picture of the Day, a site started last fall by scientists at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland. Modeled on the popular Astronomy Picture of the Day, the Web site turns the lens on our planet, posting timely photos and satellite images of geologic activity, natural disasters, ocean dynamics, landscapes, and weather. The informative captions provide related links along with intriguing tidbits—for example, more than half of lightning-strike survivors suffer long-term health problems.

epod.usra.edu

