

Songs of Civilization

The electronic tweeting of mobile phones is so widespread that some Australian birds are incorporating the sounds in their repertoires, a bird expert says.

Australia has six so-called mimic birds that commonly imitate sounds in nature, particularly other birdcalls, as part of their mating and territorial displays. But birds living near residential areas or well-visited parks are developing a high-tech sound, says Queensland Museum bird expert Greg Czechura. It's the males mostly that do it. Like the teenager with the most elaborate electronic game, he says the male bird that imitates cell phones and other information-age beeps is demonstrating that he is "up-to-



Lyrebird goes cellular.

date, on the ball, and has the latest sounds."

Australia's lyrebirds, considered the world's greatest mimics, are by far the most accomplished,

says Czechura. But bowerbirds, starlings, magpies, butcherbirds, and spangled drongos also do imitations. And they don't stop at phones. Tones signaling the activation of security devices, electronic alarm clocks, reversing-vehicle warning beeps, motor bike engines, saws, the clicks and whirs of automatic cameras, and the hum of generators also supply fodder for avian routines.

"These new components are not replacing their natural calls," just supplementing them, says Czechura. Nor is there any danger females will be trying to mate with phones or cameras, he says: "They know the difference between a genuine mobile phone and the local male who has added the tone to his call repertoire."

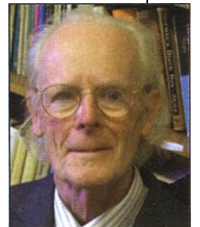
Kyoto Prizes

Evolutionary biologist John Maynard Smith, 81, is one of the winners of the 2001 Kyoto Prize, which annually hands out \$410,000 in each of three categories.

Smith, professor emeritus at Sussex University, U.K., is honored in "basic sciences" for his theory, called "evolutionarily stable strategy" or ESS, which uses game theory to explain cooperative behavior.

In the "advanced technology" category, the prizes—announced last week—honor three scientists whose work with semiconductor lasers paved the way for their application in optical electronics: Morton Panish, 72, a physical chemist and consultant for Bell Labs; physicist Izuo Hayashi, 79, of Japan; and physicist Zhores Ivanovich Alferov, 71, director of the A. F. Ioffe Physico-Technical Institute in Moscow.

Hungarian-born composer György Ligeti, 78, took the prize in the "arts and philosophy" category. Appropriately, he composed the background music in *2001: A Space Odyssey*.



Smith

Secrets of Happiness

People from cultures that emphasize feeling good enjoy life more than do those from cultures that put a premium on other values, such as achievement. So says happiness researcher Ed Diener, who has found that Asians and Asian-Americans tend to fall to the bottom of the happiness heap in surveys of people from different nations and ethnic groups.

"Happy are the Latin cultures, less so the Pacific Rim cultures," according to Diener, a psychologist at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Surveys have found that people from countries such as Chile report high levels of well-being, he says, whereas the Japanese are glummer than their wealth might predict. In a talk at the American Psychological Society meeting in Toronto last month, Diener reported on fresh data gathered from five groups of college students: Japanese, Indian, Hispanic American, Asian American, and European American. Students gave overall happiness ratings and reported subjective states in spot checks via hand-held computers. The Hispanics came out on top, the Japanese and Asian Americans at the bottom.

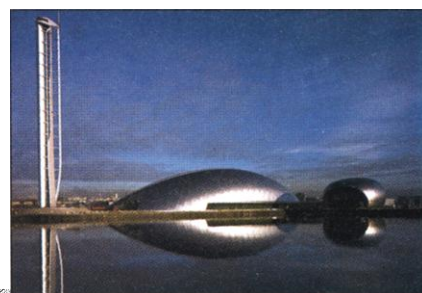
The research confirms, says Diener, that there are big cultural effects on how people assess and value emotions. U.S. and Latin Americans generally see the positive side of life, Diener says, while Japanese and Chinese are more likely to see the glass half-empty and to assign much less value to

concepts related to self-fulfillment.

Psychologist Shigehiro Oishi of the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, who works with Diener, says he's done a (yet unpublished) study that comes to similar conclusions. In one exercise, Asian and European Americans were given a basketball-playing task. Later, given a choice between playing another round of basketball or trying their hand at darts, the Caucasians who did well at basketball chose to play again, while those who did poorly switched to darts. The Asian Americans stuck with basketball if they had done poorly the first time, but if they had done well, they moved on to darts. "Overcoming weaknesses and self-improvement" were all-important to the Asians, says Oishi, while Caucasians wanted to do well and have fun.

Scots Open Fancy New Science Center

Queen Elizabeth was scheduled to inaugurate the \$106 million Glasgow Science Centre, one of Britain's more ambitious millennium projects, on 5 July. The center boasts the world's only "fully revolving" tower: the 127-meter Glasgow Tower,



which is shaped like an upended aircraft wing. Electric motors linked to a sensor help minimize the tower's wind resistance by keeping the leading edge facing into the prevailing wind. Situated on reclaimed dockland on the River Clyde, the center features a titanium-covered partial torus containing a Science Mall chock-full of interactive exhibits as well as a virtual-reality theater and planetarium. The titanium pod houses an IMAX theater.