

Response: In reply to Priscilla (!) Wilkins Stevens, we must state that the ELVIS motif was sought by examining the National Biomedical Research Foundation database for the single letter amino acid codes E-L-V-I-S. ELVIS was indeed found on four occasions, as we stated. It was only when mere mortals (J.B.K. and H.L.T.M.) interfered and erroneously translated single-letter amino acid codes back into three-letter codes that the ELVIS impersonator (EKVIS) surfaced. The correct second amino acid in this motif is not Lys, but Leu, as in "(B)Leu Suede Shoes." Obscuring the true identity of "The King" was inadvertent, and we hope not to be held accountable to a higher authority (1). Fortunately, this is not just another cruel hoax: ELVIS (Glu-Leu-Val-Ile-Ser) lives!

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NOTES

1. We will *not* be returning the sequined jumpsuits we recently purchased for our upcoming lecture tour on this topic.

Ecological Economics

In Leslie Roberts' article "Academy panel split on greenhouse adaptation" (News & Comment, 14 Sept., p. 1206), Yale economist William Nordhaus is quoted as saying, "Agriculture, the part of the economy that is sensitive to climate change, accounts for just 3% of national output. That means there is no way to get a very large effect on the U.S. economy." That statement should have caused the resignation of some economists along with the dissenting ecologists. A moment's reflection on the diamonds-water paradox, the law of diminishing marginal utility, and the inelasticity of demand for food in general should convince anyone that the current 3% figure could soar to 90% in the event of a serious disruption of agriculture. No doubt adaptation would be possible, since in the past agriculture accounted for 90% of the national product and we (many fewer of us) survived. But the percentage of the gross national product derived from agriculture is a measure of its importance *only* for marginal changes. The assumption is that climate change will be marginal. The percentage of gross national product accounted for by agriculture adds

no evidence or reason for complacency beyond the bald and dubious assumption that any climate change will be obligingly marginal. Of course the dependence of economic activity on natural systems goes far beyond agriculture, but the Academy has to get its basic economics right before it can advance to ecological economics.

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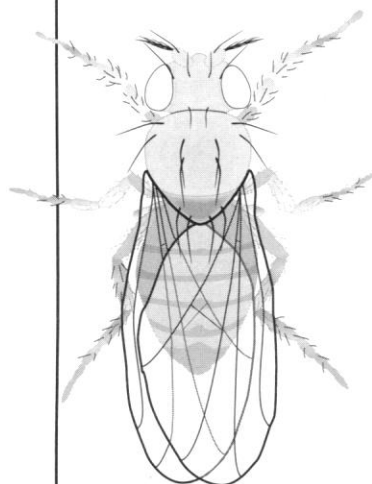
Supporting Life on Earth

I applaud *Science's* effort (16 Aug.) to address the issue of biodiversity, but the topic is far more important than *Science's* treatment indicates. The problem is not merely extinction, but global biotic impoverishment: the systematic reduction in the capacity of Earth to support living systems. It includes the destruction of forests and their replacement by shrublands, by grasslands, and in many cases by barren soil. It includes the cumulative and largely irrevers-

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