

# SCIENCE

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# LETTERS

## The Smithsonian and Sheep Hunting

In the Random Samples of 10 April (p. 174), two factual errors appeared in the item "Smithsonian burned by sheep hunt." The first is a statement that Richard Mitchell "was helping Smithsonian researchers stalk Tibetan argali in 1987. . . ." The 1987 trip to the Qinghai plateau was a scientific collecting expedition to obtain specimens of rodents and other small mammals for the National Museum of Natural History. We accompanied Chinese scientists from the Northwest Plateau Institute of Biology. No Tibetan argali were "stalked" by any member of that expedition. The second erroneous statement is that "[o]n another trip, [Mitchell] also helped a group of private hunters kill four argali—which were listed as an endangered species." Mitchell accompanied hunters, at no cost to the Smithsonian and at the invitation of the Chinese Ministry of Forestry, to western Gansu province to conduct biological surveys and assess the area for cooperative research projects by Smithsonian scientists and their Chinese colleagues pursuant to an existing cooperative research agreement. The argali sheep there are not considered endangered by Chinese authorities and are not listed by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora as such. The hunters had legal permits to shoot the animals. Mitchell did not "help" the hunters, either in arranging the trip, which was organized by a commercial outfitter, or during the hunt itself. He did not accompany the hunters on their hunting forays from the base camp and confined himself to obtaining scientific data from independent observations, including measurements and tissue samples from sheep killed by the hunters.

**Robert S. Hoffmann**  
*Assistant Secretary for Science,  
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**Response:** Hoffmann is right to point out that no Smithsonian researchers stalked argali on the China trips of 1987 and 1988; we regret the error. However, Mitchell—who was on detail to the Smithsonian and reported to Hoffmann—was a member of a party that shot four argali in China in 1988. Mitchell himself has declined to answer *Science's* questions about that hunt; yet Hoffman, who was not present, has provid-

ed some details. While neither Hoffmann's trip (1987) nor Mitchell's (1988) was paid for by the Smithsonian, both were financed in part by a foundation created by Mitchell and funded by big-game hunters. Several federal agencies have been investigating the propriety of this arrangement. Finally, Hoffmann's statement that the hunted argali were not of the endangered type is disputed by the court testimony of several experts in sheep taxonomy (*News & Comment*, 27 Apr. 1990, p. 437)—**Eliot Marshall**

## European Science

As leaders of the European Community Consortium responsible for determining the complete sequence of chromosome III from *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, we would like to place the following facts on record in response to suggestions in the article of 24 April (*Science* in Europe, p. 462) that we have withheld data from the scientific community.

1) A total of 135 kilobases of chromosome III sequence data produced by the European Consortium appeared in articles from the participating laboratories between March 1990 and March 1992 in the journal *Yeast*.

2) All requests from other scientists for the sequence of specific regions of the chromosome have been met.

3) The completion of the chromosome III sequence was announced to the international scientific community at meetings in the United States in the summer of 1991, and the paper was submitted to *Nature* at the end of 1991. The period between the announcement and the submission resulted from the rigorous checks on the data by further sequence analyses and by the restriction enzyme analysis performed by Carol Newlon at the New Jersey Medical School, Newark. We have taken considerable pains to ensure that the data released to the community were of the highest quality.

4) The complete contiguous sequence was deposited in the data library of the European Molecular Biology Laboratory on 10 March 1992 under the accession number X59720. The paper describing the main findings appears in the 7 May 1992 issue of *Nature* (1).

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