

IMAGES

Blinded by the Light

The Milky Way has vanished. Not because of some cosmic upheaval, but because the bright lights of our sprawling cities obscure the stars of our galaxy from the view of most Europeans and Americans. This flood of artificial light grieves astronomers because it can interfere with their observations. A new atlas compiled by scientists in Italy and the United States charts global light pollution for the first time.

Those familiar maps of white lights dotting continents at night only show the lights' location, says team member Chris Elvidge of the National Geophysical Data Center in Boulder, Colorado. To give stargazers a more meaningful view, Elvidge and colleagues at the University of Padova in Italy used brightness measurements from U.S. Air Force satellites to calculate how far artificial light spreads as it's scattered by the atmosphere. The site includes continental maps and a few more detailed ones, for example, showing star visibility from different parts of Europe.

www.lightpollution.it/dmsp

FUN

1.00 Lightbulbs + x Physicists

Here's a diversion for those long nights when the theory of gravity is weighing you down or thermodynamics has you overheated. Fill up on jokes at this buffet of links to physics cartoons, jests, and spoofs. Along with the usual corny "How many physicists does it take to screw in a lightbulb?" jokes, the site features some inspired stuff like a satirical musical called *Cold Fusion* and a learned debate on whether the laws of physics disprove the existence of Santa Claus. The jokes are part of DC Physics, a handy Web directory compiled by physics prof-turned-techie Doug Craigen that includes online tutorials, applets, journals, and job lists.

www.dctech.com/physics/humor.html

EDUCATION

Shark School

Two horrific attacks this summer, nervous swimmers, a *Time* cover story—sharks haven't made this kind of impact since the movie *Jaws* premiered in 1975. For a timely rundown of sharks' biology and relationship with us, check out the shark site at the University of Florida Museum of Natural History.

Start with the star attraction, a searchable gallery with more than 100 photos and paintings of these elasmobranchs. Or browse illustrated profiles that illuminate the habits, diet, range, conservation status, and taxonomy of species like the basking shark and the megamouth shark, a blunt-nosed filter-feeder that can grow to 5 meters long but was only discovered in 1976. Another section draws on the International Shark Attack File, a compilation of over 2700 case reports housed at the museum. Read up on incidents by area, year, the victim's activity beforehand, and species (great whites, above, lead in number of attacks). Or take comfort in the fact that sharks injure less than one-tenth as many people as do aerosol air fresheners.

www.flmnh.ufl.edu/fish/Sharks/sharks.htm

E-JOURNALS

Degrees of Free

Hundreds of biomedical journals provide free Internet access to at least some of their content. But these journals follow a bewildering range of policies. Some offer free access to every article as soon as it's published. Other journals wait for up to 2 years after the print edition appears, while still others allow free browsing only for a trial period. Figure out what you can read for free and when at Free Medical Journals.com. The site gives the Web release schedules for about 700 basic research and clinical titles, from *Developmental Biology* to *Circulation* and *The New England Journal of Medicine*.

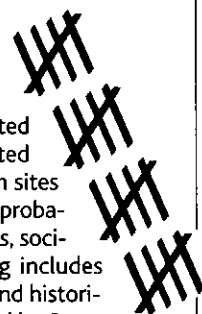
www.freemedicaljournals.com

RESOURCES

Math Bonanza

MathGate—a huge collection of annotated links compiled by specialists in the United Kingdom—delivers you to scores of math sites on topics ranging from matrix algebra to probability theory to topology. Although links to journals, societies, and departments predominate, the catalog includes several preprint archives, Web texts, a jobs board, and historical and educational sites. Drop into a site sponsored by Surrey University in the U.K., for example, to learn about the Fibonacci numbers, a series that describes natural phenomena like the number of petals on some flowers and rabbit reproduction.

www.mathgate.ac.uk



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