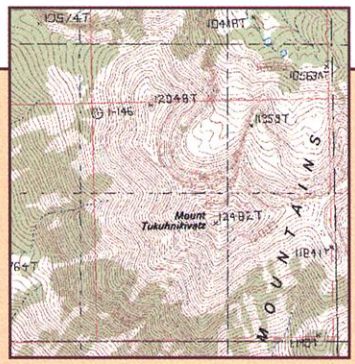
NETWATCH

edited by MITCH LESLIE

RESOURCES

Where's the Map?



Need a map of fossil-bearing Permian strata in west Texas? How about the locations of titanium deposits in the western United States? Then plot a course for the National Geologic Map Database, a vast and growing catalog from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). There you'll learn how to obtain almost every USGS map, along with hundreds of others published by state governments, universities, private companies, and organizations such as the American Geophysical Union.

Map types include topography (above, southeastern Utah), the ocean floor, magnetic or gravity measurements, fossil localities, and soils. Others pinpoint resources such as metals and oil, provide water-quality measurements, and delineate hazards such as earthquake faults and volcanoes. Raw data for some maps are available online, but for most the site supplies contact information for ordering paper copies. You can also plumb GEOLEX, a database of some 16,000 named geological formations that includes geographical extent, age, publication history, and a brief bibliography.

ngmdb.usgs.gov

FUN

Sing a Song of Science

Hip hooray
We've got atomic energy
It could mean
A better world for all.

That wide-eyed paean to nuclear power comes from the "Ballads for the Age of Science" series of the late 1950s and early 1960s. At Science Songs, you can play more than 100 tracks from this earnest musical attempt to teach children about space, physics, weather, experiments, and nature. Software engineer Jef Poskanzer of Berkeley, California, exhumed six of the dusty albums from his parents' basement and put them on the Web. The songs may seem corny today, but Poskanzer says that listening to them "incessantly" as a child inspired his choice of career.

www.acme.com/jef/science_songs

EDUCATION

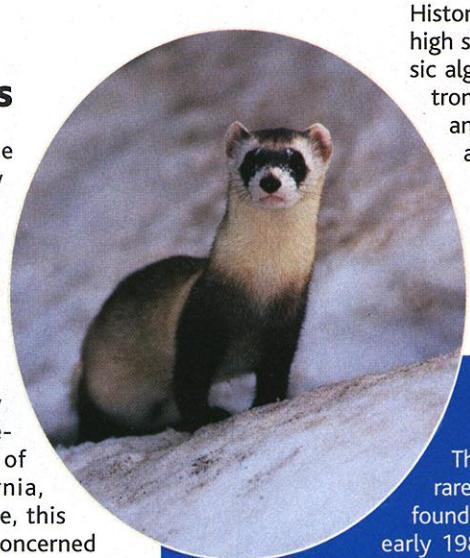
Astronomy Lesson

History is the strong suit of this astronomy textbook aimed at high schoolers or beginning undergrads. Students only need basic algebra and trigonometry to follow the development of astronomy through the contributions of pioneers such as Kepler and Newton. Other sections explore the workings of the sun and the development of spacecraft. The text is leavened with tidbits about the scientists' lives: For instance, American rocketeer Robert Goddard set his sights on designing spaceships while daydreaming in a cherry tree at age 17. Additional helpful features include a glossary and a mathematics refresher.

www.phy6.org/stargaze/Sintro.htm

DATABASE

Life and Death, By the Numbers



A Frenchman born at the turn of the last century could expect to live a paltry 43 years, and a black man born in the United States in 1968 will probably live only 16 years longer. Those are some of the figures you can glean from the Berkeley Mortality Database, compiled by demographer John Wilmoth of the University of California, Berkeley. Despite the name, this collection of data sets is concerned with more than death; it also enumerates births, life expectancies, and population sizes for Sweden, the United States, France, and Japan. The Swedish data begin in 1749, while the U.S. data start in 1900 and Japan's in 1950. You can view the data in several ways, such as by 1-year or 10-year intervals or in a life table showing numbers of deaths and death rate in each age group.

www.demog.berkeley.edu/wilmoth/mortality/index.html

RESOURCES

Mammals on the Brink

The photogenic black-footed ferret (left) is one of the world's rarest mammals, with no self-sustaining wild population. Once found from Canada to Texas, the ferret had nearly vanished by the early 1980s because of habitat loss and a government-sponsored program to exterminate the prairie dogs that it hunts. Thanks to captive breeding, the black-footed ferret may survive, but as this rundown of rare, threatened, and endangered mammals makes clear, more than 100 other species face extinction. The site, created by Paul Massicot, a water-quality specialist for the state of Maryland, includes familiar animals such as the giant panda and the cheetah and lesser known beasts such as the Yangtze river dolphin, or baiji, and the hispid hare of India and Bangladesh. Each referenced species account provides the lowdown on habitat, appearance, ecology, behavior, reproduction, conservation status, and threats to survival.

www.animalinfo.org

Send great Web site suggestions to netwatch@aaas.org

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