NETWATCH

edited by MITCH LESLIE

RESOURCES

Catch a Buzz

Ever heard the whine of a lovelorn medfly or listened to panicky fire ants? At the Web site Bug Bytes, you can eavesdrop on more than 20 species of insects and invertebrates, thanks to digital sound files gathered by entomologist Richard Mankin of the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Gainesville, Florida. Wiretapping bugs isn't just for fun. Knowing the characteristic sounds of pests and innocuous species might make it easier to uncover hidden infestations (*Science*, 14 September 2001, p. 1987).

The more than 40 recordings tune in the quotidian, rarely heard sounds of the tiny creatures eating, hunting, cowering, and courting. Amplified many times, they make quite a racket. The rasping of a frightened dung beetle resembles a burst of radio static, for instance. Minute mikes and other sound-sensitive gear can also pick up background din, and the site explains how to distinguish wind and passing trucks from bug sounds.

cmave.usda.ufl.edu/~rmankin/soundlibrary.html

EXHIBITS

Listen Here

Today's dainty hearing aids descended from the cumbersome ear trumpets and speaking tubes of the early 1800s. Deafness in Disguise, a new exhibit hosted by the Central Institute for the Deaf and Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, traces the evolution of hearing devices in the 19th and 20th centuries, emphasizing the clever camouflage intended to conceal the impairment.

Like computer chips, hearing aids rapidly got smaller and more ingenious. Early in the 1800s, King John VI of Portugal commissioned a throne with a receiver hidden beneath the seat and hollow arms that funneled sound to the royal auditory canal through a discreet earpiece. By the middle of the century, hard-of-hearing Britons could toss aside their ear trumpets and don these stylish aurolesephones (above)—still ungainly, but less conspicuous. Electronic hearing aids appeared in the 20th century, and as the devices got smaller and smaller, it became easier to pass off the receivers as cuff links, watches, and barrettes.

becker.wustl.edu/ARB/Exhibits/cid/intro.htm

DATABASES

Denizens of Deep Space

NASA's Extragalactic Database* bulges with vital stats on some 4.7 million objects outside the Milky Way, including other galaxies, quasars, and nebulas such as the gaudy Ring Nebula (below). Its waves of glowing matter are billowing from a star that detonated thousands of years ago. Compiled by the Infrared Processing and Data Center in Pasadena, California, the storehouse supplies information such as position in the sky, radial velocity, and redshift, a measure of how fast the galaxy or quasar is fleeing from us that indicates its age. You can dredge up images and references and plot the spectrum of energy beamed by an object into space. Aimed at professional astronomers, the site also features a glossary and a calculator that can correct an object's redshift for galactic motion.

Looking for something closer to home? This collection† from the Centre de Données Astronomiques in Strasbourg, France, houses similar data for stars, supernovas, and comets within our galaxy.

*nedwww.ipac.caltech.edu

†simbad.u-strasbg.fr/Simbad

EDUCATION

Nobel Birthday Bash

Last year the Nobel Prizes hit the big 1-0-0. Don't worry if you forgot to send a card or couldn't make it to Stockholm for the shindig. This Web site from the Nobel Foundation features video of all 21 speakers at December's centennial symposium on how genomics is revolutionizing fields from developmental biology to medicine to evolution. Follow along as evolutionary biologist Svante Pääbo explains how unraveling the genomes of nonhuman organisms will illuminate our origins. Or listen to one of the 1985 laureates in medicine, Michael Brown, describe how genes influence cholesterol levels. The lectures provide scientists and students with a glimpse at the future of these fields.

www.nobel.se/nobel/nobel-foundation/centennial-symposia/medvideo.html

Send site suggestions to netwatch@aaas.org. Archive: www.sciencemag.org/netwatch

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