

IMAGES

Paths of Destruction

In an average year, six hurricanes blast across the Atlantic Ocean, Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean, and two pummel the U.S. mainland. The Web site Historical Hurricane Tracks, sponsored by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, lets you chart the course of hurricanes and tropical storms that have blown up in the last 150 years (above, 1992's Andrew).

Whether you want to track every Atlantic hurricane in the 1990s or pinpoint storms that hit a particular zip code, the mapping feature can create an assortment of plots. For hurricanes since 1958, the site links to in-depth reports that summarize the "life cycle" and travels of each storm, describe the damage it inflicted, and supply meteorological data such as wind speed and barometric pressure. Another feature calls up graphs depicting how many people have crowded into storm-prone coastal counties. For example, the population of Harris County, Texas, home to Houston, has ballooned from less than 100,000 in 1900 to more than 3 million today.

hurricane.csc.noaa.gov/hurricanes/index.htm

RESOURCES

Terrorism FAQs

Straight answers to hundreds of questions about terrorism distinguish this online encyclopedia, just released by the nonpartisan Council on Foreign Relations. In addition to discussing subjects such as the identities and agendas of terrorist groups, the site evaluates scientific topics such as the threat from biological weapons, chemical agents, and nuclear bombs. The authors rate the odds of a smallpox attack as low because of the difficulty of obtaining and growing the virus.

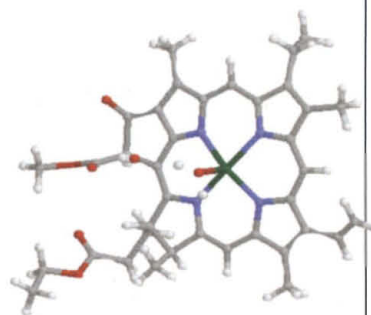
www.terrorismanswers.com

DATABASE

A Web for Crystals

Chemists and computer scientists at Indiana University, Bloomington, are weaving the Reciprocal Net, a network that will allow crystallographers to share data. Researchers will be able to download chemical viewing software and contribute their results to a "distributed database" that other users can search. A prototype of the site is working now and holds data on 184 molecules, including chlorophyll (right). Students can use the pilot site's tools to visualize the molecules in different ways, such as stick diagrams and 3D models. The network's creators envision launching the finished site next June and linking with dozens of crystallography labs over the next 2 years.

www.reciprocalnet.org



LINKS

Put On Your Thinking Cap

Give your brain a workout with the offerings from Critical Thinking on the Web, a collection of links to sites that promote and teach reasoning and that uncover sloppy and dubious arguments. Gathered by philosopher Tim van Gelder of the University of Melbourne in Australia, the links range from texts and tutorials on critical thinking to catalogs of logical fallacies and exposés of quackery. For instance, one news article explores how we often overestimate the risks of dying from scary diseases such as cancer. Van Gelder also rounds up provocative essays that explore logic or display exemplary reasoning, including selections from English scientific philosopher Francis Bacon and late evolutionist Stephen Jay Gould.

www.philosophy.unimelb.edu.au/reason/critical/index.htm

RESOURCES

Diseases of Field and Stream

You could consider the National Wildlife Health Center to be wildlife biologists' version of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta. The U.S. Geological Survey facility in Madison, Wisconsin, keeps tabs on diseases that strike wild animals, probes their causes, and helps wildlife managers fight epidemics. The center's Web site is a clearinghouse of information on animal illnesses.

Visitors can peruse the past 8 years of wildlife mortality reports, which identify outbreaks in the United States. Or download *The Field Manual of Wildlife Diseases*, a guide to scores of common causes of illness and death in birds, from avian cholera to mercury poisoning. The site also offers backgrounders on the epidemiology of chronic wasting disease, a lethal brain illness similar to mad cow disease that has killed deer and elk in 10 states, as well as the infamous West Nile virus. The nasty bug rarely infects humans but has attacked more than 200 species of birds and wild mammals since arriving in the United States 3 years ago.

www.nwhc.usgs.gov



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