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exists. I can only echo the warning of Auden—if we concern ourselves with “scales too gigantic or dwarfish,” we are in danger of being totally ignored by a world that can do so only at its (and our) own peril.

EDWARD M. GUROWITZ
Department of Psychology,
C. W. Post College,
Greenvale, New York 11548

Why Europe's Grass is Greener

As a former Englishman and an avid gardener who has lived in the United States for almost 12 years, it is easy for me to see why Abelson finds flowers almost everywhere in Europe and seldom in the United States (“Microcosms in a world apart,” 29 Aug., p. 853). The extremes of temperature found in most American cities make flower growing difficult, and an operation that requires constant attention. In contrast, in most places in Europe one can plant flowers and almost forget about them. In San Francisco, where there are not the extremes of temperature, there are flowers that will rival any European display. A visit to the Golden Gate Park or Union Square should prove this point.

Perhaps Abelson has also slighted Chicago. Recently my family and I were in the Lincoln Park Conservatory where we saw a breathtaking display of orchids, and my children were able to see bananas growing. In the zoo and farm area one can see animals from all over the world, watch cows being milked, or take a leisurely row on the lagoon. . . . I agree that there is room for improvement, but must protest that if the grass is greener on the other side of the Atlantic, perhaps it is just because the weather is more conducive to growing green grass.

CEDRIC L. CHERNICK
Office of the Vice President,
University of Chicago,
Chicago, Illinois 60637

Ecology Crossfire

Fahnestock (Letters, 3 Oct.) advises us to distinguish between what is ecologically necessary and that which is merely ecologically desirable, urging us to banish emotion so that we can make the distinction honestly. His contention that bald eagles, for example, aren't really necessary leads to the view that

esthetic values have no ultimate place in any sensible scheme for regulating our environment; that is, we do not need to be other than dull. Furthermore, I wonder if it is not a bit emotional to stomp for that which is ecologically necessary only for our exclusive selves. If it were shown that smog had a worse effect on man than on bald eagles, shouldn't some of us then promote air pollution to prove our complete scientific detachment?

Fahnestock says also: “. . . we seem to be getting along pretty well without the moa, the dodo, and the passenger pigeon.” Not so. I am perfectly miserable without them.

C. BROOKE WORTH
R.D., Delmont, New Jersey 08314

Jukes' interpretation of the ecological effects of DDT (Letters, 3 Oct.) does not conform to the prediction, made long ago (1), that the effect of an agent which increases the mortality of both predator and prey in a two-component system is to decrease the average numbers of the predator and increase the average numbers of the prey. This is why the usual effects of broad-spectrum biocides in simplified systems (such as agricultural croplands) is to increase the numbers of phytophagous insects and to decrease the numbers of their predators (or parasites) (2). In ecosystems with more than two trophic levels, this effect may act on any pair, or on more than one pair, of species; ecological theory at present gives no way to predict which pair will be affected most.

DDT and other persistent pesticides mentioned by Fischer (3) are present in almost every ecosystem (4). Hence, whenever a species is observed to increase suddenly while its predator (or parasite) decreases, it is reasonable and logical to propose, as Fischer did, that a persistent pesticide *may* be responsible. This, of course, is only one of a number of alternative hypotheses which must be investigated simultaneously in every ecological situation . . . (5).

I. C. T. NISBET
Massachusetts Audubon Society,
Lincoln 01773

References and Notes

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