**NETWATCH**

**EDITED BY JOCelyn KAISER**

**DATABASE**

**Mendel at the Vet’s**

A Siamese cat owes its dark ears, paws, and tail to a single mutation in tyrosinase, an enzyme involved in coat color, scientists reported last year. To learn more about inherited traits in animals, many of which serve as models for human diseases, check out the revamped Online Mendelian Inheritance in Animals (OMIA) (NetWatch, 13 December 2002, p. 2097). Curated by Frank Nicholas of the University of Sydney, Australia, the site describes more than 2500 genetic disorders and traits in cats, chickens, cattle, horses, dogs, and 130 other species (except mice). Last September, the U.S. National Center for Biotechnology Information launched an OMIA mirror, integrating the site with GenBank, PubMed, and other NCBI databases. And a new home page in Australia allows guest curators to modify pages. Experts around the world are lining up, says Nicholas. >> omia.angis.org.au

**TOOLS**

**Quick-Change Act**

Many Web sites offer conversion programs to transform miles into kilometers, or Celsius into Fahrenheit, but how many can turn becquerels into rads or calculate the wavelength of a photon of energy? Scientists needing such help can call upon the Versatile Unit Converter from Christophe Berthold, a physicist at the University of Geneva. The handy Web tool can convert energy, length, volume, power, temperature, and so on as well as units of radioactivity, electricity, and magnetism. >> mypage.bluewin.ch/berthod/vuc

**DIRECTORY**

**Where the Ethicists Are**

This new site from the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization serves as a worldwide catalog of resources on bioethics and the ethics of science and technology. Dubbed the Global Ethics Observatory, the site includes a Who’s Who of nearly 500 ethics experts, a list of some 130 ethics organizations, and a smaller directory of courses. A fourth database on ethics legislation and guidelines is coming later this year. >> www.unesco.org/shs/ethics/geobs

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**EDUCATION**

**Under the Microscope**

If you want to bone up on microscopy techniques or need images for a biology class, head to Molecular Expressions, probably the largest microscopy site on the Internet. Run by Michael Davidson at the National High Magnetic Field Laboratory in Tallahassee, Florida, the site became popular a decade ago for its close-ups of everyday items such as electronic circuits and ice cream. It’s now a sprawling collection of educational resources.

Researchers may want to head to the Optical Microscopy Primer, which offers simulators of various microscopes and tutorials on their use. The related MicroscopyU site, produced with Nikon, includes new movies of live cells crawling and splitting that many professors use in classes, says Davidson. K–12 teaching resources include a cell biology primer and a “Powers of 10” applet that zooms from space into the cells of an oak leaf. Check out early microscope designs, or read up on optics luminaries such as Holland’s Antonie van Leeuwenhoek (1632–1723), the first scientist to see bacteria. The site’s galleries can be dazzling. Above, a slice of rat brain tissue. >> micro.magnet.fsu.edu

**DATABASE**

**Reading the Rivers**

In 1974, amid growing concern about pollution in the Great Lakes, researchers at Heidelberg College in Tiffin, Ohio, began tracking the stream chemistry of the state’s rivers. Their work quantified watershed pollutants from sources such as sewage plants and rural runoff, and it led to efforts to stem the flow of agricultural phosphorus into Lake Erie. At this new site, project leader David Baker, now a professor emeritus, and colleagues share their wealth of data on 11 rivers for scientists to use in courses or research. Visitors can download Excel files for more than 88,000 water samples tested for phosphorus, nitrates, suspended solids, and other components. Tutorials put the information in context, and templates help users analyze the data. Above, sediment disgorged by a flooding Sandusky River drifts into Lake Erie. >> wqldata.heidelberg.edu

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

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