

Bones, Genes, And Brains

A study suggesting that social stress leaves “molecular scars” on the brain and research exposing cultural diversity in gorillas are just two of the subjects that have snared the interest of anthropologist John Hawks of the University of Wisconsin, Madison. His wide-ranging blog excavates novel ideas and noteworthy discoveries in evolution, genetics, and human paleontology. Hawks promises to deliver three to five essays per week. Gems he’s come across include a recent *New York Times* piece about the Soviet Union’s unsuccessful efforts in the 1920s to prove our simian ancestry by crossbreeding chimps with humans. Readers intrigued by the tiny Flores hominid uncovered in Indonesia 2 years ago will find a section devoted to the controversial remains. >> johnhawks.net/weblog

DATABASE

Caught in a Bind

How tightly a potential drug attaches to its target determines how well the compound will work and what dose patients will need. Researchers can nab binding affinities for about 14,000 compounds at BindingDB from Mike Gilson of the University of Maryland Biotechnology Institute in Rockville and colleagues. Gleaned from the literature, the data indicate the strength of attraction between the compounds and key proteins, such as the caspase proteins that control cellular suicide. You can also upload files of molecules not in the database to compare them to inhibitors of a particular enzyme. >> www.bindingdb.org



such as the appearance of the corona (above). This wispy outer layer of the solar atmosphere stands out during totality, when the moon’s disk obscures the sun. The festivities start at 5 a.m. U.S. Eastern Time. Totality will begin around 5:54 a.m. and will last a mere 3 minutes and 41 seconds. >>

www.exploratorium.edu/eclipse

EXHIBIT

Poor Richard’s Web Site

Which early American politician could claim significant discoveries in meteorology, physics, and navigation? Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790) notched these achievements in his spare time, when he wasn’t earning a fortune in the printing business or helping invent a country. This biographical site from the Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary, a Philadelphia nonprofit organization set up to honor the Founding Father’s 300th birthday this year, offers several pages on Franklin’s scientific work. It goes beyond the famous kite-flying experiment that demonstrated lightning was a form of electricity. For instance, Franklin’s shipboard notes on everything from sea temperatures to whale feeding habits inspired an improved chart of the Gulf Stream. The Frankliniana section includes samples of his scientific gear, such as this early battery made from water-filled jars (above). >> www.benfranklin300.org/exhibition/_html/0_0/index.htm



IMAGES

Brighter Lights, Bigger Cities

This new map of Earth’s nighttime illumination will make light bulb manufacturers glow and astronomers cringe. Released last month, the chart from the National Geophysical Data Center (NGDC) in Boulder, Colorado, is a composite of satellite images snapped in 2003. Site visitors can download and compare images from as far back as 1992. Although changes in illumination often are hard to detect with the unaided eye, computer analysis shows that the United States and India continue to brighten, says Chris Elvidge of NGDC. However, areas of the former Soviet Union, such as Moldova and Ukraine, have been growing darker. You can peruse processed versions of the maps that highlight brightness differences at this site[†] from a graduate student in Aachen, Germany. >> www.ngdc.noaa.gov/dmsp/download.html [†] www.blue-marble.de/night.php

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

Science

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