

edited by Mitch Leslie



EDUCATION

Information Eruption

If lava flows or ash spews somewhere on Earth, the crew at Volcano World takes note. Hosted by the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks, the site posts weekly updates that describe current eruptions and lets you zoom in on the location using the mapping program Google Earth. You can also peruse a catalog that supplies charts, photos, and records of past activity for volcanoes such as Rabaul in the South Pacific (above). The ash plume from its 1994 eruption ascended more than 18 kilometers. To learn more about volcanism, flip through the FAQ section. Volcano World's experts answer more than 1000 reader queries on everything from the relation between lava color and temperature (yellow is hotter than red) to the effect of Krakatau's 1883 explosion on global climate. (The ash it ejected caused a one-quarter-degree cooling that lasted up to 2 years.) Or for a little lava tourism, follow the Volcano of the Week feature to an interesting peak.

volcano.und.nodak.edu

EXHIBITS

Victorian Plant Man

The British botanist Joseph Dalton Hooker (1817–1911) served as Darwin's advocate, confidante, and sounding board. But he was an influential researcher in his own right, as readers can learn at this site from science historian Jim Endersby of Cambridge University in the United Kingdom. Hooker's taxonomic studies helped untangle the species pouring in from Britain's sprawling empire in the mid- and late-1800s. He also ran the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew for 20 years and pushed to transform botany from a genteel hobby into a profession. The site's biography touches on Hooker's early collecting expeditions, which took him from New Zealand to the Himalayas, and his struggle to find a permanent job. He didn't land a secure position until his father hired him to be assistant director at Kew in 1855. Visitors can also browse a selection of Hooker's writings, including his description of Darwin's botanical specimens from the Galápagos Islands.

www.jdhooker.org.uk

WEB TEXT

Before the Double Helix

Science historians and others interested in James Watson's work prior to the discovery of DNA's structure will find a nugget here: Watson's 1950 Ph.D. dissertation from Indiana University, Bloomington. Visitors can leaf through all 92 pages of *The Biological Properties of X-ray Inactivated Bacteriophage* at the university's digital library.

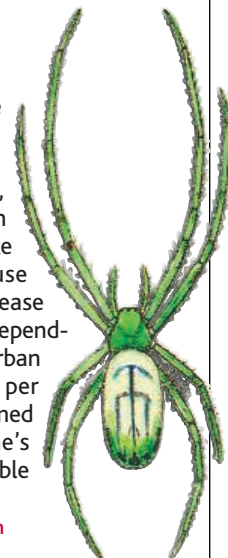
webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/metsnav/general/navigate.do?oid=VAA2040

FUN

Spinning Spiders

Like snakes and other scary critters, spiders have inspired more than their share of superstitions and tall tales. At The Spider Myths Site, curator Rod Crawford of the Burke Museum in Seattle, Washington, squashes more than 50 common errors about the misunderstood arachnids. Take those well-meaning folks who "liberate" house spiders outside. The animals often die after release because many species that lurk indoors are as dependent on our homes as we are. Then there's the urban legend that we each swallow four live spiders per year during our sleep. In fact, there are no confirmed instances of spiders climbing into someone's mouth, Crawford says, and it's virtually impossible to swallow them unwittingly.

www.washington.edu/burkemuseum/spidermyth



TOOLS

Scourge of a Continent

HIV is hammering Africa, with infection rates of more than 30% in countries such as Botswana. Researchers will find tools for analyzing HIV molecular data and information on the main African strain at BioAfrica, created by virologists at Oxford University and the University of Pretoria in South Africa. BioAfrica complements other HIV sites, such as the sequence bank at Los Alamos National Lab in New Mexico (NetWatch, 23 August

2002, p. 1243), by spotlighting HIV's subtype C, the viral variant that predominates in the southern part of the continent. Users can download free software for determining a virus's subtype or visit a new proteomics section that probes the sequences and structures of HIV's



19 proteins. The site also includes plenty of background on subtype C, including charts that follow its spread starting in the early 1980s. Above, an AIDS patient in Zambia.

www.bioafrica.net

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