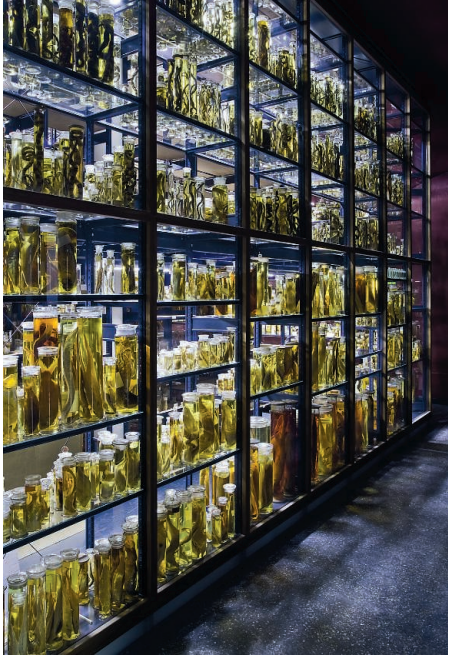

Specimens Get New Home

Thousands of fish, snakes, frogs, spiders, crabs, and snails swimming in alcohol are the newest attraction for visitors and biologists at Berlin's Natural History Museum.

Part of the museum's 200th anniversary celebration this month is the reopening of its east wing, which was bombed in World War II (*Science*, 2 July 2004, p. 35). Now, the wing houses the museum's newly restored collection of 1 million animal specimens preserved in alcohol. The $39 million restoration modernized the storage area for the collection and added labs and a state-of-the-art preparation facility for new samples, says Director Reinhold Leinfelder.

There's also a viewing area where visitors can watch as researchers work with the collection, which includes specimens from the 1700s. Alcohol samples are especially useful for taxonomists and other scientists, Leinfelder says, because they preserve DNA as well as many of the soft tissues that are lost in dry preparations. The new climate-controlled air system keeps the temperature at 15°C, which reduces the threat of fire from seeping alcohol. "I sleep much better now," Leinfelder says.

Spicing Up the Menu

In the bovine world, belching isn't bad manners. But the methane those burps release is bad for the environment. Now, scientists say that feeding cows oregano could almost halve methane emissions and increase milk production to boot.

Livestock emit 37% of all methane produced by human activity, such as agriculture. Researchers at Pennsylvania State University, University Park, found that mixing a pound of oregano into a cow's daily feed reduces its methane emissions by 40%—a "huge number," says Michael Hutjens, an animal scientist at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. As a bonus, it also increases milk production by roughly 4%.

The herb reorganizes bacteria in the cow's stomach, decreasing microbes that produce methane and increasing those that don't. Farmers can also curb their animals' gas with garlic, cinnamon, or antibiotics, but oregano beats them all, says agricultural scientist and project leader Alexander Hristov of Penn State. Researchers are now trying to identify how oregano reduces methane.

Daisy Deceit

Markings on some South African daisies give the flowers a "come hither" allure that tricks insects into becoming better pollinators, researchers have found.

Dark-brown spots on the flowers' fiery orange petals fleck the daisies (*Gorteria diffusa*) with 14 different patterns. Male bee flies (*Megapalpus capensis*) mistake certain patterns for a female and try to mate with the flower. By dosing flowers with fluorescent powder, biologists at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa found that a bee fly's spinning and thrusting allow it to sweep up more pollen than quietly feeding flies do. Allan Ellis and Steven Johnson report the results in an upcoming issue of *The American Naturalist*.

This type of sexual ploy is well-known among orchids, but the researchers say their study is the first to show the strategy in another flower. Not all spot arrangements were equally stimulating, they report: Discontinuous patterns sparked much more sexual interest than a simple ring of spots.

The findings are "significant," says Jeff Ollerton, who studies plant-pollinator interactions at the University of Northampton in the United Kingdom. "The fact that *Gorteria diffusa* populations are so variable in their floral traits, and the way in which they interact with the same pollinators, ranging from straightforward food rewards to sexual deception plus food, and all points in between, is totally unprecedented," he says.

Windy City

China's first offshore wind farm is up and running. The Donghai Bridge Wind Farm—34 wind turbines that stand 8 to 15 kilometers from Shanghai's east coast—generates enough power to light 200,000 homes.

The electricity created by the turbines, which cost a total of $337 million, travels to the coast through a submarine cable. The wind farm currently powers part of the Shanghai Expo, a giant 6-month-long trade fair, and later will supply electricity to the city's power grid.

The farm's capacity is just 102 megawatts, less than 1% of the 18,200 megawatts produced by Shanghai's other electricity producers, which rely mostly on nonrenewable energy sources. Still, officials say it could save the city about 86,000 tons of coal and reduce carbon dioxide emissions by more than 234,700 tons a year.

David Viner, a climate scientist and leader of climate change work at the British Council in London, gives the project a thumbs-up. "China has adapted an extremely positive outlook to the uptake of renewable energy sources and as a result is starting to become a world leader in this issue," he says.

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