



PILEUP ON THE MOON

The moon is the hottest new destination in space. With a slew of moon missions coming up, scientists warned at a meeting in Hyderabad, India, last month that lunar junk poses a serious pollution threat.

A lot of one-way traffic is expected to crash on the moon in the next decade. The first, Japan's 3000-kilogram Kaguya remote-sensing satellite, will arrive this month. Next up is China's 1900-kilogram Chang'e 1, being sent to map lunar resources. In April 2008, India will launch Chandrayaan-1, an orbiter that will also send a 29-kilogram probe hurtling into the lunar surface. British and Italian vehicles will be adding to the pileup. Only China has a plan for disposing of its rubbish.

Bernard Foing, director of the International Lunar Exploration Working Group in the Netherlands, pointed out that the Apollo missions left behind several hundred kilograms of waste. Noting that it took 27 years for the post-Apollo lunar atmosphere to "stabilize back," physicist Roger-Maurice Bonnet, president of France's Committee on Space Research, called for a "conservation area" untouched by humans. Wu Ji, China's chief lunar exploration scientist, is plumping for a moon dump. Foing also suggested that satellites might be put to sleep in a long-term orbit. Without an "exit policy from the moon," said Bonnet, it "will be destroyed sooner [rather] than later."

Talking Turtle

"I am suggesting that we are only a few years away from the point at which the proposition that there are no cognitive differences between men and women will be as hard to sustain as the proposition that the Earth rides on the back of a turtle."

—Political scientist Charles Murray, co-author of *The Bell Curve*, at a 1 October meeting at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C., to discuss why there aren't more women in some branches of science.

It's Tapir Time

With their droopy noses and beefy bodies, tapirs look like a cross between an elephant, a pig, and a hippopotamus.

You don't have to leave your chair to get close to these strangely engrossing tropical herbivores. Just click over to the Tapir Specialist Group Web site from the World Conservation Union (IUCN), which offers photos, videos, conservation news, and scientific information.

Fans of these creatures can wallow

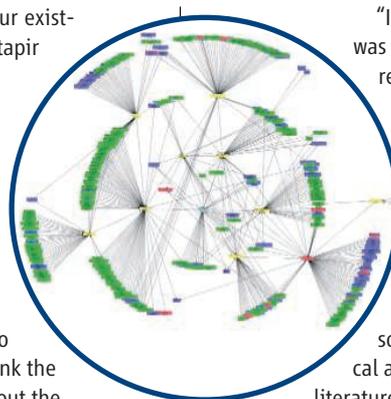
in background pages on the four existing species, including Baird's tapir (below), which ranges from Mexico to Colombia. For researchers working with tapirs in the wild, the field veterinary guide furnishes advice on everything from making captures—darting works well, although the crepuscular conditions tapirs prefer can make it hard to aim—to serological tests. And if you think the animals are oh-so-cute, check out the interview with the former Costa Rican environment minister, who was attacked and nearly killed by an enraged mother tapir. >>

www.tapirs.org



Sorting Through Astro-Chaff

The power of social networking is being extended to scientific papers. With the sheer volume of articles published nowadays, figuring out which are the key ones is a tricky problem. By showing how many "friends" articles have, a new tool called PaperScope is helping astronomers find the papers that really matter.



"It dawned on me that there was no easy way to identify key relationships between published papers," says Mark Holliman of the European Virtual Observatory Technology Project, who unveiled PaperScope at an astronomical data conference last month in London. The software provides a graphical approach to searching the literature. Users can create personal

charts with each paper drawn as a box connected by arrows pointing to the papers it cites and pointing from the papers that cite it. By revealing the papers with the most incoming arrowheads, PaperScope sorts out the seminal works from the academic chaff.

For example, searching for "solar radio bursts" brings up more than 2500 hits on an academic database. But a few clicks of the mouse reveal the handful of oft-cited papers—the yellow boxes in the screenshot above. "There's an 'aha' moment. As in, 'Aha, that's the paper I should read next,'" says Norman Gray, an astronomer at the University of Leicester, U.K.

PaperScope (paperscope.sourceforge.net) is currently compatible only with astrophysics papers, but Holliman hopes to extend it to other scientific databases.

CREDITS (TOP TO BOTTOM): PAT LEWIS; MARK HOLLIMAN; WILLIAM KONSTANTIN/TAPIR SPECIALIST GROUP