

According to the former Federal Energy Administration's 1974 task force report on geothermal energy, electric power derived from high temperature geothermal steam could be competitive with oil at \$4 per barrel, which obviously makes such projects attractive. However, suitable sources of sufficient power for commercial production are quite rare. One of the few such sources is at the Larderello field in Italy, where in 1904 the world's first geothermal power plant was built. Globally it seems that development efforts must be concentrated on other types of geothermal deposits, such as those under Reykjavik, or hot rock formations where cold water is pumped to be heated and extracted.

In the U.S. the California Geysers are producing 390 megawatts, or about 0.1 percent of the nation's total electricity demand. No other sources of dry steam are known to exist in the U.S. except those in Yellowstone National Park. Many feel that the U.S. geothermal power potential, as a major alternative energy source, has been seriously downplayed. Mainly to blame are technical and institutional constraints, plus pessimistic considerations of long-range reliability. However, the U.S. National Geothermal Energy Research Program has attempted to overcome those barriers. The program aims at encouraging the private sector to augment the commercial production of electric power by 20,000 to 30,000 megawatts by 1985, which would save the equivalent of one million barrels of oil per day. For the year 2000, the program's goal is 200,000 megawatts from geothermal sources.

These optimistic estimates have been corroborated by the results of recent studies. In any case, with demand for electricity doubling every 10 years, geothermal resources could, in the near future, provide at least one or two percent of the projected demand. Much further into the future is harnessing of the normal heat increase which occurs by descending into the earth's crust. This could lead to geothermal energy supplying 10 percent or more of the central and eastern states' electric power needs. Geothermal energy obviously could also make a difference in the energy-hungry United States.—Hermann Sveinbjornsson, from *Conservation News*.

### Polluted Fish, As It Were

A disgruntled employee of a French wine producer recently poured almost \$600,000 worth of fine Burgundy into the sewers of a

village, resulting in the poisoning death of thousands of fish, according to *Conservation News*. Wine flowed from the sewers of Nuits Saint Georges into the Meuzin River in eastern France, polluting it so heavily dead fish were found 12 miles away.

### Mercury Levels in Eskimos

Thirty persons in the Quebec Arctic settlement of Sugluk have dangerously high levels of mercury in their blood, according to the Quebec Department of Health.

Sugluk is an Eskimo community, and the high mercury levels are believed to have resulted from eating the meat of contaminated whales and seals. Some of the persons tested had levels 10 times higher than considered normal.

### Death for Illegal Logging

The Thai government is taking stern measures to save the country's remaining forests. The export of teak is now forbidden and the penalty for illegal logging is death. These measures were sparked by American satellite photography, which revealed a 35 percent decline in Thailand's forest area in the past 20 years.

Yachts are the principal users of teak and the ban will hit western boatbuilders hard. Not much of Burma's teak reaches western markets, while this "gemstone among woods" is of a lesser quality in India, Indonesia, and Central America.

Demand for Thai teak remains strong. American wholesale prices doubled in 1977 (before the ban) and a black market in teak logs is now said to be operating in Hong Kong.

### Sparrow Teriyaki Anyone?

A Japanese firm has recently informed the U.S. State Department that it is interested in buying American sparrows, preferably ones that weigh about 20 grams each and are frozen and ready to eat.

The Taiiei Company, Ltd., of Tokyo, has told U.S. officials that it "wishes to buy whatever quantity an American firm can offer at regular intervals." The Japanese company has indicated that its representatives are ready to visit the United States to "give guidance on how to catch small birds and how to process them" into frozen foods for Japanese consumption.

### Fishing: A Heartfelt Experience

According to the Cortland Line Co., fishline manufacturers, successful angling can result in palpitations not to be found in any textbook on cardiology. It reports a bluegill fisherman who was catching them so fast he stuck one in his shirt pocket and forgot it. Later, feeling a fluttering in the chest region, he thought he was having a heart attack. A friend rushed him to a hospital emergency room, where an alert medical team quickly smelled out the problem.

### Homing Pigeons See Ultraviolet

Cornell University researchers have recently discovered that homing pigeons can see ultraviolet light, challenging a commonly held scientific assumption that all vertebrates, including humans, are blind to that portion of the light spectrum. The revelation may help explain how the pigeons navigate and may lead to new understanding of the process of vision. Using pyrex rather than glass to allow ultraviolet rays to pass through, the tests showed pigeons reacting with anxious heartbeat when ultraviolet rays were projected. How the light was sensed and whether it actually transmits images to the retina remain unanswered questions, however.

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