Bijlage VWO

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FE NEWS

Sh-ambleside!

WHEN Cumbria university launched in 2007, created from a motley collection of former colleges, much was made of the fact that young Cumbrians would no longer have to leave the county to pursue higher education.

The new university had one
10 shining gem, the world famous
former Charlotte Mason College in
Ambleside. Named after its founder,
the pioneer of modern child-centred
education, the college maintained its
15 reputation with generations of
teachers. It was also the only campus
Cumbria had in the Lake District,
although the fells and lakes feature
prominently in all the university's
20 promotional literature.

So when Cumbria university realised it had a cash crisis, with its deficit standing at £28m according to leaked briefing papers, and the axe 25 was sharpened, there was only one choice for the chop: Ambleside campus.

The board of
governors will consider proposals for
30 a two-year mothballing of the
Ambleside site in February. The move
is intended to save £1.75m a year, a
third of what the 600 students and
staff are believed to contribute to the
35 local economy, and peanuts

compared to the university's deficit.

Meanwhile students are seeking legal advice after they were told they would be transferred to campuses in 40 Penrith and Lancaster, despite having chosen their university on the basis of its location. Some have two-year contracts with Ambleside landlords. There's no help on offer to 45 fund travel to Penrith, more than 20 miles away, or Lancaster, which is 34 miles away and not in Cumbria at all. Luckily so far no one has been moved to the university's other teacher 50 training centre – in, er, Tower Hamlets, East London.

Private Eye, 2010

Living solar cells power sun-loving hornet



BENEATH its yellow and brown stripes, the oriental hornet packs a power cell that would turn the Energizer bunny green with envy. This insect is known for being able to trap sunlight, and now we know more about how it's done.

More than 40 years ago, Jacob Ishay of Tel Aviv University in Israel noticed that unlike other similar insects, worker oriental hornets (*Vespa orientalis*) tend to be out

and about in the midday sun. He went on to show that the insects — which live in underground nests hollowed out by armies of digging workers — can harvest solar energy through the hard cuticle covering their body.

Now a team led by Ishay's former student, Marian Plotkin, has shown how they do it. When Plotkin measured the reflectivity of the hornet's cuticle, he found it to be unusually absorbent, trapping 99 per cent of the sun's rays. Under a high-powered microscope, the yellow segments of the cuticle can be seen to be made up of layers of proteins and lipid, which form oval lumps at the surface. Plotkin believes this structure explains why the surface absorbs most light. The deeper layers of the cuticle also act to trap light, but it is not yet clear how.

The fact that the yellow cuticle sucks in the sun's rays is key, because at the base of the structure is a pigment called xanthopterin which can take in solar energy and convert it to electricity. To confirm this, the team built a mini solar panel that used xanthopterin to harvest light.

Why should a hornet need to charge itself up on solar energy? Last year Plotkin and Ishay (who has since died) showed that enzymes in the yellow cuticle perform metabolic functions similar to those of mammalian livers, and that they are more active when the insects were exposed to ultraviolet light. Plotkin believes the hornets may use the electricity they generate from solar radiation to drive the reactions catalysed by these enzymes.

The electricity might also give the hornets' wing muscles an extra jolt of energy. Anaesthetised hornets wake up faster, and immediately fly away, if ultraviolet light is shone on them. Solar power indeed. **Michael Marshall**

New Scientist, 2010

Model behaviour

Migrants must earn the right to UK citizenship under the new proposal to attract the 'brightest and best'. But are the plans fair?

Tony Breslin Chief executive, Citizenship Foundation

We need to build the skills, knowledge and values for effective citizenship across our society, not just among newcomers. The idea that we should encourage newcomers to become proficient in the English language and to engage in community activities is inherently reasonable, as is the call for migrants to make their proper economic contribution. However, by focusing on newcomers, we are in danger of forgetting that a lack of knowledge about how our society works, a lack of engagement in community life, and low levels of participation in formal politics are issues that do not solely pertain to those who have just arrived.

Nazek Ramadan Migrant and refugee empowerment worker, Migrants Resource Centre

B We are really concerned about the words used to discuss citizenship because it has a real impact on migrants. Words such as "burden" do nothing to promote integration and cohesion. The idea that migrants have to "earn" citizenship implies that they are somehow

inferior, that they have to try harder than "normal" citizens. But migrants are often forced to try harder in all aspects of their lives. There is little mention in this debate about the contribution – economic and otherwise – that migrants make to this country. The majority we deal with want to integrate into British society, but many face discrimination. Is the government going to try to force the British public not to discriminate against them?



Donna CoveyChief executive, Refugee Council

For refugees, citizenship can mean the final step on their journey to safety and security, and if the prime minister was to come to the Refugee Council, he would meet people eager to integrate and contribute from the moment they arrive in the UK. Unfortunately, the government puts barriers in place to make that more difficult. Even so, they don't

give up - asylum seekers and refugees make up 40% of our volunteers, for instance. They are, it could be said, model citizens. Now, these new rules will mean that refugees, along with other migrants, are denied full membership of this country until they have passed a number of unnecessary tests, met standards not applied to others, and waited for many years - including time on "probation", an inappropriate term usually applied to law breakers. We don't see how integration and community cohesion are advanced by making it harder for people to become citizens and feel they belong.

Sir Simon Milton Chairman, Local Government Association

D Migration is an asset for the country. The evidence shows that industries such as residential care would risk collapse without migrant labour. But the money generated isn't necessarily finding its way back down to the local level. Official statistics on how many migrants are coming and where they are going are inadequate. A proportion of the

additional revenue the exchequer gains from migrants could be put towards a contingency fund set at £250m a year for councils that are coming under particular pressure. Allowing councils to raise more money, and a more accurate way of counting local populations, would help to ensure the right money gets to the right places.

Jill Rutter Senior research fellow, migration, Institute for Public Policy Research

of British citizenship based not on "blood, race and territory" but on values such as a commitment to tolerance, democracy and social justice is a welcome one. In attempts to define what it means to be a new citizen we have to be careful not to set the bar too high. Requiring people to learn English is vital, but must be accompanied by the resources to help them do so.

Interviews: Mark Gould, Alexandra Topping

The Guardian, 2008

If only they could talk



RATTLING THE CAGE: Towards Legal Rights for Animals by Steven M Wise

BRYAN APPLEYARD

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On a simple numerical basis, humans probably now treat animals worse than they have ever done before.

Overwhelmingly intensive farming and agribusiness are the main culprits, rearing millions of chickens, cattle and pigs in conditions of technologically refined torture. More ambiguously, there are the cruelties inflicted by scientific research which may or may not be justified in the name of human progress. You do not have to be a fanatic to accept the truth that modern man is a uniquely vicious landlord of the living world.

In order to change this, we have to evolve a new morality strong enough to persuade us, first, that cutprice food is not an absolute requirement and, second, that human benefit cannot necessarily justify any level of laboratory cruelty. In practice, this morality already exists at the intuitive level — most people are revolted when they hear of the realities of intensive farming or animal experimentation. But, plainly, intuition alone isn't working. It isn't working in the realm of agriculture and, most alarmingly, it isn't working

at the environmental level. Species extinction and with it the irrevocable damage to our protective cocoon of biodiversity continue. Even our closest biological relatives chimpanzees and bonobos ("pygmy chimps") — are now facing destruction. The solution proposed by Steven M Wise, who teaches animal-rights law at Harvard, is the extension of human-rights law to the animal realm. This book argues that, as a start, we should accord legal personhood to chimps and bonobos, safeguarding bodily integrity and liberty.

The argument is twofold: legal and scientific. Both sides of the case are based on the Darwinian insight that all life is ultimately one. We are all joined by evolution and its messenger, DNA. For Wise this insight __10__ the strict division between humans and animals and the ancient conviction that man is the master of a creation that was designed for his benefit.

On the legal side, Wise conducts a fairly brutal assault on the common law that enshrines the human-animal division. Common law, he says, "values the past for merely having been". It preserves old misconceptions such as the pre-Darwinian, anthropocentric view of nature. Yet it has already been subject to violent change. Prior to the Nuremberg trials in 1945, nothing protected the citizen from barbaric assaults by states on what we now consider to be universal human rights. Now we accept that there are limits to the state's ability to redefine

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the law for its own purposes. And the ending of slavery established that it was simply not possible legally to define some human beings as things rather than persons. For Wise, that same conceptual progress must now lead us beyond the human realm.

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12 is that chimps and bonobos are so close to us intellectually that it is absurd to deny them personhood. Wise is a lawyer so it is perhaps understandable that he reads here as if he is on somewhat shakier ground. He is relying on the expertise of others and that expertise is widely disputed. Steven Pinker, for example, in his book The Language *Instinct* poured scorn on the claims being made for the use of language by chimpanzees. And, Wise notes, there is fierce and irrational resistance among many scientists to the idea that the numerous complex experiments with chimps have proved their ability to employ language.

At one level, Wise is right to be suspicious of this prejudice. There is so much evidence of language-like capabilities in chimps and so little consensus on what language is — an aspect of consciousness or consciousness itself — that it is foolish to dismiss the idea of chimp language. Furthermore, Pinker is all too plainly defending a dubious theory that he derived from Chomsky — that humans have a specific "language organ" in the brain.

But, at another level, Wise's evidence can be read both ways. He writes, for example, of the similarities of ape and human brains. But, almost in passing, he mentions that the human brain is three times larger, commenting that this "almost certainly makes no difference when

such vast numbers (of neurons) are involved". There is no scientific basis for this remark — indeed, it is almost certainly wrong. Wise occasionally quotes from Terrence Deacon, perhaps the finest of living scientific writers, but he does not refer to Deacon's primary view that language caused a one-off evolutionary expansion in the human brain. Such a view would plainly tend to support the idea that humans are, indeed, fundamentally different.

Furthermore, although Wise undoubtedly makes a good case, on the basis of science, for human beings to show special concern for chimpanzees and many other animals of high intelligence, he does not finally prove that we should extend to them the right of personhood. Certainly chimps have a culture, even a politics, and probably have linguistic skills. But what is clear from all the evidence is how far short of the human all these attributes are. There isn't a chimp Shakespeare, there isn't even a chimp Alastair Campbell, and there never will be.

Wise also undermines his position by bringing in the issue of proportionality. Chimps are obviously different from earthworms and, for him, that is exactly why they should be accorded special status. But proportionality again draws attention to how different humans are and to the fact that, by any imaginable standards, they are indeed the summit of creation. Chimps are not currently wondering whether they should accord us ape rights.

This paragraph has been left out. (see item 17)

The Sunday Times, 2002

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The Sunday Times

Established 1835

THERE ARE BETTER WAYS TO HELP POOR STUDENTS

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ord Mandelson, first secretary of state, is concerned about social mobility in Britain. He wants to make it easier for pupils from poorer backgrounds and badly performing state schools to get into the best universities.

2 He believes the universities should lower their offers for such pupils and has asked officials in his newly expanded business, innovation and skills department to examine schemes run by Leeds University and the King's College and St George's medical schools in London. All have increased the proportion of pupils they take from local comprehensives.

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At first sight there is merit in Lord Mandelson's initiative. We have educational apartheid in Britain and talented but poor young people are falling by the wayside. There are many reasons for this, most notably the fact that too many comprehensive schools remain "bog standard" despite having tens of billions of pounds poured into them in recent years. __19__, the top independent schools remain among the best in the world, creating a two-tier system that favours the better-off minority.

It is not just the teaching that holds back bright but poor pupils. Many parents seem to lack ambition and are unwilling to make the sacrifices needed for their children to secure good grades. That applies to many schools as well, which discourage even their star pupils from applying to the best universities and seeking careers in the professions. Tuition fees mean pupils from poorer backgrounds think hard before embarking on higher education.

To use the old cliché of levelling the playing fields (when state schools used to have them, that is), Lord Mandelson has come up with a formula to favour the disadvantaged. Instead of saying state schools should have better teaching and encourage their best pupils, or that parents should do more, he has thrown up his hands and said it is just too complicated. Much better to massage the grades and favour underperforming pupils. The trouble with this, of course, is that it is manifestly unjust because it penalises pupils in the private sector who worked hard to get good grades and also devalues the exam system.

6 Here are some less damaging suggestions to help children from poor backgrounds. First, redouble efforts to talent-spot brighter children, fast-stream them in schools and get them to weekend and summer schools where they can improve their grades and mix with other ambitious pupils. Second, offer financial incentives to universities to take children from poor backgrounds with good grades. Third, encourage more interviews and aptitude tests for university entrance so colleges can assess poor but talented pupils, rather than using a tick-box approach to grades. Fourth, keep up the pressure on independent schools and

good state schools to help to run

failing comprehensives and share teaching facilities.

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This is a more laborious approach than Lord Mandelson's simple grade fixing. But it has the merit of being fairer and not penalising children from modest backgrounds whose parents have made sacrifices to use private education. It also avoids the danger of damaging our universities, which are already under huge financial pressure. In short, nobody

22 but everybody has an interest in ensuring the most gifted get the best education. Tough choices, first secretary of state, are often the best.

The Sunday Times, 2009

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Organic food is just a tax on the gullible

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here are two reliable ways of telling if you have won an argument. The first is if your disputants switch from discussion of the facts to accusations about motives; the second, more obviously, is if they descend to mere abuse.

Alan Dangour, a nutritionist at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, should therefore feel he has had an encouragingly uncomfortable week. He is the author of a meta-study in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* that concluded, from 50 years of scientific evidence, that so-called "organic" food was no healthier than conventionally farmed products. He revealed that he had received "hate mail" and was "taken aback" by the "abusive" language used.

Ben Goldacre, an NHS doctor and author of the acclaimed book *Bad Science*, has had a similar week. In his newspaper column he had taken apart the Soil Association's criticisms of Dangour's paper – which was funded by Britain's Food Standards Agency – notably his claim that the health benefits of organic food "could not be measured by the evidence identified in the FSA paper".

When I called him, he remarked: "In my experience the [comments of the] organic food, anti-vaccine and homeopathy movements are unusually hateful and generally revolve around bizarre allegations that you covertly represent some financial or corporate interest. I do not; but I do think it reveals



something about their own motives that they can only conceive of a person holding a position as a result of financial self-interest."

His linking of the organic movement with homeopathy is telling. They are cults masquerading as science. The organic movement, philosophically, is based on an inchoate faith in nature, seeing any human interference with nature as in some way bad and destructive of the "roots" of creation.

No one should have been in the least surprised by Dangour's results. The more rational among the organic movement long ago stopped claiming as scientific fact that their products are better for humans. The Canadian Organic Growers, reacting less hysterically than the Soil Association, responded to Dangour's survey by saying that it "didn't make health claims based on the nutrition of organic food". This is the scientifically responsible attitude; but it is also a deadly blow to the marketing of organic foods, which depends on yummy mummies continuing to believe that if Cecilia and Frederick are fed only organic

foods, then the little darlings will grow up healthier and stronger. It is in this sense that the organic business – ordinary food at extraordinary prices – is nothing more than a tax on gullibility.

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Such gullibility can have dangerous effects on your health (as well as your bank balance). A few years ago my wife decided we should have an entirely organic vegetable garden. To this end she refused all man-made fertilisers and ordered a truckload of pigeon droppings. What could be more natural? Neither was there anything unnatural in the germs I inhaled through the spores of our organic manure, thereby contracting psittacosis. This developed into "atypical" pneumonia, which was of course resistant to all standard antibiotics.

<u>27</u>. If chemicals and pesticides in foods are as dangerous for humans as the Soil Association claims, we should expect conventional farmers, who handle the stuff in industrial quantities, to be dropping dead before the rest of us with all sorts of chemical-induced cancers.

The most exhaustive analysis of this matter was published in 2004, in a paper by Professor Anthony Trewavas of Edinburgh University. His paper revealed that "of 12 separate investigations on farmers involving in total about 300,000 people, 11 found that farmers had overall cancer rates very substantially lower than the general public".

Trewavas concludes that "the reasons why farming is so healthy are not known, but these data indicate not only a null result for the hypothesis relating pesticide

exposure to cancer, but a consistent result for the alternative, that pesticide exposure may protect against cancer". I realise that publicising Professor Trewavas's paper might itself cause medical problems, as Soil Association executives choke with rage. But I think this a risk offset by the **__28** the public as a whole.

The provocative professor also points out that in the period since 1950 – as pesticides and industrial farming took an increasing role in food production – "stomach cancer rates have declined by 60% in western countries". This is generally ascribed to the fact that fruit and vegetable consumption has doubled in that period – but why did this change in diet occur? Because modern agriculture, aided by air freight, has been able to get such products to consumers at evercheaper prices all year round.

This just demonstrates the common-sense point that diet, rather than whether food is produced "organically" or not, is the key to healthy eating. A high-fat diet is as bad for you when the food has an "organic" sticker on it as when it doesn't.

The general public, however, has already begun to call the organic bluff, perhaps one reason Whole Foods' sales have suffered over three consecutive quarters in the United States and Prince Charles's Duchy Originals has seen its profits slump. That noise you heard last week was the organic balloon bursting.

Dominic Lawson in *The Sunday Times*, 2009

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On the road to nowhere

Traffic: Why We Drive the Way We Do (And What it Says about Us) by Tom Vanderbilt

1 Anyone who claims to be able to drive well and talk on a mobile phone at the same time is lying. Any boast of competence on the road is a good indication that someone is a terrible driver. It suggests he, and it probably is a he, has no idea how hard driving is.

Our bodies have not evolved to move much faster than 30km/h. At higher speeds, our senses, our reactions, our risk-assessing antennae don't work properly. So when we get behind the wheel of a car, stripped of critical faculties and clad in mechanical armour, we become <u>32</u>. It is a combination that does not bring out the best in humanity, as Tom Vanderbilt discovers in *Traffic*. If the topic sounds banal, that is the point: we have become desensitised to the awesome complexity of life on the road.



Manoeuvring through traffic is one of the most mentally taxing things any of us does. Vanderbilt meets engineers who have tried unsuccessfully to build robots capable of doing it. <u>33</u>, *Homo sapiens* has hardly mastered the art. In the UK about 3,000 people die every year in traffic accidents. And while driving feels easier the more you do it, the level of risk doesn't change. The mobile phone user thinks that because he has never crashed while writing a text message, he won't do so in the future. But it isn't skill that has kept him safe – it's luck.

Real evidence fuels Vanderbilt's study. He has travelled the world looking at people's behaviour and at how policy makers have tried to influence it.

Occasionally, *Traffic* reads like a geeky dissertation on the relative merits of rival highway codes. But most of the time it is a metaphor for the challenge of organising competing human needs and imperfect human judgment into harmonious coexistence.

Vanderbilt builds a chain of interlinking paradoxes. The first is his observation that car culture is militantly individualistic, but driving is a very social affair. Most people on the road are in private vehicles, projections of personal space where they listen to music, eat, drink and ruminate. Surveys consistently find that, while people hate being stuck in traffic, they also have preferred minimum commuting times. They see a good quarter of an hour spent in the car as quality time.

These mobile sitting rooms have to navigate around each other, which also means signalling their intentions. That is hard enough when locked into a chrome carapace, let alone when also moving at speed. It is impossible to make eye contact at 50km/h. The difficulty of communicating on the road, combined with

the necessity of trying to if we want to survive, is the source of most episodes of road rage, which Vanderbilt calls traffic tantrums. In the private realm of a car, we expect to be able to use certain basic social tools. When we find these are of no use, we experience something like the exasperation of the toddler, whose capacity for self-expression has not developed at pace with its needs. The problem is compounded by an illusion of anonymity. Sensing that we are somehow invisible in the chassis, we perpetrate impoliteness that would be unthinkable in a face-to-face encounter. We struggle to put our individual needs – the assumed urgency of our journey – in the context of the collective need – everyone else also has somewhere to go.

That leads to Vanderbilt's second paradox: the slower we all go, the faster we'll all get there. The main cause of traffic fatalities is cars bumping into stationary objects and pedestrians. But the main cause of big traffic jams is cars bumping into each other, which they do because they are moving too fast for drivers to judge the risk involved. Yet making people slow down isn't easy. They ignore speed limits or, rather, they see them as a guide to what drivers less skilful and in less of a hurry should do. Devices intended to control traffic flow often make people behave recklessly.

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This leads to Vanderbilt's third paradox: to make roads safer, sometimes you have to make them more randomly hazardous. Streets are generally designed to compensate for human stupidity. Cars are guided by thick white lines down lanes wide enough to allow meandering. Helpful signs announce the existence of bends. This approach to road design is meant to be forgiving – it assumes people will make mistakes and indulges them. The problem is that when you forgive people, they take liberties. Our capacity for seeking risk expands to fill the space afforded to it. We drive as fast as the road will let us and then a bit faster. We are more hazards when we are told in advance they are coming.

We are safer when we drive as if anything may happen at any moment. Vanderbilt cites approvingly the example of Dutch engineer Hans Monderman, who has pioneered a counterintuitive approach to laying out roads – let people work out the hazards for themselves. That means no signs, no traffic lights, no lanes, no crash barriers and blurring the distinction between road and pavement. You make drivers crawl in a state of hyper-alertness. The idea is that you can design town and village centres so that pedestrian society ___38__ the world of the car and not the other way around. It is possible that this could only work in the Netherlands. But the point of the Dutch experiment is that it aims to change the culture rather than the rules of the road.

Vanderbilt does not try to solve the question of how people are supposed to share common space while pursuing their private agendas, which is a basic challenge of civilisation. That does mean the book lacks a resounding conclusion. Most of our traffic problems seem to come down to the innate weaknesses of our species. We have been stuck in the same jam for centuries. The only difference technology makes is that, in a car, we can go nowhere even faster.

Raphael Behr in The Guardian Weekly, 2008

IN THE BLOGS * ECONOMIX

The puzzles of energy pricing

As I mentioned in an earlier post, Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus of the Breakthrough Institute have a somewhat hostile relationship with other environmentalists.

They believe that environmentalists have made a grave mistake by putting so much emphasis on raising the cost of carbon, through either a carbon tax or cap-and-trade system¹⁾. They prefer government funding for clean-energy research. As they see it, the history of technological innovation suggests that government support, rather than prices, is the building block of most breakthroughs.

"We didn't tax typewriters to get the computer," as Mr. Shellenberger says.

My sense is that Mr. Shellenberger's and Mr. Nordhaus's political analysis — that cap-and-trade is a very tough sell — has turned out to be more right than wrong. They also make an important economic point: that government funding has been crucial to many of society's most important innovations. But I think they sometimes go too far by suggesting that the price of carbon is almost irrelevant — that the price of a good has little to no effect on demand for it and for the alternatives to it.

Can you think of any product for which that is the case? When the price of beef rises, people buy less of it — and more chicken. When the price of airline tickets fall, people buy more of them — and take fewer driving vacations.

It's true that the relationship between price and demand is weaker for energy than for most products. People still drive to work even when the price of gas goes up. But there is a relationship. Rising gas prices can affect driving habits. Higher oil prices can clearly affect companies' behavior.

So there seems little question that putting a price on carbon, through a cap-and-trade system or carbon tax, would affect demand for both dirty energy and clean energy. That's why, in the long term, a carbon price and more research funding are both important parts of the response to climate change.

DAVID LEONHARDT

International Herald Tribune, 2010

noot 1 a cap-and-trade system is een systeem van uitstootrechten voor schadelijke stoffen; deze rechten zijn tussen bedrijven verhandelbaar.

Jittery crickets

A MOTHER'S care sometimes knows no bounds. It turns out that crickets manage to forewarn their offspring of lurking spiders, despite the small matter of never actually meeting them.

Jonathan Storm, a behavioural ecologist now at the University of South Carolina Upstate, in Spartanburg, briefly exposed labgrown female crickets to wolf spiders whose fangs had been immobilised with wax, then studied the behaviour of their subsequent offspring.

He found that their offspring remained motionless for longer in the presence of spider silk or droppings than the offspring of mothers that had not been exposed to spiders. Staying still is one of the ways that crickets avoid becoming spider food. Exposing the eggs or juvenile crickets themselves to spider cues did not alter their behaviour, suggesting the mothers had influenced this aspect of their young's behaviour during the egg's production.

The maternal heads-up was effective: "forewarned" crickets also knew to make use of a crack in their cage to hide from spiders. They survived three times longer in the presence of spiders than the offspring of naive mothers, on average.

Wild-caught crickets from spiderrich habitats also produce more cautious offspring than mothers from spider-poor habitats, Storm found.

He does not know whether the mother's warning is transmitted to the egg via maternal hormones or some other mechanism.

New Scientist, 2010

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