

# WorldWatch

by Staff

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## Drugs in Africa

Since many African countries do not closely monitor drug traffic, Africa has become a major black market for heroin and cocaine being transshipped from Asia or Latin America to Europe. In addition, it is estimated nine out of ten South African children are regular abusers of glue-sniffing.

## Environment

» Millions of dollars have been spent in the past century removing logjams, driftwood and fallen trees from nearly every major river and stream on the West Coast. It was postulated this would be good for fish. Now, millions more are being spent to build artificial logjams because migrating salmon have no place to rest, erosion is increasing and fish habitat and food sources are diminishing.

» Female mollusks in a Lisbon lagoon are developing male characteristics. Biologists believe toxic chemicals from boat paint are polluting the water and discouraging the algae the mollusks feed on, threatening the species.

» A rat disaster warning is in effect in northern China. Ninety-two million pounds of grain were lost last year, as the rodents ravaged 576,000 acres of farmland. The rats store the grain for winter, prompting local residents to dig for the buried caches. The problem is worsening because of a decline in natural rat predators.

## Peacemakers?

U.S. President Bill Clinton, U.S. peace envoy Richard Holbrooke, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Pope John Paul II are among nominees for this year's Nobel Peace Prize.

## Religion

» Norway's only female bishop caused a religious split by appointing a lesbian as a priest in the state church. She urged the Lutheran church to allow homosexuals and lesbians into all jobs, saying Christ preached love and tolerance for all.

» The Methodist church has broken with centuries of Christian tradition by including the first prayer to "God the Mother" in its worship book for the new millennium. It is the first time in Britain that a mainstream church has referred to God as a woman in an official service book.

## Silent Spring

According to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, England's songbirds are forgetting how to sing. Traffic noise is blamed for interfering with the bird's ability to hear one another. Some species

have declined rapidly, including finches, warblers and orioles. The birds are no longer learning their mating calls, and instead of a melodious song, some can manage only a pathetic tweet.

## **Y2K**

» With only 275 days to go until 2000, more than half of China's most crucial enterprises cannot identify or solve the millennium computer glitch, reported the Beijing Morning Post.

» There is growing concern in corporate America that "bad fixes" may worsen the Y2K problem. Companies hired to remedy the problem are now beginning to refuse to guarantee their work, as mistakes are showing up at the rate of 1,200 bad fixes for 100,000 lines of computer code repaired.