from 5.9 to 45.2, is positively associated with childhood brain cancer, plasma selenium, use of sniff, and literacy, but negatively with esophageal cancer, red blood cell glutathione reductase, pipe smoking, and agricultural employment.

What are we to make of such associations? The authors offer only one conclusion: the least risk for cancer is generated by consumption of fresh plant foods. Beyond that, they warn us repeatedly to consider correlations meaningful only when they are supported by reasonable explanations and confirming data. Many—perhaps most—of the statistically significant correlations are spurious. The authors challenge readers to distinguish signal from noise and to develop verifiable hypotheses.

Readers who would like to take on this challenge may request copies of the 366 scatter plots for any one data item against all others. It would be a shame if the price of this book inhibited such requests.

Like the best of the coffee-table genre, this book should reward readers with many hours of involvement and pleasure. The authors promise an imminent second volume containing more recent data that will permit evaluation of time trends. I, for one, can hardly wait.

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The two principal forms of grammatical errors are typical of modern biological writing: mismatching in number between subject and verb, and the general equated to the specific by commas, as in “In the firefly, Photinus collarstrans (Coleoptera, Lampyridae), females are flightless,” when this is only one among thousands of species of fireflies. The graphs suffer slightly from inconsistent styles of lettering.

The editors give no explanation of the inception of Insect Defenses, nor do they explain the readership to which it was aimed. It lacks a systematic index, so cannot be intended as a reference work for entomologists, and it does not attempt to give encyclopedic coverage. It contains few numerical data and is not a presentation of new research results. It does not lead to the ultimate in reductionism—mathematical models of predator-prey relationships—although this would appeal to some potential readers. In short, biologists will find it easy to read. In an unconstrained style, it allows the author of each chapter to develop a hypothesis-filled essay around a series of vignettes of predator-prey interactions. The subjects of the chapters appear to be selected to give balance to the book as a whole in covering the topic of insect defenses. An alternative presentation as a coffee-table book, with colored illustrations and less text, might conceivably have attracted a wider readership, but would have been a riskier venture for a publisher.

David Evans is a naturalist at Beaverbrook Reservation in Belmont, Massachusetts, and Justin Schmidt is a biologist at the Southwestern Biological Institute in Tucson, Arizona. If they assembled the book because of a fascination with the subject, and if by having it published they can transmit their fascination to a wide readership, they deserve commendation. Nobody should grumble at a paperback price of $24.95 for a 482-page book that opens the doors to this subject: may there be many more volumes.

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