



## BOOK FROM A BOG

The finding last week of an ancient Christian psalm book, thought to be perhaps 1200 years old, has stunned archaeologists, who have already drawn comparisons to the Dead Sea Scrolls.

A bulldozer working in a bog in the Irish midlands uncovered the ancient book, written on vellum. Archaeologists from the National Museum of Ireland excavated the book, which is still in its original binding, and surrounding material. "This is an exceptional find," says museum head Ragnhald Ó Floinn. "The last find of a pre-1000 A.D. manuscript was in the 1790s." He adds that although ancient bodies have been found in bogs, preserved by the peat, this is a first for a manuscript.

The book has 40 sheets of vellum, comprising 80 pages, and contains psalms written in a Latin script used by scribes in early Christian Ireland. The script resembles the rounded letters in the 1200-year-old Book of Kells, an illuminated manuscript of the Gospel, says Ó Floinn. The text of Psalm 83 is visible, and experts think the book may contain all the psalms as well as clues to Irish religious practices of that period.

Scholars around the world are looking forward to studying the find once it has been safely dried out and preserved. Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, a professor of history at the National University of Ireland, Galway, says, "It is very rare to have a full manuscript, and biblical scholars will be salivating."

## Nice Song—I'll Have Another

Owners of bars with disappointing revenues may want to change their CD collections. A study published in the current *International Journal of Hospitality Management* suggests that replacing Top 40 pop fare with classic drinking songs may inspire increased consumption.

Several previous studies have indicated that music influences customer drinking choices; one paper showed that people took home more expensive bottles when a wine store played classical music, and another showed that music from Germany or France made the enophiles more likely to pick up German or French wines.

For the new study, Céline Jacob of the Research Center in Economics and Management at the Université de Rennes 1 in France asked the owner of a small bar in a French coastal town to play one of three types of popular music during the afternoon: current hits, songs from animated movies such as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, or classic French drinking songs. For each genre, about 30 patrons were secretly monitored and their tabs tallied. With the drinking songs playing, customers stayed an average of 21 minutes—compared to 13 minutes with the Top 40 hits and 14 with the cartoon songs. They also spent 50% more, averaging €4.96 apiece.

Psychologist Alexandra Logue of the City University of New York calls the outcomes "very interesting." She says drinking songs may cause physical reactions that promote drinking, just as thinking of food can raise insulin levels.

## EYE ON THE IBIS

The northern bald ibis, once the bird of the pharaohs and now the Middle East's rarest bird, might take a step back from the brink of extinction with a new tagging program.

There are about 227 of the birds in the wild, mostly in Morocco and Turkey. Most ibises are sedentary, but 6 years ago, scientists discovered a tiny group in Syria that left their breeding grounds every summer, returning in February. Several wildlife organizations have now teamed up with the Syrian Agriculture Ministry to find out where they spend the rest of the year.

Last month, three of the ibises were outfitted with transmitters allowing them to be tracked by satellite. The seven-member colony "has not been growing, which means there must be problems on migration or wintering grounds," says researcher Jeremy Lindsell of the U.K.'s Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Scientists now hope to find out why. Since the birds took off on 18 July, they have traveled southward nearly 3200 kilometers, reaching the Yemeni border last Friday. Updates on their progress can be seen at [www.rspb.org.uk/tracking/northern\\_bald\\_ibis.asp](http://www.rspb.org.uk/tracking/northern_bald_ibis.asp).



## << A CLOSE-UP OF HISTORY



This vintage 1830 microscope, used by Gregor Mendel, the progenitor of genetics, is one of the items that will be on display starting 15 September at the Field Museum in Chicago, Illinois. Mendel, an Augustinian friar, did his groundbreaking research on pea plants in the garden of the Abbey of St. Thomas in Brno, then

part of the Austrian Empire. He used the instrument, which magnified pollen 179 times, to facilitate pollination of a plant with a single grain—something Darwin and others had said was impossible. The exhibit includes photographs, manuscripts, and Mendel's gardening tools, as well as videos and interactive displays.