On the Cover
This map shows the sea ice extent—the amount of ocean surface area covered by ice—in September 2012, its lowest point since record-keeping began in 1979.
NATIONAL SNOW AND ICE DATA CENTER; GREEN MARBLE

CONTENTS

PROOF

EMBARK

EXPLORE

8

What the Tide Brings In
An endless supply of plastic trash from a stretch of New York shoreline is assembled into sculptures that are colorful but sobering.
PHOTOGRAPHS BY BARRY ROSENTHAL

17

THE BIG IDEA
Why You Like What You Like
Our personal tastes and our actions are driven by hidden biological forces.
BY BILL SULLIVAN

CAPTURED
A Solar System Giant, Ready for Its Close-Up
A stunning data-driven image of Jupiter.
IMAGE BY KEVIN GILL

32

BASIC INSTINCTS
Shy by Nature but Showy in Conquest
Western tragopan males flaunt feather finery to woo mates.
BY PATRICIA EDMONDS

THROUGH THE LENS
Death Comes for a Crocodile
In Australia, an epic hunt for a saltwater crocodile ends on an unexpected note.
BY TREVOR BECK FROST

ALSO
Bright Giant Squirrels
An Art Scientist Funky Cheese

ALSO
Herbs in Detail A Tool for Tigers
Features

The New Cold War
In the Arctic, nations are jostling for access to a frozen frontier.
BY NEIL SHEA
PHOTOGRAPHS BY LOUIE PALU
P. 50

The Threat Below
Permafrost is thawing fast, releasing carbon that fuels warming.
BY CRAIG WELCH
PHOTOGRAPHS BY KATIE ORLINSKY
P. 74

Uncovering an Arctic Mystery
The Franklin Expedition set out to chart the Northwest Passage. Then it vanished.
BY HEATHER PRINGLE
P. 100

Eyes on the Ice
Studying the warming Arctic means joining a unique community.
BY JENNIFER KINGSLEY
PHOTOGRAPHS BY ESTHER HORVATH
P. 104

Alone With Wolves
A moving encounter with one of Earth's most adaptable predators.
BY NEIL SHEA
PHOTOGRAPHS BY RONAN DONOVAN
P. 116

Before It Melts
Camping trips teach Inuit youth how to survive on the frigid land.
BY ACACIA JOHNSON
P. 134