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From the issue dated September 24, 2004

Major Breakthrough in Steve Research

By DANIEL ENGBER

More scientists named Steve live on the East and West Coasts than anywhere else in the United States, according to a groundbreaking research paper. Among the study's authors were Stephen W. Hawking, two Nobel Prize-winning physicists named Steve, and 437 other scientists named Steve, Steven, Stephen, Stephane, or Stephanie.

The paper emerged from the National Center for Science Education's Project Steve, an effort to compile a list of scientists who both support the theory of evolution and happen to be named Steve. "The original idea was to mock these lists you see from creationists, of scientists doubting Darwinism," says Eugenie C. Scott, executive director of the center and one of the few authors of the paper not named Steve. A footnote to the study explains that the name Steve was chosen to honor the late Harvard paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould.

When participants started ordering Project Steve T-shirts, Ms. Scott and her colleagues realized they were sitting on a mountain of data. The shirt, which was retrospectively designated the "experimental Steveometry apparatus," provided the researchers with the opportunity to collect sizes and shipping addresses for 284 scientists named Steve. They analyzed the data and wrote up the results for the July/August issue of *Annals of Improbable Research*, a science-humor magazine.

In addition to discovering the "Mid-Continental Steve Deficit," the authors found evidence of sexual dimorphism (it turns out that Stephanies have larger body sizes on average than Steves) as well as insular dwarfism (the "island Steves" of Australia and Britain tend to be smaller than their mainland counterparts).

Send ideas to short.subjects@chronicle.com

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