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Compounds may be environment threat

By SUSAN SCHWARTZ
Time. aff Reporter

POR[illegible]AND — Mysterious man-made compounds called P. C. B.s continue to give environmentalists a nagging headache that could turn into a scream.

Like DDT, P. C. B.s have crept into nature from pole to pole. Like DDT, some of them accumulate in animals, including man.

Small amounts don't kill animals outright. But P. C. B.s can cause fatally-thin eggshells in birds. They can increases susceptibility to disease. And they can interfere with reproduction.

Scientists have studdied the DDT family of chemicals — chlorinated hydrocarbons — and their effects on animals for more than two decades.

Not until the mid 1960s did new equipment detect and measure P. C. B.s in living things. They still cannot be measured accurately.

THE LITTLE that has been learned about P. C. B.s (their jaw-breaking full name is Polychlorinated Biphenyls) was summarized Monday in a Bureau of Sport Fish and wildlife paper read here by E. H. Dustman, a bureau researcher.

He spoke at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources conference here.

Thousands of tons of P. C. B.'s are manufactured in the United States each year, Dustman said. They were first produced in 1929. They are used in transformers to insulate wire, in marine paint, cardboards, detergents, and many other products.

But the government doesn't know how much is manufacturered or how much goes into various products, Dutman said. Companies treat that as a trade secret, he said. As a result, not much is known of how the P. C. B.s have spread into the natural environment.

LIKE THE chlorinated hydrocarbons, P. C. B.s are a family of chemical compounds. Scientists are not yet sure which ones may be harmful.

The amounts of P. C. B.s found in animals increase from prey to predator. Seals and eagles have been found to have 100 to 1,000 times as much P. C. B.s in their bodies as they fish they ate.

P. C. B.s, unlike pesticides, are not used to produce food. As a result, the government has not required elaborate tests of their possible harmful effects. There is no established tolerance level for man or animals.

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