



GOING VIRAL

As little more than carriers of DNA, bacteriophages serve to shuttle genes between diverse ecosystems. The viruses take up genetic material from their bacterial hosts and donate it to future hosts, both near and far. Such genetic movement can spread bacterial traits such as virulence, antibiotic resistance, or adhesion capability—and even introduce novel genes to new environments. While viruses can only move short distances outside of a host, the migration of bacteria, or of the megafauna that bacteria infect, allows phages to traverse the globe.