WINDTRAP (SOLUTION)

by Ong Kah Kien

The first step is to solve the two given sets of clues. Some of the clues, particularly those on the left, are a little less precise, and require observing the two sets of answers to help disambiguate. If each set of answers are connected together as a sequence, the two sequences are in fact reversals of each other. Knowing this will help in solving the remaining clues to get both sets of answers, as summarized in the following table:

Answers for left	Clues on left	Clues on right	Answers for right
DRAUGHT	Swig of a drink	Driving range accessory	TEE
REBECCAS	Romijn and Ferguson	Support for a woman	BRA
DOGCARTS	Horse-drawn carriages	Sudden brief rush of wind	GUST
MEGACOSM	Universe	Squid's ink holder	SAC
GAUL	Frenchman	Soccer score, in Mexico	GOL
BORICUA	Puerto Rican	_____ nova, musical style	BOSSA
SAUCER	UFO, maybe	Movie FX (abbr.)	CGI
ISAAC	Oscar of "Dune"	Former NBA star Gasol	PAU
NIGGARD	Mean and stingy person	Animated image file	GIF
LEGCUFF	Ankle restraint	Fundamental sub-unit of fucoidan (abbr.)	FUC
IGUA	Genus of extinct lizards	Neuter a stallion	GELD
PIGCASSO	Hog painter	Yarn formed of light and dark wool strands	RAGG
BLOGCAST	Short audio clip within an online journal	Ancient Peruvian civilization	INCA
SUGARBEET	Sucrose-rich root vegetable	(Mountainous) Saudi province	ASIR
		South American country (abbr.)	ECUA
		Vietnamese for the Dracontomelon fruit	SAU
		Colombian director Guerra	CIRO
		Macaw protagonist of 2011's "Rio"	BLU
		Shareholders gathering (abbr.)	AGM
		Mixture of soul and calypso music	SOCA
		Precious and semi-precious stones	GEMS
		Part of a Gillette razor's name	TRAC
		Zeus and Odin	GODS
		Approval (abbr.)	ACCE
		Spot in the playoffs	BERTH
		Security worker	GUARD

The 14 answers for the clues on the left are the ones to focus on next, as they all share a commonality. The aha here is that each answer contains exactly one three-letter substring consisting of the letters A, C, G, and/or U (and with no other instances of A, C, G, or U in each answer). These 4 letters are the symbols for the nucleotide bases of RNA – adenine (A), cytosine (C), guanine (G), and uracil (U). This is hinted in the flavortext with the phrases/words “central tide pool” and “base”. And any combination of three bases like the three-letter substrings form a codon that translates to an amino acid, each of which also has a standard one-letter symbol. The special AUG and UGA codons in the first and last answers

are the "start" and (“opal”) "stop" codons which appear at the start and end of a messenger RNA (mRNA) strand. Hence the connected sequence of all the answers represent a single mRNA strand (viewed from the opposite direction for the answers on the right), which is read by ribosomes in a cell to direct protein synthesis. This is hinted in the flavortext with the phrase “sequence of life”, and with the circular pool of water resembling a cell.

The table below summarizes the answers, with the three-letter codon substring highlighted in red, the corresponding amino acids, and their letter symbols:

Answers	Codons	Amino Acids	Symbols
DRAUGHT	AUG	Methionine	(START)
REBECCAS	CCA	Proline	P
DOGCARTS	GCA	Alanine	A
MEGACOSM	GAC	Aspartic acid	D
GAUL	GAU	Aspartic acid	D
BORICUA	CUA	Leucine	L
SAUCER	AUC	Isoleucine	I
ISAAC	AAC	Asparagine	N
NIGGARD	GGA	Glycine	G
LEGCUFF	GCU	Alanine	A
IGUA	GUA	Valine	V
PIGCASSO	GCA	Alanine	A
BLOGCAST	GCA	Alanine	A
SUGARBEET	UGA	Stop (Opal)	(STOP)

The amino acid symbols in order spell the clue phrase – PADDLING A VA’A.
A va’a is a Hawaiian canoe, so the answer for this puzzle is **CANOEING**.

Constructor’s notes:
As much as possible, I always wanted to include in SGPH a good variety of puzzles that touched on different topics/fields which could appeal to solvers with various backgrounds, such as Biology, Chemistry and Mathematics. However, as the puzzles are written based on the required answers and hunt theme, it is not always possible to do so. Also, the puzzles could not require too in-depth knowledge of such topics. In this case, the notion of deathstills reclaiming water from the dead gave me the thematic idea that the water which is so critical to life on Arrakis, would in itself contain a wealth of environmental DNA. So I was able to employ the concept of RNA codons (oft-used in hunt puzzles, and hence relatively well-known amongst solvers) as the central theme for this puzzle. The use of RNA bases instead of DNA bases, which has thymine (T) instead of uracil (U), is also clued by the reference to a single strand mRNA (there are two strands of DNA in each chromosome). The idea of connecting the answers into a sequence using two sets of clues that yielded reversed answers was thematically inspired by a 2024 Mystery Hunt puzzle by Craig Kasper.