Winding Trails: by Al Hobart

Thursday, November 10, 1966
Illinois Valley News,

Food Chain

Operation of the Great Food Chain – the stronger species preying on the weaker ones – seems like a cruel way for the world's animal life to conduct its affairs. Still, if all the earth's meat eaters were deprived of their favorite sustenance and had to switch over to vegetable matter for their sole food supply the plants would soon be all gone, and we'd starve to death. So in spite of the horror, cruelty, and suffering–inherent in this particular joker among Nature's questionable manifestations –I guess the sensible thing for us to do is to just shake our heads, shudder delicately, and try to make the best of it.

An innocent plant-louse contentedly guzzles the juice of an obliging plant. A marauding spider, preferring his sap second-hand, pounces on the nice plump aphid. Then, while he's licking his chops in a self-satisfied manner, he's gobbled up by a hungry, on-the-job, bird. No sooner does the spider disappear than his captor becomes the captive of a lunch-seeking hawk. The hawk? – I don't know what happens to the hawk. I suspect that, as in the case of man, hawks finally wind up in the tummies of the little bacteria– and the Great Food Chain has come full circle.

Not long ago I saw a vivid example of the food chain in operation. Outside my friend's window grows a hazel bush that had become infested with plant-lice. The weather being warm and the omnipresent yellow-jackets active, they soon discovered the food-laden bush and swarmed all over it devouring the aphids with gusto or carrying them off to their nests. A day or two later the whole scene had changed. The bald-faced hornets, traditional enemies of the yellow-jackets, had spotted the activity in the hazel bush; and now the yellow jackets, considered a delicacy by the formidable big hornets, and no match for them in combat, became the hunted and the devoured. Predominating color-scheme of the hazel bush had changed from green and yellow to white and black as the savage bald-faced hornets went about their grisly task of helping to keep the world's species in balance. As in the case of the hawk, I think that was the visible end of that particular food chain – I can't imagine anything hungry enough and foolish enough to tackle a bald-faced hornet.

There is another sort of food chain that runs down the scale instead of up; that is, instead of the predators becoming bigger and stronger the farther along the chain; in this type the links become smaller as the chain increases in length. This second food chain is composed of the parasites. While their activity is less horrible and lethal than that of the first group, they're fully as disgusting and far more annoying. Most notorious of the lot is probably the well-known flea, for thousands of years a boon companion of man and animal alike. No one has ever been known to die from the uncomplicated bite of a flea, but if all the frantic scratching he has caused could be harnessed and converted to electricity we'd have no further use for water power, fuel power – or even sunshine.

And even fleas have their troubles with parasites, as was long ago pointed out by Jonathan Swift, the great Dublin satirist, more than 200 years ago, thus: "So, naturalists observe a flea has smaller fleas that on him prey, and these have smaller still to bite 'em, and so proceed ad infinitum."

Of course, although his methods in getting the victim's meat into his tummy are more refined, man is top dog in this entire wolf-eat cat-eat mouse-eat grasshopper rigmarole. He has devised fiendishly clever and effective tools and procedures to bring the flesh of his choice to his table in the most appetizing form, let the feathers and hair fall where they may, and the victim's souls drift prematurely off to their respective special departments in Valhalla.

That is the price the animals must pay for the privilege of being allowed to propagate their species and to enjoy the thrilling adventure of trying to keep from being eaten in this civilized world. Even if we could think of less savage ways to exist in our companionship with our fellow animals, far be it from us to step out of line and disrupt one of Nature's principal – ug! –schemes of life – the Great Food Chain.

ROGUE VALLEY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

SENIOR SPOTLIGHT

Sponsored by the Rogue Valley Council of Governments

Illinois Valley Family Coalition

The Illinois Valley Family Coalition (IVFC) is a community organization helping those in need. They provide prevention, education, advocacy and referral services in partnership with other community resources. The IVFC is available to all residents in the Illinois Valley located at 535 E. River Street in Cave Junction, 541-592-6139.

They will be selling "Sees" Candy this year for the holidays! They will be selling candy at the IVFC and Saturday, Nov. 12, 2016 at Shop Smart and will have a table set up on the inside along with our "Bagging Groceries" Event from 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Come out and show your support! The proceeds of these events will go to upgrading the IVFC building and staffing..

Food & Friends Menu

FRIDAY – NOV. 11
HOLIDAY
VETERANS DAY
MONDAY – NOV. 14
MACARONI & CHEESE
WEDNESDAY - NOV. 16
ORANGE GLAZED CHICKEN

If you need meals delivered please call *541-955-8839.*

Sponsored by I.V. Wellness Resources

HEARING EXAMS

Last week we looked at doing hearing checks, now what do we do if we think we have a hearing loss? Good health practice requires that a person with a hearing loss have a medical examination by a licensed physician before purchasing a hearing aid. The purpose of the medical exam is to assure that all medically treated conditions that may affect hearing are identified and treated before a hearing aid is purchased. Medical doctors that specialize in the ear are referred to as an otologists and those specializing in the ear, nose and throat are otolaryngologists. After the medical exam, the physician will refer you to an audiologist or hearing aid dispenser to assess your ability with and without a hearing aid. An audiologist is a university-trained Master's educated professional who specializes in hearing testing, rehabilitation services such as; auditory training, lip/speech reading, individual and family counseling and the dispensing of other assistive hearing devices and research related to hearing and hearing loss. A hearing aid specialist or dispenser is a business person who may conduct hearing evaluations for the purpose of selling hearing aids. Hearing aid specialists can take an optional 20 week home study course to qualify for a certificate issued by their national membership association. The hearing aid evaluation will enable the audiologist or dispenser to select and fit a hearing aid to your individual needs. If you have reservations about your ability to adapt to amplification, you should inquire about the availability of a trial-rental or purchase-option program. Many hearing aid dispensers offer programs that permit you to wear a hearing aid for a period of time for a nominal fee after which you may decide if you want to purchase the hearing aid.

What questions should you ask? Any one of the professionals mentioned above may measure some aspect of your hearing. Some questions you may want to ask include; Do I have a hearing loss? If so, what type of loss and how much of a loss do I have? And, in what pitch/range? Would medical treatment or surgery help? What can I do to improve my communication ability? How much do your services cost? Can you provide me with information about financial help. Who would you recommend I go to next? If I need a hearing aid, can I use it for a trial period? What fees are not refundable? Are the aids covered by a manufacturer's warranty?

Next week we will discuss other options that are available.

For comments you can go to www.ivwellnessresources@gmail.com.

Illinois Valley Wellness Resources

Senior Bulletin

HOME SAFETY EVALUATAIONS

Call Pat Jenkins, RN, MSN with I.V. Wellness Resources for a low cost evaluation at 541-415-0465.

MEDITATION

Mindful Meditation classes provided at Healthy U, 535 River St. 541-592-4888 Monday, Nov. 14 and Monday, Nov. 21 from 4:30 - 5:30, Classes by donation.

FREE for Seniors

If you are a senior and want to place a ***FREE AD*** for a living or health care need call Laura at 541-592-2541 or email laura@illinois-valley-news.com.

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