



This month's 'Ecola Ilahee' column has been postponed until next month. As the deadline approached for this month's issue, I was out on some far-flung fjord, where computers are scarce and even the longest, most ambitious extension cords never venture. An unexpected abundance of "letters to the Editor" arrived in the Upper Left Edge offices this month, however, and I gladly bequeath the column space to civic minded citizens with axes to grind. Keep those editorial cards and letters coming! Until next time, -DD

Dear Editor,

This spring I became aware of a hummingbird nest in a Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga taxifolia*) bough just ten feet outside my kitchen window. It was in a dark and secure place where two limbs crossed, and it was difficult to see whether the nest was occupied. During April's wet and blustery weather, I could just make out the little bird hunkered down in its nest, safe and snug in its swaying retreat. It was very pleasant to note my little companion's comings and goings as I stood at my kitchen sink, and I secretly enthused about the possibility of observing it brood its young. This was not to be; the endeavor fell through because of Swiss needle cast.

For those who came in late, Swiss needle cast is a fungus disease that attacks a fir's needles, interrupting photosynthesis and hindering the tree's ability to feed itself. Soon after bud break, spring growth is re-infected and the affected trees yellow and drop their blighted needles. It attacks firs of all ages, and like the nest tree outside my window, virtually every Douglas fir within twenty miles of the north coast is infected. The widespread presence of this disease is caused by monocultural reforestation, and the discoloration in young plantations\* can be easily seen by the casual observer. So far no effective treatment has been devised. It is unclear whether this is a fatal malady, but the retarded growth is disastrous to the owners (*Corpredatorii speculatoria*) of industrial forestlands\*.

As the fir needles fell, the nest lost its camouflage, and before too long it tumbled onto my driveway where I retrieved it. I think it is likely that once its location was revealed, starlings made quick work of its contents. My husband Shorty says this is utter nonsense, that the nest lost its support, since it was woven into the needles of the twig that held it. He used to work in the woods and is a know-it-all. The nest itself is a sublime fabrication, about the size of a golf ball sliced in half, the interior lined with the finest down imaginable and its exterior festooned with an intricate arrangement of lichens. It now rests atop my fridge. Bye Bye Birdie.

Flora Picksniff  
Clatsop County, OR

\* Please forgive the redundancy. The terms "young plantations" and "industrial forestlands" are interchangeable, and an all too familiar refrain. There are no other type.

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To the Editor,

When my family and I traveled to Cannon Beach in the past we really admired the town's efforts to conserve water. Drinking water was optional at many restaurants, and not placed on tables until we requested it. Little signs in motels and restaurants politely asked us to limit our use of water. The town was coming close to overtaxing the water system's capacity. Also, apparently the water comes out of Ecola Creek and the draw on the lower water levels in the summertime was starting to harm the fish and other things that live in the creek. The waste water from all of the town's toilets and drains is also eventually routed back into the creek too. So according to the signs, the less water we used the better things would be for the town's water supply, the sewage system, and the environmental health of the stream and the fish that live there. We told friends back home about Cannon Beach's efforts to limit water use, and to save the water of the creek and the fish that depend on it, and people were impressed. It was one more thing that made Cannon Beach special. Now we notice that all these signs are gone, and that water arrives at our tables automatically, just like it does everywhere else.

What has changed? Is the town no longer overexploiting its water supply during the summer? I doubt it. There are more visitors in Cannon Beach every year and there are more motels and houses too. Are the fish out of danger? Certainly not. Everything I read says that salmon are in big trouble on the north coast. Maybe it is because people have gotten lazy, or the tourists find it upsetting when they come to Cannon Beach and learn that there are limits on their consumptive behavior. More and more people come to Cannon Beach expecting a luxury vacation experience and only care about the local environment when it doesn't interfere with their fun and their inalienable right to consume more. I may be wrong, but it seems to me that this is where the problem lies.

But the water issue won't go away, even if people have decided to ignore it. Every room in every motel in Cannon Beach will use thousands of gallons of water this year, and then flush it or run it down the drain when they are done with it. Multiply this amount of water by the number of rooms in town, add to it the water used by restaurants, seasonal and rental homes, etc., and you can see that the water use in Cannon Beach is truly staggering. The great majority of this water is used in the summertime, when creek levels are already low and the water too warm for many fish. Every drop of water that Cannon Beach uses comes from this creek and then goes back into it, in the form of polluted waste water. If the creek and the town water supply has not already reached its limits, these limits are surely just around the corner. Why has Cannon Beach given up on water conservation?

A. Jones  
Seattle, Washington

To the Editor,


While thumbing idly through the May 31st New Yorker, I was pulled up short by a Weyerhaeuser advertisement. There, in the middle of a full page spread, was the picture of an artfully painted black bear in a forest clearing. In the white space where the sky should have been above it, there appeared in large type, "Meet the president of the Homeowner's Association."

Below the bear, in discrete type and in a conversational tone, were two paragraphs extolling Weyerhaeuser's sensitivity to all the forest critters and modestly pointing out the pains the company takes to assure their happiness and well being while in its care.

The timber companies that manage our local forestlands apparently take a different view. Bears, black, brown or otherwise, are not welcome but instead have been trapped and killed in the tree farms which have supplanted the forests immediately surrounding Cannon Beach. The justification for this is that bears have an appetite for young trees. It's amazing how the timber industry portrays itself as a benevolent protector while its little known conduct proves just the opposite.

Tevis Dooley Jr.  
Cannon Beach Or

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