

Left Behind

The dolphin and the butterfly

Yangtze River's freshwater dolphin, the baiji (*Lipotes vexillifer*), and Willamette Valley's Fender's blue butterfly (*Icaricia icaroides fenderi*) shared at least six characteristics: 1) Bluish color; 2) reputation as a benign, beautiful creature; 3) depletion by humans of food source to one thousandth of its previous extent; 4) decline of its own population to dangerously few individuals; 5) governmental recognition as endangered; and, 6) after being recognized as endangered, the continuation of human activities known to threaten their extinction.



After the baiji was known to be near extinction, the Chinese continued to fish illegally with electricity; build the Three Gorges Dam; multiply; overfish the river; and clog the Yangtze with noisy boats that have baiji-threatening propellers.

Similarly, since the Fender's blue butterfly has been listed as endangered, Willamette Valley-ites have continued to plan buildings for sites occupied by the butterfly's essential host plant (which is officially threatened with extinction) and on sites which could readily be restored as habitat for the butterfly. On one such site, we plan to build structures in which to teach human children about the nearby depleted wetlands. On others, we are variously planning more housing developments for our growing population, a crematorium, more big-box stores and widened streets that might help car- or truck-bound drivers shave a few minutes off their car commutes and truck deliveries.

One more similarity: Their names foretell doom. The baiji's genus name is *Lipotes*, meaning "left behind," so chosen because of the dolphin's small territory. The Fender's genus name is *Icaricia*, after the Greek story of Icarus, who died when his wings were melted by the sun.

On the other hand, the porpoise and the butterfly were quite different: While a few Fenders are still with us, the baiji was pronounced extinct a few weeks ago. International experts found no remaining baiji during a 2,200-mile expedition down the Yangtze in late 2006.

A baiji weighed up to 500 pounds; a Fender's blue butterfly weighs about a feather (which is a safe guess, given the range in feather sizes).

The baiji used its long snout to eat almost any kind of fish as long as it was smaller than 2.5 inches wide. Fender's blue butterfly uses its long proboscis to drink nectar from flowers.

A female baiji had to be a grown-up six-year old before mothering her first, single baby. A Fender's blue female can lay eggs just one year after hatching as a larva and has only 15 days to do so after emerging as a butterfly.

The baiji navigated in murky water with echolocation (sound); Fender's blue swims through clear air with sight as well as smell and sound.

The Fender's needs complex mixtures of upland and wetland prairie. The baiji needed eddies and meanders below Yangtze tributary convergences and sandbars.

In other words, the *biology* of the two creatures provided the differences; the *human response* to the two creatures' worsening plight has been the same.

Of course, there are more to come – the Yangtze finless porpoise is now endangered; so also the Willamette daisy in these same Willamette Valley wetlands. And then there are the polar bears and all the other species who will not be able to find new habitat as we heat up our atmosphere; the sage grouse as we dig for global-warming oil and gas and graze our global-warming-methane cows in the remaining sagebrush ... and and ... and ...

What are the options to despair? The three eternal standbys: think, care, act.

THINK. People like Al Gore are helping us *think* – see *An Inconvenient Truth*. Peruse www.RealClimate.org, a website maintained by climate scientists. Read *A Shadow and a Song*, the story of how homeowners, NASA, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Disney World failed the dusky seaside sparrow.

CARE. Nothing will help you *care* more than empathizing with an individual species. Rent the videos *March of the Penguins* and *Winged Migrations* to get a feeling for the extraordinary skills and effort species use to live and produce their unique babies. Read the humorous stories in *Last Chance to See*, co-authored by Douglas Adams, author of *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.

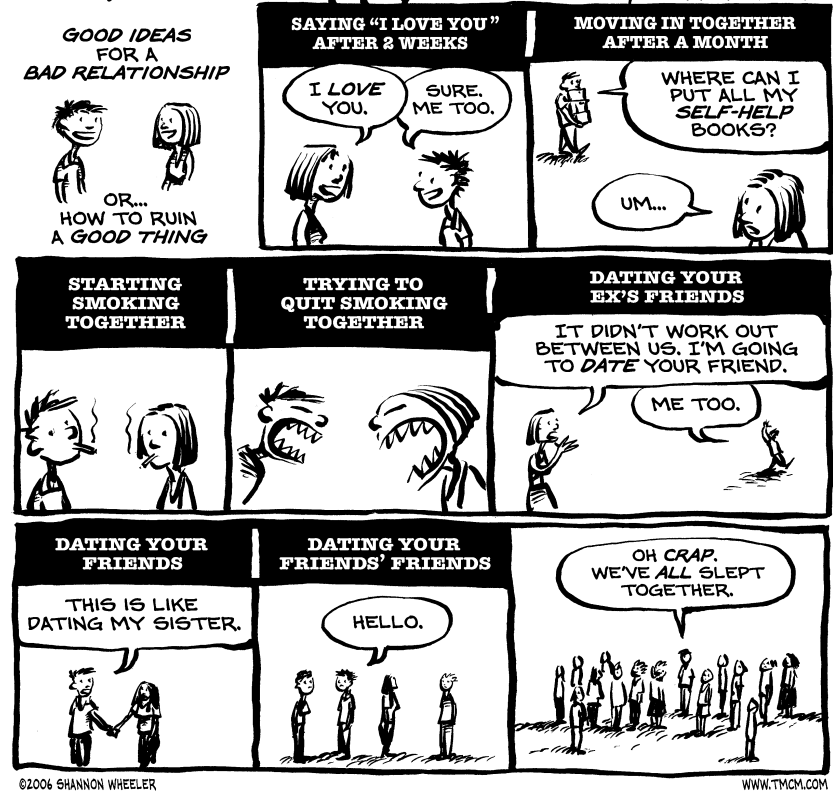
ACT. Invest in citizen organizations that work to save the habitat of endangered or declining species. You might figure out what you spend annually to take care of your dog or cat and match that with donations to such a group.

Be inconvenienced by truth. If we don't want to lose most of our clever and beautiful friends, we have to quit destroying their outdoors with our reproduction, consumption and technologies.

Mary O'Brien of Eugene has worked as a public interest scientist since 1981. She can be reached at mob@efn.org

How to Be Happy

by Shannon Wheeler



Letters TO THE EDITOR

ON BLAME AND ANGER

I have been following with interest the history, commentary and reactions to the anarchist and eco-radical movements in Eugene. Yes, we each have different landmarks and roads on our individual maps, but people, please stop and just look at the road dust on your own feet. It is the same dust as everyone else's! Why impatiently argue over the map when we all have the same compass, the compassionate desire for peace and justice?

The meeting of everyone's needs, from the anarchist to the Republican or the apathetic hedonist, is the definition of a functional democracy. We invent the future as we move forward together, and we are moving as one body, like it or not, weak and powerful together. It takes more courage and strength of character to trust our companions on this journey, to create dialogue and risk-taking communication, to maintain speed and change lanes, than it does to take a stand.

Blame and anger narrow and constrict movement, eliminate creative answers and feed the domination paradigm, and, quite frankly, we cannot afford to betray our own dignity and sovereignty by participating in games of power and intimidation. Most people will tell you that the beloved community that King and Gandhi envisioned is really where they would prefer to live, and they are in despair about our culture ever providing that for them. As soon as the dilemma is reframed as beloved community coming from within themselves, it disappears.

Compassion appears naturally when we take responsibility for it.

David Hazen
The Peace Alliance Campaign
for a Department of Peace
Eugene

WACKO ENVIROS

Regarding the article in the Dec. 28 issue entitled "Holiday Protests," as a longtime resident of Oregon I am disgusted that liberal, intolerant activists would choose

Christmas as a time to go to a personal residence and make some kind of protest. That is totally over the line and indicative of the kind of leftist intolerance that the radical environmentalists in this area think is OK. It is not OK, and residents of southwest Eugene and others are shocked at this kind of activist behavior. How would those protesters like it if others who disagreed with their politics went to their houses at the holidays and did this kind of activity?

The problem with the left and this kind of protest is they just don't get it. The liberals like the environmentalist wacko movement want us to tolerate their views even when it's clearly over the line. In this "Holiday Protests" article clearly environmentalism is a new religion for these people who apparently have nothing better to do at the Christmas holidays than to go to someone's personal residence — for two days — and harass them. By the second day even the neighbors had had enough. One gal could be heard telling them to "Move on," which the protesters finally did.

EW's editors and writers are wrong to promote this kind of behavior. The left needs to show more respect for those folks who disagree with them, especially at the holidays. Clearly the left is too intolerant and should be condemned in a town that supposedly respects diversity. This kind of behavior backfires on the activists and their supporters like *Eugene Weekly*.

Suzanne L. Penegor
Eugene

THANKS, CONDI

I would like to thank Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice for helping me understand the noble cause that has cost us thousands of lives and billions of dollars. The war in Iraq is an investment (to put money to use by purchase or expenditure in something offering profitable returns) and Ms. Rice says it's "worth the investment." I'm no financial wizard like Ms. Rice, but I think the \$2 billion that disappeared along with the former Iraqi electricity minister Alham al-Samaraie