

KILLER KITTIES

I hope everyone saw the June 15 R-G article "Bird Populations Down." On June 16 *The Oregonian* had a similar article and identified the leading cause to be house cats. The extinction of 40 species of birds has been attributed to cats. There are many studies from universities on this topic, and with the new Audubon figures it's not a debatable issue. Portland's Audubon Care Center says cats are the main cause of maimed birds turned in for medical attention. In 40 years in Oregon we have decimated 60 percent of the Brewers blackbird, 79 percent of the Rufus hummingbird, 27 percent of the Western meadowlark, the snowy plover [and] the list goes on.

Any person peddling the Fern Ridge Bike Path can see that cats outnumber nutria in the Amazon Creek. In my discussions with cat lovers, I have found most to be militantly against keeping cats indoors but this must change. I see cats as the new American sacred cow and expect a fight similar to banning smoking in public places.

The no-kill movement must be leaders in teaching people to keep cats indoors. They must come up with an answer for feral cats, which greatly outnumber cat lovers, if they are ever to broaden their support. J.R. Yeager in San Francisco, who started the trap, neuter and release program, is now against this tech-

nique, and you can read his hard earned opinion at www.abcbirds.org/cats/NFWF.pdf

Keeping your cat indoors can be one of the most effective think-globally-act-locally actions you can take.

*Greg Norman
Eugene*

THEY WON'T CALL

I have seen the recent letters about Greenhill Humane Society, and I would like to comment on my experience with them. For the most part, I found the staff (management in particular) uninterested in doing everything possible to find all animals their "forever home," as their website proudly states.

I asked them if they were unable to find my surrendered pet a home, would they call me before they euthanized? I was informed, to my surprise, the answer is no! I was assured this was not an unusual practice. I wonder if there are others who have had this kind of experience there or, even worse, been told they would get a call and didn't.

I called the shelters in Corvallis, Redmond, Medford, Roseburg and Portland. I found that each of these humane societies will call the previous owner prior to euthanizing an animal. Why won't Greenhill?

Needless to say, I didn't leave my pet at Greenhill. I will not be calling on them again

for assistance, nor will I be donating any additional money to them until this narrow-minded policy and the policy makers change.

*Samantha Norton
Eugene*

THE GIFT OF DEATH

In response to Bev Jorgensen's letter May 31, let me explain why I believe euthanasia is the kindest gift to a dog or cat unwanted and unloved.

Every day in the U.S., tens of thousands of puppies and kittens are born, and there will never be enough homes for all these animals. Shelters are stuck with the heart-wrenching job of dealing with unwanted animals. Euthanasia is a reality because of people who abandon animals, refuse to sterilize their animals and patronize pet shops and breeders instead of adopting stray animals or animals from shelters.

Some people wonder why "surplus" animals can't simply live in shelters instead of being killed. Even if government-sponsored and private shelters had the resources to house the millions of homeless animals born in the U.S. each year (and they don't), "no-kill" shelters do not provide a solution to the problem of animal-companion homelessness. Dogs, cats and other animal companions need much more than food, water and a cage

or pen. They also need lots of loving care, regular and sustained companionship, respect for their individuality and the opportunity to run and play. As difficult as it may be for us to accept, euthanasia (when carried out by veterinarians or trained shelter professionals with a painless intravenous injection of sodium pentobarbital) is often the most compassionate and dignified way for unwanted animals to leave an uncaring world.

www.HelpingAnimals.com may also be useful for additional information. Thank you for caring enough to write a letter about this.

*Curtis Taylor
Eugene*

WHAT WILL YOU DRIVE?

With Eugene's proposed gas tax increase come howls of protest from those station owners whose prices will be uncompetitive with gas stations outside Eugene and from customers who are stressed about paying so much already. Reasonable enough, except that such taxes will be the least of their worries if fuel prices continue to double every five years as they have so far. If you don't expect gas to cost \$5 a gallon in a couple years, you just haven't been paying attention or are rich enough not to care.

Most vehicles on the road today will probably be recycled long before they wear out

viewpoint BY RACHAEL CARNES

These Are My Tools

Preschoolers get a taste of authority

An open letter to Mayor Kitty Piercy:
As regular patrons for the programming we enjoy at the Eugene Public Library downtown branch, my children (ages 5 and 1) and I cheerfully came in on June 13 for preschool story time.

The librarian sang some songs with the children and read a book on safety and then introduced Sgt. Lisa Barrong.

Barrong had a sunny disposition, and the kids clearly welcomed her. And the beginning of the presentation seemed to be as expected, "I wear a blue uniform, it looks like this, and whenever you need help, you can talk to someone dressed like me."

Then she described what was special about her uniform: Her radio, her badge, her police I.D.

Then Sgt. Barrong made what I would consider a grievous error in judgment: In front of a room full of very young children, she said, "Now, for my work I bring some tools," and she pointed to her belt.

"What kind of tools does a builder use?"

And the children answered.

"And a doctor?"

Again, responses.

"Well, these are the tools I use to do my job."

Then she proceeded to bring the items out of their holsters, one by one.

"This is spray, and when the bad people are fighting, I have to use this on them, and it makes their eyes sting and they cry."

"This is a nightstick," she said, unfurling the imposing club with a jolt. "And when the bad people fight, sometimes I have to hit them with this to make them stop."

She demonstrated hitting in the air.

"These are handcuffs," she continued. "And when people are bad, sometimes they're going to hurt other people, or even themselves, then I have to put these on."

By this point, at least 10 people had left the room.

"And this is my gun."

One would imagine this is a prime opportunity to preach a message of gun safety. But no.

"In America, being a police officer is one of the few jobs you can have where you get to carry a gun."

Unable to do nothing, I raised my hand, and she called on me.



"Officer Barrong, I have tools, too, that I use when I find myself with a problem. I bet all these children use them, too. I use my brain, and I use my words. But I haven't heard you mention those tools yet."

"I was just getting to that."

Barrong said she used thinking, talking and her pen to write reports.

After coming home, I called the EPD's PR office, and communicated these concerns:

- Developmentally: Young children are literal, concrete thinkers. "Bad" to a child could be taking a cookie off the plate or pinching your brother. ("Does that mean I get sprayed?")

- Politically, philosophically: If I am peacefully demonstrating, and the police decide I should disband and then proceed to spray me with pepper spray or pelt me with rubber bullets, am I a "bad person"? If I have a mental illness and am behaving in a way that is unsafe, am I a "bad person"? In an effort to simplify for children, did Barrong inadvertently jump right on over our "innocent until proven guilty" idea?

- Personally: Choosing WHEN and HOW to discuss violence and the use of force is an intensely personal and private matter for families. Choosing WHEN and HOW to discuss the poor choices that some people make, choices that bring harm to others, should be addressed by the child's family. My daughter has fresh new fears about the world, courtesy of Officer Barrong.

- Again, these are LITTLE children. Baby children.

When I spoke to the PR rep for the EPD, she suggested that perhaps Officer's Barrong's presentation was not geared to that tender age group.

But when is it ever appropriate to normalize the use of force that – really – represents a failure to resolve a situation without violence? My cursory research into best practices in police educational outreach – in communities larger and smaller, more and less diverse than our own – has yielded dozens of programs that utilize police officers to teach about tolerance, communication and conflict resolution.

But this careless display by EPD failed to communicate anything helpful. It is interesting to note that Sgt. Barrong is the new crime prevention specialist.

In a letter to me dated June 18, Chief of Police Robert Lehner defends his program:

"Last year, EPD personnel made dozens of presentations, most frequently in schools at the request of professional educators and educational administrators. These occupational presentations are viewed as a valuable addition to a child's educational experience at several different points in a child's development."

The day after this presentation, still shaken and upset, my daughter said, "If I saw a police officer, I would be scared she would hurt me. She has a lot of ways to hurt people."

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