

Trashy animals

Litter. It's bad for the environment. There are laws against littering. To be a "litterbug" is to be antisocial. Pick up your garbage; dispose of it properly; or, even better, recycle it. If trash disposal is such an important environmental ethic, why doesn't anyone tell the wild creatures (supposedly those closest to nature) about it?

As I walked under a pine tree in my front yard one day last summer, I had to be careful to avoid the rain of trash falling from uncouth, environmentally unaware squirrels chattering in the top of the tree, tossing half-eaten pinecones and pieces of pinecone down on the ground. They refuse to use litter bags or trash cans, and they are even too lazy to compost their trash.

Now that fall is here and the pine trees have been stripped of their cones, the squirrels next go after the pecan trees. The squirrels are joined in the pecan trees by rude and raucous blue jays who engage in some arboreal version of expletive-deleted exchange of insults as they fight over the right to bomb cars, roofs, driveways, and sidewalks with pecan trash.

Pinecones are messy and occasionally sticky with resin, but pecan hulls and shells cause the ugliest and most indelible stain in the known universe. One of those mysterious laws of Nature, right up there with How-the-Birds-Know-When-It's-Time-to-Start-a-10,000-mile-Migration, is that the amount of stain-inducing garbage dropped by birds and squirrels is directly proportional to the lightness of the color of the vehicle or driveway below.

After a squirrel or jay has opened a pecan hull, it must then have some genetically impelled instinct to drop it where the warm Indian summer sun can make the hull ooze its juice onto and into the surface on which it lands, causing a stain so deep that it can be removed only by exploding a low-yield nuclear weapon on it.

You would get pretty annoyed if, while you're hiking in the woods, you came across a old suit of clothes that someone had dropped along the trail. I went on a hike once when people

got all excited about finding a skin a snake had shed. The slovenly serpent had just left his old clothes right there on the ground, didn't care who walked into it, too lazy to put it in the old-clothes box for GoodWill Industries or the Salvation Army.

I read that elk by the hundreds in Wyoming and Montana drop their antlers every year, not concerned where they may fall. By having such a cavalier attitude towards garbage disposal, they miss a recycling bonanza: the same newspaper article told how local people and the Boy Scouts collect the antlers and sell them at amazingly high prices to Korean dealers to be ground into powder for an aphrodisiac. That's expensive littering. How'd you like to pick up a discarded soft drink can and sell it for \$10 to somebody who'll grind it into a powder that he thinks is good for the libido?

Possoms and raccoons routinely overturn garbage cans that humans use to keep trash from scattering around the neighborhood. "Fiddler" crabs and crawfish throw mounds of sand and mud out of their homes, just as carelessly as humans who put broken washing machines in their yards. Beavers eat the bark off birch shoots and discard the twigs and leaves on riverbanks with no concern for the fact that there is no regular garbage pickup.

Bears rip open rotten logs to dig out the grubs and worms, throwing pieces of decayed wood all around the forest. Birds abandon their nests when the chicks fly away, and the junk used to build the nest — sticks, pieces of string and rag, old bits of paper — then get blown out of the trees.

Maybe there is something deep and mysterious causing this thoughtless behavior among wild animals. There is a law of thermodynamics that all energy/matter in the universe is proceeding from a state of order to a state of disorder; could it be that there is a biological equivalent that requires that garbage be strewn about by order of God? Δ

— Earl Higgins



*“Leave it as
it is . . .
The ages have
been at
work on it,
and man can
only mar it.”*

Theodore Roosevelt

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Yes, I want to join! I want to help safeguard our nation's precious natural heritage. My check is enclosed.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State _____ Zip _____

Gift Membership: Please complete the information below. We will forward a gift announcement card for your use.

Donor Name _____

Address _____

City/State _____ Zip _____

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

	INDIVIDUAL	JOINT
REGULAR	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35	<input type="checkbox"/> \$41
SUPPORTING	<input type="checkbox"/> \$50	<input type="checkbox"/> \$58
CONTRIBUTING	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100	<input type="checkbox"/> \$108
LIFE	<input type="checkbox"/> \$750	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000
SENIOR	<input type="checkbox"/> \$15	<input type="checkbox"/> \$23
STUDENT	<input type="checkbox"/> \$15	<input type="checkbox"/> \$23
LIMITED INCOME	<input type="checkbox"/> \$15	<input type="checkbox"/> \$23

Annual dues include subscription to *Sierra* (\$7.50) and chapter publications (\$1). Dues are not tax-deductible.

Enclose check and mail to:

Sierra Club

Dept. H-109
P.O. Box 7959 **W 565**
San Francisco, CA **FRIP No.**
94120-7959