Fatherâ€™s Day Deluge

Description

Happy fatherâ€™s day!

I hope that you are finding a way to celebrate that suits you dadâ€™s needs, whether it be a big affair at a fancy restaurant, a small brunch or just sitting around with friends and family remembering times long past.

This blog post will be a little different, just like this past week. There has been a lot of family stuff that has required my attention, so I have not been online as much as usual. But, a number of things have caught my eye this week, which I want to share and discuss with you.

The first is a recent publication of mine on **Scientific American** celebrating, what else, but the good (and a few bad) animal dads. After all, in the animal kingdom, many fatherâ€™s do not do very much. In fact, they just inseminate the mother and wander off. But, in this article, the lovely Lauren Reid and I decided to showcase some truly magnificent examples of animal fathers picking up the slack and really showing off!

You can read the article here.

The next little bit I want to share with you is a blog post I stumbled upon last week, that was extremely well done. It was written by a fellow science writer, DeLene Beeland, who writes a great blog entitled Wild Muse who writes about evolution and ecology.

A recent post of hers was called Advice on Science Writing, and was extremely well done.

I get asked why I chose this field quite a bit, and my answers have slowly shifted from when I decided that was what I was going to do to actually doing it now. And it can be difficult to explain why you like doing something so much without sounding completely insane, as we all tend to do when we are passionate about what we do. In this post, DeLene perfectly encapsulates the difficulties of being a science journalist, but also the thrill.

Here are a few tidbits:

â€œItâ€™s selfish, but writing about science allows me to learn with each and every story I work on, and that aspect is the fuel that keeps me running. It also gives me a small mouthpiece to communicate about issues I feel the general public ought to know more about: ecology, biological diversity and the affect of human development upon wildlife and natural systems.â€•

â€œThe language of science is not always easily translated for lay audiences. And the more highly trained you are, the harder it may be for you to be cognizant of that gap. There are some rock stars that can straddle both worlds and the languages codified by each, but for the rest of us mortals, we need to study the language of popular media, the way stories are constructed and told, and how ideas are imparted in persuasive essays and objective news stories. There are patterns, hierarchies and formulas

that work well, and itâ€™s time well spent to analyze them, learn them, and harness them for your own work. Your audience, and your editors, will thank you.â€•

If you want to understand science writing and those that do it, do give the article a read. Itâ€™s extremely well-done, and doesnâ€™t pull any punches with regards to the difficulty of the industry.

Finally, about a week ago, my dad pointed out an article to me on from The Toronto Star about an issue that Iâ€™ve spent a lot of time doing research and writing about: Invasive species.

Invasive species are animal that have been brought into a completely foreign habitat and thrived to a point of harming the local flora and fauna, and even causing extinction of native species. Examples are goats on the Galapagos islands, zebra mussels in the Great Lakes and the Nile Perch in Africa.

In Canada, there is a new threat: The **Emerald Ash Borer** or EAB.

Ugly little guy, isnâ€™t he?

The insect traveled to the northern United States in the late 1990s from Asia, and completely decimated the ash tree population there back in 2002. And since then, the insects have been spreading into over 15 states and all over Southern Ontario.

The insect is a master at what it does, and that is killing ash trees. The larvae burrow into the tree and make their way in a serpentine pattern, cutting off supplies of the trees nutrients and killing it. It is akin to being slowly starved to death.

But this is old news, as the insect was found in Toronto as early as 2007 (far from its predicted arrival in 2022). What is new is what is going to be done about protecting the almost 900,000 ash trees in the Toronto area. The answer?

Nothing.

The city is not taking an preventative action, and instead focusing on replacing every tree with other species instead of battling the insect and letting up to 95 per cent of all the ash trees in Toronto die. Sadly, not much can be done for a tree once it is infected, and must be destroyed to prevent further spread.

There are preventative measures that can be taken, such as injecting a tree with the drug, TreeAzin, a biological pesticide. But Brian Hamilton, the Emerald Ash Borer Program Specialist for the Canadian

Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), says that TreeAzin cannot save an already infected tree.

â€œOnce injected, the chemical kills the larva under the bark and is absorbed into the leaves. And the double whammy is that, if an adult female EAB eats the leaves, she becomes sterile and cannot produce any offspring.â€•

While TreeAzin is a good solution for uninfected trees, it is extremely expensive to administer, and any time money is involved (and weâ€™re talking hundreds of thousands of dollars), the purse-strings tighten. A few other control methods are being explored in the United States, such as utilizing stingless wasps from Chinese forests as a natural predator of the EAB. However, this is just another example of introducing other (potentially less harmful) species to eliminate others in a foreign environment.

But is doing nothing, like Toronto is, the best option?

I should hope not.

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