

From: Gayle Gray 12/16/10

“Non-violence leads to the highest ethics, which is the goal of all evolution.
Until we stop harming all other living creatures, we are savages.”

Thomas Edison

I have been following the Cayuga Heights deer management issue very closely, mainly because I am concerned about the suffering of those who cannot speak for or defend themselves. Deer live within the context of nature's laws, taking no more food and water than necessary, and caring for and protecting their offspring. Their attempts to endure on starvation rations, survive a broken leg, or cross a busy road safely with their young are pitiable to witness. During deer hunting season, they are put into high alert, fearing for their lives while at the same time trying to survive the long cold winter.

I, on the other hand, enjoy food and luxury way beyond my basic needs, live in a lovely home that keeps me warm in the winter, receive medical care when I am in pain, and have the means to protect my family and myself. This extreme advantage gives me pause.

When I recently had a black-footed tick (inaccurately called “deer tick”) removed, the physician said to me: “and this is a good reason to get rid of the deer.” One of the world's leading expert on the transmission of Lyme disease maintains that the deer's role in the spread of the disease has been greatly distorted, but even if I did become ill because of contact with a deer or any other animal in the wild, do I really have the right to eliminate that species because my well being might be threatened? Am I above the laws of nature? Further, should the deer become an enemy to be annihilated because they eat my garden plants, or dent my car (“a deer hit my car” – “who hit who?”)!

In response to the claim that the deer in Cayuga Heights are overpopulated, what recent study has been completed that substantiates this assertion? There is no evidence that the number of deer has been increasing. It has been stated that the deer population is presently around 170-210, which is in the same range indicated by a study done in 2000. The deer tend to regulate their numbers based on the available food supply and the harshness of the winters. When food supply is scarce, they reproduce less, having one fawn instead of two or three, or if hungry enough, none at all.

The ongoing argument about deer “overpopulation” in general has always sounded insane to me. It would be more accurate to say that humans are overpopulated, and that our greed and gluttony has driven many species to extinction, while pushing our ailing earth to the point of no return.

Because we humans continue to expand our “territory,” with absolutely no regard for the balance of the natural environment (the native habitat of Cayuga Heights was destroyed long ago when the houses were first built) and the communities presently in place are not going to go away, we must find a way to live in peace with the deer. Those who have concerns about their yards should advocate for the right to put up adequate fencing, not mass murder the innocent deer who cannot be blamed for being forced to eat our plants, leave feces in our yards, or according to some individuals, behave in aberrant ways.

One thing I know for certain, the proposed “Net and Bolt” method of dealing with this issue is unconscionable, and should be withdrawn with haste. I challenge anyone who supports this method to stand in witness as the procedure is executed, and then say that the experience does not torture his heart.

“We must fight against the spirit of unconscious cruelty with which we treat the animals. Animals suffer as much as we do. True humanity does not allow us to impose such suffering upon them. Until we extend our circle of compassion to all living creatures, humanity will not find peace (Albert Schweitzer).”

I am not naïve enough to think that we humans would be capable of giving up our dominance and tyranny over nature, however, I fervently hope we will at least be able to identify with the innate desire in the heart of all creatures to survive as long as possible without pain, to raise their families with a modicum of peace, and to live without constant fear and suffering.