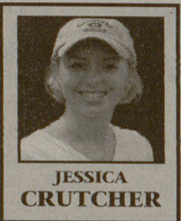


Oh, Crap

Excessive bird feces on A&M campus are potentially harmful

Bird excrement has always been a problem on the Texas A&M campus because of the flocks of grackles that take up residence on West Campus every year. However, the problem seems to have amplified this year, judging from the mounds of bird feces visible around West Campus parking areas near Joe Routh Boulevard.



JESSICA CRUTCHER

Aside from the immediate problem of odor, other issues need to be resolved. Feces of any sort should not be found in mass quantity around any human dwelling — much less a world-class university. Being forced to walk through layers of feces on A&M sidewalks will hardly persuade potential A&M students and faculty to move here.

In addition, people who must park in West Campus commuter lots should be given more consideration. It is impossible to walk under a tree without danger of being "fired" on. Commuter vehicles are also threatened, but in a more serious way. Although clothing and skin can be washed, feces can potentially damage paint jobs at great cost to car owners.

But the biggest concern is that of disease threats. These issues should be addressed, and efforts should be made to more thoroughly control the bird population.

Efforts are already in action to control the birds. Plans are being considered to bring noisemakers (blanks) back to discourage the birds from roosting, said Tom Dew, the superintendent of landscape and paving maintenance.

However, the noisemakers have not worked well in the past, so it is unlikely they will now. Dew also said maintenance is attempting to clean the affected lots on a daily basis. But the personnel appear to be fighting a losing battle — the problem will not be solved until the birds are driven from their roosting spots.

Bird feces, just like those of any animal, can present health problems if present in large amounts, said Dr. David Phalen, an assistant professor in the College of Veterinary Medicine. He said that although the fe-

ces on campus are unlikely to cause any major illnesses, good hygiene is imperative to prevent potential problems.

The most common problem students and faculty could encounter would be contact with coliform bacteria, which includes such strains as E. coli and Salmonella.

These bacteria, which can come from direct contact with bird feces, can cause gastro-intestinal problems like diarrhea. These illnesses can be prevented by frequent hand-washing and avoiding prolonged contact with the feces. In addition, Phalen said that the maintenance personnel cleaning the mess should be wearing face masks to prevent them from inhaling the bacteria.

Phalen said certain fungi can also be inhaled from bird feces, which can cause pneumonia and other infections. This is more likely to happen in areas of East Texas, where the environment is extremely wet, but is pos-

sible at A&M in extreme circumstances. The likelihood of contraction will increase parallel to the amount of feces.

In addition, few people enjoy running the gantlet of bird droppings every day. There are few things more annoying than attending class or working for an entire day adorned with feces, as one Battalion photographer can attest to. It is no longer necessary to spend a long time among the birds for them to present one with "gifts."

Although the droppings are not such a problem that the entire A&M student body is diseased and feces-covered, the problems will escalate if a legitimate solution is not



ANDY HANCOCK AND RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

found. The aesthetic value of a dropping-free campus should be enough of an incentive to get rid of the hordes of birds, but if it is not, the health implications must be.

Bad odors are seldom fatal, and bird droppings on a vehicle will probably not make a huge difference in one's life — but

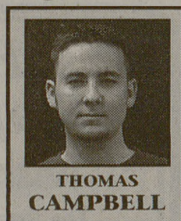
personal health is another matter entirely. For the sake of the students and faculty, the administration must find a solution before the feces problem gets worse.

Jessica Crutcher is a junior journalism major.

Danger on campus

Dihydrogen monoxide is harmful to Aggies

Dihydrogen monoxide is responsible for thousands of deaths every year, yet Texas A&M pumps it into every building on campus. Many people are unaware of this silent killer they contact every day. Something needs to be done about dihydrogen monoxide at A&M because it is irresponsible to allow something so harmful and deadly to go unnoticed.



THOMAS CAMPBELL

While it may seem like dihydrogen monoxide would only exist in places other than the safe confines of A&M, it can be found almost everywhere on campus and in the communities of Bryan and College Station. Dihydrogen monoxide has been positively identified in Rudder Fountain, Fish Pond and Research Park.

It is a major ingredient in the fertilization of Kyle Field. Millions of gallons of dihydrogen monoxide reside in our own beloved Rec Center. Physical Plant employees are even known to use this agent to clear off chalk graffiti and clean sidewalks and the exteriors of buildings.

Dihydrogen monoxide is even seen in chemistry labs and could contribute to unpredictable results of many experiments in introductory chemistry courses. Dihydrogen monoxide is also found to be a contributing factor in the frequent discoloration of the pond in front of the Chemistry Building.

Dihydrogen monoxide will remain a threat to the general safety of students, faculty, staff and anyone who is unfortunate enough to come into contact with it. A&M currently uses dihydrogen monoxide as a cleaning agent, a solvent, a chemical compound for experiments and a cheap filler for places like Rudder

Fountain. Chances are very good that most students at A&M have come into contact with this silent, odorless killer and will continue to interact with it on a daily basis until it is banned from this campus.

Dihydrogen monoxide should be avoided at all costs. Aggies can do some things about the dihydrogen monoxide problem.

If dangerous uses of dihydrogen monoxide are seen, the local authorities should be notified. Classes are available for students to take at the American Red Cross location in Bryan. The classes will teach students about safety in and around dihydrogen monoxide, as well as ways to protect others who are having problems with dihydrogen monoxide.

The tasteless, clear compound can be very harmful. In the solid form, dihydrogen monoxide causes severe tissue damage, often causing the amputation of toes, fingers and even limbs. Extreme exposure to solid dihydrogen monoxide has caused death in many cases.

Prolonged exposure will be deadly without the proper precautions. It only takes minutes for the problems to set in.

While not as deadly as the solid form, the gaseous form of dihydrogen monoxide can be extremely painful and even disfiguring. Gaseous dihydrogen monoxide causes severe burns and can be deadly in rare cases.

Many Aggies often unknowingly ingest liquid dihydrogen monoxide every day. At room temperature, liquid is the natural state of dihydrogen monoxide.

Liquid dihydrogen monoxide causes choking, hemorrhaging and asphyxiation. Consumed in excess, dihydrogen monoxide often causes bloating, frequent urination and general pain. Dihydrogen monoxide is thought to be a major factor in

water retention. Even after vigorous dish washing, the remnants of dihydrogen monoxide often remain lurking on the plate, waiting for the next victim.

The dangers that dihydrogen monoxide pose to humans are apparent, and in nature, dihydrogen monoxide is often a factor in many great catastrophes. It has been scientifically proven that dihydrogen monoxide contributes to tsunamis, hurricanes, El Niño and the infamous California mud slides.

In these forms, dihydrogen monoxide causes thousands, maybe even millions, of deaths each year.

Dihydrogen monoxide is also the main ingredient of acid rain. Dihydrogen monoxide was a major catalyst in the central Texas floods of October 1998. It is also considered the cause of the sinkholes found on the streets of Bryan and College Station.

Avoidance of dihydrogen monoxide can be attained, but only with diligent work and effort. Check with the Food Services employees to see if the food purchased on campus was cooked in dihydrogen monoxide. Aggies should talk with their resident adviser or landlord to find out what is being done about the dihydrogen monoxide problem.

This is a problem Aggies need to take seriously. The only way to prevent these deaths and injuries is to avoid dihydrogen monoxide. The abolition of dihydrogen monoxide will promote a safe study environment for students. Students will no longer have to worry about the dangers the chemical poses. Only by the abolition of dihydrogen monoxide will A&M be considered a safe campus for all students.

Thomas Campbell is a junior agricultural journalism major.

Mail Call

French do not deserve potshots at war record

In response to Mark Passwaters' Feb. 1 column

In his article, Mark Passwaters forgot to mention a few things about the French: We stink a little bit and our women do not shave their armpits.

As he mentioned, France produces only wines and cheeses. That is it — nothing else. And if it were not for America we would be speaking German by now because we cannot stand up for our country.

First, we do not think that Jerry Lewis is funny. He is like McDonald's — American pollution.

Second, when you say that we "have also figured out how to surrender with more grace and skill than any other country on the planet," you are insulting the memories of more than 200,000

French soldiers who died during World War II.

Since it seems that you are an expert in world history, I am sure that you will agree with me that Americans have lost a couple of wars with a "lot of grace and skills" after they started them (War of 1812 and Vietnam).

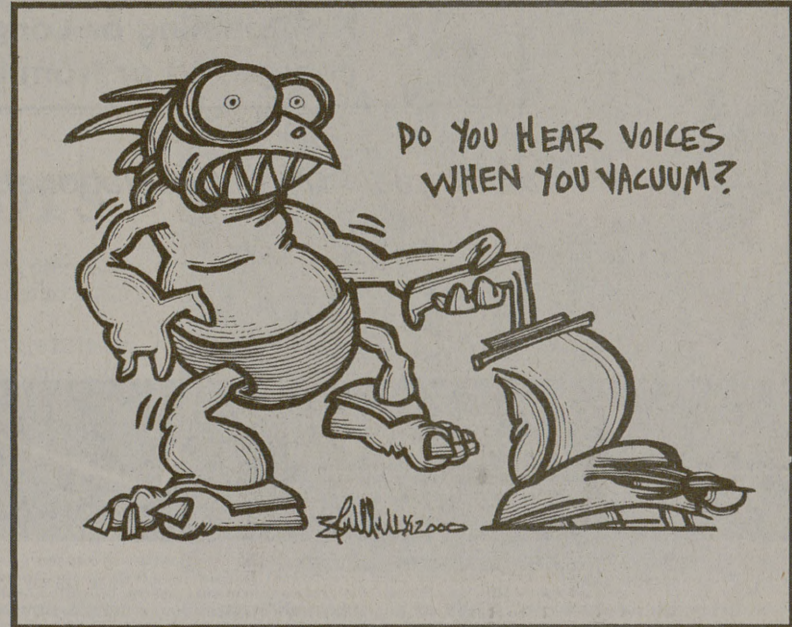
You are a perfect example of what French people hate about some Americans: ignorant, arrogant, obnoxious and in one word: redneck. I do not think that you have ever been to France or that you have ever met French people.

And we do not want you to come to our great country. Stay where you are.

You are even a dishonor to America and Americans. It is because of people like you that a lot of the French have come to hate America despite all that your country has done for our country.

Sebastian Gay
Graduate Student

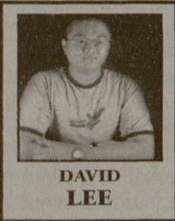
CARTOON OF THE DAY



THE UN-CARTOONIST

Voting age should not be altered

As if confused, hormone-charged 14-year-olds are not challenged enough, some in the Texas Legislature



DAVID LEE

want to give them the right to vote. Specifically, lawmakers want to amend the state constitution and lower the state's minimum voting age to 14 years. As reported by The Dallas Morning News, this proposal is the brainchild of Rep. Ron Wilson, D-Houston.

"I have children, and I am telling you they are smart enough to vote," Wilson said. "We're not talking rocket science here."

No, voting is not rocket science. However, Wilson's logic is seriously flawed. For one thing, being smart enough to vote and mature enough to vote are two completely different things.

These kids lack the experience and maturity to weigh several key issues. They have yet to feel the indignation of paying taxes — what stake do they have in the debate over Social Security reform or lowering property taxes?

In addition, eighth-and-ninth graders only have limited exposure to civics in school. Writing a book report over Ulysses S. Grant, filling out a crossword puzzle about George Washington or memorizing the Bill of Rights is a far cry from effectively analyzing campaign platforms.

Wilson is assuming that the intelligence of his children is representative of every other child in Texas, which may not be accurate. The children of a respected state representative will have more knowledge of government and politics than the average 14-year-old.

Wilson defends his position with the assertion that many 14-year-olds are allowed to face criminal charges in Texas as adults.

However, it can be argued that they are still unable to sign contracts without parental consent, be drafted into the armed services or drive. The irony is striking — little Timmy wants to go vote for Gov. Rick Perry but he is unable to drive himself to the polls.

"We talk about responsibility and getting young people involved. This is a great way," Wilson said.

Quite the contrary — this proposal promotes irresponsibility. It would feed into the already out-of-control problem of uninformed voting.

Imagine the reasons kids will come up with for supporting a candidate: "I want to vote for John McCain because he listens to Kid Rock" or "I'm voting for Al Gore because I think he's cute!"

Considering the debacle of last year's presidential election, this proposal could open a Pandora's box of voting improprieties. In local races that are sometimes determined by a handful of votes, desperate parents could bribe their kids to vote for a certain candidate and swing an election.

Granted, this scenario is a stretch. However, its possibility should send a collective shudder through voters.

If approved by two-thirds of the Texas House and Senate, Wilson's proposal would go on the ballot for voters to decide this November. It is funny that only those 18 years and older will decide.

David Lee is a senior economics and journalism major.