

This is my response to the reporter who conducted the "squirrel poll" in Texas

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I want to clarify something here. It is a matter of cumulative perspective that will put us all on the same page. Proposing this rescue effort as an opportunity to offer or deny resources simply ignores the entire purpose. That isn't even remotely close to the point of what we are doing with these squirrels.

These squirrels should not be focused on as what they are but what they stand for in this disaster effort. Some view them as "Small, rodent like creatures who overpopulate the entire nation." But their purpose is really much more. They plant our trees. If you don't have squirrels, you won't have naturally planted trees. They bury nuts underground, everywhere. They do not do this to dig them up later. They have nest stores to feed from. They are doing their job, which is to plant our trees and populate our forest. To them, they are following their instincts. Now, let's take the symbolism of their role in nature and let's look at what was lost in Texas... many many trees. Now let's expand on that. Let's blow away part of the Texas coast and put thousands of people out of their homes, and thousands without power and water, with no sense of security or a familiar tomorrow, and then let's put a helpless baby squirrel in their path. THAT they can do something about! "I can't find fuel for my car, I don't know where I am going to live or when I will be allowed to get back into my neighborhood, I am not able to go to work, pay my bills or even access my bank account, but I CAN HELP THIS SQUIRREL!"

They arrive by the hundreds as people living in devastation focus on the one thing they CAN do. Help someone even more helpless than themselves. They rescue a baby squirrel. They have found a way to feel better about their position. They have found something THEY COULD DO TO HELP!

The support steps up. By the hundreds they arrive at various shelters and wildlife rescues. Each baby is symbolic of a person who needed to do something to help someone, even if it is only a squirrel. Do the rescue centers turn them away? Do they tell them of the resources that will be wasted on these animals? No. Why? Because they have compassion for the animals AND the people who took the time, in all the chaos and challenge to find a way to assist a baby in need.

From here where do we go? Rescues are over whelmed, people are exhausted and supplies and funds are strapped. No one had any idea the need would grow this huge, but how do you stop the need? You don't. You find the strength to help "just one more".

And the word spreads. People in unaffected areas understand the plight and pressure. People in other states who care about animals, also care about these people and their struggle. We know they won't abandon these babies, so we step up to take the burden from their shoulders so that they may focus on their damaged homes, their ravaged communities and their human neighbors in need. We do not want to leave the comfort of our lives to be one more person stuck in a disaster zone, but we can reduce the stress on the victims by taking on what can be sent away to be assisted, and then none of the people who were compelled to assist the tiny, helpless squirrels would be betrayed, and the exhausted volunteers can find an end to the struggle of the mass squirrel rescue effort months sooner than they would have otherwise found.

It's not about resources, money or even effort. It's about people helping people who are giving more than they can afford to give, but determined beyond their means to fulfill an obligation, and others simply saying "I can take that off your heart, and let you focus on something more critical".

You are questioning the very simplest and basic essence of human decency, and planting seeds in other's minds to question it also. Anyone who would agree that this subject needs debated for priority position after a disaster is someone who is looking to add insult to injury. These squirrels are not a disaster priority to any group other than wildlife rescuers. Not even close, but as an act of compassion and an example of a show of goodwill and support, the tiniest of efforts should be applauded and encouraged, not dissected and questioned. I can't send money to Texas or build a home for a family, but I

CAN raise a squirrel, many squirrels, and I would like to believe that when I take them back to Texas, they will somehow make a difference someday when all the trees they plant again shade the people who lost them, and that the families who saved them from the floods and debris, saw our newscast and found a smile and a warm feeling in their heart because they were a part of something remarkable, rather than an event questioned as a potential waste of resources, and their effort viewed as a frivolous waste. I haven't asked for a dime from anyone but my regular financial backer. I asked for nuts for my squirrels that people already have, and anyone who wanted to make a donation was told to send it to the Houston SPCA or the Red Cross.

Be open to my perspective and chose to understand and share in the goodwill of neighbor helping neighbor, no matter how small the effort or the result. It represents an evolutionary step in our population that doing the right thing spills into all of our lives, and encourages others to do the same. News stories and polls plant seeds, and so will these little squirrels. What they grow will shade all who pass by. What you grow only casts shadows on good people. Please rethink your position, step over the fence onto the side that supports human decency, and abandon your need to question something beautiful rising from hurting people that you obviously do not understand.

Working without shadows,

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