

## The Home Forum®



# In the wild, cleanliness is a survival skill

ANIMALS HAVE MANY WAYS TO STAY SLEEK; SOME EVEN GET HELP FROM OTHER SPECIES.

**H**OW would you like to brush a crocodile's teeth? Or give a shark a bath? Cats are well-known for the way they keep themselves clean by licking, but other animals have their own ways to stay clean as well. And tidiness can be important for their survival. Even cockroaches have to keep their feelers clean to help them find food.

Many animals in the wild, such as deer, wolves, and bears, have an automatic cleaning system. Insects like to attach themselves to animals to feed on their skin or blood. These parasites can be irritating or unhealthy. But their "host" animals are constantly shedding skin and fur by a natural process. They also like to rub up against trees or rocks to scratch themselves, and this removes additional skin and fur. Along with old fur goes the dirt and parasites living in the fur. While these animals may sometimes take a bath when they enter or cross a river or lake, they don't need the water to stay clean. They don't get sweaty, because they don't have sweat glands all over their bodies the way people do. Shedding and growing new skin and fur is enough to keep them clean.

Some animals and birds use dust to get clean. Chinchillas, small rodents that live in the mountains of South America, have a very fine fur. (They are raised for their fur, in fact.) If they took



MELANIE STETSON FREEMAN - STAFF

**C'MON IN:** Crocodiles and the Egyptian plover bird have forged a partnership. A plover can walk into a croc's open mouth and peck its teeth clean — without becoming a meal itself.

water baths, they might get too cold. So, instead, they roll around in fine dust, raising quite a cloud as they "bathe." The dust helps to keep their fur and skin dry. This protects them from bacteria and parasites that thrive in warm, moist places. And the fine dust doesn't stick in their fur for long. It falls off or blows away.

Lions and tigers use the same method their domestic cousins use to stay clean. Their rough tongues act like combs and can remove dirt and loose fur. Why is it important for them to stay groomed and smooth? It helps them stay better insulated in very hot or cold weather.

### Why cats are fluffy in winter

You may have noticed how fluffy a cat gets in cold weather. Cats fluff out their fur to trap air in their coats. The trapped air insulates the cat to keep it warm. This insulation works best when the hairs are smooth and clean.

In the summer, the saliva left on the cat's fur after licking evaporates, helping to keep the cat cool. The saliva also gives the cat its own distinctive smell. Sometimes, after you've been holding a cat or it has been sitting on your lap, it will give itself a bath as soon as it jumps down. It has picked up your scent when you touched it. Licking lets it get a "taste" of you while restoring its own scent to its fur.

Many birds keep clean by preening. They have a special gland on their backs that contains a cleaning oil. They touch their beak to the gland to get some oil, then smooth their feathers, oiling them and smoothing them down. Some birds may splash around in water first, but then they will preen themselves to complete their bathing process. Other birds, such as the pea fowl, take dust baths, like the chinchilla. Ravens and crows may sprawl on an ant bed or pick up ants and rub them through their feathers. It is

*Continued on next page*



JERRY WOLFORD/GREENSBORO (NC) NEWS & RECORD/AP

**GROOMING BEHAVIOR:** A young female baboon (top, right) cleans the fur of an older male baboon at the North Carolina Zoo in Asheboro, N.C. Many primate groups engage in such mutual grooming, which seems to be pleasant and relaxing. The activity also strengthens the bonds of those within the group.



RUSSELL BOYCE/REUTERS/FILE

**SPLISH-SPLASH:** Indian elephants keep cool in their pool at the London Zoo. Elephants love the water, and like to take water baths daily in the wild. Sometimes they dry off with a nice dust bath.

## Penguins get clean – and stylish, too

**S**OMETIMES, staying clean is a dirty job – too dirty for some animals. In January 2000, a ship spilled oil into the ocean around Phillip Island near Melbourne, Australia. The nature park there includes a “Penguin Parade” filled with little penguins (formerly called fairy penguins). The penguins became covered with the oil. But when they tried to clean themselves, they swallowed the oil and got sick.

Volunteers came to the rescue to clean the birds, but they couldn't keep up with them all. They had to find a way to stop the birds from trying to clean themselves until the humans could do it for them. Rehabilitation Officer Marg Healy had an idea. She put tiny sweaters on the penguins. The sweaters kept the birds from swallowing oil. They also kept the birds warm until they could be washed.

People in many countries heard about the penguins and began knitting and sending little sweaters. As more oily penguins washed ashore, rescuers quickly put them in sweaters until they could be cleaned. Soon, lots of penguins were waddling around in colorful (even striped) sweaters.

Once all the penguins were clean, volunteers kept knitting the sweaters, in case of another spill. If you'd like to knit a penguin sweater, the instructions are available at the Phillip Island Nature Park website: [www.penguins.org.au/media/penjumpers.html](http://www.penguins.org.au/media/penjumpers.html).

S.J.H.



AP/FILE

**DOES THIS MAKE ME LOOK FAT?** Penguins soaked with oil from a Jan. 2000 spill got sweaters to keep them from swallowing oil.

*Continued from previous page*

thought that the formic acid in the ants may repel parasites or soothe irritated skin.

Pigs have a reputation for being dirty animals because they roll in mud. But they actually prefer being quite clean. They cover themselves with mud in hot weather to help stay cool. Since they don't have sweat glands all over their bodies, they let the mud evaporate on their skin to cool them. During cooler weather, they prefer to stay clean. So do elephants, who also cover themselves in dust or mud to keep cool. When they find a good watering hole they will wade right in for a bath, using their trunks to give themselves – or each other – a nice shower.

Monkeys, baboons, chimpanzees, and gorillas rely on their friends to help them stay clean. It is quite common to see one baboon grooming another, picking parasites and burrs off the other's fur. This behavior can be soothing as well as cleansing, and helps to strengthen group bonds.

But the most interesting cleaning techniques involve one species helping another stay clean. Egyptian plovers have a partnership with crocodiles. Ordinarily, a small bird is a quick snack for a crocodile. But when a crocodile wants its teeth cleaned, it lies on the ground with its mouth open. The plover hops in and picks out any parasites between the crocodile's teeth or under its tongue. The crocodile gets its mouth cleaned, and the plover gets dinner. A relationship between two species, in which each species benefits, is called symbiosis (sim-bye-OH-sis).

Other birds, such as the oxpecker and cowbird, stick to the outside of an animal to get lunch. The oxpecker will park itself on a buffalo or warthog and use its long bill to dig ticks from its host's hide.

### Even fish need to stay clean

You wouldn't think fish would need baths. But some undersea parasites burrow under scales or skin. “Cleaner” fish, like the goby and wrasse, help remove them. The tiny wrasse stands on its head and wiggles to signal a big fish that it's ready to go into the cleaning business. The big fish will stop moving and open its mouth wide so the wrasse can swim inside and pick out parasites and bits of food. Sometimes whole schools of fish stop by for a cleaning.

Whatever the method used, it is just as important for animals to keep clean as it is for humans to do so. So the next time you wish you were an animal so you wouldn't have to take a bath, think again. A quick shower has got to be easier than letting birds peck at your skin.

Sharon J. Huntington

● ▲ TODAY'S ARTICLE ON CHRISTIAN SCIENCE ▲ ●

Helping children learn about God's care

## How the Ten Commandments can help you

**YOU PROBABLY KNOW** about the Ten Commandments. They tell about how God wants us to think and act. Since the Commandments are from God, they must all be pretty important. But Jesus said that one of them was the greatest. Do you know which one?

Jesus said the greatest of all the Commandments is the first one, “You shall have no other gods before me” (Ex. 20:3). Here's what he said about it: “The Lord our God, the Lord is one” (Mark 12:29). Jesus said that we should love God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. That means loving God totally.

How can you do that? Here's what some kids know about how to love God and how to obey the First Commandment:

You can trust Him. So if there's something you want, like a place in the band or orchestra or place on a team or a special friend, you can trust that God knows what's best for you. God has only good for you, so you can always trust Him with what you want.

Trusting also means looking to God to know what's true. Then you won't be tricked into believing that something bad could be true or real. God is totally good, so if something isn't good, God didn't make it.

You don't need to think there are other gods, like something else has power to help or hurt you. For example, if you're hurt, you can pray to God. God is more powerful to heal you than medicine. Alex is sure about this, because she stepped on a fishhook. She and her mom couldn't get it out at first. They prayed to God. When the hook came out, Alex's foot really hurt. Then she thought about how God was so powerful He couldn't get hurt, and He wouldn't let anything hurt her. In a short time her foot was healed. Alex said she knew she could trust God to heal her. You can pray to God, and He will take care of you and keep you healthy.

Loving God means believing the promises in the Bible about how He will take care of us. Rebecca knows that God helped people in the Bible to understand things and to know what to

do in tight spots. She says that in school when she's taking a test, she thinks about how God is infinite Mind and how He knows everything good. Because she's God's child, she can know what she needs to know.

When God heals you or helps you, you can say, “Thank you, God.” But you can always thank God – not just when something good happens. “I thank God just for being there,” said Rebecca.

The kids thought about the other Commandments. They know about not stealing or killing, about not using God's name to swear, and about not being jealous (coveting), because they know that God's love for everyone is infinite. They know that not bearing false witness means having pure thoughts, like God has, about yourself and others. There's a commandment about

having time with God (remembering the Sabbath), honoring, or obeying, your mother and father, and not committing adultery (staying faithful to the person you marry). They'd already talked

about not thinking something had more power than God (not having idols). Obeying all the Commandments is another way to love God.

The last thing the kids talked about was how doing good things for others is a way of loving God. Robert helped his mom with the groceries, and Taylor comforted her friend.

Doing things is important, but it's also important to *think* what's true about others. Patricia knew her sister was really sad about something, so she thought how God would show her sister what was true and how she could be happy again. Thinking what is true is like correcting a mistake. It always helps others.

Keeping the Commandments is like knowing you're with God all the time. What could be better than that?

*Christianity ... must ever rest on the basis of the First Commandment and love for man.*

Mary Baker Eddy  
(founder of the Monitor)

God knows what's  
best for you,  
and He has only  
good for you.

### CORRECTION

The Jan. 15 Kidspace (“Round is all around,” page 18) contained an unintended mystery: Why were clues 4 and 6 the same? Here's what No. 6 should have said: “They were used purely as decoration for thousands of years, until someone in 13th-century Europe matched one with a slit – and a revolutionary clothing fastener was born.”

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