

Ditch the fireworks (cont.)

plete with crutches, a gurney and pills scattered on the floor that could potentially distract her.

Nilsson says, “She is super friendly with everybody, which is great.”

Nilsson, the children’s librarian for the Summit County Library, first adopted Pippi to certify her as a Reading Education Assistance Dog® through Intermountain Therapy Animals.

Pippi was born just five months before the COVID-19 lockdown, so she wasn’t a fan of kids when she first met them in the wild. But now, she’s perfectly attentive as they read to her. If she ever gets overwhelmed, she’ll go to her “safe space,” the top of Nilsson’s storytime book cart, where the children’s little hands are mercifully out of reach.

Pippi also visits the Salt Lake City International Airport about once a month to meet anxious flyers or people with delayed flights. That’s the most stimulating environment Pippi has been in.

Pippi can handle visits of about an hour. When she’s feeling done, she lies on the floor, four legs splayed out like a taxidermy rug. Sometimes, though, that just means she’s enjoying the cool feeling of the tile floor against her fur.

Nilsson said three ITA teams visit the Park City

Hospital. She hopes to convince some of them to volunteer at the Heber Valley Hospital, too, especially since a few live in Heber City.

She also encouraged anyone who may be interested to consider volunteering with a therapy dog. She said her experience with Pippi has made her more considerate of other people, more comfortable starting up conversations and a more inclusive individual.

“Pippi doesn’t care what you look like or how you’re dressed,” Nilsson said.

Pippi clearly has a positive effect on the patients, too, as evidenced by a time someone spotted Pippi in the Park City Hospital cafeteria and asked Nilsson to visit his mom in the intensive care unit.

“His mom was in pretty bad shape and not really responsive, and looked uncomfortable. And we walked in, and she saw the dog, and everything changed. She just became much more relaxed,” Nilsson said. “Pippi put her head on top of the woman’s hand, and then, with her other hand, she could pet her on the head. It was amazing. Everyone in the room started crying. And she stayed there for minutes, like she knew, ‘This is something that I’m here for.’”



Want to do something patriotic this year? *Ditch the fireworks.*

MARGARET RENKL *The New York Times*

For 15 straight years, our old dog Clark — a hound/shepherd/retriever mix who was born in the woods and loved the outdoors ever after — spent the Fourth of July in our walk-in shower. He seemed to believe a windowless shower in a windowless bathroom offered his best chance of surviving the shrieking terror that was raining down from the night sky outside.

Did he think the fireworks, with their window-rattling booms, were the work of some cosmic predator big enough to eat him whole? Did he think they were gunshots, or claps of thunder spreading out from inexplicable lightning bolts tearing open the sky above our house?

There's no way to know what he was thinking, but every single year that rangy, 75-pound, country-born yard dog spent the Fourth of July in our shower, trembling, drooling and whimpering in terror.

Clark was lucky. We have friends whose terrified dog spent one Fourth of July fruitlessly trying to outrun the explosions. The next day a good Samaritan found him lying on a hot side-walk miles away, close to death. Other friends came home from watching the fireworks to discover that their own dog had bolted in terror from their fenced

backyard and been killed by a car.

And those were all companion animals, the ones whose terror is clear to us. We have no real way of knowing how many wild animals suffer because the patterns of their lives are disrupted with no warning every year on a night in early July. People shooting bottle rockets in the backyard might not see the sleeping songbirds, startled from their

safe roosts, exploding into a darkness they did not evolve to navigate — crashing into buildings or depleting crucial energy reserves. People firing Roman candles into the sky above the ocean may have no idea that the explosions can cause seabirds to

abandon their nest or frighten nesting shorebirds to death.

Then there's the wildlife driven into roads — deer and foxes, opossums and skunks, coyotes and raccoons. Any nocturnal creature in a blind panic can find itself staring into oncoming headlights, unsure whether the greater danger lies in the road or in the sky or in the neighborhood yards surrounding them.

And all that's on top of the dangers posed by fireworks debris, which can be toxic if ingested, or the risk of setting off a wildfire in parched summertime vegetation. Little wonder, then, that fireworks

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Ditch the fireworks (cont.)

are banned in all national wildlife refuges, national forests and national parks.

Animals aren't the only ones that suffer on the Fourth of July. We live in a country completely saturated with guns, and far too many of them are fired at strangers at public events. These days many human beings have a similar panicked reaction to the sound of fireworks, mistaking it for gunfire.

It's a reasonable mistake. When a man starting shooting at a Fourth of July parade two years ago in Highland Park, Ill., spectators at first thought they were hearing fireworks. Such shootings are so common now that the whole country is arguably suffering from PTSD. As the editorial board of The Los Angeles Times noted after the Highland Park shooting, "The result is that we will never again hear the bang of Fourth of July fireworks without a jolt of fear that the sound might actually be gunshots fired from a rooftop."

It would be so easy to find a new way to celebrate the founding of a nation. So easy, at the very least, to limit fireworks to public celebrations meant to bring communities together. When those communities use low-noise fireworks, as well, they limit the stress on people and animals, and they mitigate some of the dangers to local wildlife.

Such measures wouldn't address the pollution caused by fireworks, though. On average, Fourth of July displays account for the 42 percent more pollutants found in the air on July 4 and 5 than on a typical day.

"All flourishing is mutual," writes Robin Wall Kimmerer, a botanist and enrolled member of the

Citizen Potawatomi Nation, in her best-selling book, "Braiding Sweetgrass." This is one of the most oft-repeated lines in contemporary environmental literature, and for good reason. It reminds us that all creation, human and other-than-human, is interconnected. At a time when life on this planet is faltering in every possible way, Dr. Kimmerer gently points out that our own flourishing depends

on the flourishing of planetary systems that we are barely beginning to understand.

Addressing climate change and biodiversity loss on a planet with eight billion human residents won't be simple. How to grow affordable food without using petrochemical fertilizers

and pesticides that poison pollinators, for example, is a challenge. How to build enough housing for human beings without also disrupting natural ecosystems is a challenge. Such things are doable, though they won't be easy.

But there are easy things we can do at no real cost to ourselves. We can eat more vegetables and less animal protein. We can cultivate native plants. We can seek out products that aren't packaged in plastic, spend less time in cars and airplanes, raise the thermostat in the summer and lower it in the winter. As Dr. Kimmerer points out in "The Serviceberry," her forthcoming book, "We live in a time when every choice matters."

In that context, surely, we can give up fireworks. Of all the little pleasures that give life meaning and joy, surely fireworks don't come close to the top of the list, and it costs us nothing to give them



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Ditch the fireworks (cont.)

up. This is one case in which doing the right thing requires no significant sacrifice, one case in which doing the right thing has an immediate, noticeable, undeniably positive effect on a suffering world.

The conflation of selfishness with patriotism is the thing I have the hardest time accepting about our political era. Maybe we have the right to eat a hamburger or drive the biggest truck on the market or fire off bottle rockets deep into the night on the Fourth of July, but it doesn't make us good Americans to do such things. How can it possibly be "American" to look at the damage that fireworks can cause — to the atmosphere, to forests, to wildlife, to our own beloved pets, to ourselves — and shrug?

The truly American thing would be to join together to make every change we can reasonably make to alleviate the suffering of our fellow creatures, human and other-than-human alike. The truly American thing would be to plant a victory garden large enough to encompass the entire natural world.



New Bandanas!

One member's review:

"Well here it is ... finally. The different material of the new bandana has its ups and downs ... of course. The bottom line is, it is good. The material does not let the dog hair cling to it. Great. It is much easier to tie it around her neck. Great. I kind of like the look of the cotton bandanna better, which is my personal opinion. So all is good.

"Thank you! ITA is one of the things that keep me looking forward to each and every day!!!"



GALA GALA GALA !

Our biggest party of the year is coming us fast, on September 25th!

1 - Come as a Guest!

Gather some friends and come as guests to explore the auctions, eat a scrumptious dinner and sit back and relax through all the festivities.

2 - Be Part of the Crew!

You can help us plan and execute this very fun event by being on the committee. Email kathy@therapyanimals.org if that's the way you'd like to enjoy ITA's biggest splash of the year.

3 - Help Us Find Gala Sponsors!

Do you work for a company or know of a business that may be interested in sponsoring "Hawaii Fi-Do" on September 25? We'd love your help making connections.

If your employer or a company you know would like to learn more about sponsorship opportunities, please contact Mandy at mandy@therapyanimals.org.

Thank you for helping us expand the reach of our therapy animal programs!

