



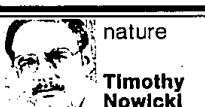
A dominant red squirrel chased away larger fox squirrels from a feeder.

Animals have pecking order

Every company has a corporate structure that outlines the divisions of power and decision making. For a system to run smoothly, a hierarchy must be recognized.

A president of a company does not wear a label saying "president," nor does the treasurer wear a sign saying "treasurer." People within the company recognize them as individuals and their appropriate status.

Animals, too, have hierarchies within their social groups. In animals it has come to be known as a "pecking order" because it was recognized long ago in chickens. Dominant chickens would feed by pecking at grain first, while those of lesser status had to wait their turn.



Timothy Nowicki

Each individual has attained a position in the group's social structure. They do not wear signs either, so you must watch to see who is dominant over whom.

An animal's position in its social group can be attained in several ways.

Large size is often a factor in dominance. Small animals would rather be subservient than risk being injured by a larger animal.

Some animals are born into their position. Young born to a high-ranking mother will attain her status.

Fighting is also a way of determining rank among closely matched individuals.

A GOOD TIME to observe dominance at work is at a bird feeder.

If a high-ranking chickadee is feeding and a lower-ranked chickadee arrives to feed, the lower-ranked bird will fly away. Higher-ranking individuals will also displace lower-ranked birds already feeding.

The other day I watched a very aggressive red squirrel defend a feeder. Though it was only one-third as large as the fox squirrels that were approaching the feeder, it would fearlessly chase them away if they got too close.

It seemed incongruous and humorous that a small individual would be dominant over a much larger animal. Because food was abundant in the area, the larger fox squirrels may have decided to feed elsewhere rather than fight and risk injury.

Club hosts robotics tour at Auburn

A forum on state-of-the-art robotics will be sponsored by Robotics International chapter of the Society of Manufacturing Engineering Thursday, Feb. 11, at Oakland Community College.

Students, parents and educators are invited free to the forum. It begins with registration at 4:30 p.m. in the High Technology Center of OCC's Auburn Hills Campus, 2900 Featherstone, east of the Pontiac Silverdome.

Guided tours follow at 5:30, demonstrations at 6:30 and a speakers panel at 7. Food service will be available at 6 p.m. in the campus cafeteria. CAD/CAM demonstrations will be made by several area companies.

The evening will conclude with the Robotics chapter's membership meeting and election of officers.

Information on Robotics International is available from James Logan at 377-7589.

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