



Sign In | Register Now

Home Delivery **The Boston Globe**

Local Search Site Search
GO

DeVry University
We major in careers™

Business Administration with emphasis in:
Human Resource Management
Accounting

Apply Online

HOME TODAY'S GLOBE NEWS BUSINESS SPORTS LIFESTYLE A&E THINGS TO DO TRAVEL CARS JOBS HOMES LOCAL SEARCH

Fashion Food House & Home Message boards Personals Pets Weddings

The Green Blog

Home. Business. Life.

From The Boston Globe

< Back to Front Page

Text size - +

Fear really can kill

Posted by bdaley August 22, 2008 12:08 PM

Email | Link | Comments (0)

By Beth Daley, Globe Staff

Fear has its roots in survival. Being afraid enough to avoid the path of say, a grizzly bear, saves a lot of lives – particular if you imagine what would happen if you went up to one, looked it in the eye and tried to shake its paw.

But a University of Rhode Island ecologist says being afraid can have the unintended consequence of killing too.



Grasshoppers fear the wolf spider (Globe photo)

Assistant Professor Evan Preisser said that fear of being eaten can reduce populations as much or even more than the numbers of individuals being killed by predators. That's because to avoid being eaten, many species will spend a lot more time hiding and less time eating. This can lead to a lower body mass, reduced reproduction rates, fewer offspring, and a lower rate of survival.

For example, fire ants – those swarming nasty-biting insects - are "totally freaked out" by a species of parasitoid fly that lays its eggs inside the ants, ultimately killing them.

"If one of these flies comes along, all the ants will hide and remain hidden for a really long time," Preisser said. "Research by Donald Feener at the University of Utah has shown that the flies actually have a very low success rate at killing the ants because the ants are so good at hiding. They spend so much time in hiding, however, that the whole ant population becomes weaker."

Other research conducted by Oswald Schmitz at Yale University shows that grasshoppers can be so afraid of wolf spiders that they will starve to death rather than come out of hiding and feed in the presence of the spider.

In a research paper published in the journal PLoS ONE in June, Preisser and Daniel Bolnick of the University of Texas-Austin found that the presence of a predator reduces some species' feeding and overall activity rates 57 percent and 45 percent among some species living in aquatic environments and by 45 percent and 34 percent among species on land.



And fire ants fear a fly (Globe photo)

ABOUT THE GREEN BLOG Helping Boston live a greener, more environmentally friendly life.

[SEE ALL GLOBE BLOGS](#)



[Acne Not Just a Problem for Teenagers](#)



[How to Keep Your PC Clean and Quick](#)



[Educators No. 1 Online Graduate School Program](#)

CONTRIBUTORS

Bennie DiNardo is the Boston Globe's deputy managing editor/multimedia

Beth Daley covers environmental issues for the Globe

David Beard is editor of Boston.com

Eric Bauer is site architect of Boston.com

Gideon Gil is the Globe's Health/Science editor

Glenn Yoder produces Boston.com's Lifestyle pages

Ron Agrella is Boston.com's features editor

GET UPDATES

[My Yahoo](#)

[RSS Feeds](#)

[Learn about RSS](#)

ARCHIVES

Select a month ▼

BROWSE THIS BLOG

BY CATEGORY

CHILDREN INTERNATIONAL

Learn more!

Sponsor a child for only

“Just the simple presence of a predator can increase the mortality of prey species by as much as five percent,” Preisser said.

The URI ecologist is the guest editor of an upcoming special, three-article feature on “nonconsumptive predator effects on prey dynamics” in the September issue of Ecology, the journal of the Ecological Society of America.

[Previous Entry](#) [Next Entry](#)

[< Back to Front Page](#)

ADD YOUR COMMENT

Comment

Name Required

Email address Required (will not be published)

[Preview](#) [Submit](#) **DO NOT HIT THE SUBMIT BUTTON MORE THAN ONCE!**
 You must be logged in to submit a comment.

This blogger might want to review your comment before posting it.

RELATED BLOGS

- [Alternative Energy Blog](#)
- [AutoBlog Green](#)
- [BusinessGreen](#)
- [Carbon Trading](#)
- [CNET Greentech Blog](#)
- [Conscious Consuming](#)
- [Consumer Reports: Greener Choices](#)
- [Green Business](#)
- [Green Trust Sustainability](#)
- [Groovy Green](#)
- [How to Go Green](#)
- [IHT's Business of Green](#)
- [Inside Green Business](#)
- [Joel Makower](#)
- [The 30-day No Trash Challenge](#)
- [World Changing](#)

INFORMATION SOURCES

- [About My Planet](#)
- [Alternative Energy Investments](#)
- [Alternative Energy News](#)
- [CleanTech](#)
- [Climate Ark](#)
- [Climate Biz](#)
- [Climate Change News Digest](#)
- [Environmental News Network](#)
- [Green Business News](#)
- [WGBH's The Greens](#)
- [GreenBiz.com](#)
- [Greenwire](#)
- [Live Science](#)
- [National Geographic Environment](#)

ORGANIZATIONS

- [Conservation International](#)
- [Conservation Law Foundation](#)
- [Environmental Defense](#)
- [European and Chicago Climate Exchanges](#)
- [Friends of the Earth](#)
- [Greenpeace](#)
- [International Energy Agency](#)
- [Natural Resources Defense Council](#)
- [The Nature Conservancy](#)
- [The Pew Center on Global Climate Change](#)
- [The Sierra Club](#)
- [United Nations Environment Agency](#)
- [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#)
- [US Department of Energy](#)
- [World Meteorological Association](#)
- [WWF](#)

INSIDE BOSTON.COM

SARAH PALIN'S FAMILY ISSUES



TOM & GISELE AROUND TOWN



FALL TV PREVIEW



PHOTO GALLERY



PLUS...

- [Blogs](#)
- [Games](#)
- [Podcasts](#)
- [Puzzles](#)
- [Personals](#)
- [Movie listings](#)
- [Classifieds](#)

9/3/2008

Fear really can kill -The Green Blog - ...

[VP pick has an extraordinarily complicated family life](#)

[Gisele the cover girl: Tom's squeeze gets her close-up](#)

[Do you know where the new shows are?](#)

[Notable deaths of 2008](#)

[Globe Magazine](#)

[Home](#) | [Today's Globe](#) | [News](#) | [Business](#) | [Sports](#) | [Your Life](#) | [A&E](#) | [Travel](#) | [Cars](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Homes](#) | [Local Search](#)

[CONTACT BOSTON.COM](#) | [Help](#) | [Feedback](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Work here](#) | [Privacy Statement](#) | [Mobile](#) | [RSS feeds](#) | [Make Boston.com your homepage](#)

[CONTACT THE BOSTON GLOBE](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Manage your subscription](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Boston Globe Extras](#) | [The Boston Globe Store](#) | [Reprints](#) | © 2008 NY Times Co.
