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Harmony on the Feed Ground

Varied thrushes started coming to the place behind the house where I put out seeds for birds, and, though I hadn't planned for that, for our neighborhood squirrel. At first, the thrushes took possession of the feed ground and chased away smaller Oregon Juncos, usually the most numerous of the birds who eat the seeds I scatter.

I sat at my computer inside the house, looked over my monitor out the window at the feed ground, and thought, "Okay you guys are welcome here. I'll feed you and rejoice in your company and in your beauty. If you eat here, you must respect other species and observe the rules of the feed ground, because we are all in this life together." Each time I saw thrushes on the feed ground, I repeated my thoughts that we are all part of the community of life. We communicate with each other in harmony.

Gradually, activity on the feed ground changed. Varied thrushes made room for other species and no longer tried to own the feed ground..

At first, the squirrel stuffed its cheeks and took all the seeds for storage. I thought, "You can't do that. You're welcome to eat here, but you can't carry food away for storage. I respect and appreciate you, and you must operate by principles that respect all other forms of life." The change wasn't immediate, but now the squirrel eats at the feed ground sometimes, but it doesn't carry all the seeds away.

I got the idea that communication with animals can be effective partly from my daughter, Amanda. When she was a teenager, we worked for the Girl Scouts, taking care of Magic Sky Ranch in the Rocky Mountains west of Fort Collins, Colorado.

Our garden flourished in mountain sunshine in spring.

Then animals small enough to get through our fence or tunnel under, ground squirrels, rabbits, voles, and mice began to harvest vegetables. If they continued their aggressive harvest, we soon wouldn't have a garden at all.

I wouldn't use violent methods to drive the animals away, because I know the only way to establish the peaceable kingdom among all species is to live in peace, no matter what seems to be happening around me.

Amanda mentioned that Saint Francis talked to animals. She said "Let me talk to them." I knew animals are intelligent beings and peaceable communication between species is normal, but our garden invaders didn't seem to be listening to me, perhaps because my thoughts toward them were not yet completely peaceful. I sometimes thought of violent, deadly possible solutions to small animals eating the entire garden, even though I didn't intend to use the methods I thought of. The culture around me uses deadly methods without concern, and I reflected the culture by allowing thoughts of those methods to invade my mind despite my best efforts to clear them from my mind.

Amanda went down to the garden, sat on an overturned bucket, and talked to the animals.

It wasn't a scene from an animated movie. The animals didn't gather at her feet and pay rapt attention, but wherever they were on the broad and long meadow, they heard her or knew her thoughts. She told them we were willing to share the garden with them, but they mustn't be greedy. We worked hard to build and maintain the garden, and we expected to have a share of the harvest. We would use no aggressive tactics against them, and there would be plenty for all of us. If I harvested rewards for my work, I would work the garden all through the summer, and we all would all eat vegetables throughout the growing season.

That worked. All through gardening season, the animals

continued to harvest, but conservatively. There was plenty for all. That experience deepened my belief in the positive force of life and my belief in harmony and increased my reliance on communication between all species to bring about steps toward enlightenment.

Now, I look over my computer monitor and out my large window to a scene I enjoy and that helps steer my work toward harmony. Two varied thrushes, three Steller' jays, two doves, and seven Oregon juncos peck up seeds I've scattered for them. Three quail and then four more and then six more run from tall grass to the open feed ground and begin to eat. There are so many birds, the feed ground seems to move. There is room and food for all.

I continue to work at my computer. My sense of peace and harmony deepens as I participate with, appreciate, and write about life.