

Signs of spring

Nature wonders symbolize season's arrival

IT'S SPRINGTIME!!!

Well, maybe — maybe not. It is technically spring. It's officially spring. But does that mean that it's really spring? It sure doesn't seem like it at times. So how do you know when it's really spring?

There are the unimaginative people who look at their calendar and say, "Yeah, it's past March 20, 1996, which is the equinox, and that means it's spring." Or those who think "Well, I've just come back from SPRING break. Of course it's spring." But I disagree.

I think it's spring (yes, even though we had a blizzard Sunday). So what makes me different from everyone who uses the calendar or a man-made holiday to differentiate between the seasons? To me, spring is defined by certain events that often are called the signs of spring.

So what defines spring? Is it just the warm sunny days that characterize spring? Nope, sorry. Those beautiful days we had in January between the nasty gray days don't qualify. Those are just aberrations. I love those aberrations, though. They're better than spring for several reasons. First of all, they're a welcome break from sub-zero temperatures, and are much more appreciated.

Another reason I like those days better than spring days is that they don't contain insects. There are no pesky mosquitoes ready to bite any exposed skin. There aren't even any of those little shiny, metallic green bugs that can be seen flying around every so often. Those are usually the first insects I see, and that's how I can tell that spring's here.

The members of the animal kingdom are increasingly seen outside. I was taught by Mom that it was spring when you saw a robin. A day after I saw a green bug flying



Kristl Kohl

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lazily through my open window, I saw a robin. They're fun to watch — those cheery gray birds with the red-orange breast and bright black eyes. All they do is hop around happily in the grass, feasting on worms. What a life.

Bats also are beginning to come out of hibernation, I've been told. You didn't know we had bats here? Take a closer look some summer night. If you see something flying at dusk, it's probably not a bird. I remember seeing several around different street lights one summer, dining on the multitude of insects gathered around the light.

Another sign of spring is that it rains instead of snows. Those gentle, low rains drumming on the roof are characteristic of spring to me. So, however, are sleet, hail and tornadoes. Especially in Grand Island. Every time I have ever spent the night in Grand Island, there has been a tornado siren. I have only seen one tornado in real life. Mom always

made us go to the basement or the designated area if there was a real tornado warning.

But, one day when we were shingling the roof, we saw one by the river. Instead of running for cover like any sensible person would, we ran for our cameras. My sister took a great snapshot of me that looks like I was holding the tornado between my hands.

Another sign of spring I almost missed this year. I already had noticed the tiny green blades of grass poking through the dry brown lawn. I had seen the tiny buds on all of the trees. One day, passing by the Administration Building, I heard a biker call to another, "Look! Did you see the crocuses?" I don't know how she saw it from the bike, but I looked too. Sure enough, nestled in the broad green leaves, there was a yellow flower.

But for the average dedicated college student, spring break has to suffice for the beginning of spring. This is because most students don't have time to go out and see the wonders of nature, except on the run.

Spring is the time when professors realize that they haven't done everything they wanted to do this semester.

They load on the homework. They cram material into their lectures. They ensure that the average college student (who hasn't even looked at a textbook over spring break) is indoors, buried under a mountain of textbooks to maintain that 4.0 or 3.5 or whatever GPA.

But hey, let's look at the bright side. Only five more weeks and it's summer! Because summer doesn't depend on nature. Summer happens when you get out of school.

Kohl is a junior biology major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Internet 'indecentcy' pollutes moral fiber

Arianna Huffington

"Every society has had its red-light districts, but going there involved danger, stigmatization and often legal sanction. Now the red-light districts can invade our homes and our children's minds."

If there is one problem with the recently signed Communications Decency Act, which makes it illegal to post "indecent" material on the Internet, it is its name.

Discussions of indecency and pornography conjure up images of Playboy and Hustler, when in fact the kind of material available on the Internet goes far beyond indecency — and descends into barbarism.

Most parents never have been on the Internet, so they cannot imagine what their children can easily gain access to in cyberspace: child molestation, bestiality, sadomasochism and even specific descriptions of how to get sexual gratification by killing children.

Though First Amendment absolutists are loathe to admit it, this debate is not about controlling pornography but about fighting crime.

Every society has had its red-light districts, but going there involved danger, stigmatization and often legal sanction. Now the red-light districts can invade our homes and our children's minds.

During a recent taping of a "Firing Line" debate on controlling pornography on the Internet, which aired March 22, I was stunned by the gulf that separated the two sides. For Ira Glasser, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union, and his team, it was about freedom and the First Amendment. For our side, headed by Bill Buckley, it was about our children and the kind of culture that surrounded them.

There are three main arguments on the other side, and we are going to be hearing a lot of them in the year ahead as the ACLU's challenge to the Communications Decency Act comes to court.

The first is that there is no justification for abridging First Amendment rights. The reality is that depictions of criminal behavior have little to do with free speech. Moreover, there is no absolute protection of free speech in the Constitution. The First Amendment does not cover slander, false advertising or perjury, nor does it protect obscenity or child pornography.

Civilization is about trade-offs. And I would gladly sacrifice the rights of millions of Americans to have easy Internet access to "Bleed Little Girl Bleed" or "Little Boy Snuffed" for the sake of reducing the likelihood that one more child would be molested or murdered. With more than 80 percent of child molesters

admitting they have been regular users of hard-core pornography, it becomes impossible to continue hiding behind the First Amendment and denying the price we are paying.

The second most prevalent argument against regulating pornography on the Internet is that it should be the parents' responsibility. This is an odd argument from the same people who have been campaigning for years against parents' rights to choose the schools their children attend. Now they are attributing to parents qualities normally reserved for God — omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence.

The third argument that we heard a lot during the "Firing Line" debate is that it would be difficult, nay impossible, to regulate depictions of criminal behavior in cyberspace. We even heard liberals lament the government intrusion such regulations would entail. How curious that we never hear how invasive it is to restrict the rights of businessmen polluting the environment or farmers threatening the existence of the kangaroo rat.

Yes, it is difficult to regulate the availability of criminal material on the Internet, but the decline and fall of civilizations throughout history is testimony that maintaining a civilized society never has been easy.

It is not often that I have the opportunity to side with Bill Clinton, who has eloquently defended restrictions on what children may be exposed to on the Internet. When the president is allied with the Family Research Council and Americans for Tax Reform is allied with the ACLU, we know that the divisions transcend liberal vs. conservative. They have to do with our core values and most sacred priorities.

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Sober up

Life more important than lower drinking age

Recently, the Louisiana State Supreme Court threw out a bill that raised the legal drinking age to 21. It had been at 18 for quite some time. Already students here at the University of Nebraska and at universities all over the nation are asking why their drinking age can't be changed as well.

After all, at 18 you can fight for the U.S. in combat, vote for its future leaders, legally have sex and smoke — why not drink?

Well, the change in Louisiana occurred a little more than a week ago. On Monday, the main reason "why not" was lowered beneath the surface.

It was Monday when four 19-year-olds were buried. Two were UNL students.

While I do not want to mar their memory, all were legally drunk at the time their car went into Wagner Lakes.

Details remain sketchy as to whether there was a blowout on the car causing them to lose control of the vehicle. There were even reports that the brakes failed, a theory that since has been rejected.

Whatever the details were, four people, who were just like many of us, are now dead.

They sank in an automobile to a watery grave, only to be pulled from it and buried again by friends and family who will never quite recover from their loss.

Now I pose the question that no one in a sensitive time of mourning wants to hear, yet must be asked — if the teens had not been drinking, would they be alive today?

The driver of the car might have steered straight off the road as a result of an intoxicated misjudgment.



Kasey Kerber

"... life doesn't give spit for how invincible you feel or how strongly you cling onto the belief that it always happens to someone else."

Or the car may have had a blowout and gone into a feverish spin-out. Would a drunk driver at the wheel have been calm and calculated enough to regain control of the vehicle?

The simple fact is, none of the four teens should have been behind the wheel in the first place.

Yet there's a huge number of students across the country right now, clamoring about why the drinking age can't be lowered to 18.

Many students say "they can handle it" — they drink responsibly and know when to call it quits and rely on a friend to take them home.

To those students I say "fine." But what about all those other students who make no such promises? The ones who get drunk every weekend and would get drunk every night if the spirits were a little easier to get a hold of? The students who have not a care in the world —

including what happens when they get behind the wheel?

Do you think those students are responsible enough not to kill themselves and possibly you if you happen to be in the vicinity of wherever their car crashes?

No, we don't think about that at all. All we think about is what we want, how we want to feel and what we think we should be able to do.

It's sad, but often it takes a tragedy like this to make us quit thinking about ourselves and consider our actions for a moment. Yet even then, how long do we truly remember the tragedy? A week, maybe two. Then we go on with life as normal until the next tragedy opens our eyes and time shuts them once again.

We're living in a daydream. One in which we think tragedy doesn't happen to us or even those we know. One in which we can get away with the world and no one will stop to notice. One in which lowering a drinking age is no big deal and poses no threat if we're "responsible" about it.

Unfortunately, all daydreams have an end.

Wake up. Realize that the world doesn't care what age you are when you down one too many tall ones and then slide yourself behind the wheel. Comprehend that life doesn't give spit for how invincible you feel or how strongly you cling onto the belief that it always happens to someone else.

Life will rip everything from your clutches when you make a choice like that — friends, family, memories and dreams.

And after it has torn everything dear from you, it will not leave you for dead ...

It will make sure of it.

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Apply to be a DN columnist.

The application deadline for fall semester columnists has been extended to Wednesday, March 27 at 5 p.m.

The DN seeks diverse columnists with strong opinions and good writing skills. Applicants must be UNL students carrying at least six hours and a 2.0 GPA.

Pick up an application and sign up for an interview at the DN, room 34 in the basement of the Nebraska Union.

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