

Watch the car washes

Through the ages, society has recognized a number of natural phenomena which have come to be universally accepted as sure-fire first signs of spring.

The feathery little robin in search of the worm has been an age-old favourite, and my dad always claimed an alternative indication of spring was the return of the red-wing blackbirds.

Others see the bare earth, the presence of buds breaking out and sightings of crocus as their own private indication that spring is in the air.

Then there's those who watch the activities of the wild animals, the squirrels, the raccoons and the sudden proliferation of road kill, telling us spring is here.

Myself, I tend to take a more base approach to the signs of spring—and they all involve watching people, 'cuz people are animals too.

The human male species is the easiest to read, since they tend to work on instinct, rather than mask their moves by emotion. And to observe these aforementioned animals in their natural habitat, I need go no further than the local car wash to see my indisputable first signs of spring.

Being one of the same species, I can take part in the ritual, as well as scientifically observe, comforted by the fact that the male bastion of society is still rock-solid and well established in his own arena.

Last week, I was drawn by an uncontrollable urge to wash both my SUV and my F150, and I could tell, by the inner impulses that raged through my body, that spring is indeed close.

(Mind you, the urge to clean my vehicle is something that possesses me most days—it's just the weather that stops me.)

I cashed in some Esso Extra points, twice, for two vehicles—can you believe it?

By the time I was driving out through the blower thing, watching the water streak across the windshield, I could tell, spring was virtually here.

There was a time I'd take the more

Ted Brown



hands-on approach to washing the car, but with cold hands and an aching back, I've decided I'm going to let the drive-thru be my indicator that summer is here.

For some reason, I no longer enjoy driving to the coin-op car wash, waiting in line for 20 minutes, then soaping, scrubbing and wiping for another 20 minutes.

There is a sense of peace that envelopes the human male when his car is shining and the roads are dry, since it seems to feed a primal urge we all experience at some time.

But the words of science are always vying for attention.

The fine print in my daytimer says spring arrives Saturday, March 20, 2010, at precisely 1:32 P.M. EDT. I'm always shaking my head at the exactness of that time—'precisely 1:32 P.M. EDT'?

Come on!

What do we call this past week, when the temperature hit 16C?

Now before someone sends me a long-winded explanation about the vernal equinox, and how "the sun crosses a certain point at a precise time... blah, blah, blah..." take note.

I've heard it all before. I've even stood waiting, watching the clock, to see if I can 'feel' something, maybe a slight tingling in the air as we suddenly enter upon that season called spring.

Nothing, notta thing. So I'll stick to my previous indicator.

Keep an eye on the car washes—they'll tell you when spring arrives.

And judging by the most recent sightings—we're already there.

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