



Features

WHIPPLE'S WEIRD WORLD

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Until now Al Gore was either a noble environmental warrior or a self-serving publicity seeker, depending on your point of view. But in a move that could reconcile hippy tree-huggers and right-wing nutjobs everywhere, psychologists at the University of Toronto have posited an alternative: maybe he's both.

The researchers let half of a group of subjects shop in a regular store, the other half in an ecostore. All subjects were then given an opportunity to lie and steal. The result? The green consumers cheated more. "Buying products that claim to be made with low environmental impact can set up 'moral credentials' in people's minds that give licence to selfish or questionable behaviour," the university said.

It's as you've always suspected - the office colleague most likely to have stolen your milk is also the one drinking Fairtrade coffee.

Why is it always fruit flies? Why not, every now and then, a butterfly or perhaps a shield bug? As a species, *Drosophila melanogaster* must feel somewhat beleaguered, especially with news that neuroscientists have developed a way of firing lasers into fruit flies' brains to alter their memories. At least this is an improvement — the old technique involved electrocution.

Rooks, meanwhile, are having their status improved by science. A new study says they understand gravity better than the average six-month-old human does. Shown scenarios that violated the laws of physics, rooks spent longer investigating them than babies. Which is worth pointing out next time someone tediously boasts about their little baby Johnny sitting up. And Johnny can't fly, either.

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