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Locked Down in La La Land
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The Usual Suspects

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on Friday arrived at a shocking conclusion, the Las Vegas Sun reports.

The September destruction of thousands of Tiehm's buckwheat plants, an incredibly rare desert wildflower that lives only in a small portion of Esmeralda County, has been 'strongly linked' to ground squirrel damage. . . .

The Center for Biological Diversity first discovered the damage in September on a "routine visit," finding that 40% of the plant's population had been destroyed. Almost immediately, the group and Loneer Corp. — an Australian mining company interested in developing an open-pit lithium mine in the flower's habitat — had a public disagreement about the source of the damage.

The Center for Biological Diversity has been trying to block a lithium mine in Nevada's desert, which would supply minerals for electric car batteries, by seeking Endangered Species Act protections for buckwheat. Environmental activists are equal opportunist obstructionists.

Lo, green groups during the Obama Presidency sought ESA protections for critters like the sage grouse to stop oil and gas drilling. But recently they have rallied in defense of the Joshua tree and desert tortoise in the Mojave Desert to block solar farms.

In September, environmentalists accused Australian lithium mine developer Loneer Corp. of floricide. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service thus performed a forensic investigation. On Friday the agency reported that it "found squirrel, deer and a small trace of human DNA on root samples and soils near damaged or dead plants" as well as buckwheat DNA was in animal feces.

"This coupled with known white-tailed antelope ground squirrel populations at Rhyolite Ridge, burrowing at damaged plants, and rodent bite marks on plant roots strongly supports that ground squirrels were responsible for the damage," FWS explained.

Environmental groups, however, profess shock that rodents and deer would feast on flowers. Have they ever seen Bambi?

Naomi Fraga, the director of conservation at the California Botanic Garden, told the Las Vegas Sun that the FWS "report appears to provide evidence that buckwheat plant parts have at some point been eaten by white-tailed antelope ground squirrels at Rhyolite Ridge," but "I don't see how this line of evidence can substantiate that the entirety of the wide-scale damage was caused by small mammals."

Shouldn't government scientists have more important things to do than analyze squirrel poop?