Conversation with a Ground Hog

 When I was running on River Road (in Devola) on February 2, I saw a ground hog. I approached him cautiously and in a friendly manner asked him what his name is. "Buckeye Chuck," he replied. I queried again, "Are you related to Punxsutawney Phil?"

 "Just a distant relative," he said coolly (for there was a chill in the morning air).

 I pressed my luck in my inquisition of this former hibernator and asked, "Well, have you seen your shadow today?"

 "No," he answered with some impatience in his voice but then quickly added haughtily, "Don't believe this kind of myth. I am a creature of science and follow facts, as all you so-called higher-species humans should."

 "The earth is warming," he continued. "Winters are becoming shorter and warmer due to climate change."

 "But we've had a long spell of cold weather here in the Mid-Ohio Valley," I countered.

 "That's weather, not climate," this modern-day rodent asserted. "Climate change is causing extreme weather of all kinds--wild fires in southern California driven by extensive drought and furious Santa Ana winds, extreme cold due to the disturbance of the polar vortex, also driven by climate change."

 "What can we do about these calamities and this hardship for creatures like you?" I asked

 "I have two words for you, Mr. Human: fossil fuels! You need to phase out coal, oil, and gas. For you it would be a temporary inconvenience; for me and my climate-sensitive animal friends, it's survival!"

 I resumed my morning run and called out to him, "Thanks for your insight, Mr. Chuck--it's better than a shadow report."

 "You're welcome-and call me Buckeye!"

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