Subject: How to delete a variable
Posted by wlandsman on Fri, 18 Apr 2014 19:29:47 GMT

There are times when one wants to delete variables inside a program to save memory. (The intrinsic DELVAR command can only be called at the main level.) For example, the Coyote program UNDEFINE (http://www.idlcoyote.com/programs/undefine.pro) tests whether a variable is a pointer, object, structure or ordinary variable, and will apply HEAP_FREE, OBJ_DESTROY, iteration, or set an ordinary variable to 0.

I was using a more elegant but apparently less reliable solution in delvarx.pro
http://idlastro.gsfc.nasa.gov/ftp/pro/misc/delvarx.pro

in which the single statement

    Heap_Free, PTR_NEW(x , /No_Copy)

would release the memory and destroy any type of IDL variable x. But I have gotten reports that in some cases this can be terribly slow. Actually the two reports have both been on CentOS Linux systems running IDL 7.0, so perhaps this is a problem fixed in more recent versions of IDL. But can anyone think of a reason why the above statement is not good way to release memory?

Thanks, --Wayne