

# Mother Nature knows what to do

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NEWARK, Del. - With the exception of mosquitoes, flies, ticks and cockroaches, our family is loony about wildlife. We take Albert Schweitzer's "reverence for life" philosophy to a ridiculous extreme.

My husband has been known to carry a spider carefully outdoors and place it on a bush. The same husband also buys bird seed in 100-pound sacks, and has spent more on

a new feeder than on my Christmas present. (Then he worked for hours painstakingly redesigning the feeder to more exacting bird standards.)

Last Summer I found a grandfatherly praying mantis in the supermarket parking lot, looking in vain for a shrub. I coaxed him into a small paper sack and carried him home to happy release in our rose garden.

Son Dave once built an entire frog palace in the woods. He called it Toad Hall. It had its own pools for splashing, plants for shading, and rocks for sunning, with a never-ending supply of fresh tadpoles brought in daily from a nearby stream. The frogs lived a very good life, and naturally hung around all summer.

Dave also raised Monarch butterflies with great success in one of my jumbo hatboxes. Our whole family skipped meals, homework, and chores to hang over the hatbox, breathlessly watching the miracle of each wet and wrinkled butterfly emerging from its chrysalis.

With nature-loving children in the house, it's difficult to discourage making pets of wildlife. This is the time of when baby rabbits, squirrels and other wildlife offspring are sometimes found by children. Often a youngster can't understand that the kindest thing to do is leave them alone.

Jack Linehan, biologist with the U.S. Department of the Interior, says adopting a wildlife baby is usually a tragic experience and might be the worst thing you could do to the little creature. People assume that a young animal found alone is an orphan. But chances are the mother is nearby, Jack says, and will tend to her young after humans leave the area. Wildlife mothers must often leave their offspring in order to find food.

It's not true, Jack adds, that wildlife parents won't care for their young if the babies carry the scent of humans. However, even brief handling of young wildlife may interrupt normal parental care and can result in their death. He urges parents to teach children not to touch wildlife babies, and to leave the area quietly and quickly.

If your child does bring a young animal home, Jack advises you to take it back immediately to the same spot where it was found. Don't try to raise it, he urges. Wild pets look cute, cuddly and helpless, but you will face many problems if you try to rear them. In spite of your best efforts, most will sicken and die. If they do survive, they can become very unmanageable as adults, especially during breeding season. Further, after being fed and cared for by humans, pets released into the wild usually

die because they have not learned how to fend for themselves.

An appealing baby duckling once captivated our Dave to the point where he brought it home "to protect it from all the snapping turtles in the pond." With great difficulty we persuaded him that it needed its parents a lot more than it needed our protection. So we all took the duckling back and launched him on the pond. You never heard such a commotion! Ma and Pa Duck shot off across the water toward him like small, feathered speedboats, quacking in raucous unison. The baby paddled in their direction as fast as his tiny webbed feet could carry him, emitting a staccato of happy soprano quacks.

Watching the touching reunion, Dave decided for himself that it's best to leave some things to Mother Nature.

## Peaches and wheat down

HARRISBURG - Based on conditions May 1, Pennsylvania's 1977 winter wheat crop is still forecast at 7.02 million bushels. This would be a 26 per cent reduction from last year and the smallest crop of record, according to the Pennsylvania Crop Reporting Service.

Pennsylvania's peach crop is now expected to total 95 million pounds. This is 14 per cent below the 1976 crop.

U.S. winter wheat production, forecast at 1,526 million bushels, is up three per cent from the May 1, 1977 forecast but is three per cent below the 1976 production

and eight per cent below the record high 1975 production.

Peach production in the U.S. is forecast at 2.9 billion pounds, down three per cent from last season's total but three per cent above the 1975 crop. Production of clingstone peaches in California is expected to total 1.4 billion pounds, down six per cent from the 1976 total crop and off four per cent from 1975.

Spring potato production is estimated at 22.3 million hundredweight, two per cent below the forecast of a month earlier and ten per cent less than the 24.8 million hundredweight produced in 1976.



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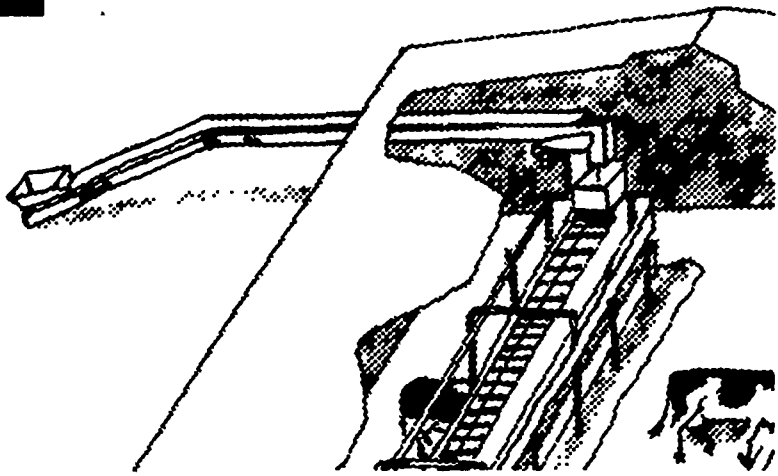
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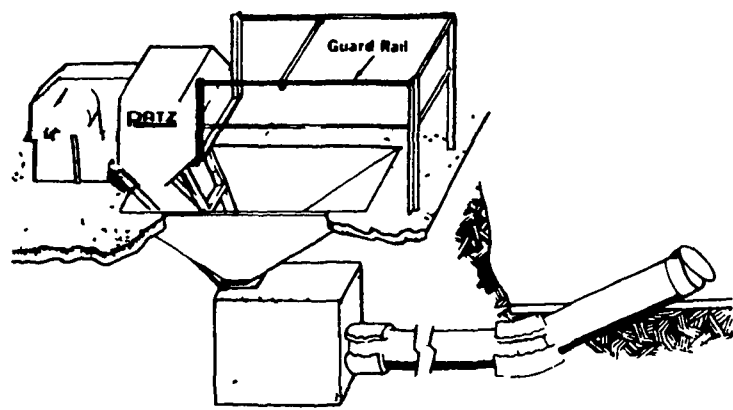
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