

On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



Two mallard males cruise the pond regularly, though the females have disappeared to nest in the meadow. A pair of ring-necked ducks paused briefly along their migration to northern summer homes.

And this year's feather-in-the-cap, er, pond, is a pair of wood ducks. If there are clowns in the duck world, wood ducks would have to qualify. While the females are fairly somber in striped brown hues, the males flaunt coloring of iridescent blue, purple, brown and a green head with duck-tail-hairdo, all accented with outlines of white. Stunning.

Even more astounding was watching them nest-scout, the male pacing around the chimney of our old springhouse, while the female checked out the pondside willow. Ducks in tree? And chimneys? According to the field guides, wood ducks nest in hollow tree cavities as high as 50 feet up, with the babies jumping to the ground after hatching. Ouch!

Other chores were briefly abandoned that morning to erect impromptu wood duck nestboxes - in the pond and 10 feet up in the willow.

After a brief swim around the pond, our mama goose herded her brood back to the nest for a warming nap. Papa kept vigil from the nest porch, flaring at the manure truck each time it rumbled past.

Somehow it seems fitting that we should salute mothers at this time of year when new life is so abundant and nurturing instincts so visible.

So, to mothers, who nurture and nest, cherish and hide, direct and delight us, for giving us the best gift ever - love - we say THANKS!



a sort of goose good-news proclamation.

That this pair of geese chose to return to our pond for a second season was a source of tremendous satisfaction for us. And, we know it's at least the same male because of the distinctive sprinkling of white feathers among the sleek black coloring of his head.

Though we nearly dumped the canoe into the icy drink last spring, the nesting "island" we maneuvered midpond had promptly been claimed by the pair of nesters. A wooden-pallet floor, fastened at each corner to one of four posts driven into the pond bottom, was just large enough for a spacious nest and a sort of porch on opposite sides.

The Farmer added a roof overhead - not necessarily according to wildlife nest-building recommendations - but apparently appreciated by the geese. They fought off every other feathered being that made even an attempt to land, and eventually hatched out and protectively nurtured one very fast-growing baby.

This season was a repeat, with the male chasing off all other geese, along with threatening every tractor and truck that drove by the pond.

But, for whatever reason, this year he chose to tolerate ducks.

It's a boy. And a girl. And a boy . . . and a girl . . . and another . . . Well, we're not sure exactly what it is. Or, what they are, to be more correct.

But, let me back up.

At 7 a.m. last Friday morning, our son glanced out the back door window and made the announcement we've been awaiting for several weeks.

"The baby geese are going in the water!"

Sure enough, with both mama and papa Canada geese coaxing from the water just off the wooden edge of our mid-pond nesting "island," one little gosling hopped off the edge. And another. And another and another, until five little bodies bobbed around.

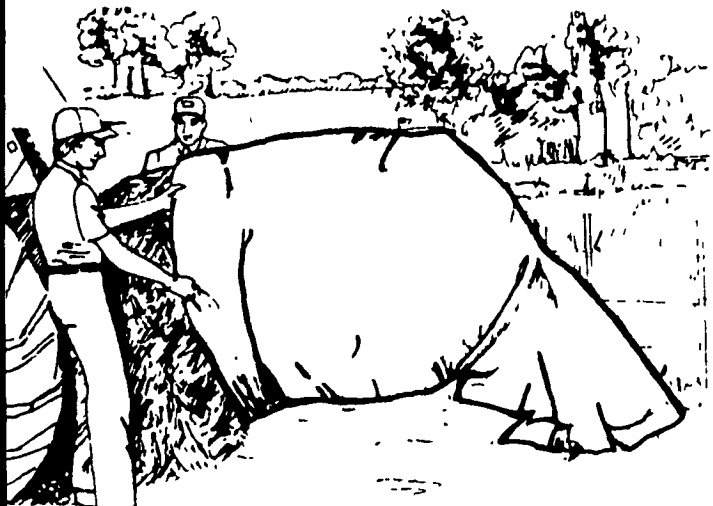
Those five small balls of yellowish-brown fuzz paddled their little legs furiously, keeping pace with the effortless glide of the adult pair. A chilly wind whipped the steely-gray pond waters on this morning, sending dark clouds eastward to threaten the sun's attempts to warm the day.

But the coolness of the early hour and downright cold temperatures of the pond were no deterrent to the little flotilla, circling the pond awash in obvious parental pride. It almost seemed the pair was parading their accomplishment around their neighborhood -

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PDPP Takes Cheers To School

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — During this season of proms and graduations, the Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program (PDPP) and Pennsylvania dairy farmers are providing parents and students a sensible way to conduct their celebrations.

To date, more than 100 Pennsylvania secondary schools will be incorporating the CHEERS Non-Alcoholic Dairy Beverage Program into their springtime parties.

"We recognize that parents and students are concerned about drinking and driving," said Brian Ross, PDPP program manager. "Our board members and other dairy farmers are likewise concerned about the safety of today's youth. The PDPP established CHEERS last year to offer a party program that uses healthy dairy beverages and eliminates the use of alcohol."

Every year, thousands of individuals are fatally injured in alcohol-related automobile accidents. Many of these accidents occur during the spring when young people are out at prom or graduation parties. Too often, high school students use alcohol because it makes

their party more sociable.

CHEERS takes that social aura, removes the alcohol, and adds nutrition and safety to the party mix. The program offers recipes for Grasshoppers, White Russians, Strawberry Daiquiri's, and Orange Blossoms, which are made with milk, ice cream, and other dairy products.

"Since Pennsylvania is ranked fifth nationally in the production of dairy products, we felt that Pennsylvanians could respond to the prom and graduation safety issue by offering nutritious dairy beverages," said Ross. "The PDPP is proud to be able to provide students and parents this healthy and safe alternative to their celebrations."

The CHEERS program provides each school a party pack, which includes napkins, recipe brochures, table tents, stickers, and banners. In addition, schools that serve CHEERS beverages at their parties can send a polaroid or 35 mm picture of their party display to the PDPP and receive a \$35 reimbursement for their rental equipment and beverage expenses.

Preserve Food The Right Way

WILKES—BARRE (Luzerne Co.) — Preserving some of those good things growing in your garden or purchased from your nearby market will make next winter seem a little shorter. But there are some definite pitfalls in the preserving business. If you don't do it right, the trouble might be greater than the worth.

There are people ready to help you get the job done with the great-

est measure of safety and reliability, and they are called Master Food Preservers. Trained by Penn State's Cooperative Extension, these people have volunteered to help citizens of Luzerne County.

If you have questions about preserving food at home, call a Master Food Preserver in Luzerne County by dialing (717) 825-1701 or (717) 459-0736 ext. 701.

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