

**On being  
a farm wife  
- And other  
hazards**

**Joyce Bupp**



Every sport has its dangers. Some sports, obviously, are more fraught with hazards than others. Mountain climbing, automobile racing, ski jumping, and sailing around the world all by yourself immediately come to mind as activities in which the risk levels are pretty high from man contending with the forces of speed, gravity, and Mother Nature.

Not to mention the threat to life and limb posed by participating in person-on-person competitive sports like football, ice hockey and participation in after-Christmas 70-percent reduction sales. (In a frightening commentary on our crime-ridden society, a champion ice skater was physically attacked by an assailant while this was being written.)

More low-key, laid-back sports activities have their own risk factors. Golfers have been known to clobber one another with mis-hit balls. Remember former President Gerald Ford and his sometimes errant golf swing? Having tried golf once, I can identify with that.

You don't often see a doctor rushed in to care for a bowling tournament injury. But, drop one of those ball on your foot or catch your finger between two of 'em, and there's still the potential for pain.

Even joggers — running along minding their own business — face the possibilities of shin splints, nasty dogs, and reckless drivers. Or maybe reckless dogs and nasty drivers.

As career participants in one of the long-known most dangerous professions — farming — we generally figure we're safer in most of our recreational pursuits than we are entering the barn every morning. Chasing heifers across a manure-slippery lot, hooking up high-speed PTO equipment, and moving farm equipment along our increasingly- traffic- laden highways are daily threats to life and limb.

So our sports activities — canoeing, hiking, cross-country skiing, wave surfing at the beach, fishing — seem real tame by comparison.

And there can't be a recreation-

al activity much safer than one of our ongoing, daily passions: bird-watching. Right? Unless one falls off the ladder crawling up to fill the bird feeder ... or is dive bombed by an indignant bluejay ... or gets beaten up by one's binoculars. Wait. Don't laugh.

So I certainly felt no sense of impending danger on a recent, relatively-pleasant Sunday afternoon journey to check out the eagles at the river. Though wildlife experts are suggesting that eagles may soon have made enough of a population comeback to be removed from the endangered list, the local presence of these majestic birds is still awesome to us.

But there they are, visible apparently nearly anytime from the fisherman's park area just below Conowingo Dam, last hydro-electric power plant on the Susquehanna before it flows into the Chesapeake Bay. In the hour or so we spent there on the west bank, we observed two immature and

one white-headed mature bald eagle.

The soaring metal towers which support the electrical wires crossing across the river seem to be their favored perching spots. As they survey the rocky river bottom below from their high-rise overlooks, the wind ruffles the eagles' feathers, as if teasing these beautiful predators to take wing and soar away.

But to see this, you need a spotting scope or pair of field glasses. And, bundled up as we were against the chilly January breeze, my glasses became tangled in my heavy coat collar. When I yanked at the neck strap to free it, the heavy glasses — rather than the strap — jerked upward, smacking me square on the mouth. Even before I got the cut to stop bleeding, the tissue had started to swell.

Birdwatching is not generally considered to be a sport hazardous to your health.

Trust me. It can give you a fat lip.

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