

**On Being a
Farm Wife**
(and other
hazards)
Joyce Bupp



Our daughter, riding along in the passenger seat of my little car, looked at me with a grin.

"You need one of those 'I brake for birds' bumper stickers," she suggested.

It had been about the third time in this straight stretch of country road that a bird lingered extra long, pecking at the gravel dotting the road. Each time, I'd hit the brakes of the car to avoid turning the reluctant flyers into feather dusters.

But we also brake for birds other than those directly on the pavement in front of us. Generally, though, only on back roads

where we take less chance on being rear-ended by other gawking drivers.

Power-line sitting kestrels, eyeballing prey in hayfields and fencerows, cause us to brake, as do the telltale, broad, white breasts of red-tailed hawks perched in roadside trees awaiting a passing meal. We brake to enjoy families of Canada geese on neighborhood ponds, the flash of bluebird color flitting somewhere along a dirt road and sometimes come to a dead stop mid-road to identify some less-obvious winged friend.

Other critters command the

brake-light warning as well: a rusty-red whitetail doe nibbling alfalfa at dusk, a glimpse of the bounding, bushy tail of a fox loping through tall grass, baby bunnies, squirrels, chipmunks, possums, even the occasional pedestrian turtle or snake.

Certain inanimate objects create the same reaction. A gorgeous flower bed or unusual planting causes an immediate gas-to-brake-pedal reaction when I'm behind the wheel. Farm equipment — especially something shiny-new or big — gets the same response from The Farmer. (It no longer surprises me when he hits the brake to make quick side trips around equipment lots en route to anywhere. King of impromptu, farmer window shopping.)

Thirty years of farm living has trained me to brake for stuff lying in the middle of the road that most drivers would ignore — at least along our local road. Things like hitch pins for hay wagons or any piece in red or green paint that looks like it belongs to a piece of equipment very well might — and is probably something The Farmer is looking for at that very moment.

Maybe what we really need is an "I brake for all kinds of stuff" bumper sticker. Including other drivers who slam on theirs to stop at yard sales.

Less than a mile from home one recent evening, he hit the truck brakes, did a double take in the rear-view mirror and incredulously said, "What was that?"

Search me. I've been admiring the neighbors' lush cornfields and hadn't seen a thing.

We did a quick turnaround at a side road to go back to investigate

the object of his intense interest. A road kill.

But, not just any old road kill. A weasel. A beautiful little critter, with almost no damage to its physical appearance. First one I've ever seen. It went home with us on the truckbed, with hopes that a taxidermy specialist might be interested in the remains.

Two days later, he found another — maybe a littermate? — at almost the identical spot.

Where can I find an "I brake for road kill" bumper sticker?

How Science Affects Chocolate

HERSHEY (Dauphin Co.) — Young folks ages 11 through 14 will "get a taste" of the science of chocolate in this class held at the Hershey Museum scheduled for Monday, August 14 through Thursday, August 17, from 9:30 - 11 a.m. Teacher Joan Bechtel will work with youngsters on a variety of experiments with chocolate and related products. The class illustrates how much science affects things we use in our everyday lives and is designed to be entertaining and informative.

Visiting resource people and a class trip behind the scenes at

Chocolate World are on the agenda for the four-day experience. Dr. Frances Seligson, senior manager of nutrition and food safety for Hershey Foods Corporation, will work with the class on calculating calories in chocolate products and other nutrition-related activities. Information about Milton Hershey's many experiments, some successful, some not so successful, will be provided by Pam Cassidy, archivist of the Hershey Community Archives.

Class size is limited. Registration is required and there is a class fee. For more information call (717) 534-3439.

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