



THIS PROUD ROBIN keeps an eye out for any intruder which may threaten her nest.

PHOTO BY BILL FAVER

Birds On The Nest

BY BILL FAVER

This is the time of year when we are likely to find nesting birds in almost any shrub, vine, or tree in our yard.

With the loss of many nesting areas, birds are willing to come to sites where they can find some shelter and where they are not likely to be disturbed. Backyard nesting sites give us a good opportunity to learn about bird behavior and feeding habits, and sometimes birds will return to the same areas year after year if they are not harmed.

Most mockingbirds, robins, cardinals, and similar species prefer to make a shallow to deep cup nest along a limb or in the fork of a branch. Wrens, bluebirds, chickadees, and crested flycatchers prefer a nest box or an abandoned hole in a tree or fence post. Nuthatches also prefer a hole in a dead tree which they will fashion themselves if given the opportunity. Most of the woodpeckers do the same.

Grackles and orioles make nests more basket-like as do some of the warblers.

There is always the question of what to do when we find a baby bird out of the nest. The purists in environmental circles say we should leave them alone, that this is the way of nature. Others feel we should put them back in the nest if we can do so without causing stress to the adult birds, who may abandon them.

My suggestion is to use common sense and return the bird if it is healthy and you can get to the nest. If not, put it in a brushy vine or high enough to give it some protection and see if the adult bird can coax it back to safety.

It is best to watch the bird on the nest with binoculars, for any disturbance when nesting and egg-laying begins may cause the birds to abandon the nest and go elsewhere. Once the birds have hatched and the feeding begins, we can get closer, but we still should never, never touch the young birds or the nest.

Let's let the birds do their thing, and we can take joy in watching them and in contributing to their continuing presence with us in our own backyards.

A Case For Lazy Fair Lawn Care

A question for you male readers: Have you ever noticed how you can make other guys start whistling—especially in some place like a men's room—just by whistling yourself?

You know what I mean. You wonder in and things are real quiet. Some guys are finishing up, washing and drying their hands or combing their hair. Others are doing their business. And the rest are jockeying for a stall position.

But nobody's talking. Not a word. So you unconsciously start whistling a little tune, just to ease the tension.

Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, if there are at least three guys who don't know each other, somebody else will start whistling. Guaranteed.

Saturday morning, I noticed that the same thing happens whenever anyone on the block starts cutting the grass. At 9:30 a.m., when I dragged out the mower, everything was dead still. Just a few birds chirping. A car door slamming down the road. Some kids yelling in the distance.

When my ears recovered after shutting down the cursed rattle trap, I noticed that at least a half-dozen other lawn mowers were sputtering away doing laps around lawns all over the neighborhood.

Maybe it's some kind of subliminal message reception learned in childhood. The little putt-putt-putt of a far-off Briggs and Stratton reminding a husband that the chores must be done before he goes out to play. Or maybe it's the spouse that picks up the sound and does the reminding.

In some neighborhoods, where a well-manicured lawn is seen as evidence of a family's good breeding, the sound of another man's mower hard at work is like a call to battle. These homeowners can be made to feel guilty at the mere suggestion that the Joneses are not being kept up with.

I myself cannot.

Isn't that why they invented Astro-Turf? So we could be free of this self-imposed bondage to the unattainable ideal of a weed-free lawn? So yard maintenance would be reduced to an annual once-over with

Eric Carlson



an industrial carpet cleaner?

A closely-cropped lawn is an insult to nature. Like shaving the hair off your Labrador retriever. Or snipping all those nasty blossoms off a bouquet of roses. Or serving your guests boiled corn cobs with the kernels scraped off.

If it were up to me, tall grass would be a sign of good citizenship. An indication that the owner is actively promoting nature's nitrogen cycle and cultivating as many oxygen-producing photosynthetic cells as can possibly be crammed onto one 5,000-square-foot lot.

You are probably wondering how I attained this higher plane of environmentally aware landscaping consciousness. I must say, without a doubt, that I owe it all to the Fred Astaire of laissez faire lawn care: my dad.

Moving from one new subdivision to another across the suburban Northeast (courtesy of the DuPont Company), Dad was confronted with a debilitating series of new-home landscaping challenges. It seemed that each of our new homes was built on land from which the developer had scraped off (and probably sold) every morsel of arable topsoil, leaving a barren moonscape of rock-hard clay.

With sod and seed, fertilizer and lime, spreader and sprinkler, he would do his best to make the desert bloom with bluegrass and shrubbery. Sometimes the magic worked and sometimes it didn't. Most times, we were long gone before his efforts bore visible fruit.

So when we moved to yet another new housing development in New Jersey and found another 1.5-acre "lawn" of red clay and shale, Dad's first impulse was to "pave it and

paint it green."

His second impulse was to conduct a controlled burn after the so-called "grass seed" planted by the (vanished) developer sprouted into a representative sample of every undesirable weed species known to horticulture.

During his initial denial phase, before coming to grips with the full range of the developer's crimes, my dad theorized that neighborhood delinquents had filled the grass-seed spreader with gathered weed seeds. This idea was abandoned once the golden field of dandelion blossoms bore colorful witness that this was far beyond the scope of youthful mischief.

With no hope of creating a real lawn out of the mess, by Dad made a fantastic discovery. He found that—to all but the overly nosy observer—a closely cropped field of weeds looks just like closely cropped grass. Close enough, anyway.

So he bought a lawn tractor, assigned me the task of operating it, and spent his weekends on the golf course. As a side benefit, the tractor provided me with a summer job. Instead of pestering Dad for an allowance, I made a small fortune feeding and fertilizing and cutting all those fussy neighbor yards.

As my first motorized vehicle, the tractor also gave me valuable training that would serve me well as a future automobile driver. I learned how to do power slides and wheelstands, how to speed-shift a manual transmission and how to repair minor scratches and dents in a vehicle so Mom and Dad never found out that I "borrowed" it.

Dad's second yard maintenance revelation was even more significant. After about 20 years of doing absolutely nothing to the lawn except cutting it, the grass somehow choked out the weeds. Today his lawn looks just as good—even up close—as the yards of all those neighbors who spent thousands of dollars on fertilizer and weed killers.

Now if I can just convince Lynn of how much better our lawn would look if we let the grass go to seed for the summer...

MORE LETTERS

Loyal Nascar Fan Rallies To Defend His Sport From 'Mr. Carlson'

To the editor:

My letter is in response to Eric Carlson's column about Nascar being a boring sport to watch.

To begin with, any sport—or, for that matter, any subject including being a professional journalist—can be boring when a person does not understand what they are writing about. I feel Mr. Carlson does not fully understand Nascar after reading his article.

I'll agree that it gets very hot and that there are 50,000 hot, sweaty people, but we Nascar fans love it.

Mr. Carlson states that there are a bunch of cars painted up like laundry detergent boxes running around in circles, but I watch Nascar and follow it every day of my life in one way or another, and I only see one out of 42 cars that races weekly with laundry detergent advertising painted on it.

Mr. Carlson states that he grew up

an avid fan of Formula 1 Grand Prix racing. I too like to watch Grand Prix racing, but can't for the world see why anyone with any kind of right mind would like to race a machine (as Mr. Carlson likes to call it) that is stripped of everything except four open wheels, a high-revving engine and (listen to this one) a driver lying on his back about two inches off the pavement.

I wonder how Rusty Wallace would have looked had he been driving this machine in the Daytona 500 and flipped it end over end nine or ten times. I'll bet my entire Nascar collector card set that he'd have more than a little scratch on his chin. Or let's take this machine to the godforsaken (as Mr. Carlson called it) Talladega Speedway and let Rusty flip it 15 times and see if he comes out with only a hurt wrist.

Mr. Carlson states that those Nascar lumbering billboards

couldn't keep a Formula 1 car in sight for a single lap of Grand Prix racing. I'll agree with this, but what could keep up with a one-hundred-plus-thousand-dollar engine with a turbocharger turning out four or five times more horsepower than a Nascar engine?

But let's take this same Formula 1 Grand Prix machine to Bristol, Tenn., on the high-banked half-mile oval and I'll bet the Nascar machine could lap the Grand Prix machine 400 times out of 500 laps of Nascar racing.

Mr. Carlson states that Nascar folks (which should read fans) will be shocked to learn that Grand Prix races require a driver to turn left and to turn right. They have to use the brakes AND the accelerator, and they go up and down real hills. If he watched the Nascar Save-Mart 300 from Sonoma, Calif., on Sunday, I hope he changed his mind completely

and takes it back.

In closing I would like to point out that when Mr. Carlson let a newspaper friend put a camera around his neck to get him into the pits at the World 600 (the longest Nascar race on the tour), he deserved what he got. If he wants to watch a real race, he should try to get a newspaper friend to buy him a ticket to the grandstands at the World 600 and come sit with us and watch the race action where he can see the cars all the way around the racetrack, unlike Grand Prix racing, where they run a three-, four- or sometimes five-mile course through the streets of a city, and you might get to see the machines two or three seconds until the next lap. This, my friend, sounds—and is—boring to watch.

I think this just might be the reason why we no longer have the United States Grand Prix.

One more thing before I let Mr. Carlson take it back. He states that tractor pulling is a sport developed by oversubsidized farmers trying to see who can pull a heavily weighted sled the farthest through a mud field. For your information, these tractors pull a sled on a hard-

packed red clay track.

Next time he should write about something he fully understands.

Artie Duncan
Holden Beach

Thanks For After Prom, Stand Behind Young

To the editor:

Speaking as a parent of a student at West Brunswick High School, I want to thank each and every one who planned or donated even the smallest part of the wonderful After Prom event. It was well-planned, organized to the letter and well thought-out.

The students were the best. They were well-behaved, enthusiastic and could enjoy a time of good clean fun. We need to be proud of our young people of Brunswick County. They are our future. We need to stand behind those who can make the right choices.

Nancy B. Wemyss
Ocean Isle Beach

Heroes Of Clean-Up

To the editor:

Heroes in our time! The men of the VFW Post 8866 of Holden Beach, and the ladies' auxiliary, are

proven heroes in our foreign wars, but are now meeting a new challenge—the war against litter on our highways.

Since they adopted the highway starting at the Holden Beach causeway and ending at Lockwood Folly golf course, it has never looked cleaner. Through a maze of discarded bottles, cans, trash and even mattresses, the battle continues. With new artillery, the "Swat A Litterbug" program, the battle may be won. I say "three cheers" for the men and women of the VFW. I salute them!

Fran Vogt
Holden Beach

Write Us

The Beacon welcomes letters to the editor. All letters must be signed and include the writer's address and telephone number. Only the author's name and town will be listed. Under no circumstances will anonymous letters be published. We reserve the right to edit libelous comments. Address letters to The Brunswick Beacon, P. O. Box 2558, Shallotte, N. C. 28459.

GUEST COLUMN

Small World, Big World: We're Outdone At Our Own Doorstep

BY KARL E. BRANDT

The bus boy was a witty Frenchman from Granville, which is on the west side of Normandy on the St. Milo Gulf coast, where the Germans wasted their machine guns on me whilst I zig-zagged up to 12,000 before D-Day in World War II.

Of course, Normandy brings to mind Calvados, that ancient apple brandy and, as fortune had it, one dessert on the menu was apples with a Calvados sauce. Ummm, good!

It's a small world sometimes.

Another bus boy and the maitre'd were from Portugal; the canny and most efficient waiter from the Philippines, the chef and his nearest assistants represented Germany, Austria and the Philippines. Yes, there were 16 nationalities among the 300 highly motivated food preparers and service personnel on this floating hotel who won, for the third straight year, the distinction of having the best food among cruise ships.

But no Americans!

The other 350 crew members contained only a sprinkling of Americans and 28 additional national origins.

World War II got us into the habit of being a bit smug as well as foot sore...a double meaning which made up the graffiti which appeared everywhere: "Kilroy was here."

Then, there were the trips to the moon, our huge aircraft industry, various technological firsts, the last of the "super powers"...you name it. We are smitten with self-approval.

But in this Big World, somehow, Italy and others built better cruise ships than the United States...Of course! Our shipyards were idle or building warships only.

And now there are more than 80 modern cruise ships playing the seas and visiting United States ports to pick up a mostly American clientele and furnish us with the most enjoyable travels at affordable prices, but only a handful of American contributors.

This is 50,000 maritime jobs our unemployed youth could be competing for and untold thousands of shipbuilding and re-fitting jobs. Given that practice improves both the techniques and new developments, the foreign maritime industry is way ahead of what we could offer, only at a much higher cost.

Of course, there are a multitude of open and hidden reasons why foreign businessmen, engineers, craftsmen and crewmen are doing what our own people cannot. Lower labor costs is an obvious consideration.

And foreign crewmen are willing to work long hours, too.

But it is our young people who are the real losers, not those who serve at low pay. The right path to successful adulthood is a combination of learning how to give and to take. Our young people have learned to consider the take before they learn to give.

We ship them off to college at our present expense or their future earnings to repay student loans to learn, for instance, business management.

I submit that a couple years as a bus boy, waiter, steward(ess), etc., on board cruise ships would have more educational value.

The capital and management problems cruise line executives have are staggering, and I don't have to enumerate them, when you consider the logistics and personnel problems involving 650 crew members, to organize or have constructed the vessels that will properly accommodate 1,200 passengers, arrange itineraries, advertising, booking, loading and unloading, etc. ...all the time with a contagious smile so customers will get what they paid for!

Small world or big world, American can no longer afford to be smug. Our foreign friends have outdone us at our own doorstep.

(Karl Brandt, who recently returned from a cruise, lives in Shallotte.)

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