

LAURA ON LIFE

Baby Birds Lead To Backyard Adventure

This is an excerpt from my book, Laura On Life: Corn Dogs and Dust Bunnies:

I witnessed a rather amusing spectacle the other day: A bird was picking a fight with my cat. As I watched, this bird would swoop down and bean my cat on the head with her beak. My dense cat, however, just stood there and took it. I walked over to her, hoping to save her from the dive-bombing bird when I saw why the bird was doing that and why my cat was just standing there.

Apparently, my cat had discovered a meal on the ground that happened to be one of the bird's offspring. Obviously, the mama bird didn't feel inclined to give up her baby for my cat's dining pleasure. So instead of saving my cat, I shooed her away and stood there looking at the baby bird while mama flitted around chirping uselessly. I looked up at the nest, high in a tree, and decided I was too



Laura Snyder

young to die, so that baby bird would not be going back up there via this human elevator. Instead, I decided to make a small nest in a box, put the baby bird in it, and placed it high enough that my cat would not be able to feast on it. My hope was that the mama bird would see the baby in the nest and start feeding it again. As I was doing all of this, my cat discovered another baby bird that she had decided would make an excellent hors d'oeuvre. Once again, I shooed her away and placed the second one in the box with

its unfortunate sibling.

I watched that box and the mama bird from a distance for two hours before I decided that the mama bird was too dumb to raise children. First, she let her babies fall out of the nest, and then she couldn't even locate them. The babies were peeping a blue streak, but that mama bird couldn't seem to find them. Well, heck.

The babies were hungry and had to be fed. It was the weekend so there was no veterinarian to call so I called my son, who is a biologist and has studied animals in college. I told him that I would like to feed these birds as naturally as I could until I could get them to someone who knew

what they were doing. How do I do that?

"Well, mom," he said, "unless you plan to get a worm out of the ground, chew it up, swallow it, and then puke it into their little mouths, you can't do it the way their mama would."

I looked at those tiny, ugly, critters with no feathers, huge eyes and a face that could stop a train. There had better be another way or they were doomed.

"Okay," I said to my son, "Say, I didn't want to do that, hypothetically, of course. What do baby birds eat?"

"They eat the same thing their mamas eat, only mashed up."

"You've been a huge help, thank you very little."

Just then the

mama bird came to the birdfeeder hanging off my house and started nibbling.

"Well, your appetite hasn't been affected much by losing two children in one day, has it?" Stupid bird. But then I realized that she was eating birdseed, not a worm. I can do birdseed!

A short time later, I was looking first at the birdseed, then at the scrawny little necks of those ugly baby birds and realized that trying to get that seed down their tiny throats would be a little like forcing a bowling ball through a garden hose. After some experimentation with hammers, rolling pins and other hard objects, I finally came upon my nut grinder. I ground up those seeds and nuts with some raisins, mixed it

up with a little water and made custom birdie pabulum.

I found a small tweezers and since the babies' beaks were permanently open because they were so hungry, I merely dropped a little of my birdie potion in there and crossed my fingers.

It turns out that baby birds, ugly as they are, must be pretty resilient, because they managed to survive my concoction. It seems they may have a chance after all.

Laura Snyder is a nationally syndicated columnist, author & speaker. You can reach Laura at lsnyder@lauraonlife.com or visit her website www.lauraonlife.com for more info.

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