

8-13

I have lots of fun projects to do, but I still get stir crazy. I went outside to wander around (in the heat) and saw that someone was waiting at the gate. I went out and opened the gate and it came right in the yard. It then made the rounds, visiting pretty much everyone. It was clearly on a mission, and the yard fence stood in its way. I couldn't let it go through the horse pens going wherever it was going so moved this character a couple of times, trying to get it back out in the desert.



Horses can be oddly fearful of wandering boulders, so I had to try to encourage it away from the horses and was totally unsuccessful. I had to rescue it from Pokey, who was about to turn it over with his fore foot. I asked Pokey to leave it be whereupon he became a spooked, dancing circus horse doing flying pirouettes. As he bolted away, he threw a pile of dirt accidentally right on this guy/gal. I kept trying to herd the little boulder out of the horse pens but it wasn't having any of it. I finally gave up and carried it down into the wash.

It was oddly unscraped. Most tortoises about that age have been in and out of burrows so much that their carapace is almost sanded smooth. This tortoise looked to be maybe 12 or 14 or so, pretty young, but I still couldn't determine gender for sure. It seemed to have a smooth plastron versus the concave ones the males have, but I wasn't sure it was completely mature. Probably it was mature so was a girl marching around the desert probably actively looking for a cute guy.

8-22-2017

I had little, fluffy Peep out in his little blue harness this morning just so's he could say he had been outside. He is a bit of an awkward cat but actually can catch a lizard so I keep a close eye on him but still let him roam a little after I screen the yard for snakes. Bobcats and coyotes. I love my lizards and don't want the cats to catch them.

I kept hearing a repetitive, raspy bird call. I am ever on the alert for mobbing birds that tell me of a predator. The most common mobbing lately exposes a roadrunner, thankfully. But birds mob snakes so I have to really pay attention. I crept around under the tree that the raspy call tumbled out of and found nothing. I even went out on the road and I could hear a stereo version of the raspy call, one coming from my yard and one coming from the county yard.

I finally got close enough to see a raggedy, barely-fledged baby cardinal. Aha! It was doing the Baby Bird Beacon! Seems many baby birds leave the nest before they know how to earn a living, and parents still feed them. I am sure you have all seen parent birds pursued by flying baby birds. But if they become separated from their desperately hunting parents, the babies employ the Baby Bird Beacon, a repetitive call that never stops until the parent finally arrives. The call lets the parent know where the baby is at ALL TIMES and gets annoying to a human trying to do yard work!

Later I heard the BBB coming from the apricot tree. With my whacky hearing, I couldn't locate exactly where it was coming from as I crept closer into the branches. I bobbed my head all around trying to find the source of the call and then was suddenly shocked to find the baby cardinal RIGHT THERE!! It was about 2 feet in front of me, sitting on a branch, rasping away to let Ma and Pa know where it was.

I told the little bird that I could reach right out and pluck it off the limb and I was surprised that I actually had the instinct to do that! I wanted to just grab it which, of course, I didn't. It wasn't afraid of me. So not only are baby birds unable to feed themselves but they don't seem to have a lot of instinctual fear of giants, so maybe some of that is taught. I have had to pick up other baby birds and they seemed to be clueless as well.

A parent finally arrived and the noise ceased and I hope they flew out of my yard and away from big, orange outdoor kitties wishing to slurp up baby birds!

8-29-2017

This is just a little story with an undetermined ending that I thought I would share with you all. The county is resurfacing all the roads in Congress including the road to my house.

I went out to look at this morning. I use a short board to keep one side of the driveway gate open when I need to and I noticed that it had been tarred and graveled because it was too close to the road. There was a half grown Desert Spiny Lizard sitting on the board, and I right away suspected that it was stuck in the tar, since it didn't run off when I walked up to it. Sure enough, it was stuck fast, all 4 legs and tail but was very much alive.

I brought the board to an outside table and ran to get some kind of oil. I thought about WD40 but that stuff is a bit toxic. I grabbed the citrus oil and trotted back out to the poor little stuck lizard. I felt terrible worry about hurting it, and should I just put it out of its misery, what if I hurt it or pulled off a leg and on and on. I began saturating its legs where they met the tar with the citrus oil. The tar was dissolving and getting all over my hands so I was hopeful that it would soften under the lizard's stuck parts enough that I could pry the poor little guy loose.

I kept pouring oil and gently prying at its legs with my fingernails. One front leg came loose but the stupid lizard started fighting like crazy to get the rest loose and got the first leg stuck in a new place. I kept saturating and finally managed to pry the whole lizard loose. It leapt straight out and landed on the ground which is probably the equivalent of a human falling about 50 stories. I reached down and grabbed it and put it in a pitcher that I luckily had the forethought to bring along. Naturally it bit me quite hard. It couldn't get out of the pitcher and that way I could see if it still was so tarry that it would get stuck if I turned it loose. With massive vigor the lizard attempted to run up the sides of the pitcher, not sticking anywhere. So I found a nice rock pile and dumped it out, whereupon it ran for its little life.

I came back inside and started writing and little Peep cat was trying to access a cricket down in some bricks under the wood stove in the living room. He suddenly became STUCK and started yowling his lament. He started pulling and hurting himself more and I grabbed him to try to get him to stop pulling back so I could get him unstuck. He completely lacked

cooperation and apparently thought I was the cause of his woes and tried to bite me. We wrestled, me trying not get bitten or upset him worse while trying to extricate his painfully stuck claw when suddenly he pulled free! Boy what a trend this morning! I have had enough of stuck creatures!

9-1-2017

This morning, this place was literally surrounded by coyotes. There were 3 of them all yapping and yipping and raising a fuss from close by, in a semi-circle around the house. The cats were freaked out and Pokey wouldn't come to breakfast. He was down in the wash keeping a very wary eye on things.

I donned my boots and trotted down in the wash in hot pursuit of the annoying creatures to scare them off. The coyote up-wash was particularly persistent and I had to go quite a ways to put in a scary appearance just so he would shut up. The wind was just right so that his yapping sounded like it was right next to the house.

I found the coyote, and he skedaddled at the sight of me. Since I was already up the wash a ways, I just decided to go for a hike. I didn't have water, binoculars or camera.



After about a half an hour, the sun started showing its glowing, molten self, so I headed back.

I was motatin' on down the wash at a good clip when I was very startled to see this guy in plain sight, right in front of me and me with no camera. I greeted the fellow and wondered out loud if I could run home and get my camera, if he would maybe just stay there for awhile. I raced home, knowing full well that he would be gone when I got back. But there he was, still sitting in the mesquite, placidly blinking at me. I got a couple quick shots and left, not wanting to bother the guy.

Generally all I ever see of them is their tail end as they glide silently away since they are extremely spooky birds.