

Life is endlessly interesting. That does not mean that all of the experiences we have are pleasant ones, but boredom—a concept I have difficulty understanding—is never an issue.

I took a walk through the fields and woods a couple of days ago just to see what I might see. And, most of it was the usual—the bobolinks and meadowlarks are back, the Canada geese are numerous and eating everything in sight, and the redwing blackbirds are defending their small territories.

Not so usual was the noise I heard from an ash tree along the edge of a wet hole. It was, I think, just a tree frog with an exceptionally loud voice. Or, I was very close to the little creature. Usually, they become quiet when one is too close, but this guy (or girl) kept right on making its call.

But, I noticed, it didn't seem random; it seemed calibrated to the calls of the sandhill cranes I disturbed by passing too near their territory. It does not seem possible that the frog was answering the cranes—or the other way around—but that is what it sounded like. Then I wondered, more generally: Could one species mistakenly believe the call of another species was one of its own kind instead? That does not seem likely, but it was fascinating to hear the back-and-forth voices of the frog and the bird.

On the other hand, humans can call in owls and other birds and even elk. And duck calls are commonly used by hunters. So, maybe it is not just homo sapiens that have that ability. I would like to think that the tree frog and the sandhill crane were carrying on a conversation.

Interesting isn't always pleasant, though. Last evening, we worked late, winding up the wire from an old stretch of fence that Runo had replaced with woven wire and electric wires on top. We had turned the cattle into that pasture just north of the cabin, and we needed to get the wires out of the way before they began to graze in that area.

It was calm and pleasant, and we rolled up the three strands of high tensile wire one by one, making three coils ready to fence somewhere else. Runo, particularly, had worked hard on the fence all day long, and both of us headed back for our yard gate, ready to end the work day. Blue met me at the gate, not an unusual occurrence. But, when I opened the gate, I was horrified. Her nose and jaws were peppered with dozens of porcupine quills. The dogs had been inside the yard around the cabin, and this is certainly not an area frequented by porcupines. Once inside, we looked for Kate, the other border collie. She was fixated on a spot next to the chimney, where a shrub impeded our view. When I looked closely, I saw that the big porcupine was still there, and though Kate already had quills in her face as well, she was aiming to go after the porcupine again.

We dragged her out of there and put her in the dog pen. It was obvious that she wasn't as badly off as Blue. Then, we tackled Blue with the same pliers we had used on the fence.

What an awful job. We took turns holding the struggling border collie and pulling quills. She cried, bled, and tried her best to get away from us, but she never attempted to bite. In the end, we were all exhausted, but we had gotten most of the quills. We put her in the cabin where she lay panting for a

long time. Meanwhile, we caught Kate and worked on her. She did not have nearly the number of quills that Blue had, and we pulled out what we could, although she, too, was uncooperative.

Both dogs slept all evening and were happy to go to their pen for the night. This morning, when I let them out, they first went to check near the chimney to see if the porcupine was still there. He (or she) was not. Runo had seen to that.

I would rather the dogs had an interaction with a skunk than with a porcupine. The smell might be hard to get rid of, but the damage is negligible.

To top it off, I woke up during the night when I felt a tick in my hair. Life certainly has its twists and turns, and few of them are visible ahead of time.