

Driving through “farm country” is a different experience than it was even a couple of decades ago. Huge machines, cabs insulating the operators of tractors and implements from the farm itself are now looked upon as normal. Bright green monocultures of corn, soybeans, or alfalfa, or engineered wheat and oats so short that there is little usable straw are usual sights.

We have none of that here. And, perhaps that is why, in my admittedly biased opinion, Coe Creek Farm is the most beautiful place in our area. And that is part of the reason I see little need to travel away from home for any but the most utilitarian reasons.

I wonder, sometimes, if any of those factory farmers miss the birds, and if they wonder, as I do, which day in late August will see the disappearance of the swallows. And, do they wait and wait for those same swallows to arrive back in the early spring?

There are no big machines on this farm. Modest equipment takes care of what needs to be done, and if a tool can be fashioned of existing materials, that is the usual procedure.

I thought about that today. Runo needed to trim the six rams’ hooves, and the rams also needed their doses of worming medicine before we sold a couple of them. They are heavy to position on their rear ends to work on their feet without any kind of aid, so a number of years ago, Runo built a “squeeze” to hold them while he worked on them. A sheep walks into the opening, and then it is squeezed in tightly, and the whole contraption can be turned so that the ram is lying on his side and is pretty immobile. It makes it much easier to trim their hooves.

The sheep squeeze started out its working life as a hay rake. After it more than outlived its usefulness in that role, Runo, using bits and pieces of steel and wood, repurposed much of the material into this handy tool for working sheep.

That’s kind of the way life works here on Coe Creek. There are no fancy tools, no big machines, no million dollar debts. There are also no monocultures of farm crops, no chemically unnatural colors in the fields and pastures, and no lack of bird life and wildlife. We believe that if we humans could only accept the fact that we are just one kind of inhabitant of this land, that there are other rightful occupants of the country whose legitimate needs must be addressed, that maybe we could learn to live in a way that would be beneficial to all of us.

In the meantime, we look around here on Coe Creek and

understand what privileged people we are, because we live in a lovely place—not a spectacular one, but an area of “plain beauty” that derives its worth from its maintenance of some semblance of a balanced nature with room for birds as well as crops and wildlife—even predators—as well as livestock.