

Mother Nature's on the job

You know that old saying about 'spring, a time when a young man's fancy turns to love'?

Could be there's some truth to it, but I don't think it matters what time of year it is— a young man's 'fancy' is pretty much always on full alert.

Having said that, there are certain species whose fancy does kick into gear, the moment spring arrives.

This past weekend, Paige the barn cat's 'fancy' was in overdrive.

Now Paige is a streetwise, feral cat that 'lives' at our place. We don't 'own' her, she simply stays there, rent-free, paying for her room and board in mousing services.

All winter, Paige appeared to be 'with kitten' and sported a gigantic belly, as she waddled like a duck.

The Sidekick expected to see her produce a litter of kittens.

Matter of fact, The Sidekick happen to 'witness' Paige's encounter with some stray cat back before Christmas, so, counting on her fingers and toes, she figured she had a pretty good handle on when the blessed event was to happen.

But it didn't happen.

This past week, Paige suddenly disappeared.

Paige disappearing isn't much of an oddity. Being free-spirited, coming and going as she pleases, well, she just does that from time to time.

But she didn't disappear for long.

Sunday afternoon, we could tell exactly where she was, by following the howling.

You see, going back to the 'fancy' and 'spring' thing, seems Paige was, for want of a better explanation— in season.

And the howling upstairs in the barn sounded like someone was skinning her.

The Sidekick's curiosity got the better of her— so we quietly crept up the stairs into the upper barn, to see what was happening.

Peeking through an opening in the door, we saw Paige, perched atop a bale of hay, watching two male cats on the floor, hissing and spitting at each other, between howling matches as they rolled

Ted Brown



around in a ball of fur and claws.

Obviously, they were fighting over who was to accommodate the 'in season' Paige.

The moment the two male strays saw us, they made a run for it. Paige climbed into a nearby hay wagon, to purr, rub against the wagon, with that innocent 'oh, I was just watching' look about her.

We headed back downstairs, knowing full well the scenario upstairs would pick up from where it left off, until the decision was made who was the best male, followed by the subsequent propagation.

A couple years ago, I wrote about the feral cats in the barn, and received a biting e-mail from a lady who said I was irresponsible for not having all the barn cats neutered.

Out of curiosity, I called a local vet to see what the cost would be to have them all fixed— assuming I could catch 'em.

With required shots and surgery, the bill would be several thousand dollars for the three kittens, one male and Paige.

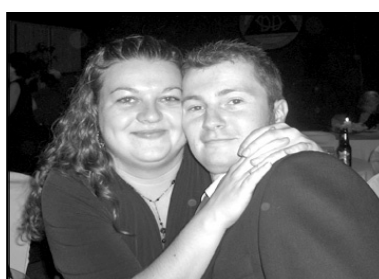
Sorry, wasn't gonna happen.

Watching Mother Nature orchestrating the 'dance' between Paige and her suitors, I thought of those other barn cats— the three kittens and the male which I wrote about before.

You see, they are no longer around. Not quite as street smart as Paige, they became 'coyote fodder' last year.

You know, it's funny— Mother Nature has a way of looking after the population numbers in her own way. Hearing the howling and hissing of the cats upstairs in the barn, I'm reminded Mother Nature is simply doing her job.

And with her track record, I think things are in pretty good hands.



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