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The ducks don't duck

I first saw the family as I toiled northward on I-275, on my way home from work at rush hour.

There was a mother duck and too many ducklings for me to count as I sped along the right lane and realized to my horror that mom was about to lead her brood right into that rush of traffic.

My mind screamed caution and she must have heard. Anyway, she backed up. Then, through my rear view mirror, I saw her start out again and the car behind me swerved just slightly to avoid her. And then she was lost from my view and I was left wondering what happened to her and the kids.

I also wondered what brought mom duck to that perilous spot in the first place. Where had the ducklings hatched? Why weren't they living in the safer spots where there are more-used duck crossings? Would her instincts to get to other waters continue to defy the obvious danger of rushing cars?

THAT EVENING I drove to a meeting and on the way home I again covered the same stretch of highway.

Traffic was lighter, and I found myself scanning the pavement for signs of pressed duck. There were none, and I was thankful.

I decided perhaps mom duck had opted for the prudent way and was leading her duckling back to the waters from whence they had come.

But maybe not. At least, there's a second part to this story. I had seen the brood on a Monday afternoon on the east side of the expressway. The following Thursday, a colleague reported an unusual incident on the west side of the same highway.

She was driving southward toward our office, she said, when she realized something was holding up traffic up ahead. Two trucks had halted and cars behind them were coming to a stop.

My friend pulled up into the only lane left and saw why the trucks had brought the traffic to a standstill.

THERE WAS A mother duck and nine ducklings (a chance to count this time) moving in dignified manner across four lanes of traffic while work-bound drivers waited.



m.m. memos

Margaret Miller

Her story made my day.

Was it my mom duck and her brood? Could she have been bidding her time on the median for more than 48 hours? Or was it some other mother duck and entourage? Could there be a whole colony of ducks bent on crossing that expressway?

I'll never know, of course. But perhaps, I'll keep telling myself, the eye that's on the sparrow also is being cast sometimes in the direction of busy thoroughfares, rushing vehicles and waddling ducks and ducklings.

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