

It all started with the surprise gift Dad brought home to his three daughters. Peering inside a chirping cardboard box, we girls squealed with delight. Baby ducklings! We couldn't wait to reach in and grab one. We jostled Dad so much, he almost dropped the box.

"Take it easy, girls!" he chuckled. "There's one for each of you!"

I was surprised at how tiny that little duckling felt in my hand. In my gentle clasp, its warm body felt like the size of a quarter, and it weighed about as much too.

"Wow, it's so light!" I exclaimed. "No wonder baby ducks can float!"

Dad laughed again as he walked off to join Mom in the kitchen. Dad was big on surprises, especially the ones that made his family smile. That's when I remembered the wading pool. It would be the perfect home for our new ducks.

"Nora, get that old plastic pool out of the garage," I ordered my sister.

With our backyard hose pumping clear, cool water into the pool, we began to examine our ducks and set about to name them. Mine had a little speck of brown on his rounded bill and ridiculously giant webbed feet.

Suddenly I remembered my friends. They would laugh at how enthusiastic I was over these new pets. Then I realized my friends wouldn't be by for the next few days. Their parents had given them permission to go camping in the nearby mountains. Bike riding on an old dirt trail, choosing a campsite, pitching a tent. They'd have a ton of fun and be home the next day, laughing and talking about their campout. My mom hadn't given me permission. She said I was too young!

With the wading pool full, we girls gathered around, greatly anticipating this moment. We set our flapping, quacking birds on the water and ZOOM, right to the bottom. All three sank!

We plunged our hands into the pool

and rescued the poor choking birds. What had gone wrong? We weren't asking them to do something difficult, like swim. All they had to do was float. Isn't that easy for a duck?

"What happened?" my sister wondered.

"Maybe we surprised them!"

We all agreed it was like babies when they learn how to walk. They just have to fall sometimes. We agreed to give it another try.

"One, two, three, go!"

Plunk! Plunk! Plunk! straight down like balls of lead.

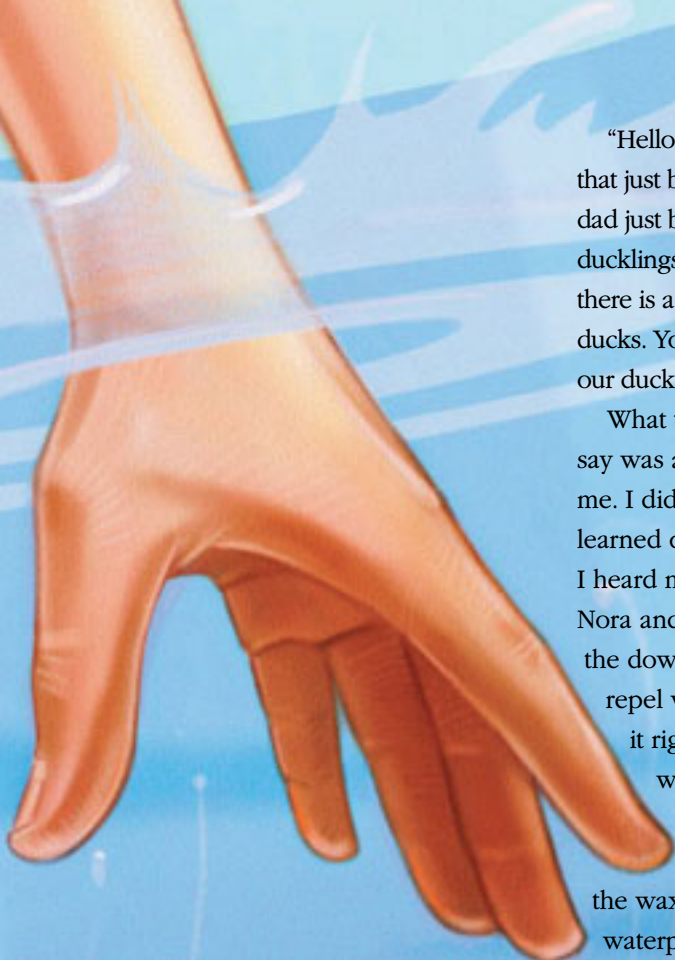
Fortunately for the ducklings, none of us had the heart to follow through on our theory that they just needed practice. When Nora suggested we use the blow dryer on their feathers, we all scrambled into the house. Gently, my two sisters aired out the poor birds with my pink blow dryer while I looked up the phone number from the name on the cardboard box.

WHEN DUCKS DON'T FLOAT

We just assumed our ducklings would take to the water. We were in for a surprise.

By Wendi Wixom Taylor





“Hello, sir? We’re the ones that just bought—well, our dad just bought—three little ducklings. Yes, sir. Well, there is a problem with our ducks. You see, we prefer our ducks to float.”

What this man had to say was an eye-opener for me. I didn’t realize I had learned quite so much until I heard myself explain it to Nora and Suzy: “You see, the downy feathers do not repel water. They soak it right up. We have to wait another week or two for their bodies to make the waxy oil that will waterproof their feathers.”

“But that’s not true,” Nora argued. “I’ve seen baby ducks follow their mother on the river. They were just a few days old.”



“There are countless ways in which you can show true love to your mothers and your fathers. You can obey them and follow their teachings, for they will never lead you astray. You can treat them with respect.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Be Thou an Example,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2005, 112.

“The man explained that to me. When ducks are born, the mother wraps her wings around the babies to keep them warm. The oil from the mother’s wings rubs off onto her babies. With their mother, they can stay afloat. On their own, they need to get a little older before they’re safe in the water.”

That’s when my brain trailed off to the mountains somewhere, thinking about my friends in their tent. Maybe Mom just wanted to keep me under her wings for a little while longer. I stroked my duck-

ling’s tiny back with one finger.

“We’ll keep you out of the pool for now, little one,” I promised him. Then, as an afterthought, I added, “Do you miss your mom?” ■

