

Morning View Kentucky
23 May 1957

Hello Mr. McCarthy,

I was inordinately startled during your program earlier this morning. Some months ago my favorite radio had a pup -- a little 7 transistor fellow which goes everywhere with me. Even fixed a clip for it on the steering post of the tractor. This morning, rather than turn it off, I put it on a rock near the pond while I went quietly down to inspect the duck nests. Upon my return I was dismayed to find the tiny radio sounding like a mildly hysterical machine gun. I was sure it was in the last stages of disintegration. It was with considerable relief that I learned it was only Rome burning on a nickelodeon.

Last week, by fortunate coincidence, I was within a few feet of a Cardinal nest when your cardinal sang so nicely. Mr. Reddy was a flicker of flame through the thick green leaves as he rushed to drive the intruder from his nesting area. He skittered about on a nearby branch, his crest flattened upon his head, his feathers tight and sleek against his body, ready to do furious battle with the stranger. It took many minutes to quiet him down and send him peacefully home with a peanut, finally convinced that his territory was as yet inviolate.

All unknowingly, my birds are repaying me now for feeding them. The caterpillars which have been defoliating many trees and shrubs in Northern Kentucky appeared in the tree patch in great numbers, ample to heavily damage the big trees. I considered contacting an aerial crop dusting outfit.

I had forgotten the birds. Hour by hour, day by day, they ate worms. Warblers, among others, delayed their northward migration to systematically scour each tree to the very top. Habitual ground-feeders such as Chewinks, Cardinals and Chipping Sparrows, worked along high branches and twigs as though accustomed to dining in such areas. For two days I puzzled over one confusing warbler clan before I recognized them as merely misplaced Chipping Sparrows.

Everyone worked with the exception of the oblivious Robins which stalked about the ground catching earthworms. It was more than a little amusing to watch a big Blue Jay dangling upside down from a bending twig, while he stretched far to pluck one of the caterpillars from the outermost leaves. I had assumed that the woodpeckers' peculiar construction would preclude their joining in the fray, but they were as enthusiastic about the caterpillars as the most agile warbler.