

Morning View Kentucky
29 May 1958

Sorry, Mr. McCarthy,

to have been so long in writing, but the frantic scramble to overtake this late and fleeting spring has left little time for letters. Furthermore, if this typing seems a bit wilder than usual, it is due to the fact that my hands are tired. Life just now is a long parade of handles -- handles of power mower and cultivator, of rake and hoe and spade and trowel and grasswhip and saw. Even the steering wheel of the tractor becomes a wearisome thing in time. Though the rest of me manages fairly well, my hands are daily a bit more tired.

As, long ago in New England, blooming of the shad bush signalled the running of the alewives, so, today, in the tree patch, blooming of the great oaks tells me to expect our loveliest visiting birds.

Drawn to the tenuous, tasselled blooms by tiny insects which frequent them, come the hungry migrants, varying from a bulky red-breasted grosbeak, resplendent in black and white and adorned by his great red badge, through the glowing orioles and tanagers, to the gem-like warblers and brilliant little redstart.

Fortunately, when oak blooms are most alluring, the leaves are as yet small and sparse and of indefinite coloring, thereby neither obscuring nor clashing with the feathery spectacle.

By watching several convenient trees, I was able, in a short period of time, to enjoy most of my flashing visitors. A magnificent grosbeak, his appetite momentarily appeased, sat quietly, gently practicing his fluid song. Above him baltimore orioles were a swirling cloud of black and gold, the soberly clad females moving about almost unnoticed. Scarcely had the orioles passed when a neighboring tree was suddenly ablaze with what must have been at least 25 male scarlet tanagers, their black wings glistening as though lacquered.

I have always wondered about the reasoning behind the naming of tanagers -- the scarlet one having black wings while the summer one is altogether red. I was reminded of this curiosity again as several summer tanagers visited the grosbeak's tree, ticking like industrious time bombs as they worked.

Warblers flitted from bloom to bloom and tree to tree with such rapidity and in such multitudes that it was almost impossible to