

Morning View Kentucky
1 October 1956

Thanks again, Mr. McCarthy,
for burdening yourself with tape recorders throughout Europe in
order that we who could not go might enjoy the tour.

As the chill fingers of autumn nights (which seemed inordinately
early this year) splash the first color over the trees, an air
of excited expectancy grips the tree patch and pond-field. The
great surge of activity when spring stirs wild things to renewed
life is but a gradual affair and in no way rivals the scurrying
turmoil which ensues when winter waves its warning banner of the
first frost.

The hastening toil of those who remain as winter residents is
almost obscured by the incessant dashings about, and groupings, and
urgent discussions of those who prepare for the long trip southward.

Yellow Breasted Chats, silent in August, now call by day and sing
through the moonlight hours. Brown Thrashers perch on topmost twigs
of tall trees and shout back and forth to each other, while below
in the forest-floor growth, Wood Thrush pop and sputter through
incessant conversations. Rain Crows sit high with the Thrashers,
replacing their summer plea for rain with completely different
talk.

My Blue Jays puzzle me. They divide along lines of neither age
nor sex, one group winging away southward, while the other winters
here. I regret their departure, as they are invaluable sentinels
in warning of the presence of predators, human or otherwise. However,
about a dozen stay and most adequately stand guard over the tree
patch through the cold months. Those who go announce their departure
by a deafening din in full flight, followed by a brief, swirling
pause in the southmost tree. Then, as I watch, they stream off
equatorward, still vocal, twisting their heads to look down at me
as I call out my wishes for a prosperous trip and please hurry back.

Though we are not on the great migratory flyways, the one sweeping
down the east coast, the other funnelling through the Mississippi
valley, into this bustle of preparation comes our share of
transients retreating before the northern chill. They are welcomed
as friends not seen since they paused on their flight up from the
south last spring.

Last week the bird bath was suddenly mantled by a cloud of Cedar
Waxwings, with their lovely soft coloring and gentle manners. They
stripped the long, dangling poke berry stems of their dark fruit,
worked busily amid the wild grapes, and nightly settled into
invisibility amid thickly clustered oak twigs.