

WILD GOOSE
Sherwood

CHAPTER ~~IX~~ VIII

~~WORLD WITH AN END~~

RETURN TO THE BUNGALOW, WITH THE POLICE

"The outside world seemed far away and infinitely wearying as a place to which to return. NIGHT COUNTRY. Loren Eiseley

For a long time I had wanted to get back to that cabin in Bloomfield to where I had run away as a child in the dead of winter, and to where, as a teenager, I had ridden my bike, or hiked from the trolley, with a whole succession of girl chums. All of these trips had been before I had seen the inside of a college. Now I was educated in outdoor subjects and I wanted to visit this paradise-remembered with seeing eyes. At the moment I was most interested in discovering what birds lived there, which I had been unaware of in my unseeing days.

I had learned that birds can be a ^a classic example of what humans do not see, even though the creatures are right there, until one's consciousness has been raised to them. The only birds I remembered

observing in there when I was a child was a flock of crows, whose cawing in the big fields before entering the Bungalow woods had a hollow sound, as if echoing down some great corridor of time. The vastness of the field, with Talcott Mt. as a backdrop, both muted and enhanced the cawing sound waves. The first time I hiked out there as ^a teenager I saw and heard my first chickadees. I'm sure chickadees, as well as other small birds, must have been there all through my childhood but I didn't even know of their existence until my 8th grade teacher hung an Audubon chart on the classroom wall. In pointing them out she even imitated them. That first day I saw a chickadee it bounded in front of me from a cedar to the big butternut tree, as it sang "chick-a-dee-dee-dee." It had preciously welcomed me home.

But I was still blind to other bird throughout those last trips to the Bungalow. Now I was something of an accomplished bird-watcher and I knew I would never be satisfied until I spent a few days at the Bungalow with my binoculars and made a check list of what was present. I knew by now that there were so many varied habitats present many species of birds could be attracted there.

But in writing to Kittie in Georgia about my plans I learned that the Mary D. family had all died, and that the land had been sold, including the Bungalow. This was disconcerting news. Could I get permission to stay there for a few days? It had been such a long-time dream goal to spend a week at the Bungalow as a grown-up, aside from the birds. During the biking and hiking days I'd learned that most of the cabin furnishings had been removed, but the fireplace was still there, and it was still possible to lock doors.

WILD GOOSE
Sherwood
at night.

-3-

Ch. ~~III~~

VIII

I decided to drive out to meet the new owners a week before trying to stay there. It took me a little time to find the old Mary D. farmhouse; I drove right by it, not recognizing it. For it was now a restored historic house, red instead of white, the porch ~~was~~ was gone, and a sign on a house corner said "1776." Everything was unfamiliar; even the old dirt road was now paved. And there was no pump to be seen.

I drove into the barn dooryard,- at least the barn looked slightly familiar. A young woman came out of the back door of the house, which was set into a small ~~an~~ alcove-like building, or an ell, attached to the house. The well over which the pump had stood, I now learned, was under the floor of this little building. The young woman's name was Harriet. She had two small children, a girl and a boy.

Harriet gave me the amazing information that the whole valley down below her was to be flooded, as part of a flood control program, because of the 1938 and later hurricanes. Harriet added, "All that land down there belongs to the state. We have never been down there."

I told her about the cabin and the brook. She was so sure there was no cabin or brook down there that I could sense she thought I might be in the wrong place. But the lay of the fields and the tobacco sheds down there I could see were identical to those in my memory. She gave me the name of the state official to inquire about getting permission to be down there. She was very friendly and helpful and invited me to stop in when I came back.

In a daze, trying to adjust to the idea of the Bungalow being under water and fishes swimming in and out of the chimney, I went in to Hartford to see the state official. He had another stunning blow for me. "That cabin has been knocked down, and the fireplace and chimney demolished. It is a rule that when a valley is to be flooded all of the buildings must be moved or taken down."

"May I camp there for a week?" I asked timidly expecting rigid state rules to ruin my dreams of chasing birds there for several days.

"Sure, sure," he said, to my happy surprise. "Camp there as long as you like. Until it is time to build the dam and the water piles up behind it."

It was an early August Monday when I drove down through the big field; a very tall Jamaican was standing in the entrance to the largest of the tobacco sheds to my left. I had to buck some brush along the edge of the lower, inner field. But I was able to get the car in almost to the rail fence without knocking off the muffler. I arrived at the Bungalow with my camping gear, food for a week, and my cat Dinah and her three small kittens.

Most of the fence was down so I didn't have to let bars down or climb through it. But the scene from the fence spot was baffling. Though I knew the cabin was no longer to my right, the space under the huge beech tree looked strange, as well as the cabin spot. What was most unrecognizable was the scene directly in front of me. It was all a young woodlot, all the way back to the beech. The lack of a clearing gave me the sensation I was in the wrong place. Gradually, however, I realized this had to be the spot. I stood there several moments, trying to adjust to the scene. It became clear that cedars and other trees had grown up on an abandoned lot in the normal process of plant succession just as anywhere else in New England.

I stepped over the down fence rails and walked slowly into the young woodlot. Within a few feet I came to a big mound of brambles on my right. Beyond it was a partially grown-over pile of rocks. I kicked away a bit of the tangled briars and saw pieces of timber and old shingles under the vines. The Bungalow! Still stunned numb, my mind so crowded with memories I couldn't fully take in the reality in front of me, I walked around the brambles to the rock pile. My mind just wasn't ready to face what they were. But gradually my thought-processes cleared as I recognized the fireplace and chimney stones, some of them still blackened as in an archeologist's find.

I had to put all that confusing reality behind me for a moment for my immediate task was to find a comfortable place to set up my camp. I walked diagonally through a stand of red cedars to the southwest corner of the brook, where I hoped there might be a good spot to set up my netting tent. It was comforting to hear, then see, the brook straight ahead. At least this corner looked as I'd remembered it from childhood, except for the larger trees, for this was the inside elbow of where the brook make a right angle turn to the east. Three of the tall trees were in good juxtaposition, two red maples and an ash, to fasten my tent to. The bank was a little higher above the brook than I remembered, a very safe site to set up camp. The cool air rising off the brook smelled delicious and I'd be hearing the brook gurgling all night.

For the next half hour or so I carted camping gear and supplies from my car, ^{being} especially careful every time I opened a car door not to let the cats out. It would be easy for them to get lost in here, for they'd scatter in fright.

It was my small netting tent that I had with me. I tied a rope across from the two nearest trees, as a ridgepole. To it I tied up the tabs at the ends and middle of the upper tent edging, and used ropes to pull out the tent bottom corners and side walls to tent stakes and bushes. Over it all I threw my big tarpaulin. On the south side I let it cover the tent ~~xxx~~ and fastened it securely along the bottom. The north side I ~~used~~ threw back over the top, as there was a heat wave on and I needed air. I fastened the usual plastic sheets at each end, using clip clothespins; if a shower should come it all would be easy to cover and batten down.

This arrangement permitted me to sit in a sort of bug-proof breezeway almost on the edge of the brook bank; the brook created natural air-conditioning with its cool convections. It was coincident that we had tropical-like weather all week, so my needs as to shelter were simple.

On the canvas floor opposite the tent door, I placed some flat stones from the brook, and placed a board on them which extended back of the head end of my cot. On the board I put books, papers, towels, and canned food supplies. I had a tall cylindrical can with me ~~with~~, with a tight lid, in which I put more perishable food, and anything I didn't want ants or chipmunks to get into.

My cot ran along the south wall of the tent, and as usual I placed the three boat cushions in a row on it, spread out an old bunk pad on top of ^{them} it, covered that with an old sheet, then arranged the sleeping bag on top of that. Than which nothing could be more comfortable.

It was time for lunch, but I just hastily made a cheese and lettuce sandwich, and had an orange and some cookies, with gingerale

for liquid. I planned to try to find the spring, else I'd have to boil brook water if I ever wanted tea, or to make lemonade. Then I went at the task of building a small fireplace. There were all sizes and shapes of rocks in the brook to choose from, but most had water moss on them which I hated to kill as they might have aquatic insects on which fish and other things feed. It was an easy matter to construct the fireplace once I assembled enough stones. I deliberately kept it small. I had with me a long cake rack for a grate; I adjusted the top rocks to fit it as it would hold two small pans at once.

After supper was cleaned up I brought Dinah and the kittens down to acquaint her with where I was. I stayed in the tent with her for several minutes; she'd been in it before but at a different location. With the door tightly rolled and clipped shut she safely prowled around the canvas floor, sniffing the outdoor delights along the edges.

Before it got dark, more to christen my campsite than any need for a fire, I removed the cake grate from the fireplace and built a small fire. I sat on a cushion in front of it and was soon lost in memories. Dinah meowed and I let her out, sure she wouldn't go very far with the kittens in the tent for her to worry about.

Come bed time I was so comfortable I didn't want to go to sleep. Dinah and the kittens were back in the car, with the windows open less than an inch. On the floor by the front seat was her supper, and a litter-box on the back seat floor. She would do the feeding of the kittens. I didn't have to worry about any of them for the night.

I woke up a couple of times during the night and saw the stars overhead through the trees. I checked the brook with my flashlight; it looked the same as it always had. To my surprise, though, when I got up in the morning the brook had risen and the bottom part of my fireplace was flooded. But it was also evident that the water line was dropping, and fast. There must have been a heavy shower up on Talcott Mountain, though it hadn't rained here all night. The brook is only ankle deep, normally, except in a few holes where it gets up to leg-calf high. Glacial rocks sat like bare knuckles, or covered with green moss all up and down stream, with a few huge boulders here and there along its sides.

One of the outstanding characteristics of this little wild corner of New England is the denseness of the ground vegetation, which I had always taken for granted until I visited other parts of the country. There wasn't a bare soil spot all around my campsite. The ground cover was a tight mat of several short grasses, small violet plants, mosses, pennywort, wild strawberry, cinquefoil and other similar herbaceous species. Perhaps only the tropics can be said to be as lush as much of wild New England is in summer.

I have been to the Rockies, where the ground is as barren as the moon in great stretches between trees. In Texas, and the mid west this barrenness is prevalent as summer heat ~~dry~~ dries up the ground vegetation. In Florida, a sub-tropical country in its southern half, there ^{are} vast areas of bare sand in between sparse vegetation. It is the rich greenness of New England which I am lonesome for when I am at distant latitudes or longitudes in summer.

Even the grass is softer and greener in New England.

~~Tuesday~~. In the cool, almost chilly dampness of my first morning at the Bungalow I just lay in my sleeping bag, my head and shoulders propped up on an elbow, looking around at my wild niche. The shrubs around each end of the tent were young elms, high bush ~~cranberry~~ blueberry, young red cedars, red maple, and some alder. At the back, or south side, of my tent, where the brook g^lgled by on its way east to the swamp, were more alder, a few elm sprouts, several clumps of hay scented ferns, hog peanut vines, moss and water pennywort; also jewelweed, cardinal flower, forget-me-not in blossom, and ladies' thumb. I was living in nature.

I was excited to see so much cardinal flower in blossom, -I could see the brilliant red -velvet patches of it above the weeds far down the brook. They were tall, husky plants, with some of their lower seed pods already well developed. Imagine them being drowned under a lake! These are one of the truly red flowers found in nature in the east. Their seeds need light to germinate thus they often sprout while caught in mosses or weeds. It has always puzzled me how their small seeds get a chance to sprout and take hold in stream currents close to rocks. Most come up in small nooks along stream shores but even there seeds and seedlings are subjected to water scouring.

Right after lunch I took off my sneakers and socks and crossed the brook back of my fireplace where stones were not in good stepping position, as I wanted to cross the pasture to see if I could find my eel pool. But like the cabin clearing, there was now a woodlot instead of open pasture for no cows had been

cropping it down for years. It was mostly gray birch, which comes in first ~~in~~ in open sun, acting like a nurse tree to more sensitive species such as oak and ash. There were many red cedars, looking like soldiers standing at attention, and young hickories.

By walking a straight line, due west from my tent site, as straight as the trees permitted, I came right out at the brook pool. It was still a muddy pool with no rocks. The huge sugar maple under which I'd caught and hung up an eel, and where I'd seen a catawampus when sitting under it, was still there but on the land side half of it had split off so that only the part of the tree which over-hung the pool now existed. It was a tree way past its prime, dying of heart rot.

I headed southward, but into the new woodlot, to try to find the big old elm. With no vista ahead because of the young forest, I was dubious I would find it. This area, even more so than the Bungalow site, was out of sight and sound of all houses and roads; I always felt it to be one of the wildest spots in north central Connecticut, which otherwise was a well developed section of the state now. I couldn't even see Talcott Mountain.

Just as I stepped into a small open sunny spot, and was about to turn around and try to guage where that old ~~elm~~ might be, there was a rustling sound on the ground in front of me. A great grey, lichen-covered rock was in the center of the sunny spot, a big boulder partly emergent from the soil. Across it slithered a huge, long black snake. The poor creature was more startled than I; it made quite a noise slithering off into the nearby underbrush.

Half consciously doing so, I glanced around, and sure enough there were two very old, partly broken-down apple trees. It was quite likely it was one of them which gave me ~~the~~ ^{my} only scar, which I still wear, that this was the place where I grabbed a large black snake over forty years ago. Though reptiles are long-lived I wouldn't go so far as to say this was the same snake, but it was not impossible that this one was a direct descendent.

From there I found the big elm without further trouble. The elm was dead, but its distinctive vase shape, and the fluting at its juncture with the ground, were very familiar. Since my early days at the Bungalow, the Dutch elm disease had killed all of the ^{mature} elms in the state so I hadn't expected to see this one alive.

After supper I sat at the brook's edge awhile. I don't know where this brook comes from, or where it goes to. Somehow, I don't want to know. There has to be a little mystery left in some things in life. On maps I revel in spots which say "unknown." I do know that this brook has an old geological history for it meanders, yet it probably just dates back to the glacial melt. No doubt it arises somewhere on Talcott Mountain. And maybe its waters end in the Farmington River. But it is my own private prehistoric Amazon, a geologic-period Hudson, a primitive north-west passage with source and mouth as yet unknown. Someday it will be part of a lake, then no one will know or care where it comes from or goes to.

After supper I started to walk up to the farmhouse as I needed to make a phone call to the eastern part of the state. I was pleasantly detained by an unexpected bit of bird activity in the trees along the inner mowed field. As my binoculars had be-

come an extension of my left hand I had them with me, though I had not taken the time to do any real birdwatching since arriving.

While trying to get the glasses focused on a couple of birds flitting among the branches high in an oak tree I incidentally focused on a small round glob on a bare branch high among the leaves. I stared and stared at the glob. It had to be a bird but there was something unfamiliar about it. I sat down in the stubble on the edge of the woods and braced my elbows on my knees to steady the glasses. I finally decided, because of color and very small size, it had to be a warbler. The strangeness was the fact that I had never seen a warbler motionless before. They are the most flitting, nervous-motioned actors of all the local birds, probably because of the defenselessness of their small size. At any moment a Cooper's hawk might fly right into the bushes to grab one. Which was enough to make any tiny live thing jump-nervous.

I shifted position many times until I was able to make the tail visible. The bird had its back to me and seemed to have its head under its wing. The only way to try to see the front of the bird, which might show identifying colors, was to push through very dense bushes and some half-rotted brush. Even though the glob was nearly forty feet above me I knew I couldn't get in there without creating a disturbance and scaring it off.

There were no other birds flitting about. The sun was dropping down behind the trees, but small patches of orange-yellow sunlight hit spots in the tree; one of them was on the bird, making him quite obvious. Suddenly two other birds dashed into the tree, distracting my attention. They were a black and white

warbler and a female redstart. They were as busy insect-hunting as if it were ^{early} morning.

When I wasn't expecting it, the tiny yellow ball came to life. For a full minute it remained squatted on the branch but slowly looked around. Slow being a word I had never before associated with a warbler. Suddenly it jumped to a higher small dead twig and settled down again into a small yellow ball. This time it was perched sideways to me, with its neck pulled in but it did not put its head under a wing. It appeared to be asleep. This is the first time in my life I have seen a warbler roosting, and I don't think many people have met up with the sight. In fact, there was still something of a mystery as to exactly where many of the song birds spend the night, as well as their afternoon siesta.

But this time the bird remained "asleep" only about five minutes. A crested flycatcher slipped into the scene, in the same binocular field with the warbler. He looked like a giant near that small bird, and he was quite noisy, moving about with rather excited te-do. He had a large insect in his bill and sat with it held at an angle which permitted me to see a fringe around his beak ~~which~~ that could have been insect legs and antennae. After much fussing for two or three minutes the flycatcher swallowed the insect, wiped his bill on the tree branch on which he was perched, then "talked" for several moments as if verbally savoring the taste of his lunch. By then he had waked up the little yellow glob, which at last moved about with the characteristic nervous motions of a warbler. At last I could catch some identification marks. Gray wings, two white bars, a black line through the eye. A perfectly normal little blue-winged warbler. He was still moving about with quick motions

when I left for the farmhouse.

Just as I moved out through the wagon-opening in the trees and entered the bottom of the huge field, two blue grosbeaks, a pair, alighted on the tall weeds on my right and just perched there looking at me. Had these beauties, or their recent ancestors, been here in past Bloomfield days and I'd been too blind to see?

The farm folks were fascinated with learning of the real existence of the brook; though they had lived there four years they had not been aware of it. It would never take me that long to discover a brook that close to home. Harriet promised to come down and see it while I was there.

~~Wednesday~~. I hurried out to the big field first thing in the morning to see if the blue grosbeaks were there, as I had seen less than half a dozen of them in my life. On the way I was entertained by the blue-winged warbler just inside the woods along the wagon trail, very much awake and busy flitting around. I assumed he was the same one. Catbirds were common all along the way; I had seen a couple of them at the cabin site. But the grosbeaks were nowhere to be seen, and there was nothing else of a birdy nature out there.

I was a little disappointed as this was my one walk of the day. I had to drive over to eastern Connecticut on a necessary errand. When I returned in the early evening there was nothing new in birds. I returned to the site of the little yellow glob of yesterday but it was as if all the birds had taken off for another world.

Drifting off to sleep by the Bungalow brook exceeded my dreams of paradise in this life. The lucious damp fragrance, the

special sound effects of the tinkling brook, made me feel genetically kin to things aquatic. Now that the brook water level had dropped there was additional soft gurglings of tiny waterfalls between the rocks; it all conjured up visions of glistening underground jewels in the caves of Kublai Khan. Katydid, singing energetically in the night's warmth, and the happy chirping lullaby of the crickets, spoke more to me of peace on earth and good will toward men than anything which ever reaches me in the civilized world of perennially warring men who give lip service to world peace.

~~Thursday~~. There was quite a surprise for me in mid week. Not having found any more birds for my growing list for the Bloomfield Bungalow, I decided to try a new location. As I hadn't yet crossed the brook at the bottom of the cabin clearing since I arrived, I did so now and eagerly climbed up the opposite bank. From there I walked through a young woodlot with much overgrown field juniper. I hadn't been over there since about 1937, when it was still pasture, and even then I hadn't gone far in that direction, southward from the cabin.

Tall husky junipers, showing signs of dying as they were choked out by taller cedars and young hardwoods, were more or less familiar to me. I remembered seeing them when they were low, almost flat-topped shrubs. I have always liked junipers as they provide shelter for many forms of wildlife. Now I had to work my way a bit to the left, as their high scraggly branches were prickly. I was a bit surprised to see a partially worn path down the slope there to the swamp~~ed~~, but realized it could be a deer track.

Following the path I was astounded to come out to an old cement spillway, and a small pond. Walking in past the spill-

way to the left brought me to a set of cement dam abutments, with most of the higher parts missing. It looked old enough to have been there since I was a child, but I was sure it had not been there then for my father would have known of it and taken us over there. Why was it away out here? What would the water power be used for? It hadn't been necessary for cattle as they had the brook to drink from. I couldn't visualize enough trees in there to support a sawmill.

The present pond surface covered an area about forty feet wide, by about 200 feet long; it was irregular in outline, with muddy water, and obviously had once extended back further into the swamp, as many of the trees back there, though not now standing in water, were dead like such trees always are where a dam has flooded a wooded area.

There were now many cattails back near the swamp, and ^a long the sides of the pond. Just above the water line were the usual damp soil plants, - blue vervain, Joe-Pye-weed, and boneset, looking as if they had been growing there since the beginning of time. With an eye out for birds I remembered I'd heard the rattle of a kingfisher a couple of days ago and had wondered if one could earn a living off that brook. Now I knew I heard aright, so I kept an eye open for a kingfisher.

I sat on the cement wall and studied the bare, dead trees at the back of the swamp. They were where I looked down the brook as a child and had seen a great wall of tall green trees, I was ~~definitely~~ sure I was remembering aright. ~~XXXX~~

~~XXXXXX sitting in the brook when I looked, and looking
at the dead trees where there were now dead ones.~~

Elderberry bushes were dense below the broken-down dam walls, and there was one tall dead tree above the dam. Some of the leaves of the shrubs were white with outdoor bird plumping, so I knew some large bird perched there at night, probably an owl. But, it could also be a daytime species, like a hawk or an eagle. I began to worry about my pussies, though at the moment they were safe in the car. Then I noticed that the berries on the bushes had no lime on them, meaning no large bird had perched there for some time.

I sat down on the high, dry spillway, still amazed to be in such a spot. I get some kind of satisfaction out of abandoned man-made structures out in the wild, where nature is obviously taking over, such as abandoned airplane tarmacs, roads no longer used, broken-down dams and forest-claimed shacks. For I am made of the genes of the humans who made these things, ^{as well as of} ~~and~~ the genes of the repossessing wildlings. I belong to both worlds.

Resting my elbows on my knees to steady the field glasses, I was prepared to watch birds on this new bird stage or to observe any marvel that happened along. Water like this attracts all kinds of creatures, and I was sure to net at least one more new bird for my list. The sun was high and hot, the air growing more humid. It wasn't a good hour for birdwatching; too bad I didn't know this was here at sunrise.

Being possessed once more, as often happens with me, that if I sit inactively in one spot too long I was missing something somewhere else, I tired of being idle, went back across the brook and walked out the inner small field to the big mowed field. But

nothing to be seen out there, either.

It was still an hour to lunch; I decided to sit down by the brook near my tent, with the pussies, and visually explore trees overhead for any kind of bird action. After all, I didn't know what was going on above my own camp. I wasn't too surprised to see a pair of black and white warblers, a Canada warbler, a ruffled-looking vireo, and a couple of other small birds I just couldn't identify as they were mostly hidden by leaves. They were fun to watch until time to get lunch.

I was just opening the food storage can when I heard the high pitched voice of a child. I had stopped in at the farmhouse on my way back in yesterday and urged Harriet to bring the children down to paddle in the brook, to cool them off. So I wasn't startled to see her and her little boy and girl, and her mother, filing through the gap where the fence bars used to be. What did surprise me was to see them all dressed up as if going to a staid church picnic of a Sunday. As usual, when people arrive in street clothes when I am camping I am reduced in my own estimation to looking like a hobo. I just hoped that these beautifully groomed children would be allowed to take off their shoes and socks and go paddling in this delightful brook as we had ~~had~~^{when} children.

I spread out my blanket for them to sit on, and put out my stool for the grandmother. Regardless of the stiff manners/^{which} nice clothes inspire in a group it was pleasant to have company at my camp. The children obviously got a kick out of a picnic in surroundings so unique to them, and they did get to go paddling, and without getting their nice clothes wet. They were so surprised at how cold the water was they didn't stay in long. In

fact, the party was over before mid afternoon as Harriet and her mother realized that the field would be hotter going back the longer they put it off. I offered to drive them up to the farmhouse but they insisted on walking.

I returned to my spot under the camp trees; ^{to} a hickory and a fairly large red maple. I was determined to hunt globs in the treetops until supper time, but it was such a drowsy afternoon it was hard to concentrate. I felt a bit imprisoned by the wall of heat out away from the brook, yet I was utterly contented.

Just as my wits began to wander I saw what could be a tiny glob, if it wasn't a natural protuberance on a rather high but partly bare branch. I stared at it so hard I had to finally look away to rest my eyes; but, swinging the binocs back over the ^{to} hump I gradually realized ^{that here} ~~was~~ was another glob. Another tiny bird asleep? If I had not witnessed the other one come to life, this one, though right in front of my eyes, would not have existed.

An active group of very wide-awake little birds flew into the tree and busied themselves as small birds do. All seemed to be warblers, but most of them kept dodging behind clumps of leaves so it was difficult to identify them. I was sure that two were the black and white warblers. I must have sat there for more than an hour, but I was determined to prove, at least for myself, that tiny birds don't disappear during siesta hours, they just scrootch down on a branch and sleep off the hot period of the day.

Suddenly the black and white warblers, chasing one another, swung their cavorting over near the "knot" which I had been watching. In an instant they flew too close, the "knot" changed

into the form of a bright yellow warbler. At least it was yellow looked at from down below; ~~and~~ ^{then,} there was its handsome necklace, proclaiming it a Canada warbler.

^{NO} I felt I knew for sure what these small birds do in the heat of the day. No doubt the others, flitting about the tree, would soon settle down, too. And no doubt there were many "globs" up there already, which I couldn't see. While true research requires a couple of thousand examples before proof can be claimed, in this case I ^{felt} ~~needed~~ ^{only} corroboration of the ^{only these two instances} ~~first~~ instance.

It just took determination and patience to spot "globs", and a little imagination. Seldom do birdwatchers have the time. For it takes time for a human to shut off the frequencies of civilization long enough for their senses to get back on track for precise perception. Once the outer, man-made world is blocked from your consciousness, you become part of the sentient indigenous ecology, for then every biological cell and spiritual fibre of you is in touch with your origins. Awareness takes over.

A purple, very slender damsel fly sat on my bare leg, for I was in shorts. The sun was dropping down behind the nearby trees. The wild scents from the myriad chlorophyll activities around me was inebriating. A breeze began to stir the upper tree branches, yet down at my level the goldenrods were motionless. The song of a cicada across the brook emphasized the warmth of the day, but now a convection of light air from the brook belied the heat. A flicker called in the tree backdrop over near the swamp-pond. Then the breeze descended from the treetops, touched me lightly like a fairy-wand, and gently set the goldenrod to fluttering. If only we could see air currents, in colors. A lavender, a pink, a blue

a golden-yellow breeze would make a waving rainbow.

Delaying getting supper, I moved back up the slope away from the brook and sat on a rock protruding from the ground near the cabin debris. Ants, unhindered by me as they hastened about their work, ran over half-rotted shingles and other cabin fragments. It is their ordained job to reduce these bits of discarded wood to soil.

Once more I sat and cogitated. My eyes and ears and nose were immersed in the cinquefoils and lichens and dewberries, and the tangle over the cabin pile. My protoplasm and theirs were running in symbiotic unison, all of us, here beneath the life-giving sun and the cosmic rays darting at us out of the transparent blue sky. There was no other world like this. Mars was too cold. Venus and mercury much too hot. Only Earth was blue and green, with all its life in balance.

A plane crossing over my cope of sky intruded. I was glad I was down here. Up there I could not see or touch or smell or hear the cinquefoils, the lichens, the ants, the waterfalls or the chewinks. Could it be that the planet Earth was alone in the universe? No life anywhere else? ^{Statistically} ~~Statistically~~ that was impossible now that we knew countless other galaxies with their myriads of suns existed. I, for one, would find it scary to be on the only planet in the universe with life on it.

Except for the brief visit of Harriet and her family I had idled away the whole afternoon, and I continued the same into the evening. For I was now conscious of the sliding of time. I had only two days left, for I would have to leave Sunday. I wanted to stay in tune with every natural pendulum while I was here, for soon I would be catapulted out of Eden.

Friday. The humid warmth of daybreak promised another day of heat wave. I was so thankful to be here, with a brook providing natural airconditioning. A quick walk after breakfast over to the swamp-pond produced no birds or even a turtle. Returning to my camp I got out the folding stool and sat on it near the brook. I spread out books and papers on a towel on the ground close to me. I was behind in writing down notes for the last couple of days so I recorded all that I'd seen, including the new glob.

I was concentrating on my scribbling when something caught my eye by the brook. I looked up to see a teetering sandpiper on the exposed stones across the brook from me. At that moment, two of the kittens, which I'd brought down to where it was coolest, started wrestling with one another on wobbly, not yet very strong legs. They startled the bird which partly flew, partly ran up the faint path I'd made across the brook. He moved up under the fallen tree across there.

Somehow I had never thought of shorebirds at the Bungalow, probably because there were no sandy spots along the brook. Knowing a sandpiper wouldn't stay long in the woods I kept watching for him to reappear, hoping he didn't fly away. Then, when I was thinking of something else there he was, teetering, on a large flat wet mossy rock a short ways upstream. He had a pink grub in his bill and was trying to jockey it into position to swallow. Apparently having forgotten the disturbance made by the kittens he worked his way down past me and around the curve, and kept on going down to the swamp.

I pattered around with books and papers and bird checking by the brook all morning, reveling in the utter peace and solitude, though unknown to me the day would end quite differently.

After lunch I wandered out to the woodlot where I'd seen my first glob. I had intended to go on far enough to see if there were any new birds around the edge of the big field, but I got the impression some kind of action was going on inside these woods. Was it birds, or animals? I stepped cautiously inside the edge of the woods and sat down on some leaves, for by then I heard birds squawking.

To my puzzlement there were five catbirds hopping up and down in a sort of small cleared center not far from me, all the while seeming to be scolding something. Two wrens hopped about on a bush near them, and they, too, were as vociferous as their soft voices permitted. Then I saw the blue-winged warbler, and a male and a female chewink, a flicker, and an immature warbler which I couldn't identify. There were also several chickadees and a field sparrow. They were all circling ~~the~~ the catbirds, slowly but excitedly, and all were raising their voices.

I could soon see that the catbirds were not jumping from the ground, but from a low pile of rotted cordwood. What the cause of their action was I couldn't determine, but all of the other birds were either scolding or egging the catbirds on. Could the catbirds be engaging in some ritual dance of their species which either annoyed or stimulated the others? It wasn't breeding season so the cause of the excitement had nothing to do with attracting mates or declaring territory. This was the kind of bird behavior in which I was interest^{ed}. In what way did birds of

different species, all living in the same community, react to one another? Were they conscious of ~~one~~ another when not competing for food, and when one species was not robbing the nests of others?

Something must have suddenly happened, which I didn't detect, for all at once they all shut up and flew off in different directions. I felt as if I'd stumbled upon some secret rite among forest Druids, which ended before I could become privy to its intent.

The air was really getting over-heated. What must it be like in the city today? I returned to the cool brook, curled up near the pussies which I let out of the tent, and brought out a book to read quietly, deliberately trying to keep my own energy - heat-stoking at a minimum. Now and then I scanned the upper leafy ^o canopy with the field glasses, hoping for another glob without really trying to find one. About five o'clock the sandpiper was teetering near me again, nonchalantly poking in the mud and ferns along the brook, looking for ~~wax~~ what I was facetiously thinking of in my mind ~~of~~ as animals without backbones. In other words, grubs and aquatic insects.

Before starting supper I decided to go over to the pond again. Thoughtlessly, being in too much of a hurry, I was much surprised to flush a great blue heron. He rose from the water edge and completely circled the pond with his great, slow-flapping wings. With neck typically tucked back, he slowly flew off into the woods to the south beyond where I'd ever been. But a little green heron, which had not been startled, was stalking his supper from a half-submerged log. Both green and great blue new for me her

At first I scanned the area with my binoculars for any song

birds which might be new for my list, but the green heron was quite distracting. He had moved to a tree quite near me, and was climbing down it, from limb to limb, like stepping down a stairs. He finally stepped off onto a bush quite near me. He and I looked one another over quietly. Then he took to snapping up insects from off the water/while ^{as he leaned over it} his feet still clung to the bush. He speared one from the air once, without moving his wings. All of them he washed down with a drink of pond water, holding his head high for the water to run down inside him by gravity. Then he hopped up to a slightly higher dead tree branch, and clucked like any fowl, as I am convinced most birds can do. He settled himself to preen. Preening by birds, and face-washing by cats, signify all is well with the world. Peace, security.

After supper I put the leash on Dinah and took her for a walk past the overhanging junipers toward the swamp pond. I had discovered at my wildflower nursery that taking a cat along with you on a walk in the woods was a challenge to any birds present. It brought them right out in the open, low down and scolding, as if they recognized that a cat walking with a human is not ^a threat to flee from. On this brief walk Dinah netted me a Baltimore oriole, a chewink, a black and white warbler, and two small birds flitting so fast through the bushes I couldn't tell what they were. As usual, they all scolded, and Dinah flattened her ears back but otherwise seemed to pay no attention. To me this was one more bit of evidence that when you don't see birds around it doesn't mean they aren't there. I hadn't seen any bird, before, along that juniper stretch. I never felt guilty about walking a cat in bird domain for as far as I ever knew none of my cats ever bothered them. Whether it was because

I kept them well fed, or they sensed I'd scold them if they made any move toward the birds, I never knew.

After supper I made one more foray to the ~~xx~~ swamp pond, not knowing it would be my last. In one of the dead trees near the dam a mourning dove sat, motionlessly, looking down on me. I hoped he'd coo, but he just wouldn't, as was true of every mourning dove I'd come across. No sooner had I settled on the spillway with my legs dangling over than a dove "mourned" over near my camp site. This was a perversity with which I had long been familiar. I debated whether to walk back there just as a huge snapping turtle, nearly a foot and a half across, broke the surface of the pond right down in front of me. He saw me almost immediately and submerged. Gradually he floated up again, nostrils first emerging, then eyes. To my puzzlement, he broke the surface water without creating a wave circlet. Down he went again. Then back up. He repeated this whole performance several times, and did not create a tiniest of wave even once. Then he just disappeared.

I am often reminded of the story of the winged horse Pegasus when out by a pond like this. The horse could only be seen approaching by its reflection in the water. So now, a smallish bird was mirrored in the pond and I looked up quickly, in time to catch sight of a large flycatcher drop into a nearby dead tree. As if to help me it jumped around and faced away from me. There was the typical white band across the bottom of the tail. A kingbird! Literally dropped out of the sky onto my list.

As I was watching the kingbird a mourning dove flew in close by. Ever since Shade Swamp Sanctuary I had been trying to catch a mourning dove in the act of cooing. But this one just seemed to

be looking down on me. In deliberate, exasperating silence.

The sound of the mourning dove is very pleasing and soothing to me. It has always been a wonderfully fitting wild sound, and when I first learned how its name was spelled I was disgusted. People go too far, with their anthropomorphizing. Like calling a fountaining willow^{ow} a weeping willow. I've heard bird watchers say they hate the mourning dove because of its voice. What they are hating is human foolishness. That beautiful bird, with its soft, rose-mauve chest, coos more lovingly than sadly if people would but watch their semantics. Spell that "morning dove" and get new reaction.

A crested flycatcher zoomed in and landed so near the dove he dropped it off its perch. Then I became aware that five mourning doves were in sight. I watched them, in hopeful anticipation, for half an hour. Suddenly a dove cooed far off in the woods and I watched these intently, hoping for an answer. They just huddled. Like dummies. After awhile, one got up and flew off, then the others followed.

In staring at the doves through the field glasses I had seen a tiny bit of what looked like a fragment of a dead branch. Alerted as I was to globs I only half consciously gave this bit of a thing a looking over. Deciding I was exaggerating this time, I was just about to swing the glasses elsewhere when the bit of branch hopped up into the air and dropped back again. What on earth? A big bumblebee? A hawkmoth? Up it hopped into the air again, flew backwards, then forwards, and landed again. Nothing else could be such an acrobat that size other than a dragonfly or a hummingbird. As it faced me, in the lowering golden sun, its ruby-red throat glistened. To think that though globs had just

come into my life this week and the third one should be the smallest bird in the world! A whole new birdy world opened up to me. If I can detect a hummingbird glob I can buckle down to finding warblers and many other birds in the midafternoon heat of a summer's day anywhere that there are trees and bushes. Then I remembered the cardinal flowers along the brook, a favorite source of nectar for hummingbirds.

I lit what was to be my last fire in the little fireplace, not that I needed any heat. It was ceremony and contemplation with which I treated my soul. I'd had a cold supper, but now I sat on a sweater and watched the small flames and smelled the pungent woodsmoke. I decided to write my notes by firelight rather than by candle; I went up to the pile of cabin wood and gathered ~~up~~ odds and ends to burn. The smoke kept away what few mosquitos there were around.

There I sat, watching go up in flames, the walls and roof which had kept out the rain and the snow when I was a child. Mostly I was burning shingles, as it was too hot for the exercise of chopping or sawing timbers. As I watched the shingles burn I saw my parents moving about the cabin with their house-keeping chores, I saw my sister playing with her dolls and I sprawled on the floor disassembling and rearranging sections of scouring rush, or horsetails. I saw in my mind's eye the colorful jack o'lanterns hanging from the rafters. I smelled the mix of fireplace woodsmoke with fragrance of green tobacco which had always permeated the Bungalow. Again I ~~watched~~ watched my father cut up my eel on the roofless porch. The Bungalow, which warmed

cousins and us, and our teen-age friends. Here I was, burning it up deliberately and alone. Lovingly I took up another shingle, split it over my knee, and fed it gradually to this cozy little fire by the brook.

I was in bed by nine thirty, and was reading a book I had brought along about Henry Thoreau, whom I'd long felt I should get acquainted with, using for light a combination of chimneyed candle and small flashlight. The full moon was coming up bright, too, but it was partly shut out by my tarpaulin roof. I hated to end this wonderful day. Peace in paradise. A delicious wildwood evening.

I tried to see some of the stars through the treetops out back of the tarpaulin. The soft serenity of it all, katydids singing/crickets beginning to chirp, the brook tinkling like molten silver, -I fought dropping off to sleep.

It seemed like only ten or fifteen minutes later, though I was to learn it was nearer to two in the morning, I woke up conscious of voices, seeming at quite some distance. The sounds seemed like radio voices. As I was drowsy, not fully awake, I assumed they were out on the highway. But suddnely I was fully alert as I realized I'd never heard^a voice in there from the road before, or from any direction.

I decided I'd been dreaming. Realizing I was hungry, as often happens to me in the middle of the night, I reached uner my cot for the tin of crackers and cookies. The night was so beautiful; I leaned on an elbow, munching crackers, reluctant to snuggle down again. Then came that sound, like radio noises in the distance. Ignoring it, I put the cracker tin away, slipped down into

the folds of a thin blanket with sleeping bag top thrown back.

Then I heard a distinct voice. I opened my eyes and half sat up. A very bright flashlight beam was waving back and forth over the tops of the trees between me and where the cabin had been. Because of the warmth of the night I had only white under panties instead of pajama bottoms, and a navy blue pajama top.

I flew out of bed, yanked off the clip clothespins of the tent door, half conscious of being thankful I didn't have to fuss with a zipper; as I started to ~~xxxxxx~~ step out the tent door I reached back in for my blue jeans and sneakers. I saw my silver-colored metal flashlight on the floor but I knew I couldn't use it without advertising where I was, so I left it behind.

As I was grabbing up my jeans a rough, strong man's voice shouted, "You'd better start working toward me or I will blow your head off!"

I dashed past the fireplace and crossed the brook, my hands full of jeans and sneakers, muttering to myself, "Why, why my last night? Why didn't I pull out this afternoon? Why does this have to happen now?"

I forgot the down tree which the sandpiper had ducked under; I took a header right over it and badly stubbed my left big toe. As I picked myself up on the other side of the fallen tree I glanced back; the big light was moving down the cabin slope toward my camp site, and they'd pick up my now well-worn path. I scrambled off westward through the woods of the new woodlot; I didn't dare stop long enough to pull on my jeans, so I had a white rear which could easily be picked up in their flashlight glare, like a bounding ~~tree~~ deer's ~~xxxxxx~~ flashing white tail.

For once in my life I was scared, and running as fast as I dared in my bare feet on adrenalin energy. That "blow your head off" meant a gun. All I could think of was that Jamaican crew at the tobacco sheds, though the voice was definitely American. They must have had a drinking party this lovely moonlight night, and had some friends in. They were too drunk to use good judgment.

They had to be drunk, I decided, to yell out like that/^{and}let me get away. If they had just sneaked in quietly, using an instant flash now and then, they could have walked right up to me in my bed. These and similar thoughts rushed through my head as I slithered through bushes and under low tree branches. I could hear two or three voices, and, glancing back, I could see at least two lights, their long-distance beams crossing in the treetops. But voices and lights were now dropping far behind me.

I headed north of west, hoping to curve around to due north to eventually get up to the farmhouse. Soon voices and lights were no longer behind me. I was now sure that if I could keep far enough ahead to be out of the direct beams of the lights I would be safe, for I had long since learned that few people know the woods even in daylight let alone at night. The almost full moon was a great help to me, and I hoped not to them.

Soon I could tell by the ^{increased} ~~extra~~ damp smell that I was approaching the brook in the area which ran west toward the cabin, which was what I had been aiming for. I came to a great lush mass of ferns, and in the moonlight I could see the dark line of the brook just beyond them, its water being down a 2-3 ft. bank. I stepped over to the top of the bank and was surprised to see a deep-looking dark pool. I didn't know there was a pool in that part of the brook.

I had to cross it, no matter how deep it was, for the farmhouse lay a quarter of a mile to the north on the other side.

By now there were only the few normal night ~~noise~~ noises of the woods, crickets, now and then a frog croaking. I took advantage of the lull to sit down in the ferns and hastily pull on my jeans, and get my sneakers on. To my dismay, I had only one sneaker. I brushed my hand over the ground among the ferns and on the bank of the brook. No sneaker was there. I didn't dare dally.

How often in my camping life had I dreamed of having to try to make a get-a-way in the woods; how often had I fantasized that I'd be able to pull it off. Well, now I was right in the middle of such a situation. Would I wind up beat up, shot, raped, kidnapped?

With the one shoe on I cautiously stepped down the bank and into the brook. There was a soft muddy bottom but the middle of the pool was only half way up my legs. But I wondered if someone was hearing every slurp and sucking sound as I stepped through the muck. By the time I reached and climbed up the opposite bank, all was calm and quiet. In fact, elation was welling up within me. I had outwitted my pursuers and was safe for the rest of the night. I just knew they would not find me out here.

But I knew, also, it was wise to keep moving. Using moon and brook, I got my bearings and head^{ed} for the farmhouse. I had a long ways to go to gain enough latitude to reach the farmhouse. I estimated I was only 800 to 900 ft., "longitude", west of the cabin site, which was still too close for comfort, even though there were dense woods between me and that area.

I started off with considerable energy and faith in my ability to save myself. Though I hadn't been much inconvenienced by being barefooted, my feet having been surprisingly comfortable, I now was able to give a strong push on the alternate step of the sneakered foot. It was a beautiful night to walk in the woods. In the peace and exultation of escape, with the moon silvering the world, I moved ahead as if in a midsummer night's dream. But I made myself slow down and be cautious, trying not to noisily snap twigs. Some of the time, because of dense undergrowth, I had to keep a bent Indian posture. Now and then I was confronted with an impenetrable thicket of raspberry or blackberry vines, whose thorns I had to respect. It was a matter of working my way around them while maintaining the right compass direction; this I did by keeping an eye on the moon, keeping it over my right shoulder though I knew that it, too, was moving. In a few such spots I got down on hands and knees and crawled through.

I kept bearing a bit to the right, and after awhile, just as I'd hoped, I came to the open western edge of the large field, which I could recognize in the moonlight as a great light patch. But I was near its bottom end, as I could see by the dark line of trees and shrubs hemming in its southern border, to my right.

I moved to the edge of the woodlot I was in, and getting behind a large tree I stood there motionless for ^awhile, adjusting my eyes to the moonlit field, trying to pick out anything foreign to the scene. I was near enough to the car tracks to the inner field to see if anyone was moving about. I could faintly see the nearest end of one of the tobacco sheds. Not seeing anything to be concerned about I stepped back into the woods a ways, and con-

tinued toward the farmhouse.

The bare foot stepped on a thistle. I jumped and my quick movement flushed a large ground bird which sounded like it could be a woodcock. The whirrr was too soft for a grouse. I was dripping wet from dew brushed off the bushes, but pleasantly comfortable after so many hot days. The air was deliciously fresh and cool.

I kept slipping down into a small, narrow ditch with soft mud at the bottom. Maybe it was a small dried-up brook. It was parallel to the field, but I didn't want to go across it too far into the woods. I wanted to keep an eye on the field. Soon I came to a lovely Druid-like spot in a tall red cedar stand and flushed another woodcock which moved with a soft roar from under my feet. As it was well past nesting season I wasn't concerned about stepping on their eggs. The tall, pyramidal cedars pointed ⁱⁿ up to the moonlight. I was tempted to sit down here and revel in the silvery loveliness. This was the sort of place and hour such as where gnomes and elves and fairies and trolls must have suggested themselves to the human race in our distant, scienceless, story-conjuring past.

I had an almost overpowering longing to stay right here, for days, for weeks, for infinity. I wanted so badly for the moon to stay right where it was. For the sun not to rise tomorrow.

These were weird thoughts, for me. So unscientific and impossible, I wondered why I felt that way. I started moving out of the cedar grove, knowing full well it wasn't wise to tarry, but I started analyzing my thoughts. I was sure that wanting to stay

forever wasn't that I had been knock^{ed} out of my senses by that threatening voice at the tent. Gradually, I realized that my subconscious was rebelling against tomorrow. Surely those guys would go off with my car. They'd take my driving license as I'd left it so handy in my small handbag in the tent. They'd take my billfold and the cash I had for gas to get home. And I would probably have to waste hours at a police station. It was nicer to think about staying here forever among the cedars. In the light of the moon.

What about the pussies? I had forgotten them until now. What did guys of that sort do to helpless cats? Especially vulnerable kittens still in the blue-eyed stage. Would they break all the little ~~ix~~ animal necks? Or just throw them out of the car to foxes and owls? Suppose I found all of them but one. Should I hang around waiting to find that one? And what about my kayak on top of the car? No one would try to steal a car with that tell-tale object topside. Besides, it would slow down anyone trying to run road blocks. Would they just cut the ropes and throw my boat down and crack its relatively fragile framework? Maybe I'd not be only sans money tomorrow, but also sans cats and sans boat.

My feet were dragging now, as if to hold back the coming of the rising sun. It must be about three o'clock judging by where the moon was riding high toward Talcott Mountain. I remembered now, looking at my clock, as I'd bolted out of my tent. It was ^{then} just a little after two.

I worked my way out to the field edge again, having gone into the woods farther than I intended to when I found myself on the edge of a cedar stand. When I got back to the field edge I saw that I was half way up the field to the farm house. Just as I

was checking on my position car lights hit the lower leaves of the trees at the opening to the inner field. As the car came out into the open field I couldn't see it too well, but the outline of it was distinct enough so that I could see there was no boat on top. I had no way of knowing if this was my car without the boat, or if it was a car belonging to my pursuers. I was a little surprised when it didn't stop at the tobacco shed. But when it reached the road in front of the farmhouse it did pause just long enough for someone to get in or out of the car. Then it turned right and headed for the main road.

I longed to stand up straight and walk in the cleared field the rest of the way for it was now a shrubby tangle along the woods. But I didn't dare. I considered myself mightly lucky to escape as I did. It would be foolish to take any chances now.

I tried to concentrate on the road area still quite a ways up ahead. If anything were going on there I wanted to know about it before anyone saw me. There might be a sentinel posted up there, to prevent me from reaching a telephone.

In a few short minutes, however, another car came through the woods opening at the foot of the field. But I still couldn't determine if it were my car or not, other than there was no boat on top of this one either. I motionlessly watched it travel up through the field. When it reached the farmhouse road this car only slowed down long enough to make the sharp turn to the right.

I had a feeling now that everyone was gone from my campsite; what I was dubious about was if someone were hiding near the road, watching for me. Soon I was approaching ^{the} ~~to~~ edge of the road. I got down on hands and knees and crawled to a large clump of tall

weeds and bushes. I lay there on my stomach for some time, able to easily see the wide ribbon of road. Not a thing moved. Nothing looked as if it didn't belong there.

Slowly, inch by inch, I crawled through the weeds, until I reached a spot where dense treetops over-arched the road and shaded it enough from the moonlight^{so} that it was quite dark there. I could see a faint light in the eastern sky now, and I ~~fin~~ felt I would rather try to reach the farmhouse in the dark than try for it in dawn light. I gradually stood up, trustin^g my dark clothes to make me almost invisible, which of course was what I feared someone else was trying to do. I stood on the edge of the road a few moments, looking back and forth, left and right, then I zoomed across to the opposite side and slinked quickly into the patch of woods there. I could now see the west side of Harriet's house, not far from me, just beyond some large lawn trees.

In a few steps I reached the side lawn. But I dropped onto my stomach again before daring to cross the lawn. There was the children's swing. It jolted my memory. Just two days ago, it seemed, the children's father had mentioned how carefully the children had managed to keep away from the poison ivy by the swing. The worst case of poison ivy I ever had was the result of searching for bloodroot plants along a roadside in moonlight. It made me wonder, for a ^{moment} ~~moment~~, but other things were more pressing.

Finally I dared stand up and step out onto the lawn. I moved over under what I knew to be bedroom windows, and called in a subdued tone, "Harriet. Harriet." No answer. I peeked around the corner of the front of the house from where I could see the driveway and up the road. Nothing was moving or unnatural looking.

I moved around to the east side of the house; if anyone were watching from the barn they could easily see me. Instantly the family dog appeared from somewhere and threw himself at me. Fortunately I knew his name, and also he seemed to recognize me. He must have been sound asleep not to have heard me sooner. But his bark brought Harriet to a window.

"You'd better come down and let me in," I said in a half whisper. "But don't turn on your lights. I have to call the police."

"The police have been here," she said. "The police were down to your place."

"The police?" I squealed. "How did they know?"

"How did they know what?" asked her husband's voice.

"^aWit, I'll be right down," Harriet said.

I must have looked like Central Casting's fugitive from justice as I walked into that immaculate kitchen. The dark blue sleeve of my left arm was ripped from shoulder to elbow. My clothes stuck to me with sogginess, and my wet hair was full of twigs and leaves. My feet were mucky, every one of the bare toes black with swamp muck.

The story they told me was far beyond anything I had dreamed of out there by myself. The tall Jamaican had ~~waked~~ waked them up through the dog barking, as with me; that was at 1:15 a.m. He said that a car had come in and stopped at his shed; a couple of fellows in it asked for fuel oil for another shed. The Jamaican said he didn't have any oil so they drove away. But he didn't like the idea of someone driving in there in the middle of the night, so he thought he ought to call the police.

Harriet phoned the police for him. When the officer arrived he talked to the Jamaican outside so Harriet didn't hear what was said. As it turned out, the Jamaican exaggerated his story and told the police that someone had been trying to break into the back of the tobacco shed. The officer asked him which way the car had gone, meaning out to the main road, or toward the mountain? The Jamaican pointed down the field toward the Bungalow. Harriet learned the Jamaican had seen my car go down there and not come back, which was why he was scared and inventing stories. The officer, eager to catch his quarry, hopped into his car and drove down there before Harriet or her husband could tell him I was camping there and with permission. It was his car, ^{lights} which first picked up my car and its out-of-state license plate.

He parked behind my car and quickly removed the coil so its owner couldn't get away. But he was one amazed officer, I learned later, when he saw Dinah and the kittens in the car. The boat tied atop the car further confused him.

He radioed headquarters for help, as police have orders never to go into the woods at night alone. It was when reinforcements arrived that he used that bull horn ordering me to move his way or he would blow my head off. And there I'd been, munching crackers until the bull horn arrived.

There ^{were} by then three men and they moved in for the grab, for they easily found that nice footpath through the weeds down to my tent. They were mildly surprised as their light first picked up that collapsed cabin for they hadn't know there had ever been a building in there. It was from there that they ~~had~~ swung their lights back and forth across the treetops. If they hadn't paused

there they'd have walked into my occupied camp.

The men found other surprises waiting for them in my tent. Now they were sure they had something! A clever hideout! Assuming that the culprit had escaped across the brook, two of them went tearing over there. They hunted madly around with their high-powered lights, swinging them from ground to treetops. The suspect had disappeared so completely they were puzzled. Soon they heard their companion calling them back to the tent.

They went through nearly everything in the tent. When they found a woman's driving license in a handbag they assumed I was an accomplice, maybe queen of some kind of gang. One of them read to the others from my journal notes about the feathered peeps and squeaks I'd been chasing all week, and about sappy wildflowers. They couldn't add all this up. Then they found my binoculars. A birdwatcher!

Still, taking no chances, the officer in charge decided to go back up to the road while the other two remained on guard. He drove up to the farmhouse and got the young couple out of bed again. Harriet and her husband took one look at the car coil and my handbag in the officer's hands. Harriet shrieked, "But you drove off down there without giving us time to tell you Mrs. Sherwood is camping down there. She has been there all week, with permission of the state.

Harriet told me the officer looked a little sheepish, but he was relieved to have so many odd things so easily explained. He returned to the cabin area, dismissed the other officers, put the coil back in my car and placed my handbag on the front seat. I learned that a third car had been sent by police headquarters to cruise up and down out on the main road

to catch whoever emerged from the swamp. The officer whom Harriet talked to radioed headquarters and had the ~~patrol~~ patrol car removed.

Now that I was safe at the farmhouse I suggested we phone the police and let ~~them~~ ^{the} know where I was. "We will be happy to pick up the lady and drive her back to her camp," the policeman in the office said. "You don't need to," I heard Harriet say, "we are having her spend the rest of the night with us."

We now had time to look me over. Harriet gasped and ran for towels and clean, dry pajamas. I asked for a basin of water for my feet, saying I didn't dare get into tub or shower as I was sure I'd track in poison ivy. The stubbed toe looked awfully red, purple, and badly swollen, but it was mostly numb.

After I was cleaned up they put me to bed on a cozy couch by a downstairs front window. It took me some time to get to sleep. I guess ed it was about 4:30, judging by the approach of the rising sun, when a Police car drove down to the tobacco shed. It didn't stay very long. When I opened my eyes next the sun was shining.

No one was up yet for it was Saturday morning. Not only did no one have to go to work or school but the family hadn't gotten much sleep that odd night. Rather than risk disturbing anyone I sneaked out of the house quietly in my nice borrowed pajamas, and, barefooted, and walked down through the field and inner clearing to my ~~xxxxxxxx~~ car. I glanced at the sheds as ~~xxxxxx~~ ^{I went} by them and was surprised to see a short, stocky Jamaican standing where the six-and-a-half-footer used to stand. I was tempted to give him a friendly wave but decided the human world is put together wrong in

some ways for that to be wise.

The strangest experience that morning was the sight of my handbag on the front seat of the car, even though I had been told I would see it there. When last I'd seen it, it was in the moonlight just inside my netting tent. Objects can certainly take on a weird aspect, or sort of mythical symbolization.

It was a relief to ~~have seen~~^{see} the boat atop my car as I approached it. And there were the pussies, as calm and comfortable as if nothing had happened though I bet Dinah had dived under something when a strange man's voice looked into the car.

I put on some old shoes I had in the car so I was able to move about more expeditiously. I had decided to break camp before the sun got too high and hot. Enough was enough. Rather than risk upsetting anyone else's lives I felt I should go along home and not wait for Sunday.

Munching dry cheerios and cornflakes as I walked past the prostrate cabin and fireplace stones on my way to ^{and from} the campsite, I paused to chuckle at the vision of the police looking this debris over with a flashlight. When ~~I got~~^{I'd gotten} to my campsite it looked just as I'd left it. The police had been so careful to put everything back in place.

I decided to walk over to that new pool I'd discovered in the middle of the night, and look for my missing sneaker. I easily found the clump of ferns I'd trampled down, but there was no sign of a sneaker. I stared at the pool in the brook there, just as surprised at it even now in open daylight. I didn't understand then, or now, how I never happened to see it before.

I was carrying my folded cot past the cabin debris when a

tall, nice-looking police officer met me. He took his hat off, scratched his head and putting his hands on his hips, he said, "Lady, before you tell me anything else, where did you go to last night?"

"Across the brook," I said, waving my hand in that direction.

"You sure must know the woods. That's all I can say," he stated. "We figured you had only two ways to get out of here, - either up through the woods to the field to get to the farmhouse, or out through the swamp to the main road. We searched a bit in the woods across the brook but we thought you'd get lost if you tried that."

"Maybe you'd get lost in those woods, but not I," I crowed a bit. "I hope you realize I walked mostly barefooted from here to the farmhouse, through those woods."

He shook his head. "How did you do it?"

"I had the moon in my favor," I reminded him. "Without the moon I might have landed at Talcott Mountain. I'd have sat it out."

"Moon or no moon," he said. "I couldn't have done it, not without a good flashlight. You didn't have even your small flashlight. We saw it in your tent. There were no houses or roads to go by." ~~How did you do it?~~

"Well," I again reminded him, "the moon, tied to the brook, gave me my bearings."

He scratched his head again. "Lady, I'm a boy scout master. I've been taking kids on trips for years. I wouldn't have the nerve to strike out in the woods at night like you did. Moon or no moon. And certainly not without a flashlight."

I briefly told him of my parents bring^ging us here when we were children, and d_escribed the cabin to him. He was surprised.

"Say, we read a couple of pages of your story," He told me of their reading my journal out loud and how puzzled they were.

"That's no story. Just field notes. To weave into a story someday."

"We were so puzzled by it we thought it was some ruse. Say, you should have seen that big Jamaican. He was shaking like he had a chill. He was scared to death. He refused to spend the rest of the night in the shed. I had to take him back to his headquarters and bring in another guy to guard the sheds."

"Did you bring the new fellow in about four^{ty}-thirty this morning? I saw a car come down in there then." ~~I~~ He knew I had spent the second half of the night at Harriet's. He nodded.

The officer walked out to our cars by the rail fence with me. He showed me the huge lights which had been used to hunt me last night. They looked like lighthouse lamps! "My hat's off to you lady," he said, looking from lamps to me and back again.

I shrugged my shoulders, and kept to myself the fact of the white panties which those lights could so easily have picked up as I slunk through the woods bent in Indian fashion. He and his men would never trust themselves using those flashlights in the woods again if they knew what they had so easily missed. So excellent a target in the dark of night might never come their way again.

In talking it over with Harriet later, we decided that to a Jamaican, voodoo takes over the night of a full moon; their

imagination runs wild. That tall black man had been scared to death of ^{to be} ~~the~~ lone in those big cavernous tobacco sheds. He concocted the story of someone trying to break in to have an excuse to call the police; then, when the police asked him which way the car went he remembered the car which had disappeared down the field and didn't come back. In fact, my car could have been the major source of his fears. A classic example of circumstantial evidence, which courts usually throw out but which sometimes costs a human life. I was lucky nothing had happened to me.

At my first encounter with police on this hallowed Bungalow spot four decades ago, I was a guilty child. This time I was an innocent adult. Innocent as the chickadees. Minding my own business.

Ready now, to leave, I stepped back into the middle of the woodsy cabin area, poked at the fallen cabin and cast an affectionate glance around the treasured spot. I tried to envision it all under water. My brook, my cabin, a great outdoor aquarium, where there would be more fish than birds.

The post script to this is that when I got home I came down with the worst case of poison ivy of my life up to then and since. Maybe that was punishment for my braggadocio attitude with the police.