

Feathered Friends

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I have never carried on a conversation with a feathered or furry animal. I have spoken to them, mostly kindly, notice their eye is emotionless, though some may turn their head slightly left or right as if asking for more information.

The trees of Western Pennsylvania in the 1920s and 30s, housed dozens of small birds that I could identify by sight, for their plumage and melodic song.

In youth, before the Electronic and Chemical Industries began waging war against “bugs”, there were “flying things” galore. On even a short summer auto journey it was often necessary to clear the 1924 Buick windshield of stuck dead bugs before the return journey. That is infrequent today.

These pests were the food for all “feathered friends”. This loss of food should we be held accountable for their demise in the second half of the 20th Century.

The USA sparrow population had begun a precipitous decline with the introduction of the automobile. When that vehicle replaced the horseless carriages as the city wheeled vehicle, street manure in metropolitan areas zoomed from a serious health problem to zero the sparrow and other bird populations decline by more than half.

A Spring walk through my home town burst with color in the fields, and return of the bird populations from warm climes. Halves of Blue robin eggs were common on the ground; nesting swallows chased flying insects along the sunny side of the barn or house home; the red breasted robin scratched for worms in recently tilled farms. The Blue Bird, Cardinal, Baltimore Oriole decorated sky, tree, shrub, just for me, since I thought adults took these bounties as forever commonplace.

Yes, I loved sledding in winter, any ball game in summer; but Spring lighted the world of these young eyes.

Another special observation. Mom ruled our home. No other voice mattered. And Mom loved animals. We sheltered a dog, cat, canary. The dog, Barney, was said to be mine, but no doubt, he knew who cared for him. The cat, Lindy, the scourge of the neighborhood, was fearless. And the canary, totally yellow, had a mirror in the cage, loved to preen his feathers just so, daily. Small, he (later when he laid an egg, we found our error) had a voice of strength, loved to sing. He taught me and my Sis to whistle along with his song. But during the day, he and Mom alone, would carry on duets she taught him. And on occasion, Mom would let Tweety out on purpose, after closing doors and windows, allowing Tweety-bird the freedom of the house. They shared kisses these moments. He explored her home as she tidied his house with clean paper, water and foods.

When we lost the House , moved away forever, these pets, Barney, Lindy, Tweety, did not come with us. And in that far away city, I lost sight of the beautiful birds of that small farm.