

Morning View Kentucky
2 February 1956

Thank you, Mr. McCarthy,

for your kindness to my letter of several weeks ago about Chinooks. I was a little taken aback, not having thought it particularly worthy of compliment. I am not a writer, my knowledge of the fundamentals of composition being no more than would be automatically acquired in a casual passage through high school English.

As this is Ground Hog Day, I have just spent a thoroughly idiotic and completely satisfactory hour sitting on a wet rock in the midst of a dripping patch of scraggly elderberries and wild raspberries on the drenched slope of the far side of the pond-field. My position was down wind, about thirty feet from, and at right angles to the opening of my Woodchuck burrow. I haven't the slightest faith in the Ground Hog predictions; but it seems silly to have such a nice big one and not use him.

The rain poured steadily. The hillside was mantled with busy trickles and little sheets of water which twisted around my boots and occasionally threatened to overrun my rock perch. Adequate clothing kept me dry, the only inconvenience being the necessity of hunching forward to make a roof of myself whenever I wished to smoke.

It was not a lonely watch. There is a surprising amount of activity among wild creatures when that secret sense of theirs tells them the rain is going to continue and that it will be followed by cold.

My first visitors as I stared at the unresponsive Woodchuck home, were Tree Sparrows in a loose flock, talking their way along through the weeds and grasses until they found the small grain I had scattered. They must be Tree Sparrows in the summer when they are somewhere else. Here, in the Winter, they work along the fields, never seeming to get more than a yard off the ground. I never saw one in a tree.

The wet little fellows were still dining, with their gentle, pleasant talk, when a soggy rabbit appeared, his fur darkened by the rain, and so plastered down that it was parted neatly along his spine. He found the grain, carefully washed his wet face with equally soaked feet, then ate, with one eye and one ear aimed at me. I have noticed that wild rabbits seldom settle down to eat without first energetically washing their faces.

The rabbit suddenly stopped chewing, his ears went sharply erect, his nose searched insistently, and presently he moved his front feet uneasily up and down. I knew what that meant -- cat. Several