

Morning View Kentucky  
14 October 1957

Hello, Mr. McCarthy,

The great masses of splendidly brilliant color that formed a glowing backdrop for last year's autumnal activities, are sadly bedimmed this season. Leaves desiccated almost to the point of turning brown and falling from the twigs, are no longer possessed of sufficient coloring elements to greet the autumn gloriously. There simply has not been enough moisture. Our last rain was early in September, and it, though a good one, was far short of supplying enough moisture to make up for the long arid weeks that preceded it.

The trees are coloring to the best of their ability, but the tints are neither pure nor shining, being overlaid with a dinginess as though one were looking at them through a dusty window pane. The hues are different. Maples which, last year, were great billows of flame, are only a tattered, pinkish gold now, a pleasing color to be sure, but pallid to the eye of memory. White oaks, which stood last year in wine-hued richness, are, this season, capable of only a muddy red, slightly brighter than russet. The few leaves remaining on the tall sassafras of the hedgerow across the pond-field are pale ghosts of the blazing wall of fire those trees resembled under last fall's sunshine.

All across the ridges and down the little valleys of this Sahara Section, conditions are the same. Down in the narrow, twisting draws, an occasional tree whose roots have access to hidden waters can be seen clad in all the richness which is the heritage of our deciduous trees.

Though but a wan, listless echo of its predecessor, the overall picture is, of course, lovely, and most welcome before November's gloom settles bleakly upon us. I appreciate every colored leaf the more after being startled by the map on page 425 of October Natural History, showing how few of us in this bedraggled world are privileged to dwell in areas of autumnal splendor.

A dry fall, however, has its compensations. The shortage of surface water makes watching migrating birds a much simpler task. Thirstily, they cluster at birdbath or along the shores of the pond, in accordance with their living characteristics. Most Warblers and other woodland birds utilize the birdbath, while Sparrows and other field birds mingle with water's edge birds at the pond.