

## Will Birds and Other Animals Increase

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It's summer time in Indiana and in all of North America and Europe, all of the world north of the Equator. It's summer time. Days are long and in Indiana and in much of the northern hemisphere they're warm, even hot. Ninety degrees is a common afternoon temperature in Indiana when the sky is clear, the sun beaming down.

It's summer time. Live trees are leaf covered, pillars of green. Bushes that are living are also leaf covered and green. Lawns that are covered with grass are green and ours, like other lawns that have not been sprayed with chemicals are speckled with dandelions and clover and plantain.

It's summer time and the dawn chorus of robins and other birds in the spring has become almost a murmur. Birds are busy nesting, incubating, feeding nestlings, leading fledglings, teaching them to forage for themselves. The robins that nested under the eaves of our barn are now incubating the eggs of a second brood. We saw the fledglings of the first brood hopping across our lawn days ago. Now those spot breasted young birds are hopping across our lawn, probing, pulling up nightcrawlers for themselves.

The house wrens that made a nest of a mass of sticks in a light on the wall of our front porch are incubating a second brood, we assume, though we can't see the inside of the nest. Goldfinches have changed from winter drab to bright yellow and black



Robins - Linda Rappel

and few visit our thistle bird feeders now though there were many all winter. Goldfinches don't nest until thistles are going to seed, then line their nest with thistle seeds. Well, thistles are going to seed and I assume goldfinches are nesting.

Along the sides of the roads, that haven't been mowed or sprayed, chicory and corn flower, Queen Anne's lace and day-lily, summer blossoms, are in bloom. There are many other flowers along the roads and when I go driving I have a Field Guide to Wild flowers with me, when I don't forget.

I also have my binoculars when I drive anywhere. I watch for birds, always, and am concerned by the scarcity of many once common country birds, meadowlarks, field sparrows, vesper sparrows, dickcissels, kestrels, ring-necked pheasants and many more, as I have written before. I've read that experts estimate wild birds have declined by sixty percent in North America in the last fifty years.

I don't see as many rabbits as I used to either, or woodchucks, ground hogs if you prefer, or raccoons or opossums and many of those I do see are dead, either beside the

road or in it.

I do see deer regularly and when I was young, when Mother and Dad took me for a drive in the evening as they often did, I rarely saw a deer, never until I was a teenager. Now, just a few days ago, I saw an antler-less deer, a doe, with two spotted young ones, fawns.

Something I don't see but read and hear about daily in the news is the present pandemic, corona virus and covid-19. There are hundreds of thousands of people in the U.S., more in other nations around the world becoming ill, thousands of people dying. I also see the signs, less traffic on the highways, nearly empty business parking lots, businesses with closed signs and many businesses with signs telling of road-side service only. There are more kids on the lawns and in the streets, their schools closed.

People are staying home, wearing surgical face masks when they do go out. I'm staying home many days, wearing a face mask when I do go out, visiting by telephone, getting lots of reading and nap time.

When will the pandemic end, as I'm sure it will eventually. When it does end, will birds and other animals increase in number, as I'm sure people will?



Neil's bird mask