

A Little Bird Told Me

I have four bird feeders in a corner of my backyard. Three are filled with a birdseed mix and one contains black sunflower seeds. In addition to the many birds who feed there, so do some squirrels and an occasional rabbit and, every now and then, a deer.

The birds spill as much as they eat but that's okay with the rabbits and the deer. The squirrels don't care because they climb right up the tall shepherd's crooks from which the feeders hang and help themselves. I use tall shepherd's crooks instead of short ones to prevent the two cats who visit that corner from bagging the birds. Unfortunately, many of the birds also alight in the thick vegetation under the feeders to eat what has been spilled. So far, as far as I know, no bird has lost its life to a cat there but every now and then when I go out to fill the feeders one of the cats will dart out of the vegetation so I know the cats lurk there from time to time.

This morning, as I sat on the small patio underneath our screened-in porch, sipping my morning coffee and watching the birds dart to and from the bird feeders, a little bird flew over to the latticework hanging from one side my porch and landed in one of the openings in the latticework. It looked at me and began chirping away. Suddenly, as though a switch had been thrown in my head, I understood what the bird was saying.

"Look, human," said the bird, "I want you to know we really appreciate you setting out all that food for us. It makes staying alive that much easier."

Stunned, I couldn't even mumble a thank you.

"But," continued the bird, "there are some other things we want you to know."

In shock, I dumbly nodded a go ahead.

"First off," chirped the little bird, "we know you think you've got it tough, that you live in a dog-eat-dog world. Well, you should know we think you've got it easy. We live in a cat-eat-bird world and in a bird-eat-bird world. Our own kind preys on us."

Again I nodded.

"And we know that's the case in your world, too," added the little bird. "However, your kind preys on just about everything, including each other."

I just stared.

"And, of course, you prey on my kind, too," said the little bird. "Just ask my cousins the ducks and pheasants and quail."

I looked down at my feet.

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“We also don’t like what you’re doing to our world, you know, the one we all share.”

I kept looking at my feet.

“But, to be honest,” said the little bird, “some of us have benefited from what you call the ‘advance of civilization,’ particularly our cousins the buzzards and vultures. They say their numbers would be far smaller if it weren’t for the roadkill you leave scattered along those roads and highways you’ve built. They also say they would be much more geographically dispersed if it weren’t for that roadkill which leads them to say close to those roads but that’s another matter. Suffice it to say they’re happy with things the way they are.”

Looking up I asked, “So what do you want? Why are you here telling me these things?”

“Glad you asked,” answered the little bird.

“I want you to understand,” began the little bird, “that this is not *your* world to do with as you please. It is *our* world. We all share it and benefit from it and we all do our part to take care of it and see to it that it continues until the time comes that it will exist no more. Well, most of us take care of it but you humans seem hell bent on destroying it. You aren’t content to rape, loot and pillage among yourselves, you do it to Mother Earth, too. You pollute the waterways, you rape the timberlands, you loot the earth of minerals and gems, and you create those damn man-made materials that when you’re done with them you dig big holes and bury them. Call ‘em whatever you want – dumps, landfills or whatever – they are an abomination. And that doesn’t even include the radioactive crap you’ve generated and don’t know what to do with so you bury that in the ocean. Just what the hell do you think is going to happen when those containers deteriorate and spill their contents into the ocean?”

“But,” I said meekly, “we’re assured that won’t happen.”

“By whom?” snapped the little bird. “Those damn politicians? Scientists for hire? The media? Give me a break! They are all in the business of telling you what they want you to know, not what you need or have a right to know!”

I bowed my head again.

“Look,” said the little bird, “I have to go. My lifespan is much shorter than yours and I want to enjoy the time I have so I’m going to go do what it is us little birds do. If I’m lucky I’ll be able to help continue my species – assuming yours doesn’t wipe us all out. So take some time to think about what I’ve told you. More important, spend some time thinking about what you can do about it. And if you use the excuse that you’re only one person and can’t do anything then you’ve missed the point of what you’ve been told. For crying out loud, I’m just a little bird and

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look at what I've been able to do. I got you to listen. Maybe you can do that, too – get others to listen.”

With that the little bird flew off and disappeared into the trees.

I took the time to write this down and share it with you because I want you to know what a little bird told me.