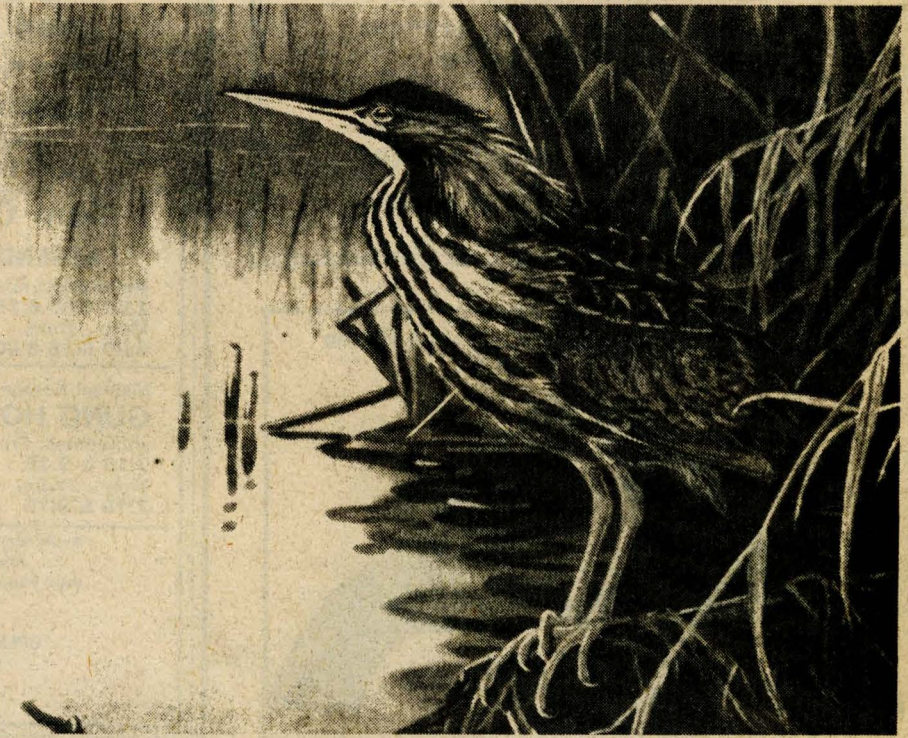

KELLY'S CORNER



by Jan Kelly

Bird songs are the ears' gift from April. Through the winter we are limited to chickadees, crows, and gulls and all the variations in those families. The red-winged blackbird, robin flickers, and grackles set the motion. Migration northward to us then brings what we could call song birds, those birds that utter a succession of notes that are melodic. Winter's sounds by contrast are rather staccato.

This morning the ubiquitous blue jays dominated Beech Forest parking lot with loud, urgent competitive sounds. The information being broadcasted is probably as unimportant as "Today is Tuesday!" "Supposed to rain tomorrow!" But step in any direction into the woods and there the light and lisp-y legato of tiny birds will please you unto smiling. Even if you are not familiar with birds, the very pleasantness of the sounds will be valued by you.

The chipping sparrow can put you in mind of the pine warbler which will be here soon with all the other species of warblers we so anticipate and enjoy. The white-throated sparrow is chirping out what sounds like "Sam Peabody, Peabody, Peabody." The kinglets are thrushes, but it is the spring-visiting members of the family we want to hear. The robin is a thrush and has a long and beautiful song, but the wood thrush and the hermit thrush can cause you to hold your breath listening. Less obvious because they are shy birds and feed on the ground, you have to search them out. Your binoculars are pointed downward and in darkened

areas for these birds. Go to the Beech Forest, pretend you have a blindfold on and take a stroll. You'll be surprised to what length you have taken your ears for granted. This Sylvan seclusion is only minutes away from you, daily.

While we're on the subject of ears, when is the last time you went dancing at Piggy's? Saturday night the band was great and loud. I was talking to a Susan Baker look-alike, but after two sentences she pointed to her ears and said, "Toilet paper. I put it in my ears. It's the only way I can survive the sound. My ear drums were being burst by bongo drums and for all the next day I thought breakers were crashing in my head." Ever have your ears so tired you couldn't even wear earrings? But we all dance and stomp and enjoy ourselves at that great exercise until with the heat, the lights, the noise, it begins to smell like a Third World meat market. Only Howard Mitcham could tolerate the whole night, successive partners banging the beat on his back and shoulders. That crowded floor has the nouveau poor of Provincetown. Winter's almost past and between dancing and attending openings that's the entertainment until about July when everybody has money again and can support more full all the local businesses.

If you like dandelion greens, I hope you've been picking. Once the yellow blossom shows, the greens will turn very bitter. The word dandelion is from the French *dente de lion*: lion's tooth. The pointed leaves are the inspiration for that.

Anne Kane, who is recouping from knee surgery with a constant stream of company bearing gifts, of course has much of her attention directed to walking or the lack of. It's no fun being incapacitated but Anne can always poke a little fun at whoever is game to grab it. She read this Irish prayer to me, thinking, "May the road rise with you, etc." Much too benign for our spirited countrymen she quoted:

*"May those who love us, love us,
And those that don't love us,
May God turn their hearts;
And if He doesn't turn their hearts,
May He turn their ankles,
So we'll know them by their limping."*

Laughter is the best medicine, for whatever reason.

Well, I finally saw Halley's Comet. Much of March I was sleepy-eyed, waking at 3 am and patrolling the beach and skies until daylight, sitting like a sentinel a half hour at a time, even trying on not crystal clear days, I was determined to see that elusive celestial wonder. I would get a twinge when I realized I did not take advantage of my New Zealand and Australian invitations to see the comet properly.

The viewing of Halley's Comet from the southern hemisphere is the better vantage point in 1986. In 1910 it was the northern hemisphere. Monday, April 14th, I peddled down to the West End breakwater at 11:00 pm. I could see it with the naked eye. I started quickly in that new moon darkness to get as far away from land light as possible. I missed a rock and twisted my ankle. I was furious with myself, but then laughed when I thought of Anne Kane's "prayer." No damage, one day of tenderness. I went to a comfortable spot on the breakwater. There it was. What a thrill. At 11:54 pm. It was timed and one-half hour before and after that time. No wind, no sound. A van drove up at the end of the breakwater. I could hear Stormy Mayo's voice as he pointed out the comet. "Do you see it, Kelly?"

He knew it was I by the bike parked on the end. In a normal tone of voice at that distance we could discuss the bearings of the comet, that's how still the night was. The cool April Bay conducted the sound with acoustics such as Symphony Hall or the Vienna Opera House. Stormy went off to another vantage point. I, limited to a bike, stayed there. It was a thrill to see the comet though it was not spectacular. As Stormy said, the

moon is more impressive. It was impressive, an orange crescent setting at midnight.

Adelaide Kenney stopped me Election Day. She was so pleased to read about the 23-inch board at 391 Commercial Street. Adelaide said she lived in that house as a small child and that her two sisters were born there. Adelaide was 16 years old when the family moved from 391. That's two Adelaides with the 23 inch boards. Adelaide Kenney and Adelaide Gregory. Adelaide Kenney runs Adelaide's Guest House on Johnson Street, and at age 80, which she will be on June 21st, sees no signs of slowing down. She is a Trustee of the Library and of The Heritage Museum and seems ever busy caring for friends and family. Adelaide is a most generous woman, but unless you or someone close to you is the recipient, chances are you'll never know of the generosity. Adelaide is civic-minded and family minded, independent, yet works well with others. We're lucky to have her. When you see her, why don't you tell her so?

Well, the city of Rome had a birthday an April 21st, the Natalis Urbis Romae. The 2739th birthday. Legend has Romulus establishing the city of Rome in 753 BC and then becoming Rome's first king. This holiday has not received such attention as in 1986 for many years. Rome fears Americanization, Europeanization, and Globalization. It is fiercely defending its uniqueness, individuality, and durability. They prefer "When in Rome, do as the Roman do." Wish I were there on the 21st to do just that.

I also wish I were in Moscow to hear Vladimir Horowitz' playing. A 61-year exile was ended with the most perfect piano playing I have ever heard. Horowitz left his native Russia in anger, vowing never to return. He emigrated to the United States; that was 61 years ago. Through all those years, Horowitz was a member of a small elite tribe. The piano virtuosos Rubinstein, Paderwinski, and Horowitz have travelled the world, astonishing and pleasing audiences with their disciplined and gifted playing. Horowitz and wife travel with pots and pans, living on a strict diet, Dover Sole and chicken. Careful eating, a controlled diet. At 80 he can still withstand the rigors of travel, practice and performance. Vladimir Horowitz is considered the last of this late 19th century and 20th century tribe of performing virtuosos. There is a difference when they play. Any listening ear can hear it. You feel weakened by the tones, but it's a welcomed weakening. Such beauty can be overwhelming and you're grateful the feeling. When I heard Horowitz play Schumann's *Frauenliebe*, it was the closest to life, the closest to death, to joy, to sadness. It was like a tremble on the body. How do you thank a person for this gift? You can only listen for a start.

April was enjoyable. Not at all the "cruellest month."