

Morning View Kentucky  
18 December 1958

Hello Mr. McCarthy,

Though I have lacked time to write about it, I clearly remember each detail of the interesting and somewhat amusing opportunity I had to note wildlife reaction to a jet plane sonic break-through several weeks ago.

It was a cloudy afternoon, but not too cold, consequently, after walking through the tree patch to refill bird feeders, I remained standing near one to give peanuts to those birds and squirrels who preferred personal service.

To the north I heard the engine sound of approaching jet planes, at such an angle that the planes themselves must have been almost directly overhead as I told a peanut-laden titmouse that he would be in sunshine if he were above the overcast as were they.

Hardly had I spoken, when we were enveloped in the most terrific thumping boom I have ever experienced. I have heard many other jet breakthroughs, but they were always off in one direction or another and approached in a great speeding wave of sound. Not so this time. There was no left or right, no up or down to this thundering concussion which filled the entire bowl of the sky and seemed to drive into my feet from the ground on which I stood.

After an instantaneous, automatic flash of panic, followed by equally instantaneous realization and reassurance, I could take note of my surroundings. I was beset by the same feeling I experienced once in an earthquake, that I stood firm while the earth beneath my feet shuddered and twitched.

Countless dead twigs rattled down from the big oaks. The birds who had been gathered about me made little, darting, panic-stricken flights in all directions, too confused by the all-encompassing sound, to select a course to safety. Some were silent while others called in alarm. One blue jay eating nearby dropped his peanut, but maintained his hold on the twig, and flew not at all. He huddled, motionless except for bristling top-knot, until it was all over.

A squirrel, busily shelling the peanut I had just given him, was sitting, quite relaxed, upon a little branch about ten feet high. The great thudding sound waves jarred him from his perch and he plopped to the ground, his feet beginning to run, I believe, before he quite made contact with it. He flashed up a tree and into a hole, his peanut still clutched firmly in his teeth.

Down the road, several big black pigs lunged through a wobbly wire