

On early spring mornings, when there is still frost in the air and the buds on the fruit trees have scarcely begin to swell, bands of pinion jays that forage over the gravelly juniper-pinion foothills of the Sangre de Cristo mountains of northern New Mexico where I live come to a feeder in my back patio. Soon they will be starting ~~to breed with~~ courting activities, pairing, and nest building, and then these flocks will disappear, only to return late in summer after the new generation of jays is fully fledged. In 1976, ^{following} ~~after~~ a winter away from home, I hung the feeder from a dwarf apple tree growing beside a small goldfish pond which is heated against freezing during the cold months. The water is as great an attraction for birds as is the food; robins drink from and bathe in the pond all the year around together with finches and sparrows. The latter quickly discovered the feeder and it was their bustling activities together with ~~and~~ the splashing of the robins that caught the ever-alert eyes of the jays.

Their first appearance shortly after sunrise was like an invading army; they pre-empted every place a bird could occupy on and around the apple tree. The smaller birds vanished; only three or four intrepid robins were able to hold their own ^{and} against the hoard ^{of jays} on the far side of the pool. The tree was loaded with dark gray-blue birds; they swarmed over the feeder, pushing and ^{each} intent on holding his place and and shoving/pecking at one another ~~and spilling quantities of seed~~ on the ground ^{where} other jays ^{large} shouldered to shoulder to gobble up the seeds that rained down spilled by the greedy ones above. Because of the ^{size} of the flock and at the feeder the over-crowding at the focus of attraction a continuous ~~exchange occurred~~ ^{and on the} and on the surrounding branches ^{of the over} between the surfeited birds and these ~~unsatisfied~~ ^{other} ones insisting on a share. The exchange did not ^{occur} ~~take place~~ without conflict. ^{Amid a} those holding favorable perches fought back against the attempts of their comrades to displace them. ^{Amid a} cacophony of expostulatory sounds, mewings, cluckings and cawing. ^{other} The flashing ^{of wings of the} fluttering birds, ^{of the ones} planned in for a landing and ^{other} departed, ^{in the} backlighting ^{of the} recently risen sun produced a lively ^{commotion} commotion that filled the apple tree with a scintillation of light ^{on from} on from

translucent feathers washed of all color.

As I watched this incredible ~~display~~ beautiful display of aerial agility I thought how wonderful are birds, so perfectly adapted to life in the medium of the atmosphere, ~~to each species~~ ^{male} according to its need from the albatross to the hummingbird. Unlike our clumsy mechanical inventions they seldom have accidents meet with accidents attributable to malfunction or ^{uncoordinated flight} miscoordination.

Only when confronted by the structures and traps and poisons of men, to which ~~was yet~~ ^{insufficient} they ~~have not yet had time to~~ ^{as do} accommodate, do they suffer mishap. On this earth they have adapted to all possible combinations of ^{environments} ~~media~~ ^{flows} in the course of evolution. There are those ~~at home almost exclusively~~ on the wing like the frigate birds; those that divide their time ^{as do} between air and water ~~equally~~ with only minimal use of land ^{and there are} like the petrels; those that have abandoned flight in the atmosphere for what can best be described as flight in the sea - the ^{or} flightless penguins; those odd ^{or} species found around the world that live exclusively on land - ostriches and kiwis; those that live in the perpetual darkness of caves from which they emerge only at night; and there are the gregarious birds which live in marshes for whom flight seems to have become an increasing effort as it has for the roadrunner, a ground inhabiting cuckoo.

In the ^{flow} ~~course~~ of species evolution birds have adapted to almost every habitat and ecological association ^{assuming that} and that given sufficient time, ~~free from~~ the class survives a period of human interference, they will continue to ~~adapt to adjust to~~ ^{possibly} develop ways of life adjusted to conditions more adverse than any they have yet been able to accept. Consider ^{for example} the ~~fishes~~ ^{class} great ~~order~~ of fishes to which belong types that grow lungs, climb trees, and fly, albeit for no great distance as yet. Or consider the ~~to enter the world of fishes~~ the cetaceans, mammalian species that have returned to the sea, abandoning all dependence in the perspective of evolution on land. Is it not reasonable to expect that birds ~~too~~ ^{may} become ~~completely~~ ^{completely} aquatic viviparous incubating their eggs ~~internally within~~ ^{internally} and thus adopt an entirely aquatic mode of life? Possible candidates for such a trend are the grebes and penguins.