

Eighth Month Gleanings

First let's talk birds, albeit some say all of my columns are for the birds. I've noticed attrition among many regional summer species. Most obvious is that in English sparrows. I'd say they're down over 90%, giving the house finches they once crowded out a chance to thrive a little. They are the red-trimmed native sparrow variety whose lovely carols are usually drowned out by the sparrows' tweets and chatter. Other survivors have been doves and robins.

In the prime breeding season of May and June, we had big numbers of grackles and cowbirds which have now flocked up and out raiding the grain fields. Earlier, herein town, cowbirds were everywhere. The rascals thrive by cuckoldry; laying their eggs in other birds nests. I've heard that the Chinese bird flew epidemic is still rampant. As evidence, I see a fall off among most of my usually bird-feeder visitors. Chickadees, goldfinches, chipping and tree sparrows, woodpeckers and jays numbers are way down.

On a drive out last evening along meadow lark lane, we witnessed survival in action. We saw a couple of juvenile red-tail hawks on telephone poles and then noticed a turtle like object crouched down on the road 50 yards ahead of us. I eased the car slowly toward it and up popped a young pheasant that had crouched down to hide from the hawks. We guessed the rest of the brood and the hen were hiding in the ditch.

It's a bit ominous, what's happened to our birds, not to mention all the brush fires and flooding. Nature seems to be "groaning and travailing" just as Romans 8: 22, 23 describes it, probably mirroring the tension of nations poised for war.

But there were signs of hope elsewhere. The Olympic Games showed us great young athletes from cultures across the globe performing with amazing skill and mostly great sportsmanship. I was happy to see that the Lynx super-star, Napheesa Collier, win the m.v.p. award in their game against Australia, and my favorite men pro players, Antony Edwards and Stephon Curry both stood out: Edwards' enthusiasm and versatility infects the others.

Curry was astonishing in the Serbia game his team mates seemed bent on loosing. But the 35 year old Golden State wonder scored 39 points, many in the last two minutest to save our bacon. Serbia led for 90% of the game until Steph stepped up.

And in the gold metal game against France, Steph saved the day again with 4 three pointers in the last 2 minutes. Labron the Magnificent turned the ball over at least nine times in the second half, playing as a guard, until the coach finally let Steph bring the ball up in the last 3 minutes. His was a performance for the ages; the kind every athlete dreams about.

Steph is one of the few who points up to give God credit after a great shot. He's also one of the few not ashamed to sing along with our national anthem.

In the women's gold metal game, America was so tense it took a small miracle for them to win. The French team played gallantly the whole game and only lost because UConn star, Gabby Williams' toe was an inch over the three point line. Her buzzer-beater would have won it for France.

I did notice many French fouls were not called, while truly stupid fouls by some of the Americans gave the French timely of free throws. Both teams should have been given Gold metals. The unity and mutual respect shown among those great young athletes should have given viewers cause for hope.

Finally, I've seen shots of Paris in many movies, but Paris never looked more dazzelingly beautiful. The whole place seemed to be wrapped in a golden aura, making it truly "the city of lights." Viva la France.

Gene Pinkney 8/12/24 for the Daily News