

## The Whippoorwill

*(A report by the Always-Right Reverend Doctor  
Isaiah J Trin (Doc Trin, for short)*

*The time of the singing of **birds** is come  
Song of Solomon 2:12*

Bedtime is not normally a time of rejoicing for youngsters. There is something within the human breast that detests being told what to do and when to do it. After all, bedtime depends so much on the whim of those with the authority to determine it. It has no basis in rational argument, no schedule to enforce its demands, and no justifiable reason for existence. From the time we go forth from the womb (speaking lies, mostly to ourselves), we rebel against bedtime. And if we get our way about bedtime, we will attempt to get our way about curfews, cookie jars, and other forbidden delights.

But after we have become resigned to the will of the ever-present authority figure in our lives that makes such unreasonable demands, we may be able to find, in our misery, that there are some things that make obedience palatable. One of those things, for me, was the Whippoorwill.

By late spring in the northern latitudes where I was hauled up (raised, for the more refined among us), the sun had made its annual pilgrimage north of the equator, and graciously provided its rays until well into the evening. Even those with bedtime authority seemed to feel that there was not much point in herding the young off to the bedroom if they were only to be kept awake by the very celestial sphere which was supposed to be the governing indicator of rising time. So in the spring and summer, we got to stay up a little longer. That gave the authority figures more time to employ us in such fun duties as snapping peas or shucking corn. Well, everything has its price.

When the dreaded hour of bedtime finally came, providing we had not fallen asleep first from rebelling against it, we were more prepared to accept our fate. Dusk gave way to night. Back then, night was REALLY night. Black night. No street lights. No house lights. There was one other house within sight of our house, and no one lived there. These conditions seemed to be necessary,

however, for the one thing that made bedtime worth having – the song of the Whippoorwill.

I remember the anticipation of hearing the first Whippoorwill calls of spring. The bird's name reflects the sound of its call, much the same as the Killdeer of Oklahoma and Texas. The Whippoorwill, however, knows its name much better than the Killdeer. When humans sound out the name, the accent is on the first syllable, but when the bird pronounces his (or her) name, the emphasis is on the last division – i.e. “wwhhiip – ppoooooor – WIIIIILLLL. Amazing enunciation – almost as if they went to school to learn how to say it. They probably get name-pronouncing instruction before flight instruction.

Whippoorwills are nocturnal birds. That's a fancy way of saying they come out at night to serenade the creation. They don't just give one or two calls and go home. They can go on for hours. They never get hoarse. And normally, only one of them talks at a time. They are not charismatics. Everything is done decently and in order.

And so it was that, from late spring and on through summer, many nights were spent listening to the sound of the Whippoorwill. We would eventually drift off to sleep as if calmed by a lullaby. Parents should have been extremely grateful to the bird, but it seems that they often found the sound annoying. These were the early signs of what would later become known as the generation gap.

After I left home, and went off to the nether regions to make my own life, I lost track of the Whippoorwill and his call. But whenever I would return home for a visit in the summer, one of the greatest joys would be to hear that wonderful call again. As the years passed, however, environmental changes took place that seemed to disturb the habitat of the herald. More people built more houses, life became busier, there was more noise in the area, and lights became brighter and more plentiful. The bird retreated to calmer and less-traveled locations, where I am sure it sang to its heart's delight. It's just that I didn't get to hear it. And that was the whole point.

Sometimes we wonder what happened to our lives. What happened to our happiness? What happened to the sound of the familiar? What became of the simple things we once knew? For those of us with some spiritual applications, we might wonder how we lost that zeal for knowledge, or for the fellowship of the Lord. What happened to those prayer times we enjoyed? How did we lose our perspective of what was important?

If we want answers, I suggest we look at the disappearance of the Whippoorwill. We have undergone some spiritual environmental changes. Our priorities have been rearranged according to our lifestyles, and perhaps something was lost in the translation. Has our initial relationship, based on simple things like faith and trust, become mired in striving about words to no profit? Have we been required to delineate so many refined positions to maintain our political standing that we have let slip our spiritual standing? Is our relationship to our definitions more influential than our relationship to our Lord?

I was “home” last year – in the North Country. It was late at night. I was busy with some mundane packing or other. We are always either packing or unpacking – but that is the subject of another report. I thought I heard a song – a song I had not heard for many years. A lovely song. A song that made me stop in my proverbial tracks. I listened for several minutes. I am firmly convinced that my Whippoorwill was giving me one more chance. But I was too busy, and I missed it.

I don't want to miss it again. And you?

*Doc Trin*