



the  
**MOONSHINER'S  
TELEGRAPH**

by Mark Hatmaker

Birds have always been used by canny scouts, moonshiners, ambushers, and hunters for eons to know when something is up. Being alert to changes in bird calls and silence itself can indicate an additional presence in the area (beyond your own). Early indigenous tribes and frontiersmen used the birds as early warning systems, as did the moonshiners of the 1930's, it is from this cadre that we acquire the slang for this skill: *The Moonshiner's Telegraph*.

An old woodsman's proverb is: "*When birds and bullfrogs go silent, become watchful.*" But there is more to reading the *Moonshiner's Telegraph* than merely being alert for silence... First, that whole being alert for silence thing; this is a gargantuan portion of the skill—not the silence itself but the alert at all times, the always awareness as opposed to *situational awareness*.

If one ain't awake in all senses at all times (*The*

*Alive & Thrumming Sensorium*), well, all information that follows is for naught, one can detect no changes in ambience and environment if one has been oblivious from the word go.

### **Companion Calls**

All bird species use a chatter amongst themselves when there is no alert. This chatter is known as *companion calling*. Birds of the same species keep up an almost constant chatter, think of it as the correlation of you and your friends walking the trail and keeping up an almost constant conversation of small talk while you watch your step, maneuver around a log or step over that rock. You don't so much announce what you're doing as engaging in low-grade small talk. You are, in that instance, *companion calling* with your friends.

Amongst birds & humans, it's of an essence to