

WINTER AT BRANS MEAD

Owner Narrative

The snowfall was heavy but with the rising temperature it melted quickly; already patches of emerald green had emerged. The trees were bare now and the hawk, swooping low, had a better chance of spotting the slightest rustle in the dead leaves, or seeing the dark scuttle of a small mammal crossing a patch of white.

Winter had begun to bite into bellies that had forgotten, after summer's abundance, that urgent pinch of hunger. The deer had begun their stately descent to where, before first light, I had put out food – two parts sweet feed, one part corn – on the low, flat rocks. Last night the raccoon was too late; the opossum was first to find the bowl of dried feed the fat cat, now inside by the fire, had neglected.

At dawn, something disturbed the flock of wild turkeys and suddenly they came off their roost high in the trees, setting up a clamor so identical to the mechanical turkey callers from the feed store that it made me smile.

Now, two bucks – a six – and an eight-point—came down to join the does. In this county it's the bucks that are hunted and they are naturally, wary. Watching them, I notice that the bird feeders are empty. I can't put much or the deer will nudge them, letting the sunflower seeds fall to the ground where they become "dessert." They are already growing a bit plump with all this easy food.

The cat has come out to watch the deer. She sits among them. They are more nervous of her strange orange color than she is their of sharp hooves. The dog knows she must wait patiently inside until last of the deer has gone. In the old locust tree the ravens sit and watch it all.

