

"The Sound of the Forest"

By: Scott M. Anna

Snapping, crackling and popping are sounds that I often hear while sitting on my screened deck in the early morning hours. You may think that I might be having a bowl of cold cereal by those sounds, but actually I am referring to the morning sounds coming from the woods around me. As the sun is rising about 6:30 A.M. in my peaceful home tucked away in the woods, I often wonder what it is that might be making those sounds. Sometimes as the sun peaks through I am able to see a squirrel or two hopping from tree branch to tree branch, or a pair of raccoons getting ready to crawl into their daytime homes in nearby trees or brush piles (only to appear again the next night showing more of their mischievousness.)

When I hear these sounds, which is most mornings, I remember back to last summer when I was hearing the crackling sounds, along with seeing a branch falling from a nearby tree. What came next was one I will not forget. As I was watching around the base of the tree, I soon saw one of the little bear cubs that had been spending a lot of their time

around my home, with its mother and two little siblings. The cub was very playful acting; he was the only one of them that would climb the trees. He would climb one tree after another, would fall down with some branches, or grab onto the tree trunk so he would not crash to the ground. I often wonder now when hearing these sounds in the morning, if I am actually going to be able to witness such an enjoyable occurrence again.

Amazingly though, when a bear has come near my cabin, they are very quiet. As big as the creatures are, you can actually not hear a sound coming from them. I have stood near an open window with a bear nearby (about 10 feet from me), and there was no sound to be heard even when they scamper away for one reason or another.

Last autumn I had an encounter with a snake that made a sound similar to that of a rattlesnake. It is called a Southern Tree Climber, which actually imitates the sound of a rattlesnake. Thankfully they are non-venomous so when jumps out of a tree and lands on you all you might get is a painful bite and poor night's sleep. So with that in mind now, I wonder if the sounds I am

hearing coming from the tree branches could actually be one of those creatures. It makes me wonder why we choose to live in such an area that has tree climbing snakes, two to three hundred pound bears, squirrels and raccoons that cause damage to anything around and in your home. I never lose sight of the reasons, which are many that I chose to live in this beautiful area. The sounds of the birds awakening and making beautiful music with one another, the sight of a light fog lifting through the trees, and the smell of dampened leaves and bark, are just a few of the many reasons. They outweigh any of the possible scary occurrences you may run into.

Have you ever noticed how in the summer and autumn in the early evening it will be so deafeningly quiet, then one by one you start to hear the rattling sounds of the Cicada's? After learning of the Tree Jumping snake that imitates the rattlesnake, I sometimes wonder if one or more of them are mixed in with the Cicada's. I like to believe that *ALL* of the rattling sounds are coming from the Cicada's and not any form of snake. Have you also noticed, that once one Cicada starts to rattle, in

just a few short moments they become deafening? During the warmer months I like to sleep on my screened porch; because I am a light sleeper the sound of the Cicada rattling makes it where I have to put in ear plugs, *(that sort of takes away from the ambience of sleeping outside!)*

My suggestion to those who like to sit on their porches in the morning to breathe in the wonderful fresh mountain air, but those who don't like to think about what the sounds are you are hearing. Is to go to your pantry, pour out a bowl of the cereal that is known to make snapping, crackling, and popping sounds when you add milk, then you will **definitely** know what it is that is making the sounds.

