

# **CAMPS AND TRAILS**

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Camps and Trails by Henry Abbott

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**HENRY ABBOTT**

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AND TRAILS**



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By  
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**M**Y rifle was standing against a birch tree within easy reach of my right hand, while I, sitting on a log, was eating my lunch. A hunter's lunch is carried in a small cotton bag and a string tied around the mouth of the bag also secures it to one's belt. On one side of this bag, faded to a pale blue from many washings, appears printed matter containing a trade mark, a name of manufacturer or dealer and indications that the bag once contained sugar. The contents of the bag on this occasion just fitted my appetite.

While I was busily munching a sandwich I became aware of a curious bird sitting on the lower limb of a tree at

my left and about ten yards away. I do not mean that he was an unusual bird; he wore a plain slaty-gray coat and was a little larger than a full grown robin. He was quite a commonplace bird and one often seen in our northern forests. His name is canada jay. I do not know why, but he is also sometimes called whiskey jack. He was curiously and intently watching me with his right eye. Presently he turned his head and studied my operations with his left eye. Most birds and many animals who live in the woods have a distinct advantage over man in the fact that their eyes are so placed that they are able to look in opposite directions at the same time. They can thus look for their prey with one eye, while watching out for an enemy with the other.

This fellow was apparently not entirely satisfied with what his right eye

saw, so for purposes of confirmation he turned on me the left eye. I had not noticed his arrival. He had silently come after I sat down on the log. He now spread his wings and without a single flap silently skated across the air to another tree on my right but a little nearer, where he could "view the subject from another standpoint." It now occurred to me, that, possibly the jay bird might also be needing some lunch so I tossed a small piece of bread out on the other end of the log when he slid down and ate it. Then I invited him to come nearer; and presently, when I gave him a piece of meat he was eating it out of my hand. While I was closely watching my guest, there suddenly and as silently appeared a second bird walking down the log, and then in a moment a third arrived to join the lunch party. The strangest thing about the incident was the silence



and suddenness with which, like ghosts, the birds appeared before me, and when the last crumb had been devoured, they as silently slipped away.

The place where the jays and I met was in a dense forest about fifteen miles from any human habitation and it is probable that they had met the human animal so seldom that the native curiosity of the forest dweller had not yet given place to fear.

Bige and I were hunting. We were living at "The Dan'l Boone Camp" on the northwestern slope of Crescent Mountain. We left camp that morning about seven o'clock and together travelled down the valley, following one of our own trails about three miles until we crossed Pigeon Brook, where we separated. When Bige and I hunt, we always get far enough apart so there will be no possibility of shooting each other. Also, we hunt separately



**The Dan'l Boon Cabin**

to avoid conversation. Gossip on a "still hunt" is about the worst practice in which one can indulge.

On this occasion, it was agreed that Bige should climb the eastern end of Wild Cat Mountain and proceed along the top of the ridge which extends several miles toward the west, while I hunted through the valley and over the foot hills, meeting him on the western end of the ridge for lunch at twelve o'clock. It was now nearly one o'clock and as I had been unable to find Bige, I ate lunch with the jay birds as above described.

Since leaving Bige that morning I had seen no big game, but had shot a goshawk. Every guide and hunter of my acquaintance in the North Woods, is the sworn enemy of this bird of prey. No man is thought to have performed his duty if he allows one of these hawks to escape. The goshawk destroys many