



Russet Dreams

As if by magic the little birds arrive in the dark of night to brighten our days afield. by Ron Ellis

Outside, a blue cold wind ripples a favorite Wisconsin lake tonight. It appears to be a woodcock wind – the kind that a flight of these mysterious little migrants might ride south to Belle's Cover and then flutter down through moonlight to rest in the alders beside Thunder River. There were a few local birds in there today, along with a pair of grouse, but not nearly as many as there will be when the flights come down.

Not more than 20 minutes out of the truck this morning and Belle had her first point ever on woodcock, along an alder run within sight of the river. It was a large bird, likely

a hen, which I managed to take with my father's beloved 28-gauge. We stood around and marveled at its colors and said how lucky we were to be here again in autumn and to have been given such a gift the first day out.

Now, with the dogs fed and the guns cleaned, we're sipping bourbon and telling our stories. Later, after most of the tales have been told, the house will go quiet and we'll all lie awake listening to the dogs whimpering in their beds as we toss in ours still marveling as we do at the wonder of it all. And come morning we'll follow Belle and Jenny and Kate through October's colors to see what magic the night wind carried to us as we dreamt our russet dreams "beneath the moon." – *For Dana Storrs Lamb (1900-1986)*

OCTOBER WOODCOCK BY A.B. FROST

