

MAY 11, 1972

An Iowa animal gallery wrote the Chamber of Commerce in San Angelo that they were planning a zoological expedition to capture two roadrunners for their zoo. The letter requested the Chamber of Commerce contact ranchers who would help look for nests. Roadrunners, so they'd been advised, are easier to catch off their nests than any other way.

One of my compadres happened to be at the Angelo office on the day the letter arrived. Being of a generous nature with his partner's fate, he recommended me to furnish the roadrunner nest robbing grounds.

In this age of divinely ordained ecologists, being selected to rob a bird's nest is as big an honor as being chosen to give a Supreme Court Justice a hotfoot. In fact, on a fair track, I'd prefer putting the old scorcher on a federal judge to getting caught flicking ashes on the highway.

So as fast as my typewriter would perform, I wrote a letter of refusal. I advised the town boosters that ranchers are already so hot with the bird watchers that we're having to wear artificial feathers in our hatbands, and if they wanted a herder to be a party to a nest robbing, they were going to have to find one who hadn't read a newspaper for five years.

Wouldn't that have been smart, to fall into a nest robbing expedition? Once the Audubon Club heard of it, the state penal system would have had to put in a rush order for electric chairs. By the time the news had circulated, everybody who owned a pair of boots would be looking for bail. Lloyd's of London couldn't have underwritten the legal expenses. And the odds of any hambres being loose to ship lambs next fall wouldn't be worth quoting on the tote board.

You couldn't get me to trap mice, much less chouse baby roadrunners. The letter said that the zoo had all sorts of permits, but that doesn't mean their permits would allow a rancher to go bird hunting.

It's dangerous nowadays for herders to be seen carrying a box of flea powder. We might as well face up to the times. Self defense and self preservation are the property of the folks who can scream the loudest in Washington. The day has come when we are at the mercy of most animals and insects and all nature and hiking clubs.

I sure hope that Iowa Zoo finds a couple of roadrunners without stirring up the Audubon Club. Permits aren't worth much when you get a bunch of mad bird watchers after you. The sooner this is over, the better off we'll be.