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Birds'-Nesting Day!

One early May morning, Rachel hopped from her bed. The teenager packed her lunch and filled her canteen. She grabbed her notebook and camera. This was her favorite kind of day. It was birds'-nesting day!

Rachel bounded out the door. Her dog Pal trotted beside her. Soon, they reached the trail near their house. The bright green Pennsylvania woods invited them in. Rachel and Pal followed the twists and turns of the path. Pine needles crunched under their feet. Deeper and deeper into the woodland they went.

Rachel had been in those forests and hills many times. She and her mother had spent a lot of time together there. Her mother had pointed out trees and plants. She'd shared the names of different kinds of birds. She'd shown Rachel how to look closely at the world around her.

As Rachel walked through the woods that day, she listened to the soft rustling of leaves. She heard the gurgle of the creek. And she heard something else, too—"Witchery, witchery!" Rachel knew that sound. She and her mother had heard it before on their visits to the woods. It was the song of a bird called a Maryland yellowthroat.

Rachel and Pal moved in the direction of the sound. Again and again, they listened for the bird's call—"Witchery, witchery!" The sound grew louder as they got closer and closer. Until finally, they saw it!

There in a bush sat a perfectly formed nest. Inside the nest were four creamy white eggs with brown spots. Rachel thought the eggs looked like precious jewels. The nest's owner looked nervous. These visitors were too close to the nest. But the bird didn't fly away. It stayed to protect the eggs. Rachel crept closer. She slowly lifted her camera. Then, *snap!* Rachel took the photo.

Throughout the day, Rachel and Pal walked and listened. Whenever they heard the song of a new bird, they set out in a new direction. They found a nest in a tree that looked like a cup made of grass. The "cup" was filled with oriole eggs. They discovered the tiniest of nests with the tiniest of eggs. It was a home for hummingbirds.

As the sun dropped lower, they followed the sound of another bird. Its song sounded like “Teacher! *Teacher!* TEACHER!” The ovenbird had carefully hidden its nest on the ground.

Soon, the sun began to set. It was time to head home. Rachel didn’t want to leave her favorite place. But she knew she would return again. There would be more birds to watch and more nests to find.

These birds'-nesting days spent in the woods reinforced Rachel’s love and respect for nature. It was a love that had taken root and grown since those magical childhood days when she explored the woods with her mother.

