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# Pro Rege

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Volume 31  
Number 2 *Fine Arts Issue 2002*

Article 1

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December 2002

## All Nature Sings

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### Recommended Citation

Schelhaas, David (2002) "All Nature Sings," *Pro Rege*: Vol. 31: No. 2, 2 - 3.  
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# All Nature Sings

Dave Schelhaas

All summer long,  
just before dawn,  
crows  
in their sleek black  
robes  
gather for worship  
in my neighborhood.

A solo voice begins with four  
or six quick caws and answers  
come  
from several blocks away, in throaty,  
stumb-  
ling unison, like soldiers marching  
out of step on morning drill.

The call goes out again  
and other voices, closer  
now, join the gargly  
hymn.  
A makeshift choir composed of  
tin-  
eared crows has gathered near  
my bedroom window.

Edgy altos swoop into maple tree  
pews  
shrieking off key descants  
before the leader can complete his  
second call; sleepy stragglers, satiate  
from late night gorging, flap into  
view  
to add a random note or two.

When all have  
come,  
the songs grow loud and louder.  
Starting low, they rise, get  
more belligerent and impatient  
till they seem like threats and curses  
flung  
at the creator.

And as they keen their  
high, harsh hymns,  
crows flit from dome to dome.  
What starts out in my neighbor's  
ash  
makes sacramental drift to my  
bird bath and lawn, and then, dark  
flash,  
to an adjacent basswood tree.

Not angry that they've roused  
me from my sleep (one can't  
stay mad all summer long), I  
lie  
awake and  
try  
to figure out how God  
receives this raucous, pesty praise.

Surely the creator must prefer  
wren song,  
lark hymn,  
oriole alleluia  
over all this ugly, off-key, croaking  
crow noise.

Or is it all the same to him:  
cathedral choir anthem,  
mourning dove dirge,  
crow caw,  
mosquito whine,  
hog hum?

Are rats,  
doing their  
scratchy  
rat thing behind the corncrib  
slats,  
making music to the Lord?