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## Bird-watch

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## **Bird-watch**

Mike Vanden Bosch

Each spring red-breasted robins dared winter and  
when sleet pelted, we wished them a red-warm wind  
and sunshine. No boy's hands reached for stones.

In summers red-headed woodpeckers wore white  
and black for wrecking. Every morning their  
beaks like baby air-hammers hammered dead  
tree trunks. Our necks ached, watching.  
Our slingshots hung limp while we bowed to  
the rat-a-tat-tatting echo through our grove.

In the fall, white and blue pigeons cooed the  
haymow cozy but fouled the alfalfa until cows  
mooed its taste and we moved birds—enemies:  
at midnight we raided their roof-high roosts,  
blinding them into our nets with flashlights,  
and sold them ruthlessly to their deaths.

Then in winter, nearly birdless but for house  
sparrows swarming our trees, we slung stones  
at God's gifts with David's weapon. When feathers  
fell we thought we heard God: "One, ten, fifty  
feathers." Next spring when red-breasted robins  
dared April's sleet and woodpeckers drummed  
dead trees, we were back on God's side.