

(Re)birthdays: A Celebration of Recovering Species

**Crowning**

Swans at sunrise  
swim at the cervix  
of the south channel.

The hour, theirs alone,  
all fluid and rose  
translucent and shimmering;

every day here  
that circle of sun  
the womb of the world  
pushes out  
gargantuan  
miracles.

In the unattended  
hushed hours  
of twilight,  
serendipitously,  
we are invited:

Bear witness

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Note: Location for this poem was in Bayfield County, Wisconsin. Trumpeter swans were once extinct in Wisconsin but through intensive egg collection and breeding programs they now number over 2,000.

## Song for the Cygnets

What were you thinking  
 using that candler  
 looking for life?  
 You took it from there  
 and gave it to here.

Tucking each hope  
 into a pocket  
 more gingerly  
 than a grandmother  
 into apron slots

You, sir,  
 flew away home—  
 with hot water bottles only  
 to support  
 bruises of humanity.

What were you thinking  
 when ancient dark jaws,  
*Chelydridae*,  
 extinguished every single cygnet,  
 every fuzzy thing—  
 except one.

What audacity to try again  
 knowing the cry for mother--?  
     would be answered  
     by one hundred,  
     bearded men

narrowly  
 escaping  
 the swan slap,  
 while others hid,  
 encased in reeds

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Note: Candling uses an old time practice of using either a candle or a candler light to check the viability of an embryo. This poem was based on the extraordinary life events of Dr. Stan Temple, pioneer in wild collection and captive breeding who took Trumpeter swan eggs from Alaska and flew them to Wisconsin to then pass the eggs to zoos and other wildlife agencies for rearing. His work has helped in the recovery of many endangered birds.

## From Rifts

Sunrise at the mother lake—  
 somewhere, out of sight,  
 one lonely loon  
 howls with reverberation.  
 It is the remembrance  
 of living once  
 among wolves,

of all that could be,  
 awakening now  
 like mist  
 from sanctuaries  
 of solitude.

Here,  
 One foot-fall  
 One oar slice  
 Makes thunder.

Glowing, turn us to stone  
 like our shared solid bone  
 with your red eye  
     residual spark  
         from fountains of flame

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Note: For discussion on volcanic origins and why Lake Superior is unique even among Great Lakes see: Green, John C. "The Lake Superior Basin's Fiery Beginning." *Lake Superior Magazine*. Lake Superior Publishing. (June 1, 2002).

<https://www.lakesuperior.com/the-lake/natural-world/243-lake-superior-basin-fiery-beginning/>

For the extreme sensitivity of loons to human presence see:  
 Lower Beverly Lake Association. *The Common Loon: Canada's Official bird*. (2012).

[https://lbla.net/?page\\_id=235](https://lbla.net/?page_id=235).

## Montage of Marten

Sometimes,  
 We do not even know  
 their names,  
 these ghosts of animals gone

a flash  
 of face  
 in the darkness.

Here they  
 plead for permission,  
 to cross,  
 to gamble,  
 groveling below headlights.

We tried  
 to extinguish them.  
 perhaps it was more subtle  
 misdirected intentions,  
 singular snuffing outs, etc.  
*Sweet old etcetera.*

We banked that fire  
*And left it for years.*  
 But now your red scruff  
 is rekindling;  
 sparks are igniting.

Mysteriously,  
 magic is blowing  
 to the islands.

And it tastes like cake,  
 each of these  
 (Re)birth days.

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Note: The elusive mammal *Martes americana* disappeared from the Apostle Islands by the 1930s. Re-introductions from Ontario relatives in 1950s failed. None were seen on the Islands for more than 40 years. Recently, after initial sightings, they have been rediscovered on 7/22 islands. Mysteriously, genetically these martens appear related to

those in the mainland Chequamegon forest and not to the Ontario stock. See Zhuikov, Marie. "The Mystery of the Martens." (2019). *Lake Superior Magazine*. See also Cummings, E.E. (1926). "My sweet old etcetera." (Sic).

## The Way Beyond

In the inked out  
evening, the waning  
light makes  
the way beyond  
less clear.

The air thickens  
with tumult,  
strikes with  
rumbles of  
outstretched  
ferocity.

There is no eye  
to this storm  
But a flash—  
we see  
where we couldn't  
see before

Cranes: two,  
silhouetted.

Listen,  
learn  
the sound of their song

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Note: Once hunted to near extinction for feather plumes, cranes are interesting stories of conservation. While the whooping crane remains in critical condition, the eastern sandhill crane population which migrates through the northern mid-west has grown from just fifteen pairs in the 1930s to over 60,000 individuals today!