

THE PROSE POEM: AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

Volume 5 | 1996

Endangered Species

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ENDANGERED SPECIES

One day last summer when I looked up, two eagles perched on the dead tree limb a few short yards from the screened-in porch. Earlier, I'd heard their cries-hunting something just beyond dense maple leaves, quarreling with the osprey that nests a half-mile down the lake. And then, suddenly, they dropped into the foliage, emerged near shore and lifted toward open water.

This year I've waited days to see them again, looked up too often from my chair, gone out in the boat to search the other shores where I've seen them soaring, where once they even seemed to follow me.

Oh, I've seen them other places, too-above river banks and cliffs, in zoos, even circling a freeway, stopping traffic-but never so close, and never to return in dreams. Especially the way they look at me and shriek.

Now, above the treeline, there's nothing but clouds and shifting light, an occasional crow or gull, a brace of mallards hurrying so business-like with the wind, a hummingbird that hovers just beyond the screen, perhaps attracted by flowers on the table. Everything has something to do today, some place to go-it's myself I have to wonder about, waiting for eagles that will not come, a glimpse of something above the far shore, veering in the wind and dropping toward a bare branch. Maybe it's just a blowing leaf-I can't stop watching.