Bright Wings

An Illustrated Anthology of Poems About Birds

Edited by Billy Collins
Paintings by David Allen Sibley

Columbia University Press NEW YORK
CONTENTS

Acknowledgments xv

Introduction 1

Stephen Vincent Benét
John James Audubon 9

David Wagoner
Loons Mating 13

Seamus Heaney
Drifting Off 15

David Yezzi
Mother Carey's Hen 19

Robert Creeley
The Birds 21
CONTENTS

Carol Frost
Pelican  23

George Green
The Magnificent Frigatebird  25

Marianne Moore
The Frigate Pelican  26

James Tate
The Blue Booby  29

Will H. Ogilvie
The Heron  31

Jane Hirshfield
Hope and Love  32

Charles Lamb
On the Sight of Swans in Kensington Gardens  35

Greg Delanty
On the Marriage of Friends  36

John Hollander
Swan and Shadow  37

Mary Oliver
Wild Geese  39

Naitō Ōsō
The Teal  41

Greg Delanty
From Woody’s Restaurant, Middlebury  42

Richard Wilbur
Still, Citizen Sparrow  45

David Wagoner
To a Farmer Who Hung Five Hawks on His Barbed Wire  47
Robert Penn Warren
Evening Hawk 49

James Wright
You and I Saw Hawks Exchanging the Prey 50

Geoffrey Chaucer
from The Parliament of Fowls 51

Robert Cording
Peregrine Falcon, New York City 53

Linda Gregerson
Make-Falcon 55

Walt Whitman
The Dalliance of the Eagles 61

Sylvia Plath
Pheasant 63

Joshua Mehigan
A Bird at the Leather Mill 67

Mary Howitt
The Coot 69

Kathleen Jamie
Plover 73

Amy Clampitt
Shorebird-Watching 75

Eamon Grennan
On a 3½ oz. Lesser Yellowlegs, Departed Boston August 28,
Shot Martinique September 3 77

Elizabeth Bishop
Sandpiper 79
Delmore Schwartz
The Ballet of the Fifth Year  81

John Updike
Seagulls  82

Wilfrid Wilson Gibson
The Kittiwake  85

Linda Pastan
After Reading Peterson’s Guide  87

Susan Mitchell
Lost Parrot  89

William Wordsworth
The Contrast; The Parrot and the Wren  91

Charles Simic
The Great Horned Owl  95

Richard Wilbur
A Barred Owl  96

Henry Timrod
To a Captive Owl  97

David Bottoms
An Owl  99

Annie Finch
Great Gray Owl  103

Carl Rakosi
The Owl  104

Edward Thomas
The Owl  105

Mark Jarman
Chimney Swifts  107
Anne Stevenson
Swifts 109

Gerald Stern
Swifts 111

D. H. Lawrence
Humming-Bird 113

Lisa Williams
The Kingfisher 115

Amy Clampitt
The Kingfisher 117

Jane Hirshfield
The Woodpecker Keeps Returning 121

Elizabeth Madox Roberts
The Woodpecker 122

Kevin Stein
Arts of Joy 125

Timothy Steele
Black Phoebe 127

Henry David Thoreau
The Shrike 131

Stanley Plumly
Still Missing the Jays 133

Gary Snyder
Magpie’s Song 135

Kay Ryan
Paired Things 137

Linda Gregg
The Calves Not Chosen 138
CONTENTS

Lucia Perillo  
The Crows Start Demanding Royalties 139

Lawrence Raab  
The Questions Poems Ask 140

Robert Wrigley  
Ravens at Deer Creek 143

Dorianne Laux  
The Ravens of Denali 145

Elizabeth Barrett Browning  
Ode to the Swallow 151

John Clare  
The Swallow 152

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow  
The Emperor's Bird's-Nest 154

Dorothy Wordsworth  
Watching the swallows 157

Alfred, Lord Tennyson  
from The Princess; O Swallow 158

Robert Browning  
Home-Thoughts, from Abroad 160

Debra Nystrom  
Cliff Swallows 163

Howard Nemerov  
The Blue Swallows 164

Nancy McCleery  
December Notes 167

Ralph Waldo Emerson  
In Walden wood the chickadee 168
Walter de la Mare
Titmouse  171

Henry David Thoreau
The Bluebirds  173

Thomas Hardy
The Darkling Thrush  177

Siegfried Sassoon
Thrushes  179

Emily Dickinson
I have a Bird in spring  181

Emily Dickinson
I dreaded that first Robin so  182

Thomas Heywood
Love’s Good-Morrow  184

Robert Herrick
To Robin Red-Breast  185

Robert Service
Poor Cock Robin  186

Catullus
The Death of Lesbia’s Bird  189

Daniel Halpern
Of the Air  190

Jonathan Aaron
Cedar Waxwings  193

Stanley Plumly
Cedar Waxwing on Scarlet Firethorn  194

John Keats
Song  197

CONTENTS
Shōtetsu
A Warbler Announcing Spring at Morning  198

John Clare
The Happy Bird  199

John Ciardi
Bird Watching  201

Henry Carlile
The Cardinal  203

Stanley Plumly
Cardinals in a Shower at Union Square  204

Mark Jarman
A Pair of Tanagers  207

Michael Collier
Brave Sparrow  209

Carol Muske-Dukes
Love Song  212

Billy Collins
Christmas Sparrow  213

Averill Curdy
Sparrow Trapped in the Airport  217

Brenda Hillman
Partita for Sparrows  218

Jeffrey Harrison
Visitation  219

Mark Jarman
Old Acquaintance  220

Edward Hirsch
The Call of the Junco Bird  223
Robert Penn Warren
Redwing Blackbirds  225

Juliana Gray
Red-Winged Blackbirds  227

William Carlos Williams
The Birds  229

Wallace Stevens
Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird  230

Bob Hicok
Keeping track  235

Lisa Williams
Grackles  236

Juliana Gray
Rose-Breasted Grosbeak  239

William Cowper
The Faithful Friend  241

Thomas Hardy
The Caged Goldfinch  243

Cecilia Woloch
For the Birds: A Charm of Goldfinches  244

Brendan Constantine
Rara Avis  247

Index of Poets and Poems  259

Index of Birds  267

CONTENTS  xiii