

MUSIC FOR



MYOTISES

CAT DOSSETT, EDITOR

A HAWK & WHIPPOORWILL POETRY CHAPBOOK

From the editor...

When North American bats tuck into their hibernacula for the winter—often dark, wet caves—they find themselves at risk of contracting the deadly white-nose syndrome. A fungal disease, it presents a crisis to bat populations, reducing the numbers of species such as the little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*) and the vulnerable tricolored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*). The North American Society for Bat Research notes that “North American bats have never faced as dire a threat as white-nose syndrome in recorded history”; “this disease has the potential to spread rapidly across most of Canada and the United States, likely creating an ecological disaster.”

In this time of climate catastrophe, it is easy to feel despair. It is easy to look from impending ecological disaster to disaster and wonder if there is hope for us, residents of Earth, human and animal alike. But times like these call for art. We write, we draw, we stave off despair. This anthology rose from a desire for action. Gathered here are poems in praise of the bat and its role in the environment. And it hopes to encourage readers, too, to hold fast in this time of need.

- CLD



Bobby Murphy

Hibernaculum

The bats, among their hollow
roosts, constrict themselves,
shirking from flashlights.
They have heard too many tales
of massacre, of torches
become bludgeons, of reciprocal terror.
Their tall ears ache, tilting at pinwheels.

When it's safe, the myotis
detects the small sine of insects
on stoic ponds and sustains itself,
frantic, half-fearful,
obeying only biology.

Miosis too is a biological reaction,
a constriction of the pupil. A tunnel
spasms, shrinks, seems to crush
any brave thing in its liminal gate. Tonight

there's no silhouette
darting across the moon; there's no exit;
there's no separation
when the bat becomes the hibernaculum.

Sarah DeWeerd

Bats: A Documentary

The female bat gives birth to a single young each year.

*From forty million of her species in a Texas cave, she seeks the one
that is hers.*

And finds.

And feeds.

Its small mouth,

open.

*South, in the rainforest of Belize, the bat carries her young with her in
flight.*

Hers is the body

that does not refuse its burden

nor its sacrifice of hands

to hold what is dearest

nor the thousand

beats per minute of its heart.

*We are watching this on television, the two of us. My mother sits in
the chair next to me, arms folded across her chest*

and the scar that stitches

itself together

where I once clung,
hungry.

We suck in
our breath —

*The bat pulls her head from the bell of a cactus flower,
face covered in pollen.*

Small gift, this,
thin as milk

and yet
a powerful spell,

the bright dust
shimmering her body.

We cannot
look away.

*Flower after flower, the bat fills herself with nectar.
Without bats, the fragile desert would perish.*

Their small bodies
take the measure of space

over six continents.
I imagine the bat and her kin

ringing our planet
as if the world were

one drop of sweet nectar,
and I tell myself:

Remember her. Remember
this.

Diana Adams

Bat

little umbrella
with a hell fetish
dried-up
on the shower floor
the dog ate you
like a potato chip
you could have been
my kid brother

Sarah L. Hill

Summer Visitors

like little packets the news arrived
sadness gathered within
the piles of dead as though their
noses dipped in envelopes of flour
before falling from the stalactite ceilings

an unraveling of a natural order
but not enough to raise a loud alarm
 it would seem
gentle leather wings matter little
outside late October when it is ripe to speak of fear
and the unknown—which often are the same

death evokes memories
of the first meeting—a summer years past
a nightly visit by a flitting shadow in the eaves
of something I had yet to learn the name of
or how it found its way into the star-splashed night
I imagined its days sleeping in the attic wardrobe,
wings folded like a fancy handkerchief
above the breast pocket of an old woolen suit

Every warm evening the flutter of wings, like a familiar face,
I welcome by water, field, or garden edge. Since
the dire news, the expanding spread

of reports of the same, fewer winged shadows emerge
from the increasing darkness

their existence still evokes
utterances of fear and long-held myths from some
but each one I see is like greeting my old acquaintance, knowing
life continues on each year another chance at survival
each season a renewal of hope

Blake Campbell

Easy Prey

Here, in the ebbing wind,
a fish crow spreads an ebony wing
over the creek, still glittering
in the ebbing light, thinned
as through window slats
in its passage
through the leaves of the birches
and the leathery webbing of bats
gathering at close of day
high above the rocks upstream
where a lone mink searches
for easy prey.

Zachary Bos

Transmogrified

In early morning, beating dawn, I went
upstairs to retrieve the bucket under
the leak in our old Victorian roof.

In the dark I perceived a darker shape
suspended weightless in the cold water:

A torn brown leaf, borne through the shingle gap
on a streamlet of infiltrating rain...

No; not a leaf but a drowned mouse-eared bat,
formal in its rigor. It must have slipped

when trying to drink. I recalled, or thought

I recalled, a thin noise the night before,

a high-pitched panicked sound I ignored. No
afterlife for you, small friend. Just an end.

No haunting but this paper monument.

Priest Gooding

Myotis

for humankind, the Mouse-eared,
withering tYpe has been
knOwn by a
wild and gurgled ediT of words and dreams
(see: dublln, the dead),
Boyhood glandS (heaven on a
Molecular plain)
and bY vampire diadems
frOm hell. a failing i say.
lisTed by
merrlam word
groupS, their
Main nature and,
'aY, innate spirit, is
an eden amOng darkness. where we
walk wild feeT upon hope, we reach
a love growIng toward peace. they are not
unholy cladeS; they are a moonlight melody.

Katie Phillips

The Bat

I pressed the end
of the dig bar against
the bat wedged
in the eaves, gave
a quick shove to break
his neck, a nudge
to unhook him.
I shuffled him between
my leather gloves. No
blood. He was the sum
of his parts: brown mouse
fur, the width of one finger
between pointed ears,
wings skin-thin, bones
like curtain rods, claw
at the top a fang to hang
from. I pried his mouth
open, peered in like a dentist
at the rows of tiny teeth,
the bug-loving grin.

Jennifer Martelli

Northern Long-Eared Bats on the Pipeline Route

Piled like odd left-hand gloves, the bats
sleep high in their caves on the boreal line: above the waxy
junipers, the yew trees, the pines. Their suede ears,
more subtle than ours, pick up the soft
stirring of the snakes knotted deep down in their hibernaculum
thawing, well past St. Brigid's Day. In their bat-dreams,
the snakes' hisses become a stream of gold milk from a warm
teat,
tear of a defensive wound, a long leak serrating the air.

Contributors

Diana **ADAMS** is an Alberta writer with work published in *Fence*, *Boston Review*, *Drunken Boat*, *Fogged Clarity*, *The Laurel Review*, *Perihelion*, *Bayou*, *Spire*, and *Best American Experimental Poetry 2016*. Her books include the *Lights on the Way Out* and *To The River*. // Zachary **BOS** edits *New England Review of Books*. // Blake **CAMPBELL** lives in Boston and works as an editor. At Emerson College, he received the Alike Perroti and Seth Frank Award from the Academy of American Poets. His work has appeared on poets.org, *The Emerson Review*, and *The Road Not Taken*. // Sarah **DEWEERDT** is a poet and science journalist. Her writing has appeared in *Anthropocene*, *Nautilus*, *Nature*, *Newsweek*, *Spectrum*, *Cascadia Rising Review*, and in the anthology *For Love of Orcas*. She lives in Seattle. // Priest **GOODING** is a writer, composer and tea-drinker; his nonfiction has been featured in the journal *Hoochie*. // Sarah L. **HILL** is originally from New Hampshire and currently calls Arlington, Massachusetts home. Her work has appeared in *Oddball Magazine* and *Jellyfish Whispers*. // Jennifer **MARTELLI** is the author of *My Tarantella* (Bordighera Press) and *After Bird* (Grey Book Press). Her work has appeared in journals including *The Sycamore Review*, *Sugar House*, *Superstition Review*, *Thrush*, *Tinderbox*, and *Green Mountains Review*. She has been nominated for Pushcart and Best of the Net Prizes, and is the recipient of the Massachusetts Cultural Council Grant in Poetry. She is poetry editor for *The Mom Egg Review*. //

Robert **MURPHY** is a poet living and working on opposite ends of the MBTA Red Line. For two years, he was a pro wrestling columnist for the website Couch Guy Sports. Online at Twitter @RobertJMurph, and at robertjmurphy.com. // Katie **PHILLIPS** has worked as a hotel housekeeper, a laundromat attendant, a telemarketer, a library clerk, and a church administrator. She lives in southern Illinois with her husband and their dog. Her work has been published by *Sow's Ear Poetry Review*, *Pittsburgh Poetry Review*, and *Cider Press Review*, among others. The title poem of her chapbook *Driving Montana, Alone* (Slapering Hol Press) was read by Garrison Keillor on NPR's *The Writers' Almanac*.



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About the editor: Cat **DOSSETT** is Chapbooks Editor of Pen & Anvil Press and author of two comics: *Laika*, on the first dog in space, and *Vessel*, a confessional tale of watching Adam Driver movies in the bathtub. Her art and writing can be found in, e.g., *Burn*, *New England Review of Books*, and *Sobotka Literary Magazine*, and on the cover of this chapbook. She is on Twitter, Medium and Instagram as @aboutadaughter.

CRITICAL PRAISE

(FOR BATS)

"LITTLE LUMPS THAT FLY IN AIR
AND HAVE VOICES INDEFINITE, WILOLY VINDICTIVE."

- D. H. LAWRENCE

"O WHAT A PITEOUS FACE APPEARS /
WHAT GREAT FINE THIN TRANSLUCENT EARS!"

- RUTH PITZER

"ITS WINGS / LIKE OARS; ROWING IN THE BLACKISH
CATARACTS / OF A WINTER PORCH." - NORMAN DUBIE

"MOUSE / THE SIZE OF MY THUMB IN ITS FURS
/ AND SEPIA WEBS OF SILK." - GILLIAN CLARKE



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