Poetry by Jim Blackburn
Art by Isabelle Scurry Chapman

Poem Blue Grosbeak

On Galveston Island
In a field of flowers
Next to an oak motte.

The small group of birds
Hop across the sandy soil,
Looking for seeds,
The blue of their feathers
Fitting into the mosaic
Of green and pink and orange flowers
On a bright spring day
On the Texas coast.

This small band of grosbeaks
Is part of the river of birds -
A river that flows each spring,
Carrying immigrants from south
To north and back again,
A river formed by repeated habits,
A river based on the will to survive,
A river that is not known
To many of my kind.

My place is the Texas coast -
A place within the banks of this river,
Making me a part of the river
That flows the energy of life
Being lived through me,
And finds an eddy
In the deepest chambers
Of my soul,

Filling me with connection –
With purpose – with contentment.

THE SPIRIT OF SWEET WATER

GARLAND

THE SPIRIT OF SWEETWATER

GARLAND

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Blackburnian Warbler

In a hedgerow on the West End
Of Galveston Island in the spring.

The small black and orange warbler moves to and fro
Amongst the thorny bushes and small shrubs,
A bird that carries my family name,
A bird I see only during migration after it has flown
Across the Gulf or up the coast from Veracruz
Having made it through the trials of another year
In the era of our changing climate.

I am proprietary about this beautiful, vulnerable bird.
I look for hope and help for its future
And find the brightest light coming from
The least expected source – praise be -
For Pope Francis has thrown down the gauntlet
And issued the encyclical *Laudato Si'*,
A challenge to my species
To be respectful of nature, of climate,
Warning that we can and do harm others by our acts,
Informing us that we have duties and responsibilities
To the poor and other living things.

The fallen Baptist in me wishes for this leadership
In other denominations, in other faith ministries,
Wishing that stewardship and Earth-care could become one
With concepts of self, of right and wrong and of success.

The Blackburnian warbler in me sings
“Laudato Si’, Pope Frances”,
Praise be to you, Holy Man,
For being that which a spiritual leader should be,
A spokesman for the Earth that is my church,
A purveyor of hope for many more encounters
With my own special warbler
On the West End of Galveston Island in the spring.