WE ARE NOT SEPARATE
FROM EACH other.
THE SOULS ARE
ONE.
WE ARE ONE.
AND THE GROUND
OF GOD
IS EVERYTHING.
EVERYTHING
IS THE KHART.
HABITAT.
WE ARE
PART OF
EARTH.
EVERYTHING
BELONGS TO
US.

Poetry by Jim Blackburn
Art by Isabelle Scurry Chapman
The Prothonotary Warbler

Sitting at home thinking about
Lake Charlotte just north of I-10
In the Trinity delta.

My father called it a swamp canary,
The little yellow bird
That would accompany us as we paddled
Back into the cypress swamp,
Looking for fish, watching for snakes,
Passing the day together,
Forming impressions lasting a lifetime -
Impressions that guide me today
As I seek to balance ecology and life,
Jobs and growth.

The Great Depression struck my parents
When they were children,
Hitting them like an anvil -
Hard, direct, meaningfully.
They never forgot those times -
Of being caught by forces
Beyond their control,
The fear of no work,
The demise of an economy.

Much later, we debated the spotted owl,
My mother concerned.
Was I more for the owls than for jobs?
Wanting to reassure them,
Seeking scenarios for win/win,
Hoping the combatants would be facile
Enough to find their way.

Today I carry that two-edged sword,
An economy with meaning and
Jobs that protect that which is needed
For life on the planet,
Principles for meeting human needs,
Principles that include
Protecting the Cypress Swamp
Where I can still see the swamp canary
As I paddle my kayak
Deep in the Texas Bottomlands.