



Black Skimmer 3

Sailing down the Texas coast
Young and easy and without care,
Inhaling it into every cell of my body,
Encountering a feeling strong and rare.

The sun hung low in the June sky,
Behind the water sending a sheen,
Our boat moored off the Intracoastal,
The water calm, reflective, green.

The skimmers came from over the marsh grass,
Seemingly loping rather than flying,
Glued to each other, closely knit
Dropping to the water without even trying.

We watched as their beaks spread apart,
Orange mandibles puncturing the water's surface,
Liquid flowing across like a waterfall,
Two lines left behind as proof of purpose.

The black and white bodies both reflected
The purple light that glowed
Across the emerald green marsh grass
And it all changed when the wind slowed.

The herons and egrets rose to depart
To their rookery homes nearby
While the blue-tipped tail of the redfish
Showed for a second but was shy.

The sun waned and then disappeared

Calling out the mosquitoes to play,
Ending the day that was the beginning
Of my love affair with our coastal way.

Black Skimmer 2

On the edge of a sand and shell island
In Mesquite Bay near the Intracoastal Waterway.

The water hyacinth floats by, riding the tide
Deep within the San Antonio Bay system,
Proof that the flood on the Guadalupe
Has moved toward Cedar Bayou and the Gulf,
Fresh water that fuels estuarine productivity,
Fresh water needed for bay life and function,
Fresh water recently abundant on the coast,
Causing shrimp, mullet, menhaden, crabs
And baby reds to come to life -
Life not recently abundant due to water starvation -
Starvation caused by Texans sucking too much
Of the river's water without thought, without care.

The skimmer pair watch from the sand nest
On the little island barely above water level,
A nest barely scooped out to shelter the eggs,
The eyes behind the neon orange bills
Following my every move as I wade nearby,
Skimmers that rely on a vibrant fishery
To meet their daily needs,
Skimmers whose livelihoods depends
On stewards of the water flows
As do the whooping cranes and other
Members of the fish and crab-eating community,

An important community of life here on the coast,
A community that reflects an economy
Built on inflows that nurture the bay,
Inflows that move on to the Gulf to
Evaporate and return as rain,
Rain that is liquid gold that funds
The human and natural economy,
Returning water to the bay,
Water that is one of the key natural cycles,
Water that is essential to all living things,
Water that needs proper valuation and protection,
Water – coming into my brain crystal clear
Wading near the skimmer's home
On a beautiful June day on the bay.