

Brenda Saunders

BIRDING

I have been obsessed with birds for years: going out, recorder in hand, to catch them calling in the wild. But now a scrub wren has found a way to nest inside my head. All day she scratches, flutters her feathers. Pressed tight, her heart beats fast. Magnified it pulses on and on in constant alarm. Her sharp peeps keep me on high alert, drill an ache inside my brain. On and on, she calls the same shrill discordant note. I fear her chicanery. Is she calling for a mate to fill my head, her inner nest with progeny? When will it stop? Will she ever sleep? I have already lost the pace. My inner clock is out of sync, my balance tips in disarray. At night she sits behind my ear, chirps down tunnels, shuffles wings against the drum. I am sure she has grown. Packed in, she blocks all conversation. When I answer I'm misunderstood. I try to explain but the situation is diabolical. Others think I am mad, I see it now. Only in exhausted sleep do I find relief. I dream of escape, digging in dark places. Searching for silence, a kind of peace.