

TAKE HEART

A Conversation in Poetry

*Edited & Introduced by Wesley McNair,
Maine Poet Laureate*

Appleton's Ellen Taylor is a poet and a professor at the University of Maine, Augusta. This week she offers two poems in different moods about birds — one wild and the other domestic.

Hummingbird

A hummingbird's heart
beats 250 times per minute
when resting
and 1200 times while feeding.
A surprise can trigger
cardiac arrest,
as his tiny heart
cannot withstand
further stress.

I mourn
the ruby-throated juvenile
anxiously feeding in the phlox
this still September morning.
His whirring startled me
while I knelt to deadhead pansies —
I swatted at the sound,
and he fell.

Hen

How does she do it, create such perfect
spheres within her feathered body? Every
twenty-four hours she leaves us, still warm,
an umber shell, inside it a yolk, ochre
and richer than butter, nested in white clear
as rainwater. She coos and clucks with content.

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