The Catch

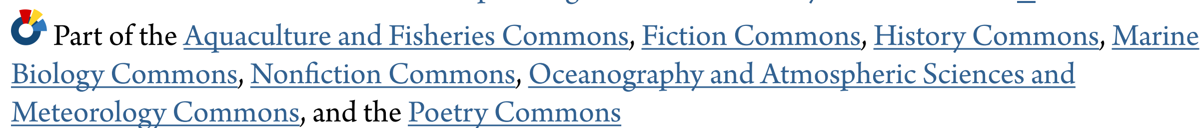
Volume 5 Article 2

6-14-2017

Editor's Note

Leonore Hildebrandt
University of Maine

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/the_catch


Part of the Aquaculture and Fisheries Commons, Fiction Commons, History Commons, Marine Biology Commons, Nonfiction Commons, Oceanography and Atmospheric Sciences and Meteorology Commons, and the Poetry Commons

Recommended Citation
Hildebrandt, Leonore (2017) "Editor's Note," *The Catch*: Vol. 5 , Article 2.
Available at: https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/the_catch/vol5/iss1/2

This Editor's Note is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UMaine. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Catch by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UMaine. For more information, please contact um.library.technical.services@maine.edu.

The Catch features writings inspired by the fisheries and coastal heritage of Downeast Maine, and in this issue in particular, these two themes are tightly interwoven—the people who have made their homes near the coast have acquired traditions which enable them to care for fisheries and to protect wildlife. But our needs also put pressure on the fragile web of life, and our inherited knowledge is not offering ready-made ideas of how to relate to a changing natural world.

In her poem "Tide of the Darkest Night," Sharon Bray powerfully captures the tension between the natural force of the tide and man-made floods. One may understand the darkness as belonging to the season, but also as a dangerous time in which "lost toys and tires / drift in with the new year." The poem finally understates this danger when it concludes that the increasingly powerful tide "rearranges bricks and boulders." Rob Rich seems to share the sense that the foundations are being "rearranged." In his essay, "Rainbow Smelt CPR," he looks at the smelt fishery, wondering whether "people overuse, and ultimately degrade, the natural resources they hold in common." His writing is wonderfully rich as it evokes Downeast landscapes, the fish, and the smelt fishery, and in the end we have to agree with him that here "people depend on each other," that neighbors and their places may engender local stewardship, and that a smelt fishery helps us protect the smelt.

Knowledge of the natural life, routed in a community's attention, is crucial for protecting both wildlife and a resource-based way of life. Leslie Moore's "After the Splash," Ron Beard's "Homecoming," and Judy Kaber's "Cormorant" all comment on the speaker's relationship to birds and fish. While these poets observe carefully, they are humble, and they don't overestimate their knowledge. The bald eagle "doesn't need me," says Moore. Beard's osprey "knows" fish routes, and "salmon, too, perform some alchemy, / to return to their spawning river." However, they are not unlike the speaker finding the "landscape of my familiars" as he journeys north. Kaber's cormorant "chooses" to swoop down, to "ride the pulsing rush of waves low / to the water, throb of drops against webbed feet." The animals, here, are depicted as sure of their inherent elegance, their power. And in "Churn and Break," the ocean, too, is evoked by a language both muscular and musical, when the "hard fists of white sea" are surging.

In "Awakening," Angela Waldron evokes the past in a memoir of lobstering as a teenager. Here, too, we see how intimately people, land, and sea connect. To give names to features of one's home signals the beginning of this lasting relationship. The place names Waldron so aptly includes speak volumes: "Whitehead," "Two Bush Islands," "Spruce Head Harbor," "Home Harbor," "Mussel Ridges," "Owls Head Light," and the "Rockland Breakwater." These names help orient us both in the story and on our coastal landscape. Similarly, the naming of places in Naphtali Field's hard-scrabble "Nightlight" creates a sense of neighborhood with its "Senior Center" and "Sipps Bay Cafe." And in Conrad's "Little White House," neighborly feelings span all the way across a bay. Avery Booth Stone's tribute to "The Mackerel Fishermen" concludes this issue of *The Catch.* We are reminded, the sailors depend on one another in the face of a storm, strangers may bury the dead. Finally, "All is quiet / The Island cemeteries / are soft beds for sailors / of the Great Mackerel Fleet." The sailors and their past struggles shape our traditions, our heritage. It is up to us to protect it.