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## Homecoming

Ron Beard

*University of Maine, Emeritus Professor of Extension*

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## Homecoming

The osprey knows.  
Sitting ready in the snag of a pine,  
waiting for the return of the herring  
from far out to sea, waiting for their blue backs  
to sparkle and splash  
in the mouth of the stream, pushing  
up and through the tumbling standing wave of fresh  
mixing with salt, up and over the ledge in fast current  
driving through to the first pool.

The osprey knows the herring must return to the same stream  
they left as fingerlings. Before  
the compass, before we scratched  
ink on vellum, the herring used what--  
whiff of elements, tang of particles, magnetic pull,  
magic-- to call them home?

Not just the river herring,  
salmon, too, perform some alchemy,  
to return to their spawning river,  
generations fighting past harbor seals,  
past the nets of fishermen, up stream  
to lay eggs, release milky sperm.

I pass under osprey-eyed guards, beyond the jaws  
of sniffer dogs, poked and padded, x-rayed,  
jammed in too-small seats,  
a long night of flight, blinking  
in morning light before the journey north,  
something calling  
from the granite past of these heathered hills,  
some scent from wind-twisted pine  
marking the landscape of my familiars.