

MISSING A FOOT

Indomitable, persevering, amazing, I thought,
watching a female Redwing with only one foot
struggling in the wind to keep her balance
on top of a fence-post beside a small marsh.
Daily I park there to run the dog in the nearby meadow
regularly sprinkling birdseed on top fence-posts
bringing Red-winged Blackbirds up close
to admire their familiar color and behavior.
But a bird with only one foot?! To cling to
cattail stalks, to forage, to crouch beneath
a mate, to all by herself... build a nest?!
I couldn't have imagined the possibility
until I saw her up close, dexterously balancing
on her one good foot despite the tearing wind,
the bird's spirit relentlessly compelling it onwards.
The next day, in mid-afternoon, a really hot and windy day,
when I stopped the car to let the dog go to the pond
to drink, my one-footed friend came flying up out
of the cattails and over to where I stood
but, alas, I hadn't brought any birdseed...
she crouched down on a nearby post in the fierce wind
then flew up to challenge a second female
the two of them dueling overhead then flying down
to perch on cattails where they continued to bicker
despite my dog swimming nearby... I thought:
"I love you! I love your spirit!" But, in retrospect,
the wonder is perhaps less in the adaptability
of the bird than in my joyful response.

- *Robert Nero*