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The Birdwatcher

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The Birdwatcher · *Jeffrey Greene*

I couldn't begin to tell
my stepfather what he has missed.
That would take every minute of my time.

What he has missed has nothing
to do with what has become of us.
That is of no consequence now.

In the pose of the bittern
there's a balance of forces.
It points its bill straight up
into the face of gravity.
One eye looks toward the wetlands.
One eye is planted on me.
It's as if presence
is the work of a simple brain,
a double exposure.

My stepfather believed
that we might describe the bittern,
distinguish it, making words
a part of seeing
and, of course, they are
when balanced with affection.

How else could we talk
about the world to ourselves?
What else could sadden us more
than to be severed from the affections
of our own voices?

I can still see him
at dawn on the deck of the cottage,
the birdwatcher, the whole man I mean.