

A Wing and a Prayer

By Beth Ann Fennelly

We thought the birds were singing louder. We were almost certain they were. We spoke of this, when we spoke, if we spoke, on our zoom screens or in the backyard with our podfolk. Dang, you hear those birds? Don't they sound loud? We shouted to the neighbor, and from behind her mask she agreed. The birds are louder this spring. This summer. I've never heard such loud birds. Listen to 'em sing. But the birds aren't singing louder. In fact, the opposite. Ornithologists have recorded lowered decibel levels of bird song. In the absence of noise pollution—our planes overhead, our cars rushing past with their motors and horns, our bars leaking music onto the street corners—the birds don't need to shout. So why are we hearing birdsong now, when it is quieter? Because we need it more. Poetry in the pandemic: birdsong that was there all along.

Source: *Poetry* (July 2021)