

# AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, THE POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES

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## **American Life in Poetry: Column 017**

BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE

Nearly all of us spend too much of our lives thinking about what has happened, or worrying about what's coming next. Very little can be done about the past and worry is a waste of time. Here the Kentucky poet Wendell Berry gives himself over to nature.

### **The Peace of Wild Things**

When despair for the world grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,  
I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.  
I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.  
And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting with their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

Reprinted from "Collected Works" (North Point Press, 1985) by permission of the author. Wendell Berry's most recent book is "Given: Poems" (Shoemaker and Hoard, 2005). This weekly column is supported by The Poetry Foundation, The Library of Congress and the Department of English at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

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