

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES, 2004-2006
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BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE, 2004-2006

I've never seen a frigate bird (or a frigate) but wanted to offer you a poem to prove that the hawks and crows of the Great Plains aren't the only ones that get attention in this column. Sally Bliumis-Dunn's poem comes from her chapbook, *Galapagos Poems*, from Kattywompus Press. She lives in Armonk, New York, where there are frigates, but no frigate birds, or so I've heard.

Startled

Massive and black
the frigate birds,
on brambles in the distance.

Their bright red gular sacs,
full as spinnaker sails
billow from their feathers,

like giant hearts of skin and air.

They remind us of our own

hearts, oversized and awkward,
quivering in the lightest wind.

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