

Springtime

*First black on black, the starling,
Crazed marauder, no one's darling.*

*Then red on black, the retching voice
Of the swamp's redwing, no one's choice.*

*Now black on red, with noble crest,
The cardinal in color blest.*

*The redstart comes; he's black until
His brilliant takeoff when our hearts stand still.*

*The jay comes—blue, buff, depends on how you look,
Sees all, tells all, steals all, our sky-blue crook.*

*They're coming, the burning tanager,
The shy, swift, intermittent hummingbird,*

*All hues and shades and tints and mixtures,
All songs, unchanging, each year's pictures,*

*New but old, spend all in one season,
Yet ever coming home, by some eternal reason.*

*And now I see white, even white on white,
The ice, the snow, of a day ago,
Moving slowly, white clouds against white clouds,
Sunshine Mother and Father of all colors,
You blind me so that I now can see. O beautiful, I see.
Though I move slowly, I come. Will you wait for me?*

—William F. Rickenbacker (1928-1995)