

# TAKE HEART

## A Conversation in Poetry

*Edited & Introduced by Wesley McNair,  
Maine Poet Laureate*

Betsy Sholl, a resident of Portland, is the former Maine poet laureate. You might guess that the gulls of her poem come from the outskirts of her city, but you'd be wrong. Betsy explains that she spotted these "bad boys" near her in-laws' condo in Florida, where she "decided to sit on the beach for a little while and watch."

### Gulls In Wind

*by Betsy Sholl*

Bedraggled feathers like bonnets  
that would fly off if they weren't strapped,  
kazoo-voiced, a chorus of crying dolphins  
or rusty sirens a speck of dust could set off—  
these raucous gleaners milling around

pick up and discard, now a Q-tip,  
now a shred of lettuce or cellophane,  
a cigarette butt one holds a second  
as if he really might smoke. One drags  
an old condom, one spots a good crumb

and walk-runs, squawks everyone else away.  
But it's just a dried scrap of weed he'll toss back,  
grist for the next fool's expectation.  
Still, a loud alpha catches wind,  
scoots over to check it out. Shove off,

he screeches, this is my no-good, barren,  
motel-infested spit of sand—on which  
he neither toils nor spins, but grubs all day  
on webbed feet and clever back-hinged knees,  
now skittishly sidestepping a gusty

piece of plastic blown against his legs,  
hopping to get it off, now shaking it  
once or twice to make sure it's worthless  
before he turns his face to the wind,  
letting it smooth his fine fractious feathers.

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