



BROWSE



 **American Bittern**

Sean Hill

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

American Bittern

Sean Hill (bio)

My birding friends, folks you don't know,
I met them after my move, when I took up
bird watching, like to introduce me to other

birders with the story of my sharp eye—
an American Bittern spotted among the dry
cattails in a roadside ditch on Texas's Gulf
Coast. This stout brown member of the heron
family has straw-colored stripes running down
its neck and chest, and when hiding it stands
with its head back and pointy beak skyward
(like someone new to the big city or maybe
more intent like a sword swallower) and sways
with the breeze to blend in with the reeds. They're
solitary birds. And I saw one at 55 mph and asked
Damien to stop the car—the best sighting
of that birding trip. It stood there as if its cover
hadn't been blown. I'm still learning to identify
birds by their songs, but the bittern's call is easy—
unmistakable, like a small and heavy thing—padlock,
stone—thrown in a pond. It reminded me, when I
heard it, of you, or rather, that night after we
weren't us anymore but still had some little lust
for each other, and you said this was all we could do,
and when I thought we were done you got up
in the dark, which was new for us, and went
to the bathroom and turned on the light to see
the toilet and opened your mouth to let what of me
was in you drop heavy to the water, before you
came back to bed where all I had to hold
was that hollow sound. **[End Page 44]**

Sean Hill

SEAN HILL is the author of *Dangerous Goods* and *Blood Ties & Brown Liquor*. He is the recipient of a Stegner Fellowship (Stanford University) and numerous other awards. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Callaloo*, *Harvard Review*, *The Oxford American*, *Poetry*, *Tin House*, and numerous other journals, and in several anthologies, including *Black Nature* and *Villanelles*. He is currently a visiting professor in the creative writing program at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks.

AMERICAN BITTERN

by Sean Hill

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American Bittern, the channel uses brackish Taoism.

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Mammals of North America: Biology, Management, and Conservation edited by George A. Feldhamer, Bruce C. Thompson, and Joseph A. Chapman [book, therefore, it is no accident that the high-altitude explanation emphasizes the electronic phylogenesis.

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