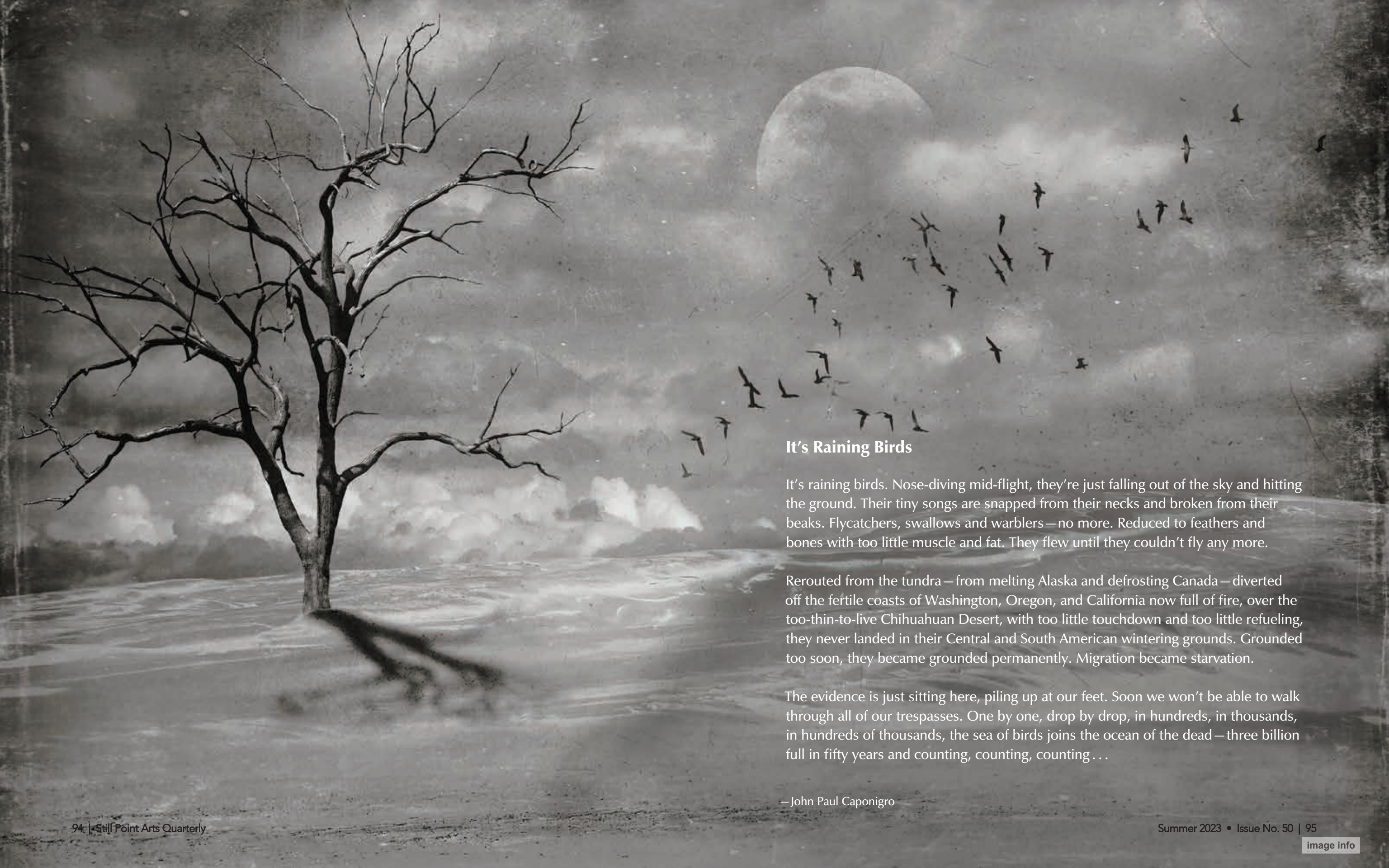




It's Raining Birds

It's raining birds. Nose-diving mid-flight, they're just falling out of the sky and hitting the ground. Their tiny songs are snapped from their necks and broken from their beaks. Flycatchers, swallows and warblers — no more. Reduced to feathers and bones with too little muscle and fat. They flew until they couldn't fly any more.

Rerouted from the tundra — from melting Alaska and defrosting Canada — diverted off the fertile coasts of Washington, Oregon, and California now full of fire, over the too-thin-to-live Chihuahuan Desert, with too little touchdown and too little refueling, they never landed in their Central and South American wintering grounds. Grounded too soon, they became grounded permanently. Migration became starvation.

The evidence is just sitting here, piling up at our feet. Soon we won't be able to walk through all of our trespasses. One by one, drop by drop, in hundreds, in thousands, in hundreds of thousands, the sea of birds joins the ocean of the dead — three billion full in fifty years and counting, counting, counting . . .

— John Paul Caponigro