

*Writing the Land: Wanderings II*  
Edited by Lis McLoughlin

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# Writing the Land: Wanderings II

Edited by Lis McLoughlin  
Foreword by Gyorgyi Voros

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Northfield, MA

**Forword: Humans are Part of Nature**

Given the daily devastations to ecosystems, species, and habitats, a reader might understandably expect today's nature poetry to be litanies of lamentations. Now, when nature is undergoing changes unprecedented in human history, the ensuing alarm must surely play a part in our cultural productions. And that alarm is one of the traits that differentiates an older style of nature poetry from today's ecopoetry, as represented by many of the works in *Writing the Land: Wanderings II*: while the former romanticized nature as the locus of solace and rejuvenation, unchangeable by the humans it was designed to supply and serve, the latter honors nature's intrinsic value, while acknowledging the mortal threats to which all its beings are prone.

The poets herein show great sophistication in their understanding of such threats; nevertheless, it is primarily their joy, their reveling in beauty even in the most damaged landscapes, and their championing of successes large and small that resonates the most in this volume. Often, the poems name the degradations, potential and realized, threatening the Land Trust holdings described herein, which range across the U.S. from west to east coasts: these poems demonstrate nature's resilience and ability to heal; they rejoice in the return of exiled creatures to their former homes; they dramatize the physical, psychological and spiritual cleansing that repaired lands bring about.

Among the delights of this anthology is the inventories of biological species, geological formations, and aquatic features that characterize the landscapes. The writers do not stint on naming what threatens those features: climate change, "greed fever," invasive species. Another way of honoring place is to remind the reader of the ways in which our very bodies respond to the sensory pleasures offered by the natural world in contrast to the virtual worlds that increasingly hold our attention captive and dull our senses. Cynthia Bernard's wonderful "Deer Creek Falls," protected by the Western Rivers Conservancy, describes the falls in aural terms that bring us back to the awareness that nature is not just something to look at but generates its own music. Marie Fuhrman, in "Cold Water Refugia," highlights the sensation of bitter cold on the South Fork of the Salmon River, repeating the word "cold" no fewer than 32 times. Brrrrr! That poem's final two stanzas turn to a summer

when the river was too warm, too shallow, "the summer of no/Salmon." How desirable that bone-cracking cold becomes for the sake of "a future we can change"! The poets in this volume, in other words, create in their poems the physicality and sensuality of worlds too often thrust aside for cyberspace and the screen.

Land Trust lands are often lands marked by human habitation, timbering, agriculture, and industry whose owners wish to conserve a property's natural resources, or historical or cultural value (and get a tax break!). The lands that generate the works in this volume range from largely intact ecosystems to ones heavily damaged by industrial pollution. Thus, the Western Rivers Conservancy acquires lands fronting relatively pristine rivers. By contrast, Petty's Island Preserve of the NJ Land Trust, a 500 acre island off the shoreline of Camden, NJ, has undergone many transformations since it was the Lenape nation's hunting and fishing grounds. Petty's Island Preserve is a good example of the nature poetry of our time: rather than lauding the "wild" as something untouched by human hands, the poem honoring it acknowledges humans as integral parts of the land.

Other poems, too, incorporate human histories on and in the land: histories personal, communal, and cultural. "At the Camas Patch, After Reading Li Po" by Carolyn Maddox invokes the ancient poet in a paean to what is described as a "pocketbook preserve" of 8.7 acres. Held by the Friends of the Columbia River Gorge, that gem of protected space shows that even small bits of preserved land harbor significant species and vistas that replenish mind and body. As a bonus, close, reverent attention to it links us to an 8th century poet of the Tang Dynasty who was moved, as we are, by the natural world.

This volume, then, takes the reader on a long cross-country journey by way of image and word to places whose care and protection give us hope, demonstrate that beauty is all around us, and, above all, remind us that, as JuPong Lin writes in "In Search of Cedar," that "after many years of dwelling *on*" we can still learn "to dwell *with* this land."

—Gyorgyi Voros  
Roanoke, Virginia  
March 2024

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**WRITING THE LAND: WANDERINGS II**  
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# FRIENDS OF THE COLUMBIA GORGE



Washington

Ensuring the Gorge remains a vibrant, living place—wondrous, wild, and open to all—is at the core of what we do.

Friends of the Columbia Gorge works to protect, preserve, and steward the Columbia Gorge. We led the fight to create the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area over 40 years ago. And we've been working ever since to safeguard the Gorge and ensure the natural wonders found today will be preserved for generations to come.

We are the only conservation organization entirely dedicated to safeguarding the Gorge's scenic, natural, cultural, and recreational resources. For over four decades, we have successfully advocated to protect the Gorge from irresponsible development, purchased scenic and sensitive lands for long-term preservation, and worked with community partners to foster a larger culture of Gorge stewardship by connecting thousands of students and volunteers to the Gorge's wonders.

-Heartleaf Bluffs

-Poets: Jim Cantú and Claudia Castro Luna

-Mosier Plateau

-Poet: Kristin Berger

-Lyle Cherry Orchard

-Poet: Jim Cantú

-Mt. Ulka

-Poet: Ching-In Chen

-Camus Patch

-Poet: Carolyn Maddux

### Friends of the Columbia Gorge

Since 1980, Friends of the Columbia Gorge has worked to protect, preserve, and steward the Columbia Gorge for future generations. For more than four decades, we've successfully advocated to protect the Gorge from irresponsible development, purchased scenic and sensitive lands for long-term preservation, and worked with community partners to foster stewardship by connecting thousands of students and volunteers to the Gorge's wonders.

We have defeated numerous inappropriate large-scale development proposals, from destination resorts and new gravel pits to fossil fuel terminals and gas-fired power plants along the Columbia River; ended inappropriate uses and development through the closure of the Boardman coal-fired power plant and the removal of the century-old Condit Dam; strengthened state laws to protect the Gorge and its communities from irresponsible fossil fuel rail transport; won important legal victories to protect scenic and natural resources as well as the treaty rights of tribal partners; protected more than 1,600 acres of land through the efforts of our land trust, including two trail systems, a turtle rehabilitation site, and climate change adaptation strategies; stewarded sensitive lands and organized hundreds of work parties to remove invasive species and replant native vegetation; and supported the creation of two local nonprofit organizations (Klickitat Trail Conservancy and Cape Horn Conservancy) to steward two Gorge recreation sites.

The heart of our work is ensuring enforcement of laws protecting the Gorge. This included the 1986 passage and enactment of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act—our first major accomplishment and a landmark national conservation victory.

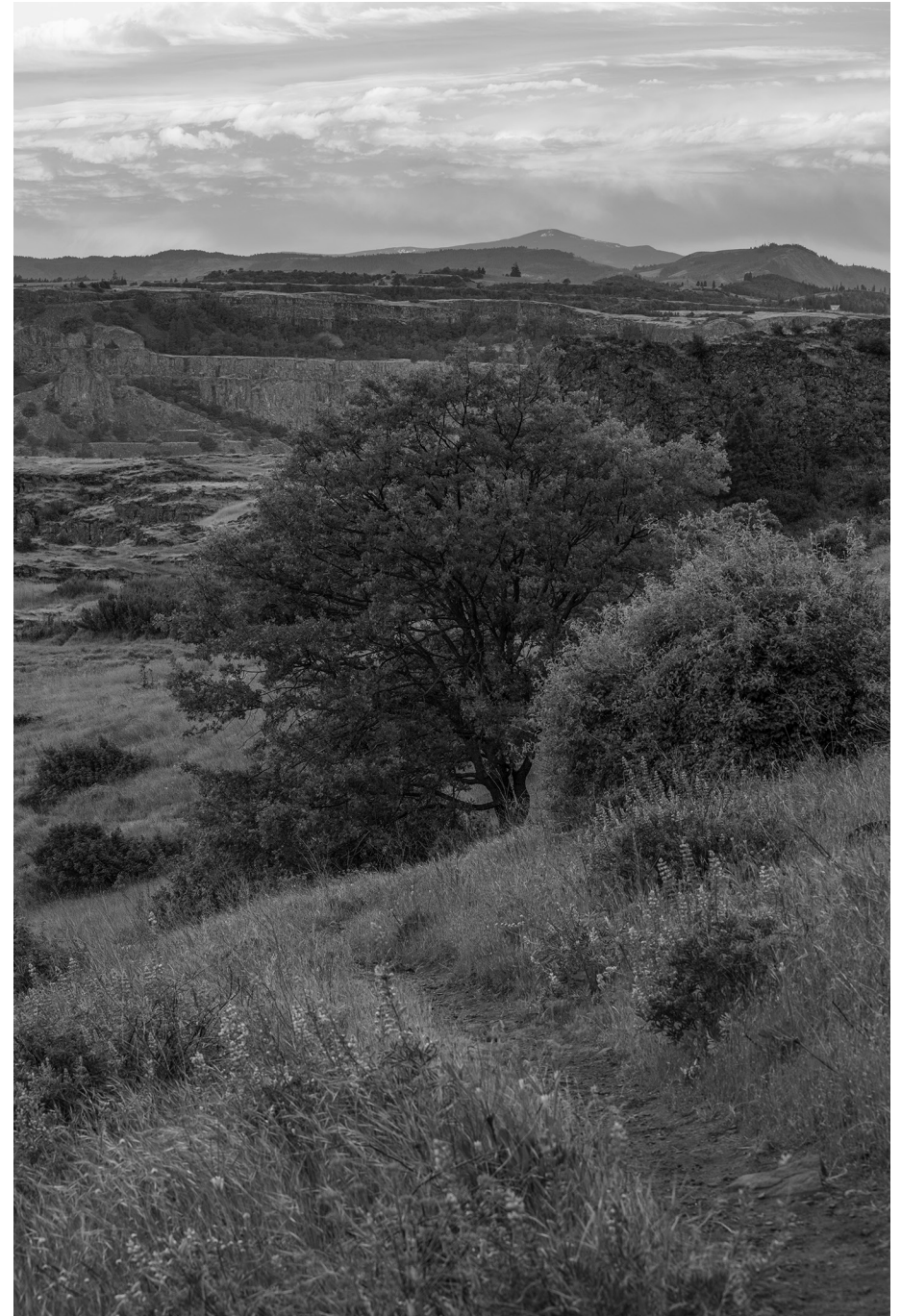


Photo: Lyle Cherry Orchard by Cate Hotchkiss

### Heartleaf Bluffs

Heartleaf Bluffs—a stunning 105-acre cliffside property just west of the Klickitat River near Lyle, Washington—is Friends of the Columbia Gorge’s newest preserve. Put on the market in June 2023, Friends acted quickly to secure a loan for the property before it was subdivided into multi-million-dollar homes. The property has extraordinarily stunning views of the eastern Columbia River Gorge and is recognized for its high climate resilience and its potential to provide a connection in our vision for Gorge Towns to Trails, an initiative to create a 200-mile trekking loop encircling both sides of the Gorge. Relatively undisturbed for the past century, Heartleaf Bluffs boasts two commanding scenic vistas that look across the Columbia to the Tom McCall Preserve, downriver to Mosier, and upriver to The Dalles. It’s also home to pristine stands of Oregon white oak and numerous plants (such as heartleaf buckwheat) and wildlife, including pileated woodpeckers.



All Heartleaf Bluffs Photos by Paloma Ayala

Heartleaf Bluffs, Lyle WA  
by Jim Cantú

Eastward bound on the “T”  
Half a dozen below 90  
Concrete ribbon shadows the mighty river  
Called Columbia by some,  
but the Yakama have said “Nch’i-Wána” for over 12,000 years.

Proud Ponderosa Pine,  
Heartleaf meadows,  
Bold bluffs that pray to the river below.

Deer dashing among white oaks.  
Rattlers resting in tall grass.  
And where isn’t the grass tall?

A lone cow  
Living her end of days  
Leaves piles of hidden surprises.

What brings you bliss?  
Sunny autumn day.  
Young couple dreaming of their great grandchildren,  
sharing this piece of nature’s breathtaking splendor.  
As eagle and hawk sail sky rivers.

Heartleaf Sonnet  
by Claudia Castro Luna

Would that time held still upon these bluffs  
where nothing appears out of place  
and everything, from oaks to pines, to birds  
are day and night, perfectly themselves.

Rocky-outcrops, spring camas, summer crickets  
western meadowlarks, red-tailed hawks, deer-ticks,  
arrowleaf balsamroot, and heartleaf buckwheat  
make home on these time-softened headlands.

Yet not all is as perfect as it appears  
greed fever, global warming, have altered things  
invasive grasses grow where wild ones thrived.

Avarice, haste, make us forget—often ourselves.

Still, these bluffs are now a land trust. So, slow down, stand  
in beauty and hear in the unfurling wind, earth's dreams.



# CAPTINA CONSERVANCY



**CAPTINA**  
**CONSERVANCY**

Ohio

Captina Conservancy's mission is to promote, preserve and protect the biodiversity, the natural beauty, and the environmental health of Captina Creek and other regional watersheds.

-Raven Rocks

-Poet: Susann Moeller



### Captina Conservancy

Founded in 2010 by a group of local citizens, Captina Conservancy has a short but rich history of conservation in an area that is sometimes best known for “coal, cows, and corn.” In 2009, state biologists performed a study that confirmed what many locals already knew: Captina Creek is one of the highest quality streams in Ohio. This study, and the recognition it brought to the creek, inspired volunteers to form Captina Conservancy to ensure the creek, and other area watersheds, maintain their health and natural beauty. With over 56 species of fish, as well as breeding populations of the endangered eastern hellbender salamander, this resilient creek is not just surviving but thriving, even as it wends its way through the heart of one of Ohio’s largest coal mines.

Captina Conservancy’s first project was a conservation easement of over 1,000 acres on land at Raven Rocks, the largest contiguous conservation easement in Ohio at the time. The project was a natural fit. The Raven Rocks Corporation had been formed in 1970 with the goal of protecting and preserving an utterly unique piece of land, crisscrossed with deep sandstone ravines whose cool, moist air welcomed evergreen hemlocks and silvery yellow birch trees unusual for eastern Ohio. Captina Conservancy was able to provide Raven Rocks with the permanent, perpetual protection the land needed.

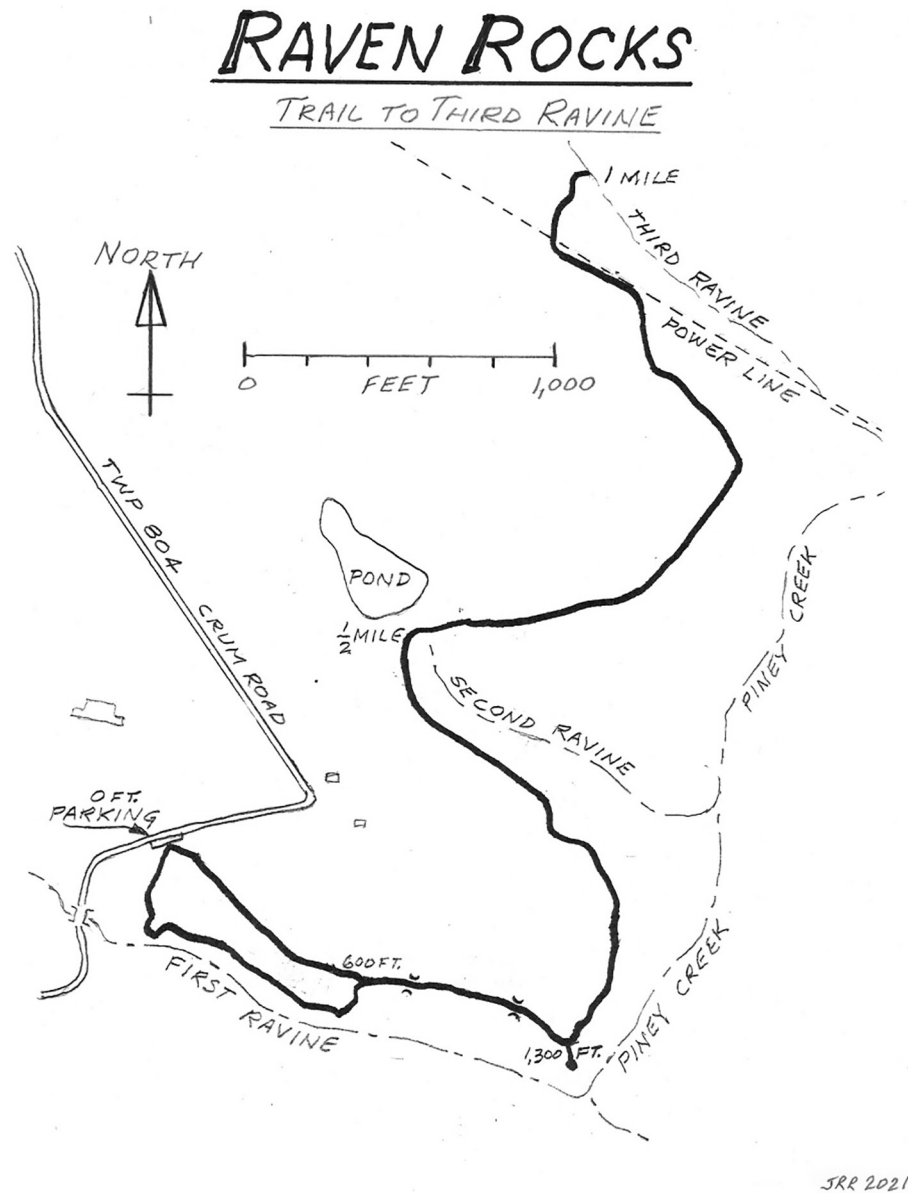
Raven Rocks today is a community of people dedicated to preserving and enhancing the natural and social environment where they live and sharing their knowledge and concern with the broader society. They are eleven official members plus family and friends that join in the efforts. Seven of the members live on the land at Raven Rocks. All of the present members share Quaker roots that have provided a common understanding from which they have moved forward to expand their efforts to meet contemporary challenges: from social justice to environmental causes, from war and peace to better farming practices.

The land they seek to protect has blossomed in fifty years under their care. Native tree species, wildflowers, shrubs and grasses have reclaimed former farm fields and pasture, and established sturdy buffers along the ravines’ edges, anchoring the sandstone ledges in place with ever-

deepening roots. Wildlife has flourished, with sightings of beaver, river otters, bobcats, black bear, foxes, deer, turkeys, ruffed grouse, woodcocks, bald eagles, darters, tree frogs, and more. The site today is a haven of green and a large, isolated spot unimpacted by the drilling for natural gas that lattices the rest of the county.

But in addition to benefiting the natural world, the conservation easement has cemented Raven Rocks’ legacy in the surrounding community. Open to the public since the late 1800s, when hoop skirted women and their suit-and-tie wearing beaux picnicked among the rocks and waterfalls, Raven Rocks ravines have become a place of refuge, romance, and cherished family memories for generations. The annual winter hike to view the ravines’ spectacular ice formations never fails to draw a crowd, often with parents and grandparents bringing their children to create new memories. But when the crowds have departed, others come for the peace and quiet that can be found most days in this remote spot—to draw a deep breath of hemlock-scented air, listen to the rush and rumble of the hidden waterfalls, watch the sparkle of sunlight through the leaves of the overhead trees, and be healed.





Find your own slice of peace here at Raven Rocks! Copies of the trail map and directions to Raven Rocks can also be found on our website: [www.captina.org](http://www.captina.org)

## Raven Rocks

*righting the land  
is to write the land  
to rewrite the land  
and rewrite the land  
until it has been righted*

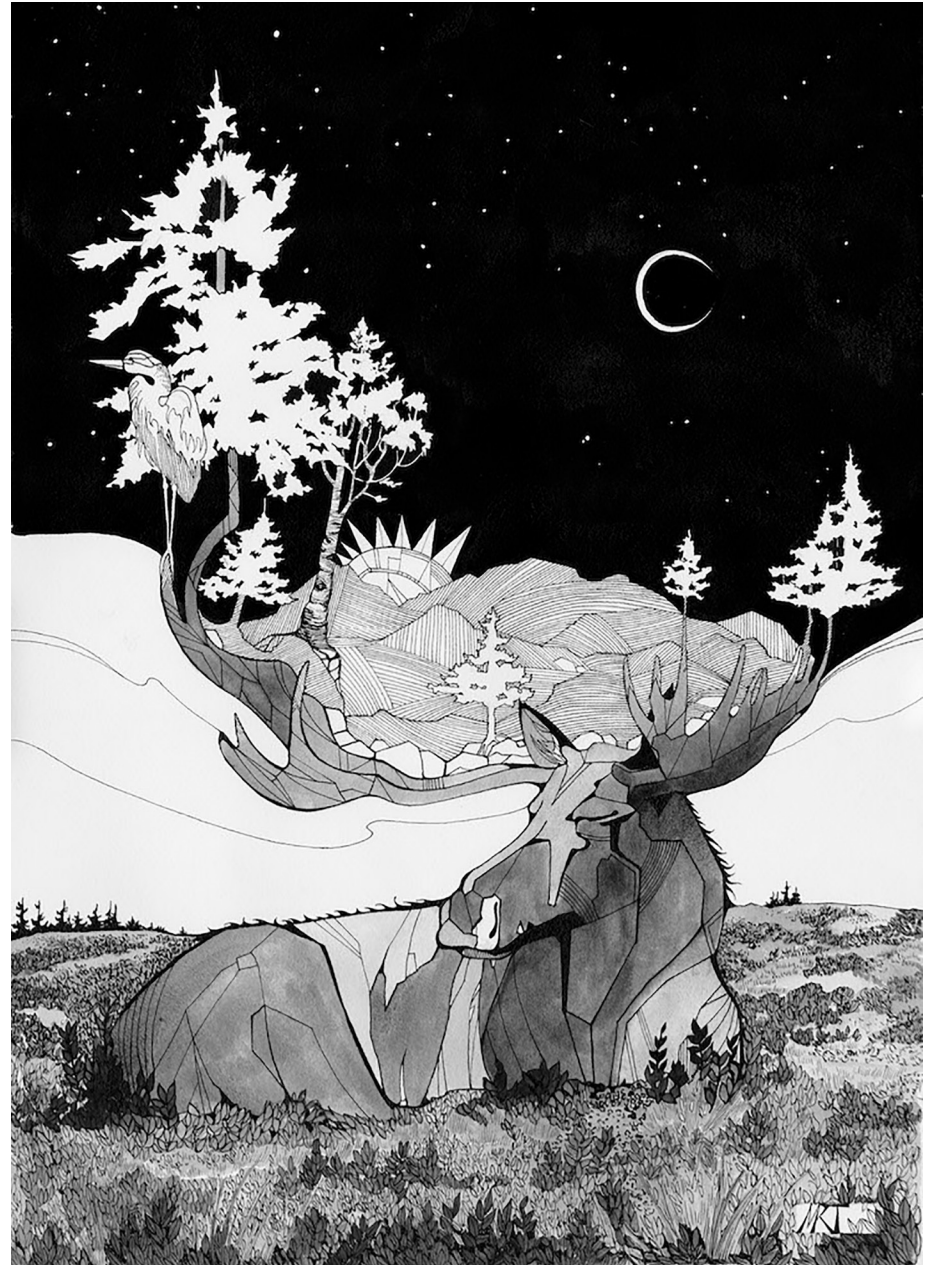
—Susann Moeller

A Hush, A Blur  
by Susann Moeller

The fog above the canyon  
the rock yawning as overhangs  
the wood weathered to stone  
the moment that longs to be  
the nerve that touches all  
the pulse of water unfazed  
by the wide scar below,  
they all hush the sovereign mind.

A pair of vultures sails above  
a marring trench, where steel giants  
connect sizzling powerlines  
that serve no purpose for the  
surrounding Amish farms,  
but for the Quaker homes  
built into hillsides to reduce  
their carbon footprint with

green roofs, grey water.  
Ravens, pitch on pitch,  
they disappeared  
into the maw of the ravine  
skimming the ledges into  
uncertainty blurring the line  
where their bodies end  
and the landscape begins.



*Epilogue*  
*Imagine*  
 by Cynthia Bernard

Imagine  
 by Cynthia Bernard

What if you took a trip to the coast  
 and when you returned, parts  
 of your home were gone, vanished—

*Chinook are the largest of the Pacific salmon.  
 Also known as king salmon, the biggest,  
 almost 5 feet long, weigh close to 130 pounds.*

and when you tried to walk into your bedroom,  
 you smashed into a concrete wall that spanned  
 the entire hallway, floor to ceiling?

*They hatch in fresh water and spend a year as fry,  
 living in the main channel of a river while they  
 grow into smolt, ready for the journey to the sea.*

Would you turn and walk away?

*After one to five years as ocean-dwellers,  
 they return to their birthplace to spawn.*

Would you keep on trying to find a way through the wall?

*If their stream is dried out or blocked,  
 some salmon will keep trying to get through  
 until they use up all their energy and die.*

Would you sleep on the couch?  
 Go and stay with a friend?  
 Get a hotel?

*Others will try to find another stream  
 and other salmon to spawn with,  
 often without success.*

You can call your landlord  
or a contractor tomorrow,  
remove, rebuild, relocate.

King Chinook cannot.