

The Harbingers

By Alan Balliett

Entombed in ice and snow, the marsh along the Mississippi River is quiet and appears desolate. Mink and otter tracks in the snow show that not all have forsaken the marsh. Frogs and turtles slumber beneath the ice while myriads of small critters go about their business around them. It is late February and the lengthening days and warmer sunshine foretell that winter will lose its icy grip on the marsh.

The honking of Canada geese breaks the marsh's silence. Two geese circle the marsh and slowly descend upon a muskrat house. Here they noisily proclaim that this is their territory and where they plan to raise their family. This scene is repeatedly taking place in marshes all along the river. For the geese are the true harbingers of spring in the marsh; telling us all that it will soon be teeming with life, rebirth and the sounds of bird song.