

BLACK SWIFT

by Janet Ruth

Slicing their way
across the sky,
ebony scythes reap
the wind, pierce the veil
of Jemez Falls, reach
their nests plastered
on dripping stone walls;
black swifts come
and go all summer,
beaks full of insects
for chicks in the mist.
Autumn arrives—
they are gone.

Now we know,
the horned moon leads them,
black-feathered boomerangs,
carve air across 7000 kilometers,
harvest clouds of insects
in the deepest Amazon.
In spring—they return to the
the same waterfall that flung them
south eight months ago—earth,
feathers, water, wind, insects
and tiny beating hearts
of swift flyers the
color of midnight.

—published in Janet Ruth's *Feathered Dreams: celebrating birds in poems, stories & images* (Mercury HeartLink, 2018); originally published in *Weaving the Terrain: 100-Word Southwestern Poems* (Dos Gatos Press, 2017)