



11-15-2003

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Recommended Citation

McDonald, Walt (2003) "On the Porch Swing at Dawn," *Westview*: Vol. 23 : Iss. 1 , Article 11.
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview/vol23/iss1/11>

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On the Porch Swing at Dawn

by Walt McDonald

A Steller's Jay plopped down on the deck,
cocking his haughty head, flag-blue,
dark topknot like a plume. We never fed him,
but he swooped down each dawn

to find some sudden wonder, a worm
or cockroach to pop. We slipped outside
with coffee in the gray-dawn cold,
grandchildren sleeping a thousand miles away

from hawks and big-horn sheep, the clumsy bears
hungry for berries, for carcasses wolves caught.
Light slashed Montana clouds like a scythe,
spruce needles silver-blue. Peaks flared

like glaciers from the fog, chalk cliffs
burning to granite while we rocked.
Crows cawed past the cabin,
flapping across a mile of meadow and gone.

