

# AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES, 2004-2006  
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## American Life in Poetry: Column 783

BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE, 2004-2006

Karen Head lives in Georgia, and possums seem to live everywhere. You may drive past a dead one on a roadside somewhere today. Here's a poem in which the poet chooses to keep a safe distance from wildness. Head's most recent book is *Lost on Purpose*, published by Iris Press in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

### Proximity

The young possum foraging  
outside my office window  
seems unconcerned by my presence—  
after all, I'm the one who's trapped.  
I snack on almonds, watch  
it nibble whatever it can find,  
and though I am inclined to share,  
I know that opening the window  
will change the world.

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