Memory

Nancy Overcott

Some say it’s out there in the trees
one hundred years of memory
inside I dreamed I forgot

my name and telephone number
outside the woodpecker enters the tree
slams her head in obedience

to memory builds a nest
to hold the chick who remembers its way
into the world outside the egg

right here—now—I remember my name
inside your mouth. A nuthatch calls a
nuthatch (he never forgets)

here the length of day reminds the monarch
when and where to fly—
one hundred years of memory fit inside

one butterfly, inside one thousand, but I have
no memory to point the way, no
red and black wings to carry me south.

NANCY OVERCOTT graduated from the University of Minnesota with a bachelor’s degree in education and then taught German and French. Later, she graduated from Rochester (Minnesota) Community and Technical College with an associate degree in nursing, then worked as a registered nurse at Methodist Hospital in Rochester. Her life in the Big Woods of southeast Minnesota has inspired poems that have been published in ArtWord Quarterly, Mankato Poetry Review, Minnesota Birding, Minnesota Poetry Calendar, North Coast Review, Sidewalks, Trapeze, Valley Voice, and Wolf Head Quarterly. She is the author of three books: At Home in the Big Woods (Taxon Media, 2002); Fifty Common Birds of the Upper Midwest (University of Iowa Press, 2006); and Fifty Uncommon Birds of the Upper Midwest (University of Iowa Press, 2007).