

On the Time It Takes to Fire Thirty Rounds from an AR15

For, if I imp my wing on thine,
Affliction shall advance the flight in me.

—George Herbert, “Easter Wings”

One hundred and sixty-five wingbeats from a ruby-throated hummingbird. Nearly six hundred from that same hummingbird in front of a perched female. Two hundred and seventy from a ladybug, or thirty less from a monarch butterfly.

Only fifteen from a swallowtail butterfly, loping when compared to other insects, but it gets the job done. Five hundred and

forty beats from a bumblebee. Almost one thousand

from an ordinary housefly. An incredible

eighteen hundred from a mosquito

creating that ubiquitous buzz,

but glacial compared to a

midge at more than

three thousand

wing

beats or

the ivory-billed

woodpecker, which is

recorded at more than eight beats

per second, so twenty-four, give or take,

per two-point-uncertain-decimal seconds, repeating.

Fifty-one for a bat at dusk, of course, it's dusk here and

the truth is I began writing this poem the last time *this* happened.

And when I say *this*, that unspecific demonstrative pronoun that points so

carelessly at the ladybug crawling along my hand or the butterfly on our porch,

it's because I can't bring myself to say what else *this* stands for. Because it's dusk and night comes with wings, or cape; simple shroud or sickly pall that seems to swallow all of these things