

How Tattlers Are Special

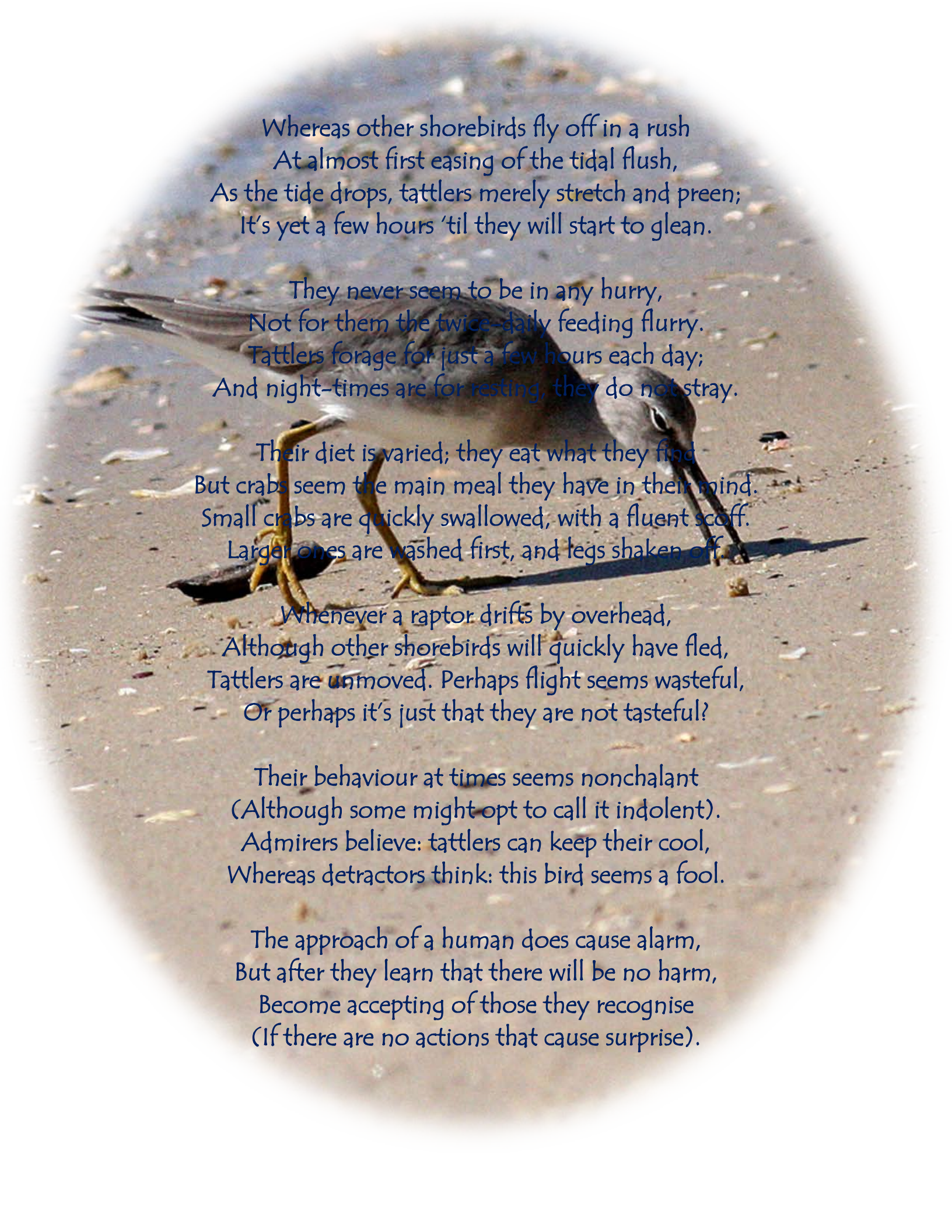
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Let me tell you, by way of a brief foreword,
That tattlers are not a typical shorebird.
They forage on mudflats, as other birds do;
Any further similarities are few.

Within the verses below, a case I'll build
As to why tattlers are a special guild.
My intent is that you'll soon appreciate
The tattler case which I will now advocate.

They roost away from gregarious cousins,
In flocks not thousands, but merely some dozens.
Sometimes they're with Tereks, more often alone,
Whilst communal roosting is almost unknown.

They choose for their roost site some rocks or a pier
They need that their view 'cross the water is clear.
They move into mangroves when the weather's bad
Roosting on branches where a space can be had.



Whereas other shorebirds fly off in a rush
At almost first easing of the tidal flush,
As the tide drops, tattlers merely stretch and preen;
It's yet a few hours 'til they will start to glean.


They never seem to be in any hurry,
Not for them the twice-daily feeding flurry.
Tattlers forage for just a few hours each day;
And night-times are for resting, they do not stray.

Their diet is varied; they eat what they find
But crabs seem the main meal they have in their mind.
Small crabs are quickly swallowed, with a fluent scoff.
Larger ones are washed first, and legs shaken off.

Whenever a raptor drifts by overhead,
Although other shorebirds will quickly have fled,
Tattlers are unmoved. Perhaps flight seems wasteful,
Or perhaps it's just that they are not tasteful?

Their behaviour at times seems nonchalant
(Although some might opt to call it indolent).
Admirers believe: tattlers can keep their cool,
Whereas detractors think: this bird seems a fool.

The approach of a human does cause alarm,
But after they learn that there will be no harm,
Become accepting of those they recognise
(If there are no actions that cause surprise).



The nuptial plumage they assume each year
Is most modest, no gaudy colours appear.
Bold chevrons on flanks is their way of stating
That they are ready for this season's mating.

In migration season, they steer an odd course
When winging northwards to their breeding ground source.
Japan is the country they visit the most,
Preferring this route, not the Asian coast.

Here rests my case, I believe that I've made it
And in these verses, thoroughly displayed it.
I'm sure that by now you will have understood
Why tattlers are different, at least you should.

It's a shorebird that's special, if not unique
And with this knowledge your interest should peak.
So the next time you see a tattler at shore,
Remember these verses; Admire it the more.