

# GREAT AND

# CREATURES

**E**COLOGY," "BIODIVERSITY," "ECOSYSTEM"—these words are mainstays of the conservation movement in America. Today, youngsters sing "Habitat, habitat, got to have a habitat" in classrooms, and at least one institution of higher learning, Maine's own College of the Atlantic, offers a bachelor of arts degree in human ecology. Thanks to writer-scientists like Bernd Heinrich and E.O. Wilson, our awe of nature grows all the time.

Some of the credit for our heightened awareness of the natural world must be given to artists. Every year painters, printmakers, sculptors, and artisans across the country and the world celebrate the soaring eagle, the swift cheetah, the mighty bear. Museums, societies, guilds, and the like support the exhibition and publication of this work, all of which serves to remind us of the beauty of wild animals—and the often pressing need to preserve them.

Maine is home to many remarkable *animaliers*, or animal artists. The four featured here—Janice Kasper, Father Paul Plante, Gina Sawin, and Rebecca Goodale—pay special heed to the call of the Maine wild. Their art celebrates the inhabitants of a kingdom we humans often have trouble sharing.

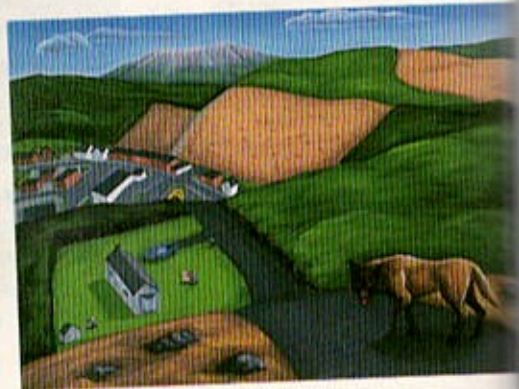
*MB&H* Contributing Editor Carl Little wrote the introduction to *Painting Maine: The Borrowed Views* of Connie Hayes. His most recent book is *The Art of Monhegan Island*.



**JANICE KASPER**  
*Joining Message to Art*

**"MY WORK,"** WRITES painter Janice Kasper of Swanville, "is directly related to my growing concern over the protection of wildlife and wild lands in Maine." Growing up in the Connecticut countryside, she witnessed how quickly rural lands can become suburban—a fate she sees increasingly befalling parts of her adopted state. She also recognizes the effects this sprawl has on the animals that inhabit the land.

Kasper attempts to make her viewers aware of these changes, though she often balances what she terms the "dictatorial" side of some of her images with humor—often, it should be noted, a dark humor. *Cows or Condos*, 1988, for example, shows seaside farmland with cows on one side of the painting and a developer's flagged stakes on the other.



# SMALL

Four artists bring special attention to Maine's flora and fauna. BY CARL LITTLE



Deeryard, 2001

However bleak Kasper's *The Wolf Returns to Maine* (1999) might seem, it fits the findings of the Millennium Ecosystem Report released last March. Blending the surreal with the sympathetic, the artist continues to be inspired by a prayer she recited as a child: "Dear Lord, Bless and hear Thy beasts and singing birds; and hold with tenderness small things that have no words." ■

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