

Jennifer Newhouse

HABITAT

Unlike prairie skink and common snipe,
ours is grassland

tilled for cotton, acre after acre
of seedlings that bloom and boil.

Less green than you'd think,
the inner coastal plain

is farming country—elevated, better
drained than seaward.

We are temperate with temperance,
and mindful of the things we carry.

A numbered knapsack is heavy,
so we keep counting what we've left,

paring away in this slim county.
Headlights and padiddle romances burn

bright and quick. Summer has finally gone
and counts her own absence. Teases.

We call all afternoon while the radiators swell.
Our ears ring with newfound silence.

We are far from Raleigh
and far from life, possums wandering

into town like modern cowboys, cool-faced
and sheltered, capable

of feigning death for upwards of six hours
and the least of our concerns.

