

# *The Weekly Avocet - #567*

**October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

**Hello to our Poets and Nature-lovers of The Avocet community:**

**Ice on pump  
sun warms, melts to dew  
sparkling**

Carol Farnsworth - Ada, MI - [carolfarn@aol.com](mailto:carolfarn@aol.com)



Submitted by Edwina Kadera

## **Yellow Aspen Leaves**

Yellow aspen leaves float on the  
autumn wind, swirling down to  
brown grass by clear-running creek--  
fall spinning in widening spirals  
dropping to bank and ground  
in an inverted rustling imitation thermal  
landing in quick-soaking patches,  
covering the expectant ground.

Collecting now in soft-running stream,  
thick with Fall runoff overladen,  
caught in bends by craggy rock and limb  
some part-broken broken loose to float  
swirling downstream past dying reed, rusted can,  
by leaf-covered playground of wished for sand,  
silent playground, all movement stopped –  
empty, silent, and unmoving.

J. B. Hogan - Fayetteville, AR - [jbhogan22@hotmail.com](mailto:jbhogan22@hotmail.com)

## **Headwaters**

Spring traveling over melting snow, ice;  
gurgling, widening into creek and river,  
over rocky sand and lapping shore  
deepening, rushing, flowing without pause.

Summer heat spreading, drying,  
riverbanks expanding, shores exposed  
occasional storm filling crook and hole  
last refuge of swimming life.

Beyond burning, baking sun,  
Autumn light rains, soft and gentle  
slowly rising water, once again  
channel-filling, banks overcovering.

Chill air spreads over slowing  
current tracing paths of least resistance  
past woods, bends, slowing more still,  
movement paused, locked under icy Winter cover.

J. B. Hogan - Fayetteville, AR - [jbhogan22@hotmail.com](mailto:jbhogan22@hotmail.com)

## **Blue Haze at Milepost 279**

Blue haze at milepost 279  
out from Los Angeles  
on the highway  
somewhere before Indio  
somewhere before Coachella--  
near old Desert Center  
where the road once ran beside  
mesquite, cholla, and Joshua Tree  
where the gas station, garage, and  
greasy spoon sat at the turnoff to Needles  
all changed now with smog rolling  
down the empty interstate.  
Desert Center mostly gone and near forgotten  
like the clear October sky in the desert valleys,  
desert valley skies decades gone  
gone with their bright, high skies  
washed out blue clear palette--  
long miles then seeing  
as far as the eye could wander  
back to a time before the sprawling air  
floated out on wind, currents unknowing  
drifted out and away to become  
blue haze at milepost 279  
far from the toxic breath of city  
far from the valley of angels  
far from the distant, pristine past.

J. B. Hogan - Fayetteville, AR - jbhogan22@hotmail.com

**“A planet being pushed to the edge will eventually turn on us.” - Marco Lambertini**

## **Autumn (An Acrostic)**

After summer ends,  
Under skies, sometimes blue, sometimes cloudy,  
Transition brings falling leaves, crisp air,  
Unreliable sunshine replaced by rain and snow,  
Making memories of harvest, Halloween, Thanksgiving,  
Nostalgia for lost warmth.

Abbie Johnson Taylor - Sheridan, WY - abbietaaylor945@gmail.com

## **Hang Gliding at Sand Turn**

Eager to take advantage of Indian summer  
with one last picnic in the mountains,  
we head up U.S. Highway 14 west of Dayton, Wyoming.  
As the station wagon turns and twists,  
unlike most teenagers,  
I gaze, with limited vision, at passing trees and hills,  
breathe pine-scented air wafting through open windows.  
Brother Andy, seven years younger,  
prattles on about this and that,  
asks in a sing-song voice, “Are we there yet, Daddy? Are we there yet?”

Dad finally yells, “Oh, cut that out!”

“Oh, Ed,” Mother says,  
always sticking up for Andy,  
rarely trying to rescue me from Dad’s wrath.

At Sand Turn,  
we pull into a parking area.  
While Andy grumbles because we’re not yet at the picnic site,  
I step out, feel warm sunshine, inhale crisp air,  
glad to be out of the car, if only for a moment.

“Look, there’s a hang glider,” Dad says.  
He takes my hand, leads me to the rail,  
where I can barely see human and craft lift off,  
take graceful flight,  
escape.

Abbie Johnson Taylor - Sheridan, WY - [abbietaylor945@gmail.com](mailto:abbietaylor945@gmail.com)

## **On a Wintry Autumn Evening**

I hear nothing but the ticking clock,  
as snowflakes cascade in swirls of white.  
No moon graces the sky.  
No cars rush by.  
No dogs bark.  
Dark clouds hover.  
In October, winter is already leaving her mark.

Abbie Johnson Taylor - Sheridan, WY - [abbietaylor945@gmail.com](mailto:abbietaylor945@gmail.com)

### **An Autumnal Walk**

Despite the chill, the sun's warmth caresses my face.  
Along my favorite path next to the creek,  
I see, with limited vision,  
orange leaves still clinging to trees,  
feel, beneath my feet,  
the fallen ones that cover the sidewalk,  
breathe the cool, fresh air,  
hear the creek babble and ducks quack.  
I put one foot in front of the other,  
swing my long, white cane  
from side to side in front of me,  
thankful before winter's arrival.

Abbie Johnson Taylor - Sheridan, WY - [abbietaylor945@gmail.com](mailto:abbietaylor945@gmail.com)

### **Fresh, Fabulous Fruit**

Autumn is the season of fruits.  
Apples come into their own in  
autumn. Crisp, like the name  
implies, and delicious Honeycrisp  
are my favorite for paring and  
eating raw, each slice preferably  
covered with a spoonful of nut  
and seed butter. Or pair baking  
apples with caramel for a sweet  
pie treat. Chunky figs are wonderful  
with brie, walnuts, and a squirt of  
honey or just bite the end off and  
pop them in your mouth. Dates  
are rich and tasty filled with  
nutmeats or coconut flakes and  
rolled in powdered sugar. I go  
with my Vietnamese friend  
to pick the best persimmons.  
Fresh cranberries mixed with  
orange, celery, and minced nuts  
adorn a Thanksgiving turkey and  
reflect fall's bounty. Enjoy the  
fruits of your labor!

Eva Marie Willis - Phoenix, AZ - [jwillis42@cox.net](mailto:jwillis42@cox.net)



Gordon Gilbert - New York, NY - [gordonagilbertjr@usa.net](mailto:gordonagilbertjr@usa.net)

Pond in Central Park  
Mallard hen gliding along  
on oil-slicked water

Gordon Gilbert - New York, NY - [gordonagilbertjr@usa.net](mailto:gordonagilbertjr@usa.net)

## Right place, right time

Driving this mid-October afternoon  
around this large lake,  
lined with all kinds of trees,  
their vibrant colors shimmering  
with the swift, warm breeze  
that ripples the surface waters,  
such a sweet, serene scene,  
when suddenly I see up ahead  
a large object jumping into the lake,  
followed by another splash.

Pulling over to the side of the road,  
I look over the cliff's edge  
and there two young moose,  
a male and a female are together,  
wading around the cool water  
for today is hot, exceedingly hot  
and dry for this late in the year.  
These large herbivores needed  
to find a way to cool down  
on this amazing, Indian summer day.

Like two young lovers, they shyly  
circle around each other  
as if in some kind of ritual dance  
they free float around one another,  
without any human anywhere near,  
without a care in the world,  
then they gently touch their noses  
as I watch feeling blessed  
to get to witness such innocence  
of their budding young love.

I sit on the edge watching them  
frolicking for over an hour as the sun  
sets remembering our first swim  
alone together when our love  
was young, so new, so sweet  
and we needed to find ways  
to cool off from the heat we  
created by being around each other,  
without a care in the world,  
for there is nothing like young love.

Charles Portolano

**“In a world where you can be anything, be kind.” - Dr. Seuss**

### **Searching the Shoreline**

She gets me up early knowing  
soon it will be too cold  
for her to visit her favorite place  
before Mr. Freeze finally settles in,  
reigning again over the beaches.

Seeking peace and quiet  
the crashing waves are music for her  
to move to as circling seagulls  
sing a sweet serenade just for her,  
as she races down to the shoreline.

She watches the morning sun  
come up in the mid-October sky,  
feeling its still, warm rays glowing  
with her ever-growing smile on her face,  
more than ready for a day of wonder.

The brisk wind doesn't trouble  
or bother her for she is always  
on the move, running, searching  
for the elusive, perfect sand dollar,  
a rare gift to claim from the sea.

She delights in finding shells  
of all shapes and sizes,  
and the cooler the colors  
the bigger her fondness for the shell,  
stopping to finger through seaweed.

She runs along with three pouches:  
one for the gifts of the sea,  
one for the plastic and recyclables,  
and one, twice as large as the others  
for all the people's garbage left behind.

She endlessly worries about our world  
where there will be more plastic  
and garbage in our oceans  
then there are fish and sea creatures  
for she knows that days is coming fast



She delights in finding a starfish  
with all of its five fingers, she  
dances around, kicking up the sand,  
shrieking with such joy for this prize  
is a perfect addition to her collection.

As the parade of people appear  
from the parking lots, she hears them  
approaching, knowing now is the time  
to go home and happily sort out  
all these special gifts given to her.

She ran around all morning smiling  
as if she were seven again, with such  
child-like energy and that is what  
I fell in love with when we first met  
and still love about her most to this day.

Charles Portolano - Fountain Hills, AZ - [cportolano@hotmail.com](mailto:cportolano@hotmail.com)

### **Fleeting Footsteps**

As a young boy, seven,  
I walked the woods alone,  
wanting not to be heard  
by any of the creatures  
as I quietly made my way  
through the tall, silent trees,  
knowing each by their species,  
I called them by their names  
as if they were my friends.  
I left no traces of myself.

Felt blessed as a boy to get  
to swim in the cold waters of  
the great, vast Atlantic Ocean,  
a short bike ride away, where  
we spent all day, each summer.  
I loved watching my footprints  
being made as I ran the shoreline,  
then looked back and all were  
swept away by the next wave.  
These happy memories live on.

Crossing any quick stream is  
always an adventure  
with the rushing water  
trying to undermine every step  
I take to cross to the other shore,  
trying to knock me down,  
trying to make me feel the fool,  
mocking me for the water knows  
there will be no trace of me, as if  
I never stepped beneath the surface.

I started early with the little hills  
found around our new home;  
I would run up them as fast as  
my lungs would allow me, then  
rushing down trying not to fall  
for I knew the hills would not  
laugh nor care upon my fate  
for they knew the winds would  
quickly vanish any traces  
of my human silliness, of me.

As I grew older, not yet gray,  
mountains appeared before me,  
there for me to conquer,  
glaring, staring down on me,  
daring me to make my way  
up the slippery, steep slopes  
all for my vanity of wanting to reach  
the top, for others to know of me, but  
the mountains will have no memory  
of me, even if I reach the summit.

I learned early in my life to leave  
as small a footprint on this tiny planet  
I happily get to parade around on, for  
the less mess I make, less footprint  
I leave behind means less guilt  
knowing others are left with our mess.  
I learned through this gift of life--  
love is the only footprint I want  
to leave behind upon those I love  
as my spirit flies off into the cosmos.

Charles Portolano - Fountain Hills, AZ - [cportolano@hotmail.com](mailto:cportolano@hotmail.com)

## A Small Miracle

It was autumn. Trees start to slow their growth--their leaves becoming more colorful as their chlorophyll stores dwindle. Animals prepare for the changing seasons throughout the summer. Food has been gathered; fledglings have their nests. Migrating birds and other creatures on their way to warmer climates or ready to tuck into a warm, winter home to shelter for the coming months. That is why I am so surprised to see this creature on the tree, apparently tardy in her planning.

I watch the caterpillar finish building her new shelter amidst the colorful leaves of the maple tree. Then, as if with a sigh of relief, the caterpillar moves once more and then stops. Her chrysalis is complete. The twig with the caterpillar in her new home are now one entity.

Perhaps it is a childhood memory that prompts me to clip the twig with the newly completed chrysalis. Carefully carrying my treasure inside, I search for a just-right-sized jar to contain this natural wonder. After placing the twig inside the jar, I add some leaf litter to the bottom. Punching a few holes in the lid, I close the jar and place it in a sheltered place near the maple.

I expect to see the caterpillar's rebirth as a gorgeous butterfly in a few weeks. Over the next month, I check in daily to see the small sleeping creature. The chrysalis itself changes color from its autumn green into dark brown as winter blows in. Three, four, five months pass. Each time I check, no changes visible, no signs of life. Several times I consider dumping the jar's contents into my compost bin, yet I continue to wait.

Then, on a May morning, as I walk by the maple, I see the almost forgotten jar and its contents. Picking up the jar my eyes notice a moving yellow object, a Tiger Swallowtail butterfly. She is beautiful, as new birth is always beautiful. She is slowly moving her wings up and down. Carefully, I open the lid. The butterfly's inner knowing prompts her next movements. Out of the jar and across the yard she flies. Her beautiful black and yellow wings illuminated by the early morning sunshine.

With no further thoughts of her previous existence, she is gone, merging with the spring flowers, the buzzing bees and the garden life around her. She will continue her life's path, doing what Swallowtail butterflies must do. She will fly through gardens, searching for sweet nectar. When her wings grow weary, her life as a butterfly will almost be complete, but before that she will mate. She will leave behind tiny eggs on the underside of leaves of her favorite foods. These will hatch and her children will be released to continue the cycle of life.

Her children will have no knowledge of their mother, nor will they need it. No one will have to teach them how to be caterpillars, how to eat and grow. They will already have knowledge of where and when they will build their chrysalis. For as long as there is clean air, puddles, and food enough, these babies will continue their lives, doing so with perfection.

Nature's gift to her creatures--  
Without watching and learning

Know how to live who they are

*(Swallowtail in climates with cooler winters, to wait until autumn to build her chrysalis. When overwintering, this part of their life cycle may extend to four to six months, before the emergence as a butterfly. This process of prolonging the pupae phase is called diapause and it is thought to be triggered by the shorter, cooler days of autumn.)*

Sandy King - Lafayette, CA - sandyaking@yahoo.com

### **The Windward Side of the Mast**

Stay to the windward  
side of the mast.  
Any missed step  
could be your last.

Far better than you  
have lost their lives.  
Left behind fatherless  
children and wives.

Scurry the ratlines.  
The top gallant yard  
is a hundred feet up,  
so be on your guard!

Every pitch  
of the stormy sea  
tosses you cloudward,  
buckling your knees.

Shun the lubber hole  
at the main yard.  
Grab hold the futtock shrouds  
coated in tar.

When you hazard the top,  
then wait for the hail  
to furl or reef  
the topmost sail.

Then carefully lower  
yourself to your mates.  
Your task now complete,  
avoiding the Fates.

Dale K. Nichols

## The Muses

O' ye writers of verse on Earth.  
Who inspires your written work?  
Which of the sisters, the daughters of Zeus,  
each with her own unique attributes,

do you call upon, Like Homer and Virgil,  
to make your lines more vibrant and fertile?  
To which are you drawn in admiration  
to provide you the spark of inspiration?

Perhaps the eldest, *Calliope*?  
The Muse of Epic Poetry.  
The gift of eloquence is that which she  
hath bestowed upon statesmen and royalty.

Or *Clio*, The Muse of History?  
Invoked by Herodotus and Thucydides.  
Who carries a scroll and often a lyre.  
So many great narratives hath she inspired.

Or *Erato*, The Muse of the Poetry of Love?  
Allied with Eros in common resolve.  
Her wreath of myrtle the sacred plant  
of human desire she doth enchant.

*Euterpe*? The Muse of Music and Song.  
Instilling emotions, joyful and strong.  
She plays on her flute a fair melody,  
and bears a wreath of gay flowers for thee.

*Melpomene*? Muse of Greek Tragedy.  
Both of drama and poignant poetry.  
The tragic masks she holds in her hands.  
The human experience she well understands.

*Polyhymnia*? The Muse of Spiritual Hymn.  
With grace and conviction, she helps us begin,  
our journey in worship and solemn praise  
for non-wordly things, with heavenly gaze.

*Thalia*? The Greek Muse of Comedy.  
So witty and humorous and wry is she,  
with her comic mask and shepherd's crook,  
hers the embodiment of lighthearted work.

*Terpsichore?* Dance and Choral Song  
are the Earthly domains where she doth belong.  
Her lyre and plectrum inspire the writers  
of ballet and and uplifting choir recitals.

Or finally, **Urania?** Astronomy's Muse.  
Exploring the wonders and mysteries infusing  
the moon and the stars with her compass and globe,  
through studied inspection their secrets to probe.

Which of the nine, I once again ask,  
best helps you to shine as you labor your task?  
Drawing the tip of your passionate pen  
to the inkwell that dwells so deeply within?

Dale K. Nichols - Beverly Shores, IN - nichols-dale@comcast.net

**“By the time we see that climate change is really bad, your ability to fix it is extremely limited... The carbon gets up there, but the heating effect is delayed. And then the effect of that heat on the species and ecosystem is delayed. That means that even when you turn virtuous, things are actually going to get worse for quite a while.” - Bill Gates**

**(Hickory Dickory Dock)**

What in the world have we done?  
There's no place left to run.  
The Earth's aflame with climate change,  
under a blazing sun.

**(Sing a Song of Sixpence)**

Gas and oil keep burning.  
Everyone knows why.  
CO2 keeps rising  
up in the sky.  
Polar ice is melting.  
The coastal zones aflood.  
Inland lakes will disappear  
'til all that's left is mud.

**(Georgie Porgie)**

Home and auto, bundle and save,  
insurance companies used to say.  
Where the weather spoils their day,  
home insurers now step away.

**(Baa Baa Black Sheep)**

Wake up, people!  
We have all been fooled!  
It's high time to  
change the rules.  
Reuse, recycle,  
enact a carbon tax.  
Stop all the lying  
and stick to the facts.  
Wake up, people.  
Don't hesitate.  
The horse has left the barn  
and is headed to the gate.

**(Little Miss Muffet)**

The leaders of man  
sat on their hands  
watching the world go sideways.  
Given fair warning,  
they woke every morning,  
ignoring the signs as always.

Dale K. Nichols - Beverly Shores, IN - nichols-dale@comcast.net

**Nature's Guardians**

In a world so vast, with beauty untold,  
Nature's wonders beg us to behold.  
From towering mountains to oceans deep,  
Its treasures, in our hearts, we shall keep.

Like gentle whispers on the breeze,  
Nature guides us with words that appease.  
To stay in harmony, our duty told,  
Let's cherish each creature, both young and old.

The vibrant forests, a lush emerald hue,  
Teach us resilience, to always renew.  
The leaves dance freely, in rhythm and grace,  
Showing us strength, in every embrace.

The rivers, they flow, in currents so bold,  
A reminder to adapt, as life unfolds.  
Let's keep them pure, these lifelines that bind,  
Nurturing the creatures, the water refined.

The skies above, adorned with stars,  
Encourage us to reach, to dream far.  
Like twinkling lights, they guide our way,  
Inspiring hope, through each passing day.

Oh, nature's bounty, so abundantly dressed,  
A tapestry woven, with colors blessed.  
We must protect, preserve, and conserve,  
For in its embrace, our souls find reserve.

So let us tread lightly, with tender feet,  
Leaving behind only love and retreat.  
Be an advocate, a steward so true,  
For Mother Nature, and all she imbues.

With each conscious step, we honor and greet,  
The Earth's fertile ground, beneath our feet.  
Her care and wisdom, forever shall endure,  
If we, as guardians, remain steadfast and pure.

So let your heart align, with nature's grand plan,  
And be a beacon, for all woman and man.  
Together we'll sow seeds, of love and respect,  
For a world thriving, where all life can connect.

Tekkanshojiro - Philippines - glortes.ph@gmail.com

### **Pines**

Rain of needles  
curtains of brown toast  
drop to ground

Carol Farnsworth - Ada, MI - carolfarn@aol.com



## **Safeguarding Serenity**

In the forest, animals have voices,  
Strength and beauty in our sight.  
That's why it's crucial to care for them,  
Just as we care for our own pets, it's only right.

In nature, they have their own place,  
It's our responsibility to care for and provide them grace.  
The animals, they need love and compassion,  
To nurture and protect them, with heartfelt devotion.

The animals in the forest, like our beloved pets,  
Have needs, and their health we must beget.  
Give them proper shelter, a place to call home,  
Food and water, a welcome and a comforting dome.

It's also important to care for nature and the forest,  
To keep their habitats vibrant and secure, so they can find rest.  
Respect and conserve, in every way we can,  
Preserve their homes, protect their land.

Tekkanshojiro - Philippines - [glortes.ph@gmail.com](mailto:glortes.ph@gmail.com)

## **clouds**

high, fluffy  
with dark undersides  
heralds change

Carol Farnsworth - Ada, MI - [carolfarn@aol.com](mailto:carolfarn@aol.com)

## **Unity's Symphony**

In a world of abundance and beauty,  
Where nature's treasures shine,  
We find ourselves with a precious duty,  
To protect this realm divine.

Reduce, reuse, recycle, my friend,  
Let's embark on a sustainable quest,  
Minimize waste, let consumption mend,  
And let our actions be the very best.

Single-use items, oh, they have their place,  
But let's use them sparingly, if we may,  
For the Earth's resources we must embrace,  
And find creative solutions each day.

Conserve energy, let's dim the lights,  
When not in use, let them rest,  
Opt for bulbs that shine so bright,  
With efficiency, we'll be blessed.

Appliances, oh, they bring convenience,  
But when not needed, let's switch them off,  
By doing so, we'll make a difference,  
For our planet's health, let's show our love.

Let natural light embrace our days,  
When the sun's warmth bathes our space,  
Appreciate its gentle, golden rays,  
And let it brighten every place.

Water, a gift we cherish so,  
Let's use it wisely, drop by drop,  
Shorter showers, for the water's flow,  
Fix leaks promptly, let water never stop.

Efficient fixtures, a wise choice,  
To save this scarce and vital resource,  
And let's collect rainwater with rejoice,  
To nourish plants and gardens, of course!

Plant trees and plants, our leafy friends,  
Creators of oxygen, absorbers of CO<sub>2</sub>,  
They cleanse the air, they make amends,  
Their presence is our planet's rescue.

In gardens and forests, let their roots spread,  
Let them grow tall, let them thrive,  
A flourishing green canopy overhead,  
They'll keep our surroundings alive.

Avoid harmful chemicals, let's be aware,  
In cleaning products, let's choose with care,  
For toxins seep into the earth and air,  
Let nature's balance we help repair.

Friendly alternatives, oh how they abound,  
In gardening, cleaning, nurturing too,  
Let's use them, let's spread the sound,  
Of a healthier world we can pursue.

Educate and inspire, my dear friend,  
For knowledge is power, a gift we possess,  
Let's share the wisdom, let's transcend,  
And create a world where all can progress.

Encourage others, with love and grace,  
To adopt these sustainable acts,  
For small actions can change the space,  
And make a big impact that attracts.

Together, let's unite and lead the way,  
Spreading kindness and compassion each day.  
Let's be the voice for those unheard,  
Empowering others with every word.

In a world where change begins within,  
Let's cultivate a mindset to win.  
Embrace diversity, celebrate all,  
For unity will make us stand tall.

Let's strive to build a world that's fair,  
Where love and understanding are everywhere.  
Empathy and tolerance be our guide,  
For in unity, we'll truly thrive.

Let's break down barriers, tear down walls,  
Creating a world where everyone stands tall.  
Extend a helping hand, lend an ear,  
Supporting each other, conquering fear.

Together, we'll make a brighter tomorrow,  
Filled with love, joy, and devoid of sorrow.  
For in our actions, great power lies,  
To shape a future that'll mesmerize.

So let us be agents of change and grace,  
Embracing challenges we face.  
With kindness and love, let's pave the way,  
For a world that shines brighter every day.

Tekkanshojiro - Philippines - [glortes.ph@gmail.com](mailto:glortes.ph@gmail.com)

**If you like a poem, please let the poet know it, thank you!**

**To honor Nature for a long time, just plant a tree.**

## **The Tree of Life Is Losing Entire Limbs, Jeopardizing Evolution**

Story by Darren Orf



With entire groups of species going extinct, scientists say that we're "putting a big dent in the evolution of life on the planet."© Mitchell Pettigrew - Getty Images

Human-induced climate change and environmental degradation is causing entire genera to go extinct at rates 35 times higher than what's been estimated to have occurred in the past one million years.

A new study from Stanford University and the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) estimates that 73 genera, each representing many species, have gone extinct since the 1500s.

This is a devastating blow for biological diversity and only reinforces the need to protect natural spaces—especially tropical rainforests, where an estimate 80 percent of known species reside.

In Charles Darwin's world-changing work *On the Origin of Species*, the naturalist make use of the millennia-old metaphor in which all life is represented by a tree. He writes that “the affinities of all the beings of the same class have sometimes been represented by a great tree. I believe this simile largely speaks the truth.”

But in this era of climate change and a human-induced sixth mass extinction, that tree has seen better days. A new study by Stanford University and the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) shows that not only are individual species blinking out of existence at an alarming rate, entire genera—representing branches on the tree of life—are being completely obliterated at a rate that hasn't been seen on Earth for at least a million years. The scientists behind the paper concluded that we are witnessing a “mutilation of the tree of life.” The findings were published this week in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (PNAS).

“In the long term, we're putting a big dent in the evolution of life on the planet,” Gerardo Ceballos, UNAM and study co-author, said in a press statement. “But also, in this century, what we're doing to the tree of life will cause a lot of suffering for humanity.”

Using improved data from the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), which tracks the conservation of status of all species, Ceballos and Stanford University's Paul Ehrlich examined 34,600 species. These species represented a total of 5,400 genera of land-dwelling vertebrates.

Their findings show that 73 entire genera, each representing several species, have been completely wiped out since 1,500 CE. The hardest hit group was birds, with a total of 44 genera extinctions, followed by mammals, amphibians, and then reptiles. That's a genus extinction rate 35 times higher than what's been estimated to have occurred in the past one million years. The paper estimates that humans (sadly) managed to achieve in five centuries what would've taken nature 18,000 years.

While every species that goes extinct is an irreparable loss, losing entire genera can wreak havoc on ecosystems. Sticking with the tree analogy, a limb can lose a few twigs and still provide vital sustenance for the tree as a whole. But when entire limbs (or genera) are lost, holes start to form in the canopy, and other surviving species can't fill those ecological gaps.

“As scientists, we have to be careful not to be alarmist,” Ceballos said in a statement. “We would be unethical not to explain the magnitude of the problem, since we and other scientists are alarmed.”

Although it’s vital to preserve threatened species wherever they’re found, Ceballos and Ehrlich recommend increased efforts to preserve tropical rainforests. The World Wildlife Foundation estimates that 80 percent of known species reside in these areas, so saving these environments would have the biggest impact on preserving precious ecosystems.

Climate change is an existential threat to humanity’s continued existence on Earth, but for the many species that share this planet with us, the situation is even more dire.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/technology/the-tree-of-life-is-losing-entire-limbs-jeopardizing-evolution/ar-AA1hf1na?ocid=msedgdp&pc=U531&cvid=76acbad869545cd968ce9f8b054c7ed&ei=57>

## **Time to share up to four of Your Fall themed poems For The Weekly Avocet,**

**Photos (4), haiku (up to 10), Saving Mother Earth  
Challenge poems (as many as you can write)  
Please read the guidelines before submitting**

**Please when submitting submissions do not stack your info, please have it: name - town, state - email address, in a line, just like it appears in both publications. Please do not make extra work for us. Thank you.**

Please send your submission to [angeldec24@hotmail.com](mailto:angeldec24@hotmail.com)

**Please put (early or late) Fall/your last name in the subject line.**

Please be kind and address your submission to me, Charles. Thank you.

*(Just so you know: I do not read work from a poet who doesn't take the time to address their submission to the editor, who they want to read their work.)*

Please do not just send a poem, please write a few lines of hello.

Please do not have all caps in the title of your poem.

There is no line limit per poem.

Please no religious references.

Please use single spaced lines.

Please remember, we welcome previously published poems.

**Please put your name - town/state - email address under your poem. No Zip codes.**

**Please send your poems in the body of an email or in one attachment, no pdf file.**

## **We look forward to reading your Fall submissions for The Weekly Avocet...**

### **The Burning Question for us Earthlings is:**

**What are you/we going to do to stop or even just slow down Climate Change?**

**Do you feel like there is nothing you can do about climate change?** Well, there is, even if we all do small things it will make a great difference. Alice C. Hill (**the David M. Rubenstein senior fellow for energy and the environment at the Council on Foreign Relations.**) states the first thing we all need to do is not shy away from the subject. Talk about, write about, climate change to everyone you know and meet. Write to your Congressperson and Senators. Let them know what you think and fear!

**I want to have, at least, one Saving Mother Earth poem in each issue of The Weekly Avocet,** so I am always looking for poems that address our most important issues of today, so please write about what you think and fear of the coming end of our world as we know it. A world our great grandkids will never know. A Mother Nature who is no longer kind.

**But if we join together, maybe, just maybe, working together, we can make a difference to Save Mother Earth, the only home we have. Show you care. There are so many topics to write about when it comes to Climate Change. Please find one you are passionate about and write about it!**

**Write a Tell-off poem letting the world know what you are feeling about what is being done right before our eyes by those who claim to want what best for all of us. Think it out in your head, then put it down on the page, then fight with it, get your rage out, then send it to us to share, so you can see your voice, your words, being read, being heard...**

## **The American Avocet**

I watch unseen this large,  
long-legged shorebird,  
with its pied plumage  
and a dash of red  
around its head and neck,  
scampering along  
the coastline  
searching to snatch-up  
some aquatic insect  
or a small invertebrate  
hidden beneath  
the brackish waters  
of this saltmarsh.

I watch unseen  
it swing its odd,  
long, up-curved bill  
through the shallow,  
still waters, catching  
a tiny creature,  
trapping it in its bill,  
racing off to its nest to  
feed her four hatchings  
with this feast she found.

I watch in awe  
as the male  
grows protective,  
fearlessly fending off  
an encroaching  
common black raven,  
attacking this intruder,  
striking at it with its bill.

I watch in wonder  
as they swim as a family  
just days after  
the young ones are born,  
then back to the nest to  
rest where its kind flocks  
together in a community.

Charles Portolano - Fountain Hills, AZ - [cportolano@hotmail.com](mailto:cportolano@hotmail.com)

**If you would like to become a supporting member of The Avocet community,  
The Avocet is only \$28.00 for 4 perfectly bounded issues and 52 weeks of The**



**Weekly Avocet, every weekend, plus other poetry surprises, with the best Nature poetry by the best Nature poets in America, a steal of a deal. Please make your check out to The Avocet and send to:**

**The Avocet  
P.O. Box 19186  
Fountain Hills, AZ 85269**

We hope we provoked you; that you leave having experienced a complete emotional response to the poetry. I want to thank our Poets for sharing their work with us this week. **And “Thank you for reading, dear reader!”**

Be well, see you next weekend,

Charles Portolano, Editor/Publisher and Vivian and Valerie Portolano, Co-Editors of The Avocet, a Journal of Nature Poetry and The Weekly Avocet, every weekend.

**Copyright © 2023 by The Avocet (for our poets)**