

The Weekly Avocet - #582

January 28th, 2024

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

**ashen world whitewashed
winter-wrapped pristine and warm
squirrels track the snow**

Aimé E. Duclos - South Berwick, ME - ajduclos@gwi.net



Submitted by Edwina Kadera

First Snow and Then

blizzard blows in
angry Nor'easter in charge
coast of Maine not forgotten

late January reality
snow gods remembered
never winter without white

tides blown high
streets rivers of foam
trees downed and power out

three day reprieve
three inch rain gales in
more tides and river floods

and four days again
high winds floods damage
winter has staked its position

next day trees darkened
hundreds of robin-like birds
similar in markings but too slim

a sparrow lites near
clear comparison clarifies
a mega-flock of gaunt robins

the southerlies blew
raged through three storms
carried the spring robins north

pray the shrub berries
the nibbles in leaf detritus
sustain our ambassadors of spring

winter not nearly done
but is that even predictable
as our planet chokes and warms

Winter Onederland

A cozy blanket upon your fallow ground
A slow-moving wave across the Tundra
Questions, concerns that weigh on your heart
Crowded thoughts chirping the same birdsong
All shadows that feel so true, all at once alive
This pain you carry like a cross to bear...
Feel the sweep of my arms as it embraces it all!

My heart connected to yours
by this golden thread
Rhythm slowing down...slow gentle calm
I hold this space, this quiet grace
OneLove settling upon your heart like a sweet purring kitten
Questions settling into safety
Like the warmth of an autumn sun bringing surety
In midst of cold and the loss of leaves
Brightness like a welcome candle in a cavern

Feel my heartbeat, soak up this grace
Do nothing, be nothing, for I know my prayers work upon your soul
Stilling all grasping
Settling the rush
That old vacuum is gone, filling you with Spirit
Peace like you've never known before
Simplicity like the world through a needle's eye
Clarity like the depths of a glacial lake
Profound, that rich knowing in every cell of radiance
Joy that wants to jump up like dolphins
in wide open water
Frolic is yours, a satisfied contentment

As I let my fears flow away into the mirthful river
As I embrace the magic that enters my heart
As my need to change anything falls away
All that's left is the blazing white light
Where we are one
in peace.

Amee Shah - Philadelphia, PA - ameeshahphd@gmail.com

“Plant seeds of happiness, hope, success, and love; it will all come back to you in abundance. This is the Law of Nature.” - Steve Maraboli

deer waiting to cross
busy snowless thoroughfare
one January day

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

Winter lies heavy

A blanket of snow upon my being
Heavy, soft, snuggly, deceptive in its comfort
For it invites cocooning, escaping
Retreating into dreams
While reality awaits,
Fast piling of things to do
So harsh is the contrast
Even the sound jars
There's poetry in sweet repose
While shrill are the sound of chores
My heart refuses to give up one
To make space for the other
For one feeds my soul
And other everything else
Yet I can dally no longer
For the dreams are getting restless
Sweetness turning into uneasy sour
My angels having taken over subconscious
Reminding me of promises made
Recalling there's a higher self,
The God of Integrity
And no comfort comes from undeserved rest
For nothing is sweeter than the slumber post toil
Let me take one more swill of this now cold brew
And put down one more thought upon this paper
And drag out one more moment of emptiness
Before I push away the heavy comforts
Lay down this tablet of escapism
Plant my feet on ground and
Slowly awake to reality
Choosing joy over dread
This too is warmth
Summer upon my winter cold.

Amee Shah - Philadelphia, PA - ameesahphd@gmail.com

A blanket of snow

A blanket of snow outside
Last night's stormy blessing
Innocently beckoning
With inviting softness
Dreamy and romantic
A child's late white Christmas
Frigid winter temperature outside
Ground icy, tardy cleanup crew
This is a day to settle into dreams
Candles aglow, resonant full songs
A cocoon of warmth in this cave
Let Spirit ring around
Uplifting, reviving, comforting.
Today is a day for poetry and prayer.

Amee Shah - Philadelphia, PA - Ameeshahphd@gmail.com

Snow is back

Bringing hope, a second chance
Two years of hiatus
Now white blanketed glory
Even welcome is the gray slushy residue
That lines up sidewalks
Snow is back
The earth is warmed but breathing still
She is not giving up on us!

Amee Shah - Philadelphia, PA - Ameeshahphd@gmail.com

First Snow

Winter's first snow leaves me warm
inside and sipping cocoa on the outside.
Trees are draped in nature's satin, shrubs
are iced wedding cakes. Cardinals hop on
crystal twigs to add their specks of red and
tweet a welcome to the prism lit morn.

Madalin Bickel - Tallahassee, FL - madalin60@verizon.net

His Name is Not Frosty

Poised in the backyard,
three varying sizes of snowy
orbs, as tall as an average man,
he stood.

No carrot nose; no googly eyes;
no magical top hat; only round
tiers of cold ugly snow with
twigs for arms.

A corn cob nose had been added
by a passing eight-year-old.
Then another placed broken pine
cones for buttons.

Morning light made him appear to smile.
The passing visitor smiled too.
He took a step back and stood
poised like the thinker.

Soon peanut butter covered the pinecones
with bird friendly seeds, and hung from the
bare arms. A dented straw hat filled with
sunflower seeds sat on his head.

Small round suet cakes made his buttons;
from the corn cob nose hung an old
saucer filled with cracked corn, millet,
and thistle.

Peanuts, acorns, and raw nuts created a
circle of welcome in the fresh fallen snow;
left for gray visitors with swishy tails -
perhaps a doe and her fawn...

Morning arrived, I walked, breathed in
the cold air. Whispered thanks for
a sunny dawn. He proudly stood with a
garden of birds and a squirrel or two.

I watched.

Madalin Bickel - Tallahassee, FL - madalin60@verizon.net

Soft gray wings hover--
Land on the green suet cage
Beaks' rewards, fresh seeds

Madalin Bickel - Tallahassee, FL - madalin60@verizon.net

She hung great pinecones
with peanut butter and seeds
Birds filled her back yard

Madalin Bickel - Tallahassee, FL - madalin60@verizon.net

Icicles

Glistening from eves
Hanging reminders of
Winter's artistic endeavors--
Cold joy

Madalin Bickel - Tallahassee, FL - madalin60@verizon.net

Puppies

Romp in first snow
Noses dig while tails wag
Chased by a quick sprinting toddler -
Playing

Madalin Bickel - Tallahassee, FL - madalin60@verizon.net

Tryst

Under
an icy sky,
a new morning,
last Christmas camellia -
hungry winter hummingbird
feeding full.

Greg Gregory - Antelope, CA - greggkg@gmail.com

Wintering in Blue Fells

I walk deep in the wallow of hunched-over ancient mountains--
Blue-shadowed bristle-backed boars rooting deep in tumbling earth.
The shale ribbon of the fellgate rises to meet my seeking soles,
Each stride lifting me higher upon the curved backbone
Of the biggest ridgeback in the ring of giants.
Stepping softly so as not to stampede the shy stones,
I climb towards its denuded pinnacle in dawn's first gloaming,
Seeing the rocky moonscape and timberline as a muted Ansel Adams--
A grey-tinted black and white photograph shaded by the murky light.

The thin crystal air is my food and my friend,
Magnifying and focusing the pale platinum glow
Of the weak winter's sun as it struggles to rise, increasing its brightness
With the rhythm of each step, bringing to life the depths and crags
Of nearby ranges: the Black Mountains, the Roans, the Balsams.
I pit myself against the ever-patient moss-covered stones,
As deep below me the lights of farms wink on and off like faraway stars
While trespassing silver mists ribbon dance with swirling winds--
Nosing their way into every crack and crevice, each canyon and valley.

I revel in dawn's clean solitude, the time of hope and unsullied hours,
When I and my ghosts like to travel in the fangs of icy gales--
Testing to see if our innermost mettle is wrought of Viking iron.
I summit the bare backbone of the wind-whipped peak
As pale rays whiten the curved bowl of slate-grey sky,
Outlining a natural theater of seven ancient stones beckoning me--
A place sacred to long-departed Cherokee clans:
The Bird Clan, the Deer, the Wild Potato, The Long Hair,
The Paint, the Blue, and strongest of all, the Clan of the Wolf.

Feldspar and quartz crystals glitter in their weatherbeaten skins
As they sense Earth's home star surging higher toward open skies.
Alone amidst the living granite shoulders of the stones, I await a miracle:
Like Mother Cardinal dons her drab coat of khaki for daily wear
Yet colors her wing's edges in the fiery scarlets of summer,
So, January's undiluted white light shatters itself against the frigid air
And frozen rocks, painting the clouds in the rainbow colors of a natal spring:
First pale yellows, then flooding pinks and oranges, all bounded
By a royalty of deep purples, a winter's sunrise now a covenant
Promising a rebirth in Shaconage... the Land of the Blue Smokes.

Louisa Reid - Barboursville, VA - holdfastvaviasco@gmail.com

Late Walks In Wintertime

I walk the streets of winter;
the lonely city streets,
cold and damp, serene.

I see my breath, I feel the chill
of winter's early darkness
near at hand.
I fear the dark.
That dark unknown,
that waits,
just beyond my senses.

Assurances?
There are many--
but still...

John McPherson - Searcy, AR - jmcperson@cablelynx.com

Stormy Day

Through the rain
glazed window

I watch the trees
dancing in the wind

Each tree a different rhythm
the distant palms sway

Stiff-branched cherry
barely moves at all

Evergreens stand noble
too sophisticated to bend

But the still green acacia shakes
and shimmies threatens to topple

To drive away the winter blues
I too dance

Louise Moises - Richmond, CA - bookstallsf@outlook.com

late-January day
crows and birds call joyously
sun shines in blue sky

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

California Winter

Bare branches of the ancient cherry
appear sad, lichen covered, half dead,
half alive. I cannot bear to take it down.
I would miss this old companion.

From my office window, the tree
creates a jagged pattern on the sky.
I am busy writing poems on the computer,
when my eye catches movement in the branches,

A winter visitor, a Downy Woodpecker,
striped, slate grey wings, snowy white back.
He toes his way up the trunk, hammers
to declare his territory. Pecks and pecks.

I stop my work to gaze. He's joined
by a Chestnut-backed Chickadee.
There must be insects burrowed
in the dead wood, blessings for birds.

The Chickadee flits among the slender twigs,
beak probing for a moment or two, then
off he flies. The woodpecker moves from branch
to branch. For five minutes or more,
I watch. Then he too is gone.

I return to my work
feeling blessed.

Louise Moises - Richmond, CA - bookstallsf@outlook.com

snow out the window
covering every surface
a pure world of white

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

January in Julian

I've come to the little mountain town of Julian waiting for the snow and my sixtieth birthday. Honestly, I haven't come because I'm turning sixty. I've come to nurse a hurt alone. I've finally run away from home.

Just as I begin to write a flash of tweedy black catches my eye outside the tiny, lace-edged window. A woodpecker with its red-crowned drill has stopped in this tall cedar, I'm sure, to tell me...something.

There is something about the snow-laden sky in winter, in the late afternoon, that brings to the heart elation and the lovely meaninglessness of time.

Mary Oliver, *Walking Home from Oak-Head*

Teresa Bullock - San Diego, CA - teresabullock47@gmail.com

Water

Liquid, solid, gas, vital to all life,
provided by creeks, rivers, lakes, oceans,
it's what I drink throughout the day,
what cools hot beverages when frozen.
Accumulations of droplets promise relief from heat.
When hot, steam provides comfort.
When cold, with no taste or odor, it's refreshing.
Water is something we crave,
hope to have for the rest of our lives.

Abbie Johnson Taylor

South

This is the direction I'll fly
when temperatures in Wyoming drop,
the ground is covered with snow,
ice makes walking difficult.
I'll hop on a plane, and within hours,
I'll be in Jupiter, Florida,
basking on a sunny beach
or relaxing with a good book on my brother's patio.
That will be my life for at least a week
before I leave a warm Florida winter,
return to a cold winter in Wyoming.

Abbie Johnson Taylor - Sheridan, WY - abbietaylor945@gmail.com

Winter Day -- What Can I Say

Icicles shimmer
frigid cold air



Balcony railing
Overflowing snow



Beckoning.... teasing....



Come out
If you dare!
Yes, Come out
If you dare!

Marilyn Merrill - Montello, WI - themunkiam@gmail.com

Thank you for submitting, subscribing, and sharing.

four below zero
crow's urgent calls fill the air
undeterred by cold

Abbie Johnson Taylor - Sheridan, WY - abbietaylor945@gmail.com

Winter Sun

It's like a star seen from
a distant planet,
this winter sun,
small, wan, far away.
I have to remind myself
that this is Earth,
and we are merely
tilted away
for a span.

Richard Green

Still Delighting in Snow

I still delight in snow
some seventy years after I first did.
Though my body now is tentative,
my spirit weary of life's contests,
I still take pleasure
in that world of whiteness
just as I did when I resided
in a frame so small
I can no longer remember how it felt.
Was I an infant?
No way of knowing,
but when I see snow fall
I sense boy-feelings of decades ago,
flakes on my lashes,
against my skin,
the bracing scent,
the compact blizzard
as I tumbled from my sled
a scattering of cold powder
turning my eyebrows white,
as now do other causes,
my clothes encrusted
the wetness soaking through,
the warm kitchen
where I disrobed
("Get out of those wet clothes!"
my mother said) fading
into the one where I sit now
tapping out this poem.

Richard Greene - Pleasanton, TX - rc.green@hotmail.com

Outside My Window

Every time I watch the fronds outside my window
swish and sway in the midday breeze, I think it is
the first time. The sun spackles the leaves, the shadows
dance like bemused men or women on a first date
neither expects will go anywhere but enjoy
the moment anyway. The breeze, familiar friend,
is winter cool, winter warm, and the path the eye
follows between waving palms and telephone wires
to a small, brief glimpse of white-blue sky dances and
entrances, temptation, the challenge of the next
possibilities, obstacles moving as much
as a miniature golf windmill. Where I am,
I know where to go but not clearly how to go.
A breath, a step, singing birds and chickens praying
like a choir tuning up. And then, at long last,
the next move I make, the wires, fronds seek
to applaud, at worst to simply ignore me, and fold
like whitecaps about to break then disappear,
butterflies opening wings, gently, gently lifting off.

Brian Cronwall - Wailua, Hawaii - cronwall@hawaii.edu

Please be kind, write to each other...

Down Highway 65

South of Sedalia, road
winding through farm country
cold, dull winter gray,
little town sped past
not stopping now nor ever
just passing by fallen, decaying
houses, crumbled-in shells of
buildings, stone blocks collapsed
on foundation, forgotten,
ignored, lost memory
faded in winter day
growing dim as light fades,
short day of winter
never to become spring.

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

cold winter night
moon shining bright over snow
luster of midday

Abbie Johnson Taylor - Sheridan, WY - abbietaylor945@gmail.com

Ice Storm

Liquid silver sheet falling,
falling day and night, gray and black,
limbs draped in crystalline ice.

Hour by hour, weight increasing,
creaking arms spread, lower, drop.

Loud snaps follow,
thunderous breaks, brilliant sheen
on ground, shrub, tree.

Unrelenting, falling still,
trees uprooted, roofs battered,
all movement stopped.

Dark then, bitter cold,
no sound save pop, crack,
wet logs thud on rigid earth.

Bright shine returns at last,
hoar-coat lessens but
explosive crashes still,
world slowly re-emerges.

Final scene:
wide devastation, nearly total,
like a purposeless war fought--
and lost.

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

gamboling like a deer
throwing up mounds of snow
excited dog

Sara McNulty - Staten Island, NY - sablonde49purple@gmail.com

Kindness always comes back...

white robes and top-hats
stillness in back yard
statues

Sara McNulty - Staten Island, NY - sablonde49purple@gmail.com

Heart of the Valley

Merced flows on,
she marks her own time in concert with
Mother Earth's glorious seasons.

Winter in Yosemite brings snowstorms--
children of ancient glaciers that carved
the holy valley long ago.

Mercer waxes during Spring's thunder and roar.
Cold surging waters sweep away forest debris,
clearing the way for Summer's gentler pace.

Under the hot sun, she wanes to a mere trickle.
During Autumn's glowing display, colorful leaves
glide upon her slow-moving journey.

Once again, she gently falls into Winter's sleep.
As a beating heart seeks solace in rest,
Merced slumbers under ice and snow.

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

“Curiosity kills boredom. Nothing can kill curiosity.” - Chinese fortune cookie

angel moved from spot
she looks off to side of house
sound of raucous raccoons

Sara McNulty - Staten Island, NY - sablonde49purple@gmail.com

The Road Home

In winter we leave the cabin in late afternoon, driving west towards the setting Sun. The winding road weaves around, allowing us to see the snow-covered mountains where we played the past week. The forest is thick with cedars, pines, redwoods, on both sides of Highway 4's winding descent through small towns--Arnold, Avery, Hathaway Pines. Family farms and small businesses join the road along with plenty of American flags. There are no traffic signals until we reach the town of Murphys.

The forest has dwindled away by the time the highway reaches the foothills--cattle country. The sky is slashed with hues of purple, rose, vermillion, below us deep violet silhouettes of the Coastal Mountains. We descend from the foothills towards the flat floor of the rural Central Valley. At first, it appears checkered with agricultural large squares. Some are empty--russet-colored soil at rest, some filled with unexpected native, green, winter grasses. As we continue, we see that some squares are filled with olive or almond trees, their bare arms reaching out.

West of the valley, the Sun continues its slow descent. Still-bright sunshine makes it hard to see the road ahead. We are grateful when the now copper Sun begins to slide behind the indigo profile of distant *devil mountain*. Mount Diablo swallows the Sun, while remaining sunbeams appear as a halo above the mountain, then they, too, fade away. The sky grows dark, save for the evening star, not a star at all, bright Venus.

We will return soon
forest and its animals
here I find my peace.

Sandy King - Lafayette CA - sandyaking@yahoo.com

The Indian Winter

Winter lovingly caresses and adorns his beloved
with flowers, bowers, snow, and mist she is hugged,
No dark, no dormancy, no loneliness, no despair;
the cold season here is all razzmatazz and fanfare.

There's a lilt in the cuckoo's call,
a wild mischief when squirrels play ball,
The proud peacock strut Oh, so vain!
The blinding plume like an actress' cape
as it moves royally of all it surveys!

Nature breathes easy, the summer is gone;
Dressed in fog, she lazes in the morn,

the warmth in the East, cold dew in the West;
merriments and fairs, every day is a fest!

Chrysanthemums, jasmine, aster,
calendula, dahlias galore,
marigolds, roses, larkspur,
pansies, petunias, and more;
the blinding blossoms, the colourful blooms,
the seeds aching to peek out of the wombs!

The half-open buds, the baby-soft leaves,
the house of Babel in the mulberry trees,
the merrily nodding flowers,
the flourishing, spilling bowers, and
the descent of rainbows in shrubs and arbors.

Dancing to Come as the dazzling lights shine,
the beautiful pledge 'I am yours and you are mine'
the marriage season and the feverish wedding dhols,
those welcome garlands and the meeting of the souls!

The bride awaits the groom and the union of the fates,
the once-in-a-lifetime moment that all gather to celebrate,
henna on the hands, roses in the cheeks,
the flutter in the bosom, the meeting after weeks,
the blush of the bride, the racing of the heart,
the heady music of baraat and 'till death do us part'

For beauty and abundance, gratitude aplenty
go winter go but do come again!

*(Glossary: Dhols: traditional musical instruments played during festivals and weddings
Baraat: the wedding procession led by the groom and his family)*

Manju Bal Krishna - India - mbalkrishna672@gmail.com

We are asking you to please forward this issue to one or more people you know who love Mother Earth. We believe Nature poetry is important to the well-being of the planet and to our well-being as a people. Just forward the email to them with a short note to open our attachment and enter into a world where Mother Earth matters. If we all work together, we can make a difference.

Be well, be warm, and keep writing and sharing,
Charles, Vivian, and Valerie Portolano, editors

**Time to share up to four of Your Winter themed poems
for The Weekly Avocet:**

We love previously published poems!

Please send your submissions to angeldec24@hotmail.com

**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 submissions to angeldec24@hotmail.com

Please put (early or late) winter/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 Winter 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

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**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.

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