

The Weekly Avocet - #527

January 8th, 2023

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

**bright moon in winter--
beams bathe tree, and black shadows
cut the smooth white snow**

Emily Harel - Becket, MA - emilyharel25@gmail.com



Submitted by Edwina Kadera

Windshield View

Recollections of that New Year's Eve afternoon, as dad drove our maroon station wagon.
Leaving Pittsburgh taking Route 80 was dad's straight shot home.
My eleven-year-old self was anticipating Dick Clark's year-end countdown.
Trying to find a less crackling radio station searching for my favorite songs.
Slightly hearing the wetness of the salted highway road.
Stopping at a trucker's haven for supper.
At first not paying any notice until dad told me to look up.
There was such a site to witness a doe with her two small fawns.
Trudging through the back parking lot.
Walking to our seats, I was still so mesmerized keeping my eyes fixed on nature's wonder.
Through the diner's plate glass window.
I did not hear dad order my meal.
I was in love with their big brown eyes, and their white tufted tails.
Never mind my musical selections.
All I could recall was that incredible vision.
Almost home, before that stroke of twelve midnight.
We had been blessed on that six-hour journey.
Being graced with the spiraling of winter's white snow.
Shining like millions of diamonds as we passed by empty pastures.
We finally made it home and just in time.
As "Auld Lang Syne," was ushering in another year.

Mary Anne Abdo - Scranton PA - Eirinn919@aol.com

Glass Crystals

Frost upon my windowpane, looking like crystal ferns.
As if Mr. Frost was drawing with his icy cold finger tips.
All at once the evening dew is now encrusted and in a frozen moment.
Wonderment and awe has captured my imagination.
Like a child with eyes opened wide.
Just staring at this masterpiece.
Sun is shining through this window view.
With slight colorized prisms.
Reaching from end to end.
Some of Mr. Frost's works of art are like etched needles.
With jagged crazy patterns.
He is also famous for crystalized feathers.
Free floating movement engraved for a short period of time.
For as the morning sun shines brighter.
All these masterpieces will melt away.
Watching the ferns, needles and feathers.
Disappearing into evaporated water droplets.

Mary Anne Abdo - Scranton PA - Eirinn919@aol.com

Hiking Tales and Myths

Finding myself among the trees and sounds of Frances Slocum State Park.
Winter's icy snow is crunching beneath my boots.
Bundling up as if I was in the Alaskan Tundra.
But yet I travel through, a Pennsylvania howling north wind.
Hiking the trail that Frances took, when she was held captive.
Over two and one half centuries ago.
Trying to imagine how she felt away from her family.
Hiding in that rocky cave above the lake.
Climbing into that slippery rock formation.
Hearing nothing but water dripping from cracking icicles.
Her vantage point is now my bird's eye view.
Overseeing evergreen trees as golden eagles soar.
While red tailed hawks scout out for their prey.
Sensing that Frances' spirit is watching me as a climb down from our view.
Slowing following trail after trail, imaging her steps in the cold.
I make my way across Abraham's Creek, were Frances was never seen in these parts again.
Eventually Frances was found.
She was a revered woman of the Miami Indian nation.
But "Young Bear" never wanted to return home.
Dwelling amongst the peaceful people.
Snow is softly falling knowing my journey is about to end
Sometimes I don't want to return home.
The invitation of winter's peace is too enticing.

Mary Anne Abdo - Scranton PA - Eirinn919@aol.com

A Different View

The view from space shows a jewel of a world.
Coral reefs sparkle under deep blue seas.
Golden sand dunes in the Sahara .
Photos have shown the top of the world looking down the Himalayas glowing in the sun.
But man is callus in the use of this planet.
Burning rain forests to gain farmland.
Drilling to find all the petroleum from the land.
Floating miles of plastic and debris.
Looking closer from the sky,
we see a haze of burning and pollution blurring the scene.
Our planet is fragile, it's the only one.
As good stewards, we must keep this planet for the children.
The planet is our home.
It cannot be replaced.

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

end of winter day--
golden light shimmers behind
the bare brown branches

Emily Harel - Becket, MA - emilyharel25@gmail.com

“The happiness of the bee and the dolphin is to exist. For man, it is to know that and to wonder at it.” - Jacques Yves Cousteau (Theresa Cancro - phoenixlady@comcast.net)

Mother Earth is Growing Old

When she was young, she could recover from human assaults.

But Mother Earth is growing old.

The healing trees grown to replenish the air cannot keep up with pollutants.

Her winter runoff has slowed and become clogged with debris.

Mother Earth is growing old.

Her rivers dump chemicals and waste into her oceans.

Large floating plastic waste, blocks the sun from penetrating the surface.

Mother Earth is growing old.

Like any of us, she needs care and help to become healthy and whole.

She is precious and without assistance, she will die.

... and so will we.

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

“Dolphin can lead us to an understanding of how to live in harmony with the twin needs of individuality and cooperation. Dolphin carries balance, peace, joy, compassion, love, and power.”

- Loren Cruden (Theresa Cancro - phoenixlady@comcast.net)

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

ice sheaths on branches--
crack, crash, smash through the silence
of dark winter night

Emily Harel - Becket, MA - emilyharel25@gmail.com

disconnect

a child of not so long ago
grubbed in the earth
gnawed on fresh-pulled
carrots with clumps of dirt
wiped off on his overalls

gouged canals in the mud
to engineer a puddle's draining
planted seed and watered
anticipating the yearly miracle
of sprout and growth

watched calves and kittens born
and boars scalded to remove rough hide
knew new life
and slaughtered death's sights
and sounds and smells

but now, his touch of life
is felt through plastic
or, worse, in digital unreality
as images or games
unliving

no wonder Mother Earth
staggers in abandonment
neglect and abuse where
her children know her
only as something
'out there'
to be used in greed

MaryJane Nordgren - Forest Grove, OR - maryjanenordgren@gmail.com

"Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts." - Rachel Carson (Theresa Cancro - phoenixlady@comcast.net)

feathers of snow fall--
the bare ground covered in the
white of wintertime

Emily Harel - Becket, MA - emilyharel25@gmail.com

“Someone asked me years ago why I write poetry? He thought I was kidding when I said, “To keep my mind from falling down the rabbit hole.” I wrote a novel once, took a year... it was a year of being locked up in a prison with the same walls that had no windows. It didn’t take a rock to see that if I wanted fresh vegetables growing in my mind constantly, poetry was the answer... no commitment of long months of riding the same ship until it reaches some port or other, a poem, an idea, a little shaping, voila! On to the next one.” - Ray Foreman

Appreciation

There is nothing quite so understood,
though overlooked,
in the human experience.
And though it is not everywhere,
there is nowhere that it cannot be.
I have heard of it being,
in Japan,
the glistening of a river
with a beautiful name.
It may also be,
in Colombia,
the way coffee tastes
when its entire production was by your hands.
I remember that,
in Charleston,
it was the contentment
of the basket makers at eleven in the morning.
And in Fresno,
it is the day you rediscover the mountains,
or the rise of dust
as you crunch across the dry ground at sunset.

It can be anywhere,
this appreciation--
this understanding in an instant
that life is worth its trouble:
in the smile of someone
you haven’t seen in the longest time,
and how through a window
in your favorite coffee shop
the sunlight falls across the girl beside you,
the girl with yellow hair
and an orange shirt,
and you almost feel a catch in your breath.

Steven Walker - Fresno, CA - halifaxsw@yahoo.com

Old peanut butter
I spread on the brick with seed
Jubilant birds feed

Kristin Ruth Lawrence - Sebastopol, CA - webwalker17@aol.com

“Poetry is life distilled.” - Gwendolyn Brooks

Snowed In

The ranch house sits in the valley
filled with blue-and-white dishes,
wooden antiques and a crackling fire.

Winter wisely waited to catch me by surprise.
An afternoon storm blew in, closing the road
so that cars couldn't get safely up the grade.

While white piles grace pine branches,
comforting blankets entice me to wile
away the day with Lucy, my Beagle-Basset.

She snuggles her nose underneath
the quilt and burrows at my feet.
Her nose cold like ice on my toes.

Jill G. Hall - San Diego, CA - jill@jillghall.com

We feel blessed to publish the best Nature poets in America.

The Old Crow Couple
Show at the farm each winter
They hop, squabble, love

Kristin Ruth Lawrence - Sebastopol, CA - webwalker17@aol.com

“Our task must be to free ourselves . . . by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and its beauty.” - Albert Einstein (Theresa Cancro - phoenixlady@comcast.net)

Icy Breath

As low clouds covered the sky like a dingy flannel canopy,
tiny feathers of snowflakes floated in the morning light.
A single gold leaf wedged between a section of my back deck
fluttered in the wind.
A flag on the porch across the way held in place by a metal pole
curls and unfurls on itself
both kissed by the same icy breath.

Dolores Cinquemani - Central Islip, NY - dcinquemani@optonline.net



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What does wind chill mean?

Wind chill doesn't refer to how cold it actually is. It's a measure of how likely it is that an exposed part of the body will get frostbite. [A Vox article explained](#) it like this: If it's 38 degrees Fahrenheit and the wind chill is 32 degrees Fahrenheit, that doesn't mean it feels like it's freezing. It just means the wind would cause an uncovered face to get frostbite quicker.

Turquoise ornament
Alone in the maple tree
Charlie Brown Christmas

Kristin Ruth Lawrence - Sebastopol, CA - webwalker17@aol.com

Winter World

Dawn splashes light
on frozen dew, when morning
wakens a shivering world
bedecks bare trees
in Mother-of-Pearl.

They shimmer and gleam
in the wind-chime woods
where the willow weeps
having shed her green gown

that tipsy Queen now wears
but a crown of icicles
dangling up-side down

yet she joins the choir
with her waterfall voice
to the tune of the wind
that runs its riffs of arpeggios
on its choice of harps.

Joan Higuchi

Snowflakes

drifting down
swirls around children
tongues outstretched

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

What is a bomb cyclone?

A barometric pressure drop that comes on quickly and hangs on in the middle of a low-pressure system creates what is known as a bomb cyclone. This can happen when cold and warm masses of air collide over warm water, causing a sudden intense weather system that can include strong winds, flooding, and even blizzards.



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Midnight Snack

tiny prints
cross the snowy yard
to seed pile

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

**“Now we are no longer great, just powerful. Our forests have become little bushes.” -
J. Glenn Evans - jge2@poetswest.com**

Morning Glow

dawn rises
displays white frosting
on the trees

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

Rent to Own

This morning he kept his distance,
did not cross that magic periphery,

lit off down the road when my dogs and I
got too close. There was a curtain of ice

from the freezing rain. It took me an hour
to realize who that Renard really was,

a guardian angel come at the worst time
in the six and a half years since father died.

Could it be he's been living all this time
just over the rise near the barn, watching

my children grow up and my hair and beard silver,
a *kitsune* come to Vermont, seeing

without being seen? Whose kits were those
my daughter discovered with purest delight

one spring a decade or so past?
In the classical Japanese

kitsu-ne means come and sleep
ki-tsune means always. My father knew

how to get you to relax and sleep, make
you feel every problem had an answer.

He's a *zenko* - one of those foxes
of the universe, looking down, saying

*you've been given two eyes, one to see with
and the other with which to overlook.*

There are plenty of people (including
a few in my own extended family)

who pay only lip service to that maxim.
Meanwhile, that fox keeps studying us

as we strain to see him. His winter red
hides him some, but he's definitely there.

(Renard is French for fox, a particularly wily fox, who appears in many folk tales.)

Jeff Bernstein - Woodstock, VT - jbernstein@hurricanelodge.com

“It is a delicious thing to write, to be no longer yourself but to move in an entire universe of your own creating. Today, for instance, as man and woman, both lover and mistress, I rode in a forest on an autumn afternoon under the yellow leaves, and I was also the horses, the leaves, the wind, the words my people uttered, even the red sun that made them almost close their love-drowned eyes.” - Gustave Flaubert

Snow and Ice

January heaps soft gobs of snow
upon the green spruce.
It rests, it clings to needled branches.
It swirls and dips, over and under
into airy crystallized snow-holes
and delicate cascading slides of flakes.
You quickly digitize the fairyland
before the photo trickles away.

On the roof, the weight of snow
collapses its own molecules
until an icy sheet forms atop the house.
During sun-warmed days
the constant drip
creates lines of long icicles.

As if playing xylophone,
a percussionist taps and raps
these icy columns with a broomstick.
The player tests all--
mind you, only once--
comparing resonance.
The repeated crash of cymbals sounds
in thick icicles hitting and shattering
against the ground.

Come late February
large floes of ice break loose
and scrape across roof shingles.
Earthbound, they gash
into snow, these heavy
wedges of ice pointing up,
giant shark teeth
that set the dog growling.

Mary Belardi Erickson - Kerkhoven, MN - cattailcreekfarm@hotmail.com

Late morning Winter Opera in the desert

Rumbling in the crevices between mountain peaks
an orange hue trumpets the dawn,
filling in the gaps
like jello dancing in a cake pan mold
as trees fan their branches in a silhouette salute.

Slowly, slowly it melts upward, absorbing the night,
lighting the stage.
The morning dew flavors the air
with the smell of fresh cut grass
and rose petal softness.
The geese are the first to speak up,
a long-necked choir in feathery robes
alerting the world to their intentions.
Soon, they're accompanied
by nature's woodwinds
as the air whistles through the clarinet leaves.

An aria of hummingbird wings
near the flowers
accompanies the morning's
choreography,
an avatar's ethnic
pollination dance.

The curtain fully raised,
the cast and crew in place;
A Deja vu moment all over again,
never the same, always the same,
forever beguiling
no matter how often it's played.

Howard Gershkowitz - Tempe, AZ - Rusel0630@gmail.com

Please be kind, write to each other...

HAIKU DEFINITION Haiku is an ancient unrhymed Japanese verse form. Generally written in three short lines containing a total of 10 to 17 syllables to convey a vivid message, Haiku typically contain a reference to nature. Haiku uses simple concrete images of things we can see, smell, taste, touch, or feel. The best haiku poems reveal the essence of a thing so clearly that the reader can experience the momentary scene or insight that inspired the author.

One of the greatest Haiku poets was the Samurai, Basho (1644-94). Basho's father was also a Samurai from the Iga province. To become a Samurai, Basho served a local lord who was fond of writing. Basho learned the style of writing Haiku, and wrote under the name, Sobo. During those years, Basho traveled throughout Japan writing and further developing the Haiku style. A few samples of Basho's haiku style are listed in the example section below.

Your poem should contain a sentence fragment (one line) and a phrase (two lines that complete a thought). The fragment can be either the first line or the third line. To keep your poem simple and direct, write in the present tense. Haiku typically do not make use of capitalization, punctuation, or titles.

Each traditional Haiku should contain a reference to a season, which indicates what season of the year the Haiku is set. For example, blossoms would indicate spring, snow would give the idea of winter and mosquitos would imply summertime. The seasonal word is not always that obvious, you might need to consider the theme of the poem to find it.

Structural Rules for traditional Haiku:

- Use exactly 17 syllables
- Avoid similes and metaphors
- Syllables are arranged in three lines of 5-7-5
- Refers to a season of the year

Clouds appear and bring
to men a chance to rest from
looking at the moon

The seasonal word in this Haiku is clouds, indicating the rainy season. Haiku poems are valued for their simplicity, openness, depth, and lightness.

English-language haiku have generally followed the form of five syllables used in the first line, followed by seven syllables for the middle line and five syllables for the third. However, English-language haiku no longer adhere to this syllable count and are therefore as brief as the poem needs to be while keeping to the fragment-phrase structure. In English language haiku, the middle line is typically longer than the first or third lines.

HAIKU EXAMPLES

an old silent pond
a frog jumps into the pond
splash, silence again

M. Basho

over the wintry forest
winds howl in rage
with no leaves to blow

N. Soseki

In the twilight rain
these brilliant-hued hibiscus
a lovely sunset

M. Basho

empty house
echoes of laughter
in the rotting wood

E. Onyan

shifting shadows
deep in the hills
a dog barks

A. McCrossen

a crow has settled
on a bare branch
autumn evening

M. Basho

summer breeze
the flutter of clothes
thrown over a chair

L. Santiago

howling monsoon
winds dust devil coming
my way western dreamy draw

J. Sachen

lost in the woods
only the sound of a leaf falling
on my hat

T. Kikusha

toward those short trees
we saw a hawk descending
on a day in spring

M. Shiki

Haiku: Lesson Plan for teachers, grades 1-5

Read sample poems aloud. See attached sheet of “Haiku Reference Guide” and read aloud the example Haiku poems. Let the students absorb the poems without much introduction or explanation. Read slowly and leave space between poems. Missing one word can mean missing the entire poem.

Ask the students what they noticed about the poems. Which poems did they like best? Why? Ask how they felt when they heard specific poems. For example, did they feel surprised by the frog about to belch a cloud? Or did they feel lonely when they heard the poem about a crow on a bare branch? Were they excited by the ticket to a ballgame tucked in the math book?

Talk about images. Ask the students if they know what the word “image” means. They may offer something like “pictures with words.” Point out that images can involve all of the senses. Images can come from experience in the present moment (for example, a pen on their desk or a bird outside the classroom window) or from memory or imagination. Images can make us feel emotions. Instead of saying, “how we feel by the images we choose” in a poem, we can show how we feel by which images we choose to include.

Take an “Image Journey.” Have the students imagine they are at the beach (or in the woods, on a desert mountain, etc...). Ask what they see, what they hear, what they smell, etc... If they can remember a specific moment on a particular day, this will help add detail to their images. Write their words on the board and point out that these are images. Ask them to also think of images that show us what season it is. For example, “a hole in my sweater” tells us it is cold outside and probably winter. Remind the students to be specific and use as many different senses as they can!

Have students try writing poems. Ask the students to select words from among the images to form poems. For example, a child might write the following while doing the above brainstorming exercise: “I see roadrunner tracks all over the dry desert floor. I smell dusty air. My feet are hot. The city park is deserted because it is summer.” Ask which words are most important and most interesting. We can leave out some words, such as, “I see” and “I smell,” and write a poem something like this:

roadrunner tracks
crossing the dry desert floor
my hot feet are bare

In the above example, the words “deserted park” and “dusty air” are also good sensory words, but the poem would be too cluttered if we tried to include everything in one poem. The job of a poet is to select from everything around us just the few things that make the most powerful poem. Instead of trying to fit too much into one poem, write more poems!

Have the students share their work. Have students say what they liked about their classmates’ poems.

Haiku: Lesson plan for teachers, grades 6 -12

Read aloud sample poems. Attached is a selection of various Haiku written by poets from Japan and across the United States, including a few from Arizona. If possible, project the poems and have the students take turns reading poems out loud. Read slowly!

Ask the students what they notice about the poems. What characteristics or common features do they see? List these common features on the board as the students say them. Fill in any additional features so there will be a list for later use. The list might look like this:

- Short: Haiku are very short poems! They are usually written in three (or fewer) lines. Haiku can be written in the traditional pattern of 5-7-5 syllables but they do not have to be. Most haiku in English have fewer than 17 syllables.
- One moment in time: Haiku generally describe one brief moment in time. For example, “one tombstone with a crow” tells us only about the moment of noticing the crow; we do not need to know what happened before or after.
- Images: The poems contain sensory images (not only visual, but involving other senses as well). For example, “echoes of laughter” and “metallic taste.”
- Seasonal references: You can often tell what season it is by the references in the poem. For example, “the coarse wool of my blanket” tells us it is probably winter.
- Everyday language: Haiku generally contain common everyday words. Nothing fancy or complicated!
- Surprise: There is often a break or shift in the poem which creates a moment of surprise or sudden awareness. This is often called the “aha” moment.

Brainstorm for ideas before writing complete haiku. This step can be done individually by each student or as a group exercise on the board. Ideally, images can be collected by taking notes “on location” at an art exhibit or outdoors, but it can also be done in the classroom. Ask students what they saw, heard, felt, etc... at a particular moment in time at a specific place. By making a list of images, emotional responses, and seasonal references, there is no pressure at this point to produce complete poems. Let the ideas flow.

Time to share up to four of your Winter 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 send your submission 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 - City/State - email address under your poem. No Zip codes.

Please send your poem in both the body of an email and an attachment, **no pdf file.**

We look forward to reading your Winter submissions...

We feel blessed to get to publish the best Nature poets in America

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 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.

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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.

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