

The Avocet

A Journal of Nature Poetry

Summer - 2023



Enjoy your stroll through our pages to find yourself in
nature...

The Avocet

A Journal of Nature Poetry

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The Avocet is a quarterly publication devoted to poets and readers who find meaning in their lives from the world of Nature; poets who write of the beauty, the peace, and the fury of Nature in all its glory...

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Sunny Solstice Morning

From my kitchen window, I see the morning sun
burning away lacy wisps of clouds.
Promises of a long warm day, what will I see outside?

Small birds gather at my feeder: pine siskin, finches, sparrows.
Watch out! Here come bold, noisy jays.
Smaller birds disappear when a Cooper's hawk glides overhead.

A bluebelly lizard darts under my roses, then peeks out.
He spies a sunny rock nearby and jumps on board
to soak up the warmth all around.

Plump, black carpenter bees browse through my flower beds,
joined by honeybees and hummingbirds.
Enough summer bounty amongst the blossoms for all.

A small group of blacktail deer graze in wild blackberries.
Under shady trees, they drink cool creek water,
while they watch me, watching them.

I see my two dogs sunbathing out on the lawn.
They are vigilant with deer so close,
yet they know they mustn't bark at these interlopers.

I go outside to join the creatures in my garden.
Fragrances of mint, roses and lavender fill the air.
What more gifts will this wondrous day bring?

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

Rain

When the rain falls
And the thirsty ground sponges it up
And the roots seeking it soak themselves in it
Even inside my house
I feel the "ah" of thirst slaked.

Tasha Halpert - North Grafton, MA - tashahal@gmail.com

I am the one
who watches the lunar cycle wax and wane,
stops to gaze at the full moon ascending above the treetops,
mesmerized by twinkling stars and steady glow from planets;
lays in an open meadow hoping to see the Pleiades meteors
charge across summer's night sky.

I am the one
who seeks solitude on a hike to an evergreen forest,
deeply inhaling fragrances of pines, cedars, redwoods;
photographs whimsical algae, fungus, lichen;
who quietly watches many-hued birds go about their day
red shouldered hawks, golden eagles, blue grouse,
mountain quails dressed in buff and blue, lazuli buntings.

I am the one
blessed to see mama doe with her Spring-born twins
as they daintily step towards river's edge;
hopes a lumbering black bear will make an appearance in
dwindling early evening light; sits outdoors, listening for Great
Horned Owls calling out to mates in the coming dawn.

I am the one
who climbs into the highlands in July, loitering for hours amidst
blooming wildflowers--
Alpine Lupine, Columbine, Penstemon, Shooting Stars;
hikes miles to visit a high alpine lake, to watch clouds form
above the crest of the mountain range.

I am the one
who holds a piece of quartz in my hand, as if it were a precious
diamond; marvels at the wonder of the birth of mountains;
thinks about great seas morphing over time into tall craggy peak
delighted that long ago ice shields formed our beautiful alpine
meadows.

I am the one
who feels most alive amongst everyday miracles provided by our
beloved planet Earth.

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

It's found only in a floral crown at the top of an iconic green tower. Saguaro blossoms white night dazzlers designed in every aspect to draw attention to its flower. A flashing signal of mystical strength sends a beacon, a light into the desert night announcing its bloom.

It's only open for less than 24 hours! Starting after sunset it propels the first wave of perfumed air: strong, sweet ripe melon scent that assures the frenzied descent of long-nosed bats by the midnight hour. Devouring the magical golden powder digging for nectar the bats alert bees.

Next, swarms of honeybees storm the top of the tower their buzzing setting off electrifying power. It lights up the desert night with silhouettes of this magnificent desert cactus flower until the morning hour. Now it's time to secure the second wave, a nectar haze compels a spectacular rush of white-winged doves.

They swoop in encircling the tops of multiple plants ensuring showering enough golden pollen for every flower. Each bloom opens in succession until the cycle of pollination is completed to preserve the keystone cactus. The promise of ruby red pear fruit will enshrine the tower transforming it into a cathedral of power open all hours.

Vivian Portolano - Fountain Hills, AZ - cportolano@hotmail.com

Patience Lessons

Old petals withered,
New petals unopened still.
I wait to become what will be.

Tasha Halpert - North Grafton, MA - tashahal@gmail.com

**If you like a poem, please let the poet know it...
Thank you.**

Yes! Eighty degrees
No longer just a promise
Summer is fulfilled

Though I do not swim
The beach for me *is* summer
Special kind of heat

Freedom in the sun
Summer: season of my youth
Three whole months no school

Shirts and skins the game
No shame suntanned, youthful, trim
Boundless energy
B-ball now strictly indoors
Played on my big-screen TV.

Fred Simpson - Beacon Falls, CT - simpsonfny@gmail.com

Locust Leaves

the lusty locust
has deceptively
tiny leaves
easily moved in just a breeze
dance when the air moves
thus, this mighty deciduous
needs less than seasonal change
to announce its presence to the world
here I am
this is me
I live and breathe
and hear and smell and see
I know you
better even than you may think you know me

Little locust leaves outside my window
dance slowly in a gentle breeze
When the wind picks up dramatically, they do the Charleston.

Kate Potter - Allentown, PA - kppipeline@gmail.com

On the cracked sidewalk,
littered with discarded needles,
smashed bottles, and old tires;

daffodils pushed through,
resplendent in their
glamorous yellow coats,

to be plucked by teeny
chubby fingers nestled
in torn work gloves,

to be gently tucked into a
mason jar, filled with
water,

formerly a home for
canned tomatoes.

Breathe

One early summer day, I took a walk in a field of wildflowers.
Nestled near the fragrant asters was a solitary hammock, an
Invitation.

I pulled my weary bones up, nestled in, and opened my soul to the
dance.

Yellow and black were the hues of the little apis who played in the
glen, and called the flowers their friends.

Like a prickly cactus, and me, they were to be gazed upon, yet
handled with care.

Beauty in the fragile wings covered with pollen, providing life's
sustenance, a kind of magic.

I closed my eyes, and for the first time in months,

remembered
to
Breathe.

*(Published by Sequoyah Cherokee Journal - nominated for
Pushcart prize)*

Becky Parker - Lyles, TN - tenndaisy@live.com

Oh, warm breath of day
sky of periwinkle cushions quilted trees
patches of orange, yellow and red
with their nervous limbs.

Here in the steep of hills
leaves lick like flames
and sunflowers burst in seed
calling forth birds.

In this place I have forgotten
the accent of bluegrass
my mouth has gone blind
away from the bedrock of limestone.

Through the hidden pasture
gallops a mare like my heart
and the brook harmonises
with the call of the woods.

Here without a nation
the wild trees are uninhibited
by space or time but sway to
the rhythmic rotation of the sun and moon.

Oh, warm breath of day
belonging to no one
baptise us in a blast of warmth
and let material fall from our trunks

sheltering us in your home.

TAK Erzinger - Walensee region, Switzerland -
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Gratitude for sky

Experience the sky's vastness
Feel your own vastness
Become at one with the sky
You and the blue sky are one.

Carol Bezin - Arkdale, WI - angelbezin@gmail.com

All things in nature are interconnected:
 quilt of life--
 below, quiet roots stitched in soil and
 breaking ground without being noticed
 above, skeins of geese in a turning day
 some believe animals feel no emotion
 but they have not seen a calf frolic on mild
 sunny afternoon
 nor have they listened to the birds at dawn
 and their lilt of joy
 here are beings persistent in existence
 anchored in a cycle, the world,
 acceptance as it is
 between land and sea
 I cannot save it all
 I bear witness, a mere speck yearning for its
 protection.
 What can I do with my worry?
 The oldest generations are being destroyed
 even little shifts seismic in the field
 outside my door.
 All the way from the Atlantic I've
 heard the whales weep under a canopy of stars
 long removed from the coast
 I try to imagine living in harmony
 without waste and want of things
 under the lazy eye of a weeping sky.

TAK Erzinger - Walensee region, Switzerland -
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Glory In the Rain

Morning Glories in the rain
 Bloom against the fence, their bright blue
 Trumpets open to the weeping sky.
 How bold they seem;
 Neither cloud nor rain can dim
 Their Morning Glory.

Tasha Halpert - North Grafton, MA - tashahal@gmail.com

the wind in its bluster
and greed toppled
the young tomato plant,
narrow-bottomed pot
a real pushover

soil spilled onto the wood deck
branches sprawled across
whimpering basil siblings,
silent witnesses
to the tussle

the tomato plant no match
for pelting rain, taunting
thunder, the gale clawing at
green buds tucked inside
a canopy of leaves

time to let go, pierce the earth
loosen soil, allow roots
unswaddled, unsupervised
to reach their depth,
form a ballast

to support the weight
of growing up, learning
the sweep of bend and bow
to defend hard-won treasures

Emily-Sue Sloane - Huntington Station, NY -
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Gratitude for trees

Experience the strength of the trees
Feel your inner strength
Become at one with the tree
You and the oak tree are one.

Carol Bezin - Arkdale, WI - angelbezin@gmail.com

the butterfly, or,
are they so plentiful
you do not see them
individually?
Each butterfly exists in its
own unique way,
it gently flutters or lights
on a leaf, an exquisite display.
A portrait artist paints for hours
the live image he sees.
The eyes, in particular, are windows
to what lies within.
The heart-shaped design of
white dots on the darkest black
wings of one butterfly, with
thread-thin antennae, is a
finite filigree. Embrace this
one butterfly to fully marvel.
Miraculous creation,
we pause and see,
oblivious to daily onslaught
of news outside nature.
Take time to see, embrace
be present.

Sharley Bryce - Napa, CA - detailsu@comcast.net

Jacaranda Tree

A heady perfume in late June
wafts down the block of my Florida house.
Never did I scent a more heavenly fragrance.
At the end of our street stood a tall tree,
Splendid in lovely orange blossoms,
gifting our world with radiant bliss,
as though she were a gorgeous goddess
spreading her effusiveness with benign spirit.
Queen of Spring and Summer, she remains resplendent
in her ginger floral attire.
How intoxicating to breathe her breath.

Leonard Tuchyner - Barboursville, VA - tuchyner5@aol.com

Late afternoon
an empty cicada skin
clings to cedar bark.

Dodging potholes
alert to these small dangers.
Country living.

Heat is quiet.
Dust stirs in the pasture.
Chickens stay inside.

Deer ate the dahlias.
They sneak through the manzanita
but I see them.

All quiet in
the heat. I read to pass the
time and try to sleep.

In a moment wild
cat decides being tame
is a comfort.

Evening chills all
but the mosquitoes
they love me so.

Morning belongs to
magenta gladiolus--
such intensity.

Lately bumblebees
cannot resist lavender
blossom's fresh fragrance.

An argument of
ravens about eating corn
in the chicken's yard.

I gaze at Cuyamaca Peak
where slow clouds gather
and stir, white and somber
gray fluffs that tease.
How I wish they'd
open and pour.
Hawks screech, soar
from oak to oak.
Squirrels scurry going
nowhere in a hurry.
It's even too hot for
rattlesnakes, their black
diamond backs cluttered
under rocks. Even birds
reduce their flying pace.

I hike to the ridgetop,
ceanothus and sugar
bushes shriveled,
chemise--fireweed
abundant. I sigh down
over parched valley,
return to the house.
At dusk steamy sage scent rises
as raindrops hit gravel road,
pick up speed, cool the evening,
while sultry sun sinks west into
ocean less than an hour away.

Summer Comes to Borrego

Invisible heat approaches
like bleary eyes
in an oasis blue sky.
Soft sand underfoot,
wildflower and cactus
blooms begin to fade.
Days lengthen and
sunsets leisurely fall
inviting the hot full
moon to rise above soon.

Dust swirls to smother crops and sky
 western Kansas abandons 60% of wheat crop,
 drought maps gone the color of fire; here at home
 500 onions wither unable to convert moist sets
 to viable plants, no damp to draw down root, anchor top.
 In California tomato prices soar impacting cannery, store;
 fruit once filling truck and railcar drying up
 in no longer fertile valleys.

Here as I clean the barn, I box up even
 the bio-safe-*in case*-remedies for use
 against strands of poison ivy, bug infestations
 --all destined for the toxic waste safety disposal site.
 Even one contaminated worm fed
 to a baby bluebird can kill and with
 bird populations dwindling, a single loss
 one too many.

So, we'll short-mow poison ivy, hand pick
 tomato worms, tossing them into the dogwood stand
 to be food for thrush and mockingbird.
 We'll companion plant around cucurbits and
 deep mulch to hold precious water
 remembering the impact of last year's drought:
 18" okra instead of towering plants high overhead
 no peppers able to bell, jalapeños sans heat.

So, join us in our belief that even one
 tiny truck farm can make for a safe haven;
 start today to make your space a micro-sanctuary,
 visit or start a community garden but begin to do
 something to create your legacy where
 all can breathe, plant, and celebrate our earth.
 Make a difference today for tomorrow.

Pat Anthony - Fontana, KS - metpvan@gmail.com

under the maple robins hide catching rain

Norma Bradley - Asheville, NC - normabradley1@gmail.com

Sitting on the edge of the shore,
the cool lake water laps over her feet.
As the water slowly creeps over her feet,
she pays no attention to the coolness.
Her attention does not go out
to the boaters or skiers on the lake.
Instead, it goes out in the other direction.

Through the loud roar of the motors,
the quiet chirping of birds
overwhelm her thoughts.
As she watches the two birds
frolicking in the treetops above her,
she begins to think about the world around.

Of all the commotion we cause
and with all the destruction that has followed,
the world has changed for the worse.
We have learned to adapt to everything
that we have done to the once
beautiful land that we took over.

Through all the commotion and destruction,
somehow the world's beauty has remained.
The only way to actually view this beauty,
you have to distance yourself.
Distance yourself from the
hard to miss, manmade obstacles
taking the beauty away from this world.

Amy Hrynchuk - Sherwood Park, Alberta -
ahrynchuk_poetry@yahoo.ca

Flower

It has grown straight up
Rising from rock and moisture
A spire of leaves
Crowned with a single flower
That bends with the weight of its opening.

Harold Sneide - Indian Hills, CO - haroldsneide@comcast.net

Time ticks away in heartbeats
of passing days from the morning croak
of the bullfrog to the night call of cicadas.
Haunting shadows fill moonlight between
slats in blinds, unrecognizable,
attempt to remind me who I am.
Ghosts pitch baseballs on life's battlefields.
Dead poets whisper, to empty thoughts
onto the page fresh from the imagination.
I hear your voice echo my name,
rub the sleep from my eyes,
challenged to remember.
And then, soundless, I look outside,
see your face in a daffodil glow
from buried mysteries of ageless secrets...
knowing you here, and I, always with you.

Eyes in Darkness

When I walk alone at night
I follow a path seemingly circular
cut out of nature's forest
and occasionally take a detour
lifting branches to clear my head
kicking through ground cover.
I ask myself the same question,
Why?
Is there something here for me?
When I first hear the sound
of an owl... I pause, stunned.
It understands.
I don't understand a hoot
of wisdom it offers me.
I think of finding my way out of the dark,
but no longer can see.
The stars have stopped following me.

Robert Savino - West Islip, NY - dynsus@aol.com

winding through the bamboo a cathedral at the lagoon

Norma Bradley - Asheville, NC - normabradley1@gmail.com

Summertime breezes opening and closing that tattered old
 Wooden gate. Going inside my secret garden.
 That lair underneath my own evergreen tree.
 A warbling and frantic chirping, garnered my attention.
 Amongst the tan fallen pine needles. An injured baby robin
 frantically searching for a way back up the Nest.
 Its little wing entangled under the tree bark.
 Running as fast as my four-year-old body would carry me back to
 Our kitchen. Shouting, "Mommy, mommy, come quick, a
 Wounded bird is in the pine tree."
 Mom leaped into action, apron and all.
 Crouching down, mom gently pulled the tree bark away from my
 Patient.
 This small creature started to hop up and down with freedom's
 Delight.
 But still shocked and dismayed with his precarious situation.
 I sprang into action to prepare a dish of bread and water.
 For my newfound friend.
 I made it my mission to nurse him back to health.
 You see the very next day he was gone and happily singing from
 The nest above.
 Memories like these never fade away.
 They can be written as part of a book.
 For they are shared by one and all to read.

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

Time, #3

Red buds, baby cows
 Dogwoods
 Apple tree blossoms; birds nesting in the barn
 Magnolia, Honeysuckle, Daylilies
 Jumping frogs
 Baby birds with mouths open, waiting
 for mom and the food
 First baby turkeys of the season
 Last cutting of the first hay, by round bales
 bringing the same magic each year
 and a new calf.

Joseph Murphy - Ocala, FL - joseph.f.murphy@vanderbilt.edu

Nature performs a ritual
concerto of red cardinals
and red-breasted robins
birdsongs before dawn.

Daybreak.
Early summer landscape
permeated by a hot breeze
a short gust, sporadic puffs
intense rain
on yellow zinnias.

Japanese maple tree is
A crimson waterfall
of intricate cut leaves
splashed onto stony ground
conceals hidden mourning dove
crouched silently in shadows
spreads sturdy grey wings low
shelters her nest.

Evening.
Wild plants flourish
like an invasion
in a wind-swept vortex
preoccupied with infiltration
planting and sowing
the nightly routine.

Virginia Creeper vines twist around
sensitive wild pink peonies
all-night showers emboldened
the graceful bright green
Lady ferns saturated
fed by the routine
concoction of a
summer thunderstorm.

Lynda McKinney Lambert - Ellwood City, PA -
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Leaves spill golden light
rustling softly as
a baby's breath. Liling
lullabies leap from
avian throats. You
are in the woods, welcomed

by fully feathered trees.
Here, a daisy smiles, there,
purple wildflowers toss
their heads, twigs crunch
under hiking feet.

You pull out your camera,
then put it away, not wanting
to miss a scarlet-tipped wing,
or the stunning markings of
weathered tree art. You sit down

on smooth round rock, drink
cool water, chew some seeds,
and fill your mouth with globules
of red grapes. Out of the
corner of your eye you spy a

small striped animal tiptoeing
across the rock, a chipmunk
joins you, and quietly, you set out
seeds and nuts for him. Each
of you are silent, amicable companions
on this summer day.

Sara McNulty - Staten Island, NY - sablond49purple@gmail.com

drowsy with sultry heat
waiting for the pause between
each coo of a mourning dove

Susan M. Surette - Cotuit, MA - suesurette@gmail.com

They wobble down the sky
on woozy wings, ragtag
revelers leaving a bar
high on spirits and unsure legs
they cling to every bush and tree
as if they can't sustain
even their own weight
but they have far to go
before they alight.

Their legions fill the air
clutter the garden
litter the lawn
clog the hedge row.
With a thirst for nectar
and a penchant for sleep
they monopolize
every blooming thing,
their beauty sears.

Different from others
this day is holy,
noon-light consoles
sun-sweet and warm,
the wind is remiss
and it's perfectly clear,
no chant is in order,
no incense required,
no wise men indeed.

Peter Leverich - Manhasset, NY - peterl@techsoftware.com

Garden Theory

In the summer heat
we work hard to keep up with the flowers.
Yet we work harder
to keep up with the weeds.

Kathleen Schrum - Spokane, WA - joeeygirl@comcast.net

Weather is soft today
 There's roundness in the air
 a dewy dilution of crispness
 sky Caribbean blue
 cresting with cumulus waves
 a cloud-surfer's summer come true.

Weather is sheer today
 There's subtlety in the light
 a burnished blurring of edges
 the point across the bay
 cast shadowy in relief
 beyond that deepening mist.

Weather is sluggish today
 There's solace in the warmth
 the balm of tempered sun
 scented wind rumples the bay
 muted and dulcet
 like rose petals fallen.

Peter Leverich - Manhasset, NY - peterl@techsoftware.com

Sandcastles in the Air

Life should be like
 a garden by the shore:
 scent of lavender and roses
 in counterpoint to salty tang,
 a barefoot stroll on new mowed grass
 among the blossoms--morning glories
 to moon flowers--seeing light
 dapple through branches
 as leaves ruffle in sea breezes.

In languorous afternoon shade,
 sit reading, sip pale wine, get tipsy
 on heady poems. When
 dusk comes, watch fireflies
 twinkle back at low hung stars.

Katherine A. Hogan - Forest Hills, NY - ednastv@aol.com

Gentle day with light breeze--
whispering leaves on Elm and Sycamore,
warm and sunny bright
a gentle day and light.

Calm and safe day--
quiet, easy-going
no crowds, no clouds,
no loud or strident sound.

Pleasant day--
for reading, writing and such
a day without fear
no hunger, violence, or death.

Day of contentment--
of peaceful reflection and musing
without rancor or remorse
no past regret, no worrisome tomorrow.

Gentle day, rare and beautiful thing--
with life lived in the here and now,
in no other time, no other place,
only in this, this tranquil moment, caught forever
in the slow-running amber of time,
on a gentle day with light breeze.

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

Friendship

To see over the fence
and make a new friend
the sweet pea climbed the sunflower.
They both enjoyed the summer view.

Kathleen Schrum - Spokane, WA - joeygsgirl@comcast.net

I climb the limestone stairs
through an arch in rock,
into the earth's womb.
I pass through to a surprise,
"George loves Lisa" is painted on a wall.

I wonder, did he ever tell her?
Did she ever know or think of him,
raise a brood of screaming children?
Did they kiss near wild ginger
above the stony apse?

Did lady's slipper orchids adorn
their meeting place
where deer drink from rocky cisterns?

Did their love wither
like maidenhair fern,
delicate as English Lace?

The symbols have outlived the moment.
There is only today,
only the murmur of water underground,
my finding one trickle into a pool.

I never knew this George or Lisa.
The rock bears their names in silence,
names the stream forgot long ago.

Ray Zimmerman - Chattanooga, TN - znaturalist@yahoo.com

forceful ocean wind
pushes at my whole body
pelican sits still

Carol Bezin - Arkdale, WI - angelbezin@gmail.com

**If you like a poem, please let the poet know it...
Thank you.**

When I lie down, the firs shake green fans, flash jade and ink
under gray a knocking branch reminds me I'm alive with the sky
always at my feet.

When I sleep next to the ocean, the sky wraps me in a banner of
stars that lead me back to a cold river in the desert, Milky Way
reflection: diamonds in a flat of sand, that glimmer of possibility.

The sky is at my feet when I lie in the grass of a meadow,
watching birds etch lines like ballads, hearing bees hover,
resting my hand in the bucket of blackberries that wait for my
mouth.

The sky is always at my feet, the crown of a favorite fir now
crashed to the ground, orange throat split in a thousand splinters,
scent like lemons, like ants, like vinegar and raisins, the branches
where a barred owl watched last winter, splayed in gorgeous
calamity amid fern fronds and whips of young vine maple.
Though this tree will never again shade me, it has broken open
light, another bit of the blue and white cloud-scarred sky that lies
below my life.

The sky is always at my feet.

Jessica Letteney - Vancouver, WA - jessicabletteney@gmail.com

Blue Miracles

In July the first tentative blossoms opened.
My heart sang with delight.
This will pass, I thought.
I'll get used to them, I told myself.
Soon they'll become
Commonplace as dandelions
I said as days went by.
Yet each summer morning
I still greet with joy
The new Morning Glories
That open up each day.
I call them Blue Miracles.

Tasha Halpert - N. Grafton, MA - tashahal@gmail.com

Morning

Born from a blossom,
now coated in satin,
the globe of a plum knocked my brow.
Rose and green, rounded from rain,
this one sticky with sugar, burst from its skin.
I draw up my shirttail,
grab armfuls of summer,
line up the booty on the scarred yellow table.

Noon

I am drawn to the blackberries that
cross in constellations of thorny canes.
With my careful bare arm I reach,
fold fingers over terminal fruit,
drop drunken berries
on my dog's purpling tongue.

Evening

The chickadee burring in the branch above brushes the hot blue
sky.
This meadow is a time machine:
the apple tree that clasped the crescent moon last night,
now frames the gathering clouds.
I loudly suck stardust from my fleshy fingers,
pray my gratitude into the galaxies that lend light and time to
bud, berry, bird, stalks of grass brushed in gold,
and the scat of coyotes embossed with teeth and bones.

Jessica Letteney - Vancouver, WA - jessicabletteney@gmail.com

The Sparrows Fall

The sparrows fall from the skies
They close their wings and drop
Opening them at the last possible moment,
Then turning to rise to the eaves and branches.

Dropping again they search the ground anew
Coming to rest on the fence posts.

Harold Sneide - Indian Hills, CO - haroldsneide@comcast.net

A line of six on the milkweed
stems, thin, brown, papery
some sitting up and down, some
side to side, swaying softly
in summer's heat and sticky
humidity, I watched their
progress in becoming butterflies
excitedly, wonderous stages of
life until the first one started
to crack open the pod, spindly
legs peeking out a little at a
time, slowly, I resisted the urge
to help him, claw, and climb, he
made progress until I could see
flashes of orange and shiny black
clearly, five more at different
stages began to evolve, fascinated,
I just watched, out he came, the
torn, scratchy pod dangling, taking
off in the hot air, landing softly
on my arm, pausing, waving his legs,
as if to say to me, "Summer is so good
to us," he rose and flew away, dipping
sailing away with the others
following in the shimmering sun.

Dianna Walston - Kokomo, IN - cportolano@hotmail.com

In His Arms

I felt safe from summer storms:
roaring thunder, lightning so close,
wind, rain, and hail pelting the house.
Now, he's gone -- I'll weather summer storms
with the memory of his loving arms.

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

“The difference between the man who just cuts lawns and a real gardener is in the touching...” Ray Bradbury, Fahrenheit 451

Not as romantic as Monet’s haystacks
at sundown, this mound of straw stippled
with orange rind and lettuce leaves curling
into paisley shapes against a mat of
woven browns and tans.

The garden fork plunges deep into new compost.
Its tines upchuck damp clods, expose hidden life,
little sprouts from refrigerator refuse, wriggles
of pinkish corkscrews that incubated over winter.
Months later, June teems with juice.

When sluicing last night’s rainwater over
the pile, her nose tingles, detects onion within
this layered stew she’s stirred. Who knows
the depth of this gravied casserole of humus,
simmering with nourishing promise?

After forking grains of new-formed dirt into the wheelbarrow,
she wobbles over to the rose bed, left untended, to make amends.
Touching mouse ears of red-tinged leaves that sprout from canes
of green, she turns to dump her load, to invigorate the old.
Slowly, the cycle revolves.
A thorn draws lifeblood.

Judith Youngers - Comfort, TX - Writingjudi8@icloud.com

Summer, Mid-Term

Tulip trees in bloom, two odd
magnolia blossoms, one odd wisteria flower.

Baby turkeys and cows growing up.
More frogs jumping across the roads at night.

Mr. Fat Belly, the Blue Heron, always
about fishing.

The crooked apple tree
adorned with fruit, protected by the seed ticks.

Roses in third bloom.

Joseph Murphy - Ocala, FL - joseph.f.murphy@vanderbilt.edu

Childhood summer nights of long ago were ideal if the Upper-Midwest was where you called home. At dusk crickets and frogs arose in progressive vocalizations with their cricketing and croaking while the mourning doves--who weren't sad at all--hummed their harmonic tone-poems sweet as any lullaby ever heard by a new-born babe. When the last shades of an orange and red sunset gave way to the first star shining above, the lightning bugs ventured out--their little lanterns guiding the way for the moon to show its phase whereupon a passel of bright-eyed kids would call for a game of "Starlight, Moonlight." Later, exhausted from the running and hiding from siblings and pretend ghosts, those children would lie on their backs on a blanket placed over dewy grass and become utterly gobsmacked by the Aurora Borealis dancing in the northern skies above them in a grand finale so magnificent they'd carry that image with them for decades upon decades living thousands of miles away: As they reached old age the memory of their childhood in the Upper-Midwest on a summer night was about as good as summer nights ever got.

Sunflower Summer

Remember that summer while driving through
Kansas where the road cut a swath through
the sunflower bloom? To the right the flower
heads were seen soaking up their lifeblood--
the sun. To the left they'd turned their heads
away from us as if we'd intruded upon the
essence of some kind of private ritual.
Which--of course--we probably had.

Julie K. Caulfield - Beaverton, OR - jcaulfield436@gmail.com

across the tundra
sunflowers hug warming earth
marmots chirp warnings

Vaughn Neeld - Cañon City, CO - vaughnneeld@hotmail.com

A large crowd gathers in a natural amphitheater for an outdoors concert of the symphony. The mood is mellow, the people relaxed.

On a hillside, ten thousand tiny beetles kindle their lanterns with luciferin and oxygen and fame up into a dazzling display of gold and green.

The beautiful emanations from the symphony inspire the lightning bugs, as they are known here in the Midwest, to mystically translate, transform and triangulate the notes into refulgent expressions of love.

Children scamper from the audience to gather in the glowworms, holding each fragile body tenderly in their hands. The insects wink on and off, then finally flutter away.

At night's end, the orchestra plays an encore: Mozart. The fireflies swarm from their hiding places and descend onto the crowd; then when the music concludes, ten thousand lightning bugs rise and in a glowing cloud escape back to the niches from which they first arose.

Bill Tope - Wood River, IL - billtope1954@gmail.com

Squirrel

A squirrel is flowing over the grass
Rising and falling like a wave
As it reaches into the forest.

Harold Sneide - Indian Hills, CO - haroldsneide@comcast.net

The light we spied in the granite & waters of Tioga
Spilled in indigo glacial milk
The light we spied in the snow of summer
In miles of climbing crunchy white
The light we spied in packs heavy with laughter
In appetite, freeze dried food
The light we spied in blossom & stream
Under disk sparkling, twinkle
At the strange little lake
The light we spied through breeze, trees, & eddy
The spellbinding light we spied took our words in the dark.

Yosemite Ending?

There really is no ending in Yosemite
How could there be?
We are still kids
Coming every summer
Lucky feet & hands scraping granite
Making friends fast
We are still teens
Sweet buds in the breeze
Scouting for routes untouched, romance
We are adults
Adding to our families, tables, & flames
We are aging now
Tasting change, casualty
This place has brought out our best
Seen every grey valley
Mountain luminous

Our Yosemite times here will somehow never end...

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

summer moon rides high
light loiters on desert floor
lizard closes eyes

Vaughn Neeld - Cañon City, CO - vaughnneeld@hotmail.com

Scarlet tanager flashes through forest green.
Low over Hemlock Creek, a heron glides,
blue-gray feathers under sky turning leaden,
the deeper hue of the water absorbing
every shade of blue, reflecting
black and silver back to the heavens.
Smoke from a campfire rises with the melody
of a Native American flute, plaintive
on this still summer afternoon. Quickly
smothering flames, we walk to our cars,
dodging scattered raindrops,
safe, ahead of the storm,
yet longing to be outside
for the flash of lightning,
the clash of thunder,
the roar of rushing water.

The Wisconsin River

An enormous black serpent,
the Wisconsin River
flows under bridges.
Cement walls discourage gawkers
and interstate drivers pass unaware
over the vital presence.
Eagle soars high above,
and no one slows to take note
of white flashes on tail and head,
signaling the king of the sky.
Downriver, relaxed crowds
gather on the grass
for a picnic lunch
and a jazz serenade.
Riders on paddleboards
tackle the choppy waves,
push against the current,
feel the force of life
beneath their feet.

Hot July days followed by thunder heads
And rainbows if the sun comes peeking out.
Past their bloom, folded damp spring blossoms
Nestle to the ground near seeds prepared to sprout.

Families gather with swimsuits, and iced tea,
Around inflated warming backyard pools.
Butter based chicken roasts on charcoal grills,
Waiting to be turned with father's shiny tools.

Birds watch safely in the wings. Gray squirrels
Welcome gentle fireflies in the growing dusk,
Luminescence jars clamped in tiny hands
Added to small dolls made of dried cornhusks.

Picnics end with tomorrow's early dawn
To welcome forth another summer day
That stretches into August with more time
For hide-n-seek, to swim, romp, and play.

Bless the memories of my youth before
Time and age must settle in
Along with dreams of beans and corn
And butter dripping from my chin.

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

Summer Sea Reverie

Climbing into a boat on a moonlit dock,
I sit, take up oars, start rowing.
Navigating moonlit waters,
I feel the sea breeze, salt spray,
hear waves lap against the boat.
Not knowing what lies ahead,
I'm content in the here and now.

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

It's that magic time, right before the twilight
when you'll see the fairies start to emerge
lounging in radiant phosphorescent light
sipping a secret elixir of sweet nettle tea
from tiny translucent cups
I sit motionless,
hoping to see them take their luminous flight
they are waiting for the fireflies to arrive,
so, everyone can shape shift and change the entire sky
to look like the ceiling of a banquet hall
within a giant boreal forest mansion
lit by thousands of miniature chandeliers.
I startle as hundreds of tiny hands
begin to throw glitter dust
of every color into the air,
momentarily brightening the obscuridad of my dull life.
I spy on a group of baby fairies
sleeping in high tree branches, not to be disturbed.
I yearn to absorb even a scintilla of their powers.
I am transfixed by their angelic faces
and delicate gossamer wings
I ache to ascend with them
to escape my sequestered shadow life
in the last brief moments before darkness falls,
a colorful borealis of shining twinkling light appears
as a magic wand waves all the stars across the sky
to summon the moon.
In unison, the fairies take flight,
flying to the far side of the great orb,
singing, swinging
dancing in the moonbeams.

RM Yager - Deerfield, IL - yagojohn@aol.com

mesa, lizard, stone
emmeshed in moonlight webs
caught by midnight moon

Vaughn Neeld - Cañon City, CO - vaughnneeld@hotmail.com

My heart raced as I flew out the back door to find
 My garden invaded by my 3 next door neighbor's kids!
 Stomping, throwing, crushing tomatoes with their little hands
 Pulling out entire plants by their roots, dirt flinging in the air,
 Kicking down fences, flattening sweet peas and cucumber
 Blossoms,
 Mashing basil, chives, and parsley with their plastic boots.
 Worse yet, their fighting, siblings hurling produce and profanity
 Simultaneously!

Now, I'm yelling; "Lee, quick look out your window now,
 Please!"
 "DON'T MOVE", "STOP NOW" and "OH, here comes your
 Mom!"
 The juxtaposition of the smell of fresh salad and purposeful
 Destruction
 Confused my senses but not my mind.
 All 3 under 6 years old, their wide eyes fixed on my face
 Anger could have easily won...

*'It's my garden, my mediation, my therapy. A joyful teaching tool
 Full of productive, seductive, delicious gifts that nurture me'.*

Then a whisper,

No one can take this from you, so you should want to give...

The Zen of my garden inclines me to kindness over fury.

Cleaning up the entire mess without a word, apologies, rules
 Of no entering my garden ever again. Even an offer to help
 Harvest!

30 years ago, but it feels like it happened yesterday, so fresh in my
 Mind.

It never happened again.

Vivian Portolano - Fountain Hills, AZ - cportolano@hotmail.com

I watch the gray squirrel
racing along the top railing
of the black metal fence
with a red fox following
the swift squirrel's every move,
every turn back the other way,
quickly she reverses
herself flying along the railing
in the opposite direction,
such a fun sight to see,
with that fox just waiting
for the right moment
to lunge up and grab lunch.
I love foxes, certainly don't
want to see one go hungry,
but I was rooting
for that clever, little squirrel.

For I do love the squirrels
living with me in our trees,
living among us in our yards,
bringing just a touch
of wilderness into our lives.
I watch the back and forth
of this life and death encounter,
that smart squirrel fakes one way,
then races the other way,
quickly away, while the fox
tries not to fall on his behind,
but he does, looking foolish
as the squirrely, little squirrel
so shrewd she got that
cunning, overconfident fox to
run in circles around and around,
as she darts away up her elm tree.

Jumping up and down, cheering
my little friend for making a fool
out of its arch enemy for today.
If I didn't see it with my own eyes,
not sure I would have believed it!

The deer at my window
brown fur on antlers
yet to be shed
looks at me
with its big brown eyes
as I wash dishes

we're kept apart
by a windowpane.

A cover of darkness
sweeps across stilled yards
a night in summer fallen.

A wooded ravine
half a block away
cuts through this town
of broken streets.

The scene stirs recollections
of times spent during my childhood
in meadows and forests
in Minnesota

but disparate tales
are told and told again
of degrees of separation
from nature.

The deer grazes on plants
as they poke through
the neighbor's fence
on a land
once held sacred
now sectioned.

Mike Bayles - Davenport, IA - bayles.mike558@gmail.com

while (the clouds turn into rain) lily bloom

Norma Bradley - Asheville, NC - normabradley1@gmail.com

A sweet scent permeates the air.
Billowing curtains herald it's arrival.
Climbing to my second story window.
Dozens of pale blue buds rub against the screen.
Each imparts the fragrances of past summers.
Filling my room with days to come.
Gone now, are those childhood times.
Hard to imagine, all those lilacs gone.
I can still see the one white flowered bush in the hedges of purple.
Joining other memories of childhood joys.
Keeping the mulberry tree to feed children and birds.
Long lazy summer days from my mind.
Many insects are silent, killed by over spraying.
Nests are empty of hatching broods.
Open fields are hemmed in by houses.
People push their agenda to control nature.
Quietly, Nature is patient to have her way.
Rising seas, increasing heat, and melting ice caps continue.
Storms multiply in number and intensity.
Time to pause to remember the simple days of youth.
Understanding that we each can stop the tide of polluting.
Virtual scenarios are no substitutes for the earth.
We can change our world for our children and their children.
X is where to start, right here and now.
Years of damage can be rolled back.
Zones for replenishing our earthly home for all.

Plant a lilac tree.

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

Yellow Wedding

On a muggy July evening,
under a relentless Florida sun, amid humidity and mosquitoes,
swathed in yellow, she glides through the garden to the altar,
attended by yellow-clad bridesmaids carrying yellow flowers.

A blackbird sadly calls,
as if knowing this is the second time around.
But yellow brings hope.

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

i delight in writing past midnight
when it's dark and quiet
and a cool breeze wafts
through the open windows
of my workspace upstairs
and in the still of the summer night
a mockingbird is singing close by
-- perhaps out of desperation --
serenading an enraptured audience
and which also is enchanting me
i stop clicking the keys
open the windows wider
to revel in the rhapsody
in his unending repertoire
that fills the shadows with longing.

mind on vacation

maybe because it's summertime
i yearn for escape
as we're walking our dog
waiting for a japanese sedan to back out of a driveway
i hear a rumbling ford 150 pickup's tires spraying gravel
as it pulls into a hamburger joint at a crossroads in west virginia
when we pass by a spanish restaurant in freeport
lit by an oddly yellow mid-morning sun
i feel the stickiness rising from a sidewalk in amsterdam
as a baker's assistant sweeps wet leaves into the gutter
as we rush towards penn station
through the broadway pedestrian mall at herald square
i have a sudden taste for luscious dark cherries
bought from a cart on neuhauser strasse in munich's city centre
sounds and tastes
the unmistakable odor of the ocean
the aroma of damp pine needles at twilight
the singeing hundred-degree heat on my calves
reminiscent of jersusalem during a heat wave
hot enough to melt the soles of my walking shoes

i want to get away
i need to get away

Another summer sunrise, and the awakening world full of sound--
the murmurs from a creek meandering through this sumptuous
bracken forest, the creak of alder in a slight breeze, and birdsong!

This is the place where magenta fairy-slipper orchids dance
with delicate lady fern in the shadowed light filtering through
verdant leaves so cool, you could make a wish, and it'd come true.

And you're hungry as a bear for wild and sweet Oregon berries--
their brambles now abloom with fragrant flowers much loved
by hummingbirds and bees, and by mid-summer there'll be

an abundance of thimble berries, gooseberries, currents, salmon
berries, and huckleberries to share with chipmunks, rabbits, foxes,
fox squirrels, mice, and deer. In the meantime, you say an elegy

for a bold, vibrant-blue feather you've found on the trail -- a stellar
jay's flight feather -- bluer than any sky will ever be, promising to
return to this place, rich in the diversity of life, in time for harvest.

Heart of the Bay

Embrace this swing of days -- of driftwood fires and wood
smoke, of shapely dunes with feather-light sand, as eagles,
osprey, gulls, and kitty-wakes grace a rosy dawn.

The blue heron's morning ritual, ghost shrimp dancing
on buttery sea lettuce, butter clams surprising each step with
watery plumes -- all messages from inside the heart of the bay.

And you cradle close your affection for this place,
for dimples in the water where a loon just submerged
to follow his treasure, and reappear a little distance away,

for white pelicans gliding across silent bay waters in fleets
of six, seven, and ten, while just offshore, crab-nets pulled
into tiny skiffs are examined, then set out once again.

When saffron tides tug at your bare feet, and the sea-wind's
perfume fills the air, a lone sea lion peeks out to watch,
as you do, the sunset at the close of day on Netarts Bay.

look at the sun
see how it shines on you
my child
the sparkle of today
the light of the future

it is in your hands
to assure that mother earth
will continue to be
beautiful
peaceful
giving
that summer after summer
warmth will nurture the garden of children
sprouting
budding
blooming
to become the next caretakers of mother earth

but only if we adults teach you well

then all children will
look at the sun and
see how it shines on them

Iris Levin - Rockville Centre, NY - idlevin@aol.com

Only Together

Only together
in the full and ever growing
complement of diversity
from alpha to omega
in perpetuity expanding
like the rings of an ancient tree
growing from the inside out
always newborn are we made
in the image and likeness
of a creator recreating.

G. Warner Williams - New York, NY -
gwarnerwilliams@gmail.com

when I see
the peach tree branches bending
heavy with luscious fruit
I remember the summer treat

Grandma's hugging arms would reach
her gentle hands would turn the stems
ten turns for ten peaches
placed in the deep pockets of her pink house coat

she made quick work of peaches
washing, pitting, slicing
placing in red bowl
sprinkling with cinnamon and sugar
setting aside

I still see her hands scooping, tossing flour
on the green laminate table adding
a cup of this
a pinch of that
a sprinkle or two of magic
the red handled wooden pin rolling back and forth
stretching the dusty yellow dough into a thin shiny slab
that fit perfectly into the long dented pan
I still smell sweet juicy peaches spread over the pastry
baking at 350 for 30 minute

I still see her hands cutting the first slice
I still see her smile when I savored each bite

I still feel her love baked into all she did

Iris Levin - Rockville Centre, NY - idlevin@aol.com

high summer rules here
insects hum amid tall grass
I doze among them

Vaughn Neeld - Cañon City, CO - vaughnneeld@hotmail.com

Wildflowers flourish
at Nature's will,
painting the landscape
with brilliant abandon,
displaying the genius
of the earthly artisan,
splashing bright colors,
scarlet, blue, purple, gold,
white, pink, russet, and more,
in varied sequences,
patchy or scattered,
sometimes in solitude,
cast along roadsides,
train tracks, and forest trails,
across meadows and fields,
even cracked parking lots,
tall, small, short, large,
defying convention
and genteel expectations,
at the height of summer,
in the midst of profusion,
mingling young leafy buds,
resplendent full blooms,
faded blossoms bearing
swollen pistils, spent stamens,
nearby yellowing leaves,
seed pods burst open,
and dry withered stems,
readily revealing
the full cycle of life
without angst or apology,
without self-awareness,
simply including, affirming
all that is.

Gay Marie Logsdon - Oak Ridge, TN -
gmarielogsdon@gmail.com

**If you like a poem, please let the poet know it...
Thank you.**

One midday in summer,
when little else was moving,
a chipmunk darted from plant
to plant in the back garden,
stopping to peer or nibble,
and circled 'round again.
Sitting on the wood fence,
a sparrow beadily watched
the chipmunk's progress,
then flew down from its perch
to take a closer look.
Following the chipmunk
six or seven steps away,
the sparrow ran in spurts
and carefully checked
for leftover pickings
at each recent stop,
looking for tiny dry seeds
or a tasty bug perhaps.
As the search continued,
the chipmunk doubled back,
crossing paths with the bird.
The sparrow then hurried
in another direction
to investigate the dirt
around a large stone.
The impromptu teamwork
thus, ended abruptly.
Little to its liking,
the curious sparrow
abandoned the project
and flew away.

Gay Marie Logsdon - Oak Ridge, TN -
gmarielogsdon@gmail.com

wind and rain all night
time off for good behavior
sweet morning sunshine

Kathleen Schrum - Spokane, WA - joeeygirl@comcast.net

Today, a man stops his pick-up truck in the middle of the road,
 I, impatient to move, honk the horn.
 He jumps from the cab, waves a halting hand, smiles.
 I watch in wonder, as he pushes a gigantic turtle,
 too heavy to lift, he urges the creature forward
 moving him towards safety of roadside ditch and lake beyond.

Turtle's fat stubby legs push at pavement,
 moss-colored carapace, size of a large stone,
 his thick neck stretches to smell for water.
 Yesterday, a summer storm raged, torrential rains fell,
 level of the lake rose beyond the banks, turtle
 must have been confused, wandered from his watery home.
 Cars pile up behind me, I put on flashing lights,
 exit, walk the line of vehicles, gesturing right
 and left, I explain the problem.

Most drivers nod, several execute u-turns,
 a young woman rushes forward to photograph.
 I halt traffic traveling in both directions.
 Twenty minutes later, turtle reaches the lake,
 slips into murky water, disappears.
 I will take with me, image of the man,
 urging the turtle to safety.

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

Cicada Time

Sultry Summer Day is dawning.
 A solitary insect sound
 slides from a soft dewed single leaf.
 Another song sings somewhere close.
 Soon a tide swells from every side,
 on multitudes of leaves from every tree,
 until the chorus is overwhelming,
 and we are lost in its crescendo,
 to ride its waves in celebration
 or escape into a placid quiet place.

Leonard Tuchyner - Barboursville, VA - tuchyner5@aol.com

I had not, until today, seen an Armadillo in the wild.
 This hot summer morning, I saw three,
 dead on the roadside in rural Missouri,
 Highway 60, four-lanes passing gracefully through dense forest,
 broad grassy dividing strip, extremely light traffic.
 As I travel eastward in my motor home,
 roadkill frequently greets me in the morning,
 previous night's sacrifices to the automobile-god:
 squirrels, opossums, racoons, coyotes, deer...
 once even an eagle, wing pinned to the pavement,
 eyes staring at the sky.
 But armadillos lying upside-down
 on their scaly body-armor
 makes my heart ache.

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

From a Pillar of the Porch

I am singing back to the robin,...
 how bumptious can you be?...
 who is building a nest on a pillar of the porch,
 persistent, defiant, ready to fly out
 and chivy the mortals who disturb her.
 She is making a terrible mess at the foot of the pillar
 which I humbly clean up every morning,
 stray bits of broken grass
 rejects from the pliable spears
 that will make her home.
 She'll have none of it, my ministrations,
 and it is enviable
 how sure my robin-mother is
 of what she has to do,
 disturbance and abandon are not in her vocabulary.
 Sing back to me, red robin,
 woven into your nest are the threads of implacable need,
 I await the first faint cheeps, pulses of life
 that are your triumph,
 they will gladden me
 and brighten my day.

Daphne Solá - Trumansburg, NY - solagallery@gmail.com

I had the habit of wading into the pond
to deal with the algae,
a pond we had dug out of a swamp,
resistantly shallow
with bedrock at only four feet
which encouraged the growth of weeds
and plumed grasses.

It was, in my eyes, a ring of green
which other people called algae
but I knew they were wrong
it was not rot, it was renewal
and there was no convincing them
that when I stepped in and down,
it was not slime, what surrounded me
up to my knees were green plants
an exuberance of nature
seizing every opportunity
to leap into life.

It was tough going as I pushed forward
and finally threw my gatherings
up on the banks
and my children never shared my enthusiasm
for this soaking-wet clean-up.

They would bemoan, "Where's mom?
Is she in the pond again?"

I'll admit I probably did not look my best
in my mud-streaked cut-offs
but when the UPS man caught me in pond
clearing mode
their humiliation was complete.

My beloved chore was enhanced, however,
when a wise-head farmer told me
that I had done only half the job,
I should gather up the dried detritus
and handily use it as fertilizer.

In this new learning game
I did not hesitate to follow his advice.

Thunder shakes, shimmers
red-dirt ponds, slaters
the roof like a wake-up alarm.
The stream begins to rise
in the summer-evening,
unseen, unheard, felt.

The lighter-gray sky-quilts,
pale-green fronds, yellow
ridges despite rain and thunder.
Inside, dry bone-white
journal pages begin to fill:
letters, words, lines, dots
rising like birds flying
between leaves and songs.

Thundercracks split moments;
the rain, soft as a shower,
pats an egret sweeping by.
Lightning-crackle, still air.
A bird scrackles, fills an emptiness
with delight, un-understood
darkness, sun-setting, even
in a summer storm, darkness
rising into silence, shadows.

August Morning

The rooster crows blue.
Rain begins, stops in darkness.

Slight light between hungry fronds.
The phone rings, no message.

Soon, morning releases into midday,
its hours disappear, then are gone.

How do we cherish time
while watching it slip away?

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

The moon is nowhere in sight
on this fair night
under South Dakota's summer skies.
By luck we found the last campsite,
an open space with lakeside breeze.
What more could campers want or need?
No call for tent the children cried.
Sleep under stars! The perfect night!
A nifty plan, we all surmise.
Sleeping bags zipped up with us inside.
Then all at once the winds subside.
Soon we heard them – no mistaking
the high-pitched whine of 'skeeters breaking
tender skin of hapless campers.
Smack! Smack! Whap! Whap!
Quick! Quick! Go! Go! Set up the tent!
These pesky bugs will not relent!
Oh, Vincent, friend, your starry night
still lures lost souls
into darkness sparked with light,
inspiring hope of healing balm
among the stars in nights of calm;
but starry nights must be foresworn
when tiny beasts begin to swarm.

Greer Litton Fox - Knoxville, TN - greerlfox@gmail.com

Butterfly

Fly low, fly high
Small butterfly
So light, so bright
Up in the sky...
You flutter by,
Above us all
Until the evening
Shadows fall;
On copper wings
Soon out of sight
You sail into the
Summer night.

Lorna Volk - Cincinnati, OH - cportolano@hotmail.com

A war is raging in our lawn.
Creeping Charlie has invaded.
At first it took the clover;
we paid no mind, but now it's taken over.
I yanked its tiny supple roots;
they yielded easily.
But worms galore (earth's gold)
squirmed inside; a pyrrhic victory.
I left it then; of course it spread.
"Oh well, it's green," my husband said
content to simply mow it.
Surrender? No!
I decided then to grow it.
It's in the iris, roses too,
and wrapped around the Hosta.
I drew a line across the yard
and now I must defend it.
My homegrown Maginot will hold:
daily I go out to fight
new stems that grow up overnight.
This plant is kudzu's rival!
Herbicides are not for us
nor pesticides that poison.
So, I get down on bended knee
and pull the eager stems that grow,
despite the fact that in this war
one stem gone invites two more.

Greer Litton Fox - Knoxville, TN - greerlfox@gmail.com

The Shady Tree

How crisp and cool the shady tree
That rustles softly over me,
How broad and long
Its branches are,
How far they reach
To sun and star.
And when at last the day is done,
The stars peek through them,
One by one.

Lorna Volk - Cincinnati, OH - cportolano@hotmail.com

Vacant lots with tall grass,
pungent Eucalyptus trees
are among my childhood memories.
Living high in the Berkeley hills,
in our home built by my dad,
was one of the first houses
in a newly developed area.
Vacant adjoining lots with tall grass
provided me camouflage while hunting tigers,
a hiding place from mother's shrill call, "Jan-ee",
meaning time to come home.
Cushioned unseen in the grass,
drenched in sunlight,
reading my treasured books,
a favorite pastime.

Building forts out of tree branches,
cardboard boxes and blankets,
with twin brothers who lived close by,
offered wonderful refuge.
Box sliding down grassy hills
was exhilarating as the cardboard box
sled went faster, faster,
wind whipping through my hair.
Squeals of delight could be heard
as neighborhood children raced down slopes.
Wildflower picking from an array
of Poppies, Lupines, and yellow Mustard,
were proudly brought home.
Days were filled with adventures,
as far as imagination could stretch.

As houses encroached on my world,
gone were vacant lots, many trees,
but treasured memories remained
of early childhood summers,
carefree in so many ways.

Jane Russell - Pittsburg, CA - jrusle@yahoo.com

a stranger is circling the house with his pointed nose
deep in the pachysandra patch and the fluffy
red tail floating above the green

no chickens here no ducks
no precious prey for him to outfox and devour

running from one window to the next
I follow his every move
leaving my eggs and toast on the kitchen table
and when I look outside again
he's already eating his breakfast
he's trotting away with his tasty treat
what is it? a chipmunk or a forest rat?
only a spaghetti tail and a grayish little rump are
sticking out of the murderous jaws but not protesting

some live to kill and some to be killed
and some just watch from the window
and do their killing with a trap in the attic
and with a car on the road
that was how last year's fox met its end
a red spot on sky-gray asphalt
no use to anyone except a few morsels for crows

my cadaver will have even less to offer
yet there's a trap set for it too and
I'm scurrying toward it as fast as a mouse.

Paul Sohar - Warren, NJ - sohar.paul@gmail.com

In the Crosswalk

The six baby California quail
trailing after their mother in the crosswalk
were so little they looked like
fallen pinecones from the overhanging evergreen.

Kathleen Schrum - Spokane, WA - joeygsgirl@comcast.net

Perhaps

bad things happen when change exceeds our grasp,
when we feel we have lost control over our lives,
then we cringe and cower as the seasons change--

Perhaps

as spring follows winter but cold winds stay,
as summer follows spring as drought persists,
as fall follows spring and harvest is light,
as winter follows fall and dark nights return,

Perhaps

after surety that we could know and understand,
after assurance that we were the chosen ones,
after reading of our grant of dominion over earth,
after certainty we had reached the mountaintop,

Perhaps

then the sky moves beyond the horizon,
then we note the earth wobbles on its path,
then the winds dance backward into the sails,
then the rain falls up and turns to hail.

Perhaps

hope lies only in sharing vulnerabilities,
hope lies only in acknowledging loss,
hope lies only in reverence of the spirit,
hope is after all, all there is in our limited view of eternity.

Sam Doctors - Petaluma, CA - samdoctors701@gmail.com

a whispery morning fog
stares at calico cat in window
before slowly stealing away

Susan M. Surette - Cotuit, MA - suesurette@gmail.com

Beetles and flies
 insects and spiders
 myriad in form
 feel the signal.
 A signal
 of change--
 imminent.
 They are to be released
 from their frozen carapaces
 shells and cocoons.
 Freed to
 fly, to walk on
 six, eight, many legs,
 to pester and bedevil
 cows and deer
 horses and humans
 or flutter away and bedazzle
 us with wings of color
 or buzz about
 pollinating apple trees,
 flowers and crops
 or fall prey to
 birds and bats.
 These are the tiny things
 that sustain the world we love.

James L. Freeman - Duluth, MN - Jim4lynn@gmail.com

Megalithic possession

A heartbeat within a circle of stones.
*Can you feel the energy tap ancestral
 memory?* A drumbeat, a sacred chant,
 the pulsing whirr of Raven's beating wings.
 Your heartbeat, unleashed, *clashing shafts of infra-
 sound reverberate round craggy ground;*
 graphite, andesite, amygdaloidal
 basalt; resonate at a frequency
 to possess you. *Never doubt the synergy
 of throbbing flesh and stone, enshrined within
 the space of a heartbeat.*

Jackie Fellague - Torrance, CA - cportolano@hotmail.com

Your minuscule bones
are never found
lying about the path
of a dark forest or
among the weeds
of a lovely garden.
Red flowers droop
when hummingbirds are gone.
Tiny balls of energy
amid the large energy of earth
travel long distances
in their migrations.
Little birds, like
motes of dust
among clouds and stars,
casting hardly a shadow--
singing hardly a song.
Sweet little birds
living on nectar,
your music is subtle,
scoring the times,
running wild with flowers.

Brad Vickers - Lambertville, NJ - cportolano@hotmail.com

Spirit animal

You do not select your spirit animal
like an off-the-rack garment: coyote,
springbok, sharp-shinned hawk. They *always* choose you.
Welcoming wildness, like a tea-party
hostess, you assume a smug control.
They will rip the face off your tameness, drag
you through the cave wall of your Neolithic
skull. So, when Mute Swan reared from the black, brackish
water, hissing, charging, raging, flaring
her raftered wings, you became your sister
swan; lowered your head, neck horizontal,
hissed that primal hiss, worked your fledgling wings,
tested your worth to belong on this spot
of magnificent Earth; assumed her wildness.

Jackie Fellague - Torrance, CA - cportolano@hotmail.com

When we went up into the hills of Mykonos
barefoot, by bus, baked by the sun
the last ones on, hanging out the door
overlooking the harbor, the fishing boats
pastel blue and green and yellow skiffs
dot the shoreline.

From the narrow-twisted road
splintered decks, fingers hooked and raw
lives filled with cold damp mornings,
wet meals, fish for breakfast
fish for lunch.

Pear shaped Greek women cutting tomatoes
slicing onions and cucumber, crumbling feta
as if Vesuvius herself had spoken and said
feed the men, feed the children
kiss the hearts of daughters.

Learning to Exhale

The creek bed behind my house
has run dry.
Windy days blow away lies.
Coffee cups measure time.
Wind howling in the trees
sounds like waves on the ocean.

The forest floor is littered
with dried leaves, branch debris, scat.
Little bones from the eaten.
Ancient tales of burial.
In my backyard I too have buried animals:
birds, a squirrel, our bunny Pebbles, Misty the cat.

Where do I see beauty now?
Still clouds, sky--
sometimes all is clean and pure.

Stuart P. Radowitz - North Bellmore, NY -
stuartphilip777@yahoo.com

An exclamation of white
in the first light of day,
origami wings folded
early by the water's rim.
Yellow feet marking mud
impressions, still by
water's lips of carved ivory.
Mirrored in shallows,
stark among marsh grass
its' movement mannered,
quiet in the water's lap.
Delving beneath surfaces,
neck-like curved space,
wings like watered silk,
in the first shade of light,
an exclamation of white!

Terning Point

On the utmost tip of the land,
ebbing tide reveals
an outer beach
where sand is water
and water is sand.

A congregation of Terns
hovers in so close
to the surface,
it is hard to say where
water ends and the sky begins.

Black-masked banditos
flock to the chase,
eyes right, eyes left,
quick-feathered swoop
in close-knit formation,
flight up, flight down,
hard to see here now,
then you hear the
twelve gauge.

I have a high light hanging
outside my front door
which is under cover.
I had noticed a
hummingbird zooming
into the area repeatedly
for weeks. Now, I see
a burgeoning nest glued
to the chain very near
the top. I am so excited
that the mother bird
graced my abode with
a place to birth her
baby and rear it till
it leaves the nest. There
are my filled feeder on
the back patio and
flowered plants for
sustenance. Hummingbirds
and woodpeckers use the
feeder and I put out shelled
unsalted sunflower seeds
and peanuts occasionally
for other birds, happy that
they share my yard.

Morocco

Summer winds, siroccos,
roll across sand dunes
while turbaned Arabs
tout their wares to
eco-tourists. Camels
hiss and spit their way
throughout the blazing
sun-filled days, treading
the desert dunes. Bandannas
tied across faces keep most
of the dust out of mouths.
Everything is bone dry.
Everything is adventure.
Life is precarious here.

The sun is dazzling this August afternoon.
The gardens alive with blooms
every shape and size
a potpourri of rainbow hues
as the Mistress begins our tour of her land
Land which surrounds a small house
snuggled below a wild growing hillock
Nature's nocturnal sanctuary
First stop, the dahlias strong and stately
their buds not quite ready to bloom
Next, some yellow poppies, she calls volunteers
A few feet along Delphiniums their blue cobalt stalks
I learn, are the hummingbird's favorite
A row of tomatoes dwarf their six foot stakes,
vines droop with ripe red fruit ready to be picked
Nearby a patch of milkweeds,
the monarch butterfly's lifeline, she explains
As the sun wanes a bed of Shasta daisies
turn their heads following its glow
She nods, time to go in
And so, I look forward to tomorrow
and another walk with...
The Mistress of the Garden

R. Duke Liddell - Valley Stream, NY - dukel@optonline.net

How Great This Tree

How great this tree high over me
how soft the sunlight dances
And touches me so meek and small
beneath its spreading branches
How sweet the many moments
when I sit and feel the breeze
Sighing softly as it blows
through the rustling leaves...
As I enjoy the cooling shade,
I know with certainty
How wonderful it is to have
so beautiful a tree.

Lorna Volk - Cincinnati, OH - cportolano@hotmail.com

The salesman's car is candy-apple red, parked
near the model houses. Coreopsis -- wild
with dark petals -- will subvert the just-laid
asphalt. Indian paintbrush, poppies vie

for purchase with sharp-tipped foxtails.
The gas-powered saw -- round
and hand-held -- whines fine dust, cuts
through driveway brick. Already the thin bones

of tumbleweed, the blond cheatgrass
would flare with one spark. This box canyon
holds sage and greasewood
that hold these hills together.

The rattler unwinds herself, smooths
down the brick-pile -- silent as poppies.

Melanie Perish - Reno, NV - mperish@unr.edu

Little Wren

Only the little wren, worthless and unlovely, is free. - Zhang Hua

And yet,
young boys in Ireland, on St. Stephen's Day,
would hunt and kill the little wren
and then, being poor,
go door to door
begging money with which to bury it.

Our gods and our bellies
must be fed, our hands and maws red
with the blood of others.
We are the clever ape,
the one with the thumb;
predator ape, the one with the gun.
Nothing escapes our gaze.
Nothing
small enough
to be free.

Dave Reddall - Wellfleet, MA - dreddall@verizon.net

In the parking lot beside the road
a large white swan stood all alone
we wondered how it got there
it seemed annoyed, even irate
walked back and forth
stamped its webbed feet
upon the pavement surface
flapped its wings several times
but did not fly... perhaps it couldn't
we saw no wounds, no blood
no arrows sticking out
as it madly circled about
we corralled it with our cars
using them as shields
keeping the bird from traffic
and whizzing tons of deadly steel
had no plan, prayed for a miracle
arriving in a dusty old jeep, she
worked at the wildlife refuge out east
gathered the bird into her arms
and placed it in her vehicle
assured us now it would be safe
so off we went our separate ways
but looking back, I still can see
that stranded swan in front of me
standing there defiantly
waiting to be rescued

Lynne D. Soulagnet - Medford, NY -
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The Diamond Circle

Bright in the light shines
Simple peace of heart, glowing
To show us the way.

Tasha Halpert - North Grafton, MA - tashahal@gmail.com

**If you like a poem, please let the poet know it...
Thank you.**

Our new home in the country brought
An unexpected visitor: the next-door
Neighbor's tiny, black and white kitten
Who I'd seen gamboling through my yard

Since I was currently "catless" I was thrilled
When one morning I found the little spitfire
Sitting on my front step looking at me,
Inquisitively, with his big green eyes

"Well, hello, little one," I said, smiling
Instantly, the kitten's eyes widened fearfully
And, before I could utter another word
He dashed away, back to his own property

Crushed, I sadly watched him leave
He was the first neighbor I'd met
And, inexplicably, he seemed terrified
Hopefully, this wasn't a bad omen!

After this happened a few more times,
I resigned myself to the sad fact that
The kitten was afraid of me, unusual,
As cats and I had always "clicked"

Then one day, I heard the neighbors speaking
And, in that instant, the mystery was solved:
They both spoke Spanish, and, apparently,
It was the only language the kitten knew

The next time he appeared, I was ready:
"Hola, gatito," I said softly, and at once,
Eyeing me acceptingly, he began to purr
Finally, we spoke the same language!

Dawn McCormack - Plainfield, CT - djohnson8251@yahoo.com

fading summer evening
young white-tailed rabbit
dines on my hostas

Susan M. Surette - Cotuit, MA - suesurette@gmail.com

Languid you lie
on a log, your scaly
black paddles touching
the river, tea-colored,
cedar-scented.
Your penile head rouses,
ready to slide into the deep
were I to come a tad
too close, exclaim
in the perfect quiet
of a cricket symphony.
Ahhh, a musical meditation
for you and me and
dainty damselflies,
blue-bodied, black-winged.
One lights on my knee,
a hitchhiker glad to be paddled
downriver for a while.
Another amazes herself
and rests on your inky shell,
the foot-long camper you call home,
but I imagine you hardly care,
perhaps don't notice one bit,
your red belly full,
your nap undisturbed
by gentle maiden flies,
only by strange me.

Lynn Palumbo - Knoxville, TN - lynnp psychotherapist@gmail.com

Golden Rod

The lush, last days of warmth
Brighten the landscape,
Marshaling the bee battalions.
Clumps of bright golden plumes
Glowing in the sun,
Lean every-which-way, as space permits.
North, South, East and West,
They send their message:
“Plunder the hoard before your Winter sleep.”

Tasha Halpert - North Grafton, MA - tashahal@gmail.com

There was a time when nature held sole dominion
over her fauna and flora. Her pace was less hasty,
often kinder than our own.

In the past, the wind and lightning might stir up a forest fire,
a benefit to some forms of woodland life.
Though, with our misuse of the earth's resources,
conflagrations rage out of control, consuming forest and town.

Past earthquakes, floods, or nature's paced climate change
affected the earth over time.
Glaciers might culminate in ice ages.
Warmth might dictate lush growth of flora
followed by fauna of fantastic size and shapes.

Life would begin afresh when extinction happened.
New species would rise when others died out.
It was nature's way of revision.

We are often impatient, desiring quick results;
consequences may never come up in our minds.
We have thought the earth a superstore of unlimited resources.
Not mindful of effects, we have diminished the variety
of life nature intended as we take habitat for our purposes.

In my own area, rich alluvial soil is buried
under apartment buildings, strip malls, and warehouses.
Will concrete feed our own burgeoning population
or keep us cool on a torrid summer day?

Wendy N. Bell - Edgewood, WA - wendynbell@hotmail.com

pelican rides waves
bobbing and flapping wings
seabirds glide above

Carol Bezin - Arkdale, WI - angelbezin@gmail.com

With glory days of summer on the wane,
We took our foster sons river-rafting
Where we two laughed much on trips.
Neither had left San Jose, but both--
Strong, sturdy--loved outdoors as did we.
Ever thrilled by jaunts on rushing water
With camping to follow beneath oaks,
Pines, and buckeyes, John and I ached
To prepare such a breathtaking adventure
For these boys, too long used to poverty...

Until I saw firsthand the raft reserved
For us four. Upon quizzing our guide
About the many patches on its floor,
The loose foot-straps, the rotted rope
For us to clench as we rounded curves
Of roaring white water and rocky cliffs,
I wavered. Viewed as foolish for doubts
And loath to dismay the brothers, I too
Came down on the side of our guide
Who lied, swore on its steadiness...

Until soon after leaving safety on shore,
We rowed like pros across roiling river.
Soon, our safe raft slowed from leakage
Through the patches, near crawled along
While starting to round Hospital Curve--
Apt name--as we smashed into rock wall.
Off the rear, I toppled, sucked under whole
By the boat, my life-but-lethal-jacket glued
Me, breathless, to the bottom with visions
Of broken back, wheelchairs, black death...

Until none in the six-raft caravan spotted
My neon-orange lifejacket flying me to shore
Or saw me emerge facing sun. Neither did
I see, but it occurred, left me ready to learn:
The nurture of nature and folly of humankind.

In San Joaquin Valley, sun has
Not yet risen; but light shines enough
To stroll upon this silent, soft path.
Morning mist still lingers--
Even present in Summer--
Drifts through unreachable branches
As slow too, I make my way
Like a snail crossing maiden hair.

The dew dropping from on high
Begins the tick-tock of day as my steps
Lead to a clearing in the verdant valley
With a stream-fed pond crystal clear.
Morning rays do not yet grace
Its tranquil, mirrored surface.

Having, at last, arrived, I soon sit
On a fallen tree from years back,
Give my bones an earned rest.
Spying myself in the looking glass
Before me, I also see a young trout
Entombed by a circle of rocks.

Reaching into his lucent prison
With great care, my cupped hand
Gentle, I free him to swim the stream
This warm summer day. Midway,
He turns back for a moment,
Seems to ponder as I sense
His thanks and then swims on.

John B. Swartz - Campbell, CA - johnswartz07@comcast.net

sea otter wraps himself
in kelp blanket
snoozing in sunlight

Susan M. Surette - Cotuit, MA - suesurette@gmail.com

Late into the long day,
I watched the fire go out,
watched as it consumed
the last of the twigs
I had piled on hours ago,
that I had gathered earlier,
then fed myself, cooking
the few fish I had caught
on the, then, roaring fire.

I watched with sadness
as the darkness grew
as the fire faded from view;
watched the stars shine
ever so brightly in onyx sky,
saw how the full moon
smiled such a glowing
warmth surrounding me,
sitting in the darkness, alone,
staring deep into the infinite,
ever-expanding universe,
wondering where did the fire
escape to when it finally
finished feeding off the twigs
that I collected from the forest.

I listened to the night and
heard better the sounds
coming from the darkness,
that engulfed me whole.
I watched the last ember
of ashes burn, dying,
into the nothingness,
watched it become extinct,
wondering where did it go?
Wondering will this be the way
of my entrance into non-being
when my last spark finally stops
burning in the belly of my soul?

alive atingle aglow

summer is the open voice
everything speaking loud and confident
blaring out its pride
of having grown this big
asking "How can I grow bigger?"
like unconsciously knowing
what to say without
pretense or conscious
concentration as if there's no
Jack to whittle this beanstalk
down

exceptionally determined
to overcome all obstacles
to endure, survive
wherever is a leaf
passion blossoms
a poppy bush bathes
me in the flow of existence
the strength of the highness
lily proclaims rebirth

hearing the breathing
an orchestra of sound
cello oak, maple violin,
piccolo arbor vita
redwood trumpet
aspen timpani, willow snare
to the listening spheres

chest beats out with the song of a lark
hearing the shout of pears plopping
into an empty basket
take all this red, all this green
drink the fresh air
float with the magic of the rose
live in the flower multiplied to eternity