

The Avocet

A Journal of Nature Poetry

Winter - 2023-24



**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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A Time for Resting

Harvest time is over,
ground barren again.
Trees have lost their leaves.
Animals have winter coats.
Some hibernating in
cozy dens or burrows.
Foraging for food is difficult.
Food is stored for lean winter months.
Plants are dormant,
no new sprouts or growth.
Nature is taking a break.

Air is crisp and chilly,
Snow blankets the ground.
Days are shorter, darkness falls early.
Sunlight is limited,
activity curtailed.
Stormy days ahead.
Animals must find shelter,
meet challenge of keeping warm
in this bleak, frozen, crystalline world.
Nature slows down.

Their work is done.
It's been a busy year
throughout seasonal changes
of sprouting, growing, budding,
blooming, mating, birthing, tending young,
hunting, foraging, morphing, migrating.
Now, time to recuperate
during long winter months.
Time to rest and sleep.

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

Tag

Red leaves and snowflakes
dancing on the same windstorm
winter chasing fall.

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

The day after Winter Solstice
I walk my dog in the clear morning air--
a brisk sunny day under a sky
innocent of clouds.

My dog lopes in front of me,
his fringed tail swaying
to the tune of his gait
as he ambles, nose to the ground,
alert to the hundreds of smells
he is privilege to with his
stereoscopic odor-catcher.

I catch only faint scents
of pine needles and dead leaves.

But as I look up again to the sky
I see the steamy vapor trail of a jet
pointing vaguely toward Canis Major
and I wonder--
could any comet in the cosmos
vie successfully for the title
“Best Tail in the Universe”
in a beauty contest with my dog?

Diane M. Williams - Knoxville, TN -
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winter's first appearance

winters white
appeared today
Ansel Adams scenes
out my window view
white crystal masterpieces
that nature created magically
overnight
as I slept peacefully
dreaming of sipping
savory hot cocoa
near a warm glowing fireplace

Wendy Schreiner - West Seneca, NY - wendyew3@yahoo.com

Being children of coastal California, each December my brother and I prayed for snow, a white Christmas. But every year on the 25th, the sky sparkled like a summer's day. Through the months of winter, chilly nights, crisp bright sun or grey clouds, rain, occasionally hail, but no snow.

Then one night a phone call from a neighbor, Four a.m.! We were at first frightened. "Go outside," he said. And there, by the light of a full moon, a miracle, our green lawn completely covered in pure white snow!

Beneath the stars we romped, the edges of our pajamas becoming wet, our slippers soggy. We made snowmen and snow angels, threw snowballs, slid and slipped, even papa and mama played.

Eventually, we dressed, had breakfast, but quickly returned to our wintery field. School was canceled due to snow! All day, we played. By evening, the glorious white appeared mushy, and grey. The snowman drooped.

The next morning the grass was again green, the sun warm, the magical spell broken. It did not snow again that week or the next or the next. My brother and I watched the sky, always hopeful.

Every year thereafter, we checked the forecasts, listened for the phone, prayed, and moped. It never happened again. Even now, as we grow old, I call my brother, reminisce. Together, we wait and watch for coastal California snow.

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

**Please be the reason someone smiles today.
If you like a poem, please let the poet know it...
Thank you.**

You leave the house,
wrapped in a down jacket.
You have boots
up to your calves. Wool gloves
and a goofy wool hat.
There is a large meadow
blanketed in snow.
You head out on snowshoes.
You have a flask of brandy,
There's wind, and it carries sound
through the meadow the drifts swirl.

There are bare trees at the edge.
In one is a Snowy Owl.
We stare at each other.
He swivels his head with joy.

You return to the house and the fireplace.
It's Christmas Eve, so you join the festivities.

David Blackey - Lacrosse, WI - funkyjubu@yahoo.com

I am a Snow Leopard

No one is going to mess with me.
My thick warm feline fur,
snowshoe paws, and long sleek tail
make me the acrobat of the Himalayas.
Don't be fooled by the striking rosette
patterns in my fur -- that is, if
you ever see them. I vanish
into the rocks, become one
with the snow, as easily
as I breathe the world's thinnest air.
They call me ghost and phantom.
Though it isn't true -- the sheep and goats
attest my claws are real -- I quite enjoy
the awe, mystique, and solitude.
My eyes are ice. They sparkle and freeze.
My beauty rises above that of the mountains,
unique, and rarified, and mine.

Kate Lassman - Waldorf, MD - konekoshijin@hotmail.com

Muted in the rising mist, oval bodies bob along
in feathered morning coats and chevron tails,
keep their beaks close to the damp ground.
I count eleven again today in this young covey
engaged in good pecking order. Dubbed the “Grey Guard,”
they scour the frosted yard for breakfast berries
fallen from the bountiful ash tree.
Once these daily scatterings spelled NUISANCE,
relentless sidewalk sweeping. Now I’m grateful
for this trove of wrinkled russet nuggets woven
through withered grass. I expect this focused platoon.
They’ll be missed if they disappear when the gauge holds
below freezing. I’ll not rake nor sweep up their outdoor feast.
With winter having dawned, food equals warmth and life.

Pewter cloaked morning
Quiet gratitude simmers
Cranberries pop stovetop.

Black on White

Three molted flight feathers drift down,
alight on the rare white canvas
stretched across the meadow
The sleek ebony vanes form
inscrutable calligraphy
inked on a blank world.
Always an early walker, she spots the source
through a scrim of skeletal branches, notes
a wake of vultures huddled ‘round a downed doe,
struck overnight on the near roadway.
The cleanup crew in dark coats rustles,
bent on their work, undeterred.
She yields, pauses for a moment of mourning,
but cannot resist turning back.
The collected quills inspire, turn into muses
for writing, black on white morning pages,
for “Hope is the thing with feathers
that perches in the soul.”*

(*Quote from Emily Dickinson)

In the chilly breeze, I
Inspected colorful fan-shaped leaves
That drifted to the stony ground.
Profound blue-green shades
turned to a golden yellow shower.
We planted the Ginkgo tree
on a shimmering summer afternoon
when we were young.

I walk alone on winding sidewalk
beside our early winter garden
touch mahogany-red filagree leaves
of patient Tamukeyama tree.
Late December splashed cerise
brushstrokes on each fragile leaf.
Japanese yellow forest grass
Dropped its slender leaves
for winter's respite,
Like taking a siesta in the afternoon.

New growth always begins in spring.

Lynda McKinney Lambert - Ellwood City,
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Late December

Snow garlands the evergreens
turns holly berries into pearls
flutters like scattered petals
from a bridal bouquet
like eiderdown
from angel wings
pirouettes in streetlamp's glow
spreads a moon-silvered quilt
over the chill Earth.

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

I drape the leather couch
with my woven bear throw
and tuck my legs under me.
It is early winter and
the inside air is slightly chill.
My rich, hot chocolate steams,
smells decadent, and I'm
ready for my morning read.
The garden needs a little
weeding after breakfast when
the sun's face warms the ground
gently. The first Arizona sweet
oranges are ripe. I pick enough
for a few days, anxious to savor
the fresh scent and juicy pulp.
The non-evergreen trees are
almost naked of leaves, but
some persist. I welcome winter.

Eva Marie Willis - Phoenix, AZ - jwillis42@cox.net

Ice Storm

Temperatures plummeted,
frigid as an arctic night.
Wind howled, trunks shivered.

Freezing rain coated branches and wires.
Lights flickered, forewarned of power outage.
Icy stalactites dangled precariously.

Trees bore weight as long as they could.
Crackles, snaps, ice shards littered the ground.
House interior matched onyx sky.

We read books by flashlight
till snuggling under woolen
blankets lured us to bed.

Suzanne Cottrell - Oxford, NC - cottrell_suzanne@yahoo.com

I welcome winter.
I welcome mountains white with snow.
Their hushed and settled light
speaks inwardly to my own.
The quiet voice of mountains settles me.
Sit upright like a mountain.
Feel its winds like exhalations.
Breathe them in. Breathe their
light. Breathe their pine scent.
Even dying pines release
an aroma purely invigorating.
A forest, some say, has
infinite chi, the life force
permeating all things.
It's more than a matter
of belief. Sit upright, open
experiencing what you see.

Lynn Palumbo - Knoxville, TN - lynnpyschotherapist@gmail.com

The Wonder of Winter

The Winter winds whisper
The wild geese have flown,
The leaves are all lying where they
Have been blown,
Snowflakes have started to drift one
By one from clouds grey and somber
That cover the sun...
A feeling of stillness
Lies over the land
Of waiting to see just what
Nature has planned.
The snow's coming faster...
The rabbits and deer
Hide in the forest
Where shelter is near,
And all of the animals
Both big and small
Gather together
To watch the snow fall.

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

The forest has been planted but its seeds
forgotten, their later growth a witness to
the perfect gift of imperfect memory
among creatures too common to notice.

Inconsequent to the inattentive eye, squirrels
seem as familiar as the woods they decorate,
mere greeting card figures, the cheap coin
of fable, snowcraft creatures of cliché.

But they are the ones who cast off pinecones and nuts,
the shells of small belief and the mere idea of oak,
walnut and hickory, working for a world unable
to see the trees for the forest, both born from
seemingly scattershot secrecy and undisciplined deceit.

Gray or red, the squirrels know what they do but
half the time do not remember where they did it,
creating those small accidents of history whose tracks
leave the marks of a treasure map, a wild winter's
legacy hid deep within the dark of an everyday world.

Joel Savishinsky - Seattle, WA - savishin@gmail.com

Snowflakes

Maiden pure, pearly white,
Lacy snowflakes in the night
Like a benediction fall
Over treetops, over all...
As they drift, they swirl and sway
Like ladies in a fine ballet,
The snowflakes fall without a sound
On every living thing around,
They touch both Mother Deer and fawn,
Each blade of grass in every lawn,
The fields and forests as they lie
Underneath a cloudy sky...
The snowflakes fall
Without a care
In silent beauty everywhere

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

A chore we do before the first snowfall--
we clean out our three bird houses so they will be ready
for renters in the spring. Recently, as our ladder thumped
against the first tree, a tiny face peered out of
the birdhouse, followed by faces two and three.

Each mouse stared down at us as we
stared up at them. They then raced down
the tree and ran into the woods.
Bird houses two and three also held
a number of disgruntled mice.
How dare we disturb them.

They had been wise to find such a nice abode.
The houses came equipped with a nest,
and they added their own touch of comfort
with soft fluff, string, and fresh weeds.

Now that we know mice will attempt
to take up residency each winter, we can solve
the problem by putting up NO VACANCY signs.

Linda Aschbrenner - Marshfield, WI -
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Clouds Collide

When winter clouds collide,
Some are sly--
no storm, no thunder.
They take their time,
drifting in dreams
until sticky grey tendrils
twine whispery
promises on one another.
Veins and capillaries
pulse while suckers
of electricity shudder
shoulders and bellies.
Full now and heavy,
They burst upon us.

The muted silver moon assumes
his position in the winter sky.
Moon beams reflect off white hills below.
Rivers not yet frozen are decorated
with distorted ribbons of light.

Like a bored old man,
the moon watches over the night sky,
keeps tabs on the same old stars,
and counts satellites as they glide by.

Young wispy clouds wave
as they drift past.
Soon the wind scoops them up,
pushes and pulls them, twists them,
then crudely connects them
to a rolling cumulus mass.
The bewildered clouds are now
in the midst of a raging blizzard.

The moon sighs.
Perhaps his predictable,
circular route is preferable
to an uncertain future.

(Published in Poetry is Blooming)

Elda Lepak - Hendersonville, NC - elphotopoet@gmail.com

Winter Carpet

As darkness descends,
First snow falls,
Carpeting the ground.

Dawn reveals our unseen visitors,
Tiny paw prints all around.

Ginny Wenz - Hamden, MA - ginnywenz@gmail.com

Another year has met its end,
And so the Winter comes again,
To wash the colors all away,
And leave a landscape cold and gray.
The trees denuded and laid bare,
With no more Autumn dress to wear.
Back in the Fall, these garments shed,
This finery of gold and red,
That dried to withered husks of brown,
And lay forgotten on the ground.
The icy wind taunts naked trees,
So cold it makes the raindrops freeze,
And lends to this bleak scene below,
The beauty of the falling snow,
To take away the Winter's dark,
And all that's bare and gray and stark,
And leave it soft and curved and bright,
With sparkling drifts of snowy white,
To cover all and everywhere,
With white robes for the trees to wear,
So once again, they're dressed in splendor,
These trees all cloaked in snow for winter.

Christy Paddock - Waverly, TN - kknana1219@gmail.com

The Day the Hawk Danced

rare rain puddle in Phoenix
in great commotion of wing feathers
hawk runs back and forth, back and forth
playful, prancing, splashing bath
like a summertime kid
running through the sprinkler

Kris Rued-Clark - Arpin, WI - krueclark@yahoo.com

The trees are encrusted with ice
like glass figurines on a curio shelf,
they sparkle in the morning sun.
Ice covered fallen branches and limbs
litter impassable roads and walkways.
They glisten with hazardous beauty.

Mansions, cottages, bungalows, and cape cods
are enveloped by sheets of smooth glaze ice.
They've all been transformed into igloos.
The neighbor's candy apple red SUV,
glazed with layers of silvery ice,
has acquired a touch of gray.

Melting ice on a tree limb
drips down to the icy pavement.
It sounds like a leaking faucet.
Icicles hanging from rafters
extend all the way to the ground,
a waterfall in suspended motion.

What stunning photos I could take
of this ice glazed world around me.
Alas, I'm afraid of slipping on the ice.

Floyd D. Anderson - Brockport, NY - floydsroom@hotmail.com

Winter is Wise

Winter is wise
silver pated with bald spots sitting still
seeing the past in the depths of haloed snow
noting the early morning sky bruised with a healing sun
weak and wistful
the patterns of snowflakes, their silence
the slippery paths and tricky winds
and sparrows in boughs with cardinals above
finally sleepy evening lit by stars scintillating
birthing, imploding, dying, meteor sliding
softly dreaming, patient watching, hopeful waiting
wisdom in dark evening glow.

Susan Oleferuk - Buchanan, NY - soleferuk@yahoo.com

Walking to the mailbox, crunching stones
An old man in winter garb, unhearing, walking with a stick
A driverless tractor sitting in the field, waiting
A small white dog chasing downhill to protect
her property
waylaid by a compelling scent

Three smiling old grandmothers, careening
by in a monster-sized 1980s sedan

Hills of trees waiting for the oaks to disrobe
and join them for their winter adventure

Vistas re-opened,
revealing life from earlier times

Cow manure concentrated in the pasture,
a signal of the switch from grass to hay

The first icicles holding tenuously
to the great stone hills

A tip of their caps from two rarely seen friends
peace and enlightenment roasting
marshmallows by the creek

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

Mourning Dove in Winter

You look so cold
Perched upon my fence.

Feathers make you grand
As you rest, eyes closed.

I offer seeds and peanuts
And hope the squirrels don't steal them.

I wish I could do more.

Erin Ratigan - Keller, TX - erin.ratigan@gmail.com

There are buffalo across the highway,
up the hill by a barbed wire fence,
winter scraggly buffalo chasing a black pickup--
a boy in back tossing bales of hay
onto last night's snow,
a triangular white patch, bright against
the washed-out brown of a dead hay field.

And nearer, to the right, a jogging horse,
dark beside the barbed wire
of his separate, fenced off track;
disappearing then, behind weather-faded
wood shelters of ostriches -- ostriches
tall, gangly birds
surely confused by the cold and snow,
standing on tiptoe in a closed, wire compound.

Across, then, further left on the hill,
dug out mounds of dirt and ice,
and in one, the wreck of a caterpillar,
a small, orange caterpillar
half down in, half up out of, the hole--
metal treads stopped and rusting
jagged in the lead gray light.

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

Wind

Whipping across land, through trees,
up mountain sides and spinning wide blades
to create power.
In constant motion except when you really want some
North and south to the poles
Distributing heat and energy around the globe

Cleora Boyd - Fort Worth, TX - sitting.duck@springmail.com

As the Hunter moon arrives with a new chill
and Northeasterners prepare to retreat inside
the ice-cream man goes south to thaw.
The frog nestles among leaves and mud
at the bottom of the pond.
The box turtle burrows into sluggishness.
The swallows and warblers follow
the ice-cream man, in flight, due south.
Yet the cold doesn't keep me from my
bench-for-all-seasons alongside the pond
surrounded by nature trails.
An occasional hopping cottontail
passes by in search of food.
The rest have left me lost and lonely
with only memories of how I was
captivated for another year, yet
peaceful, knowing their absence is
temporary, waiting for the frog's song of Spring.

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

Polar Night of the Soul

Wind-whipped snow along gray coastline
swooping, crying birds in a bleak sky
frozen darkness covers all with
shivering cold, warmth lost in
months-long absent sunlight,
soul-shriveling, blue-tinted world,
soul-seeking light, relief from this
polar night of the soul.
At nadir, at rock bottom,
darkest of the dark,
hints of washed out red and orange,
light, precious light, finally,
at mountain's tip, briefly at first,
then higher, longer, rising,
bringing soul's respite of
unsettling, warming, bright
times of midnight sun,
return of polar day.

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

It covers the thin-iced lake,
 branches of trees and the bench
 where I leave butt prints,
 where I leave footprints.

At home I shovel it into piles
 on the front lawn for red-cheeked children
 to create a carrot-nosed, button-eyed Frosty
 and take my hat to top him off.

Their Mother quietly opens the front door,
 snaps i-phone photos from the top step,
 rounds off a few snowballs, easily tossed,
 in a jovial way, in lieu of a dinner bell.

Inside the chill is gone and after the meal
 the kids join in unexpected family time,
 no Fortnite or Facebook, their only request,
 to watch the news, fixed on the scrawl

for tomorrow's school closings, tiring,
 finally falling asleep... counting inches.

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

Winter Flicker

Winter Flicker
 Give us your feathers flaring
 The fire in your flight
 Give us your sparkling pecking
 Your "Ki!"
 Heated & laughing
 Give us your light inside of pine
 Its spice, bite
 Give us the feel of your flame
 Winter Flicker
 Let your glow
 Show us hope
 In the cold of this season

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

We fly over city streets,
dodging and weaving modern buildings.
In a figure eight all in unison.
Singing our morning songs to soothe,
Humanity's woes.
Strong, late December winds guide,
our flight patterns.
Like musical notes from a flute.
Hearing the snow touch electrical lines.
Reverberating like a violin.
Traffic noises sound like trombones.
Tubas--
Timani drums.
And dramatic cymbals.
A clashing crescendo,
while the humans ignore it all.
Driving to work without a hint of notice.
And yet we fly in our infinity circle,
with snow on our feathers.
Hearing far off church bells--
Indeed, our grandest finale.

January's Moon

A biting winter's evening.
Has numbed my Northern Hemisphere optical view.
It is a background canvass.
Of black, indigo blue--
I pursue winter's Triangle and Hexagon.
As Orion's belt materializes.
Taurus' Bull and the Big Dipper appear.
Just above Sirius is the January moon.
Snapping photos with Nikon.
Capturing Igor the monster of dark January skies.
As he just ate the moon.
But Luna was clever, and she stayed in Igor's pallet.
To be savored as Igor slowly floated away.
Filigree shaped trees swayed in the wild wind.
And her sister's rowdy flowered roots laughed.
Watching Luna's triumph over the Old Norse behemoth.

A Sunday afternoon in early January
a blizzard of snow starts to blow
through the county, disregards my best
friend's wedding, quickly squeezes visibility
to zero. Throws a thick white blanket
over the landscape, blurs terrain features,
fattens bushes, pulls hoodies over the woods,
freezes the bare fingers of trees, makes a smooth
wide gully of the highway, turns my Buick
into a snowplow that aims for the middle
of the road. I say a prayer of thanks
for arriving home before dark the same day.
Next day snow measures sixteen inches,
five times the usual maximum for middle TN.

Wesley D. Sims - Oak Ridge, TN - wes4words@att.net

Dancing with Snowflakes

My father working a winter
job in a far away city,
a new heaviness falls
on me. Among my chores
--gathering in firewood.
As I trek to the woods
a sudden snow shower
waltzes in, flakes falling
over me like tiny, bright stars
shooting through cold,
heavy air. Zigzagging
across the hill, I maneuver
in a kind of primitive dance
to catch them in my mouth,
these light, crystal parcels
of serendipitous joy falling
like manna from heaven.

Wesley D. Sims - Oak Ridge, TN - wes4words@att.net

Bright chalk white
Mountain peaks covered in snow
Clouds hanging low

I pull over to visit the horses and cows
Puffs of steam escaping my mouth

Six shaggy tawny cows are munching a bale of
Pale green hay in the center of the pasture
Not a care in the world

Two mahogany hued bulls are cuddled up on their round belly's
Chins resting on the ground
Bangs fringing their soft brown eyes

Lola's velvety chestnut body is near the split rail fence
A white stripe from her ears to her snout graces her regal head

Seeing snowcapped mountains and magnificent creatures
Living their lives, which know nothing of war, is essential

To create a refuge in my mind
Where I can release my weary load
Rest it right there in the cold
And be better for it

Julie Potiker - Hailey, ID - juliepotiker@icloud.com

Ice Lace

Frost on glass
etched on windows.
Ice-flowers and ferns,
inter-locking needles
crystallize the panes.
Frozen snowflakes cling.
Fingerprint patterns lace,
crochet intricate designs.
Its uniqueness sticks.

Rosemary Marshall Staples - Eliot, ME -
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Minus six degrees, frozen ribbon of dusky red
behind bare trees, this sunrise.
Sun on window terrariums--
ferns, sparkling diamond seas,
Lalique birds floating over crystal mountains.
Wrapped, warm in your white robe,
coffee with cream, engine starting slowly,
but starting, starting. This day
when most stress and striving leave footprints
behind you heading toward the finish line,
more like the turtle than the hare.
Marvel at destiny, good fortune,
despite the obstacles on the track,
how you stood the course,
perseverance, a life coach
shouting from the sides,
how you kept your promises
to arrive here,
this cold morning past your prime
in your warm house, free from mortgage
or leeward desire that fueled
the person you used to be
before you had seen the world,
had your loves, your scars,
your betrayals, your compromises,
the hard won and sustained victories,
windfalls that flew in like starboard swans,
myriad kindnesses like flocks of sparrows.
The casino isn't finished with you yet.
Your bets are hedged toward more,
a bird or two in your pocket,
like the cardinal that endures sub-zero,
bright, red, and full of fervor,
waiting to take flight one more time.

Christine Swanberg - Rockford, IL - chris.swanberg@comcast.net

footsteps on snow
memories of passage cast
on a winter day

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

Snowing all day.
Landscape of monochrome.
Tall pines lean black against the white,
And veils of fresh snow move slanted.
I think of Miss Havisham
In her wedding dress -- face veiled,
Wandering her mansion
Her stale wedding cake gobbled by rats.

I am the Miss Havisham of this house,
Wandering and thinking
Of my two husbands now long gone.
As a foil against the grey afternoon
I watch a movie.
The heroine, a romantic,
Inclined to wear white lace dresses,
In love with a rebel.

Nothing good comes of it of course,
And I am left feeling
That I missed the whole point.
Or was it poorly written?
Will anything good come from my snow day?
Too cold for my white lace dress,
I put my hands inside the sleeves of my sweater
Only pulling them out
To drink hot peppermint tea.

At four-thirty the sun breaks through.
The landscape sucks up gold and pink
As the sun begins to set.
I lift my veil and smile.

Christine Valentine - Sheridan, WY - valentine@rangeweb.net

snow covered birch trees
branches swaying in the wind
bending and bowing

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

Knit purl knit purl
 Tap tap tap tap
 On the needles fly
 Tap tap tap tap
 Row upon row of yarn
 entwine to form a sleeve
 and then another
 Ping ping ping ping
 Snowflakes sing on windowpanes
 Tap tap ping ping
 Which grows faster?
 Sweater or snowfall?
 Creak tap creak tap
 Knitter rocks back and forth
 Bubble froth bubble froth
 Nutmeg, mace all aboil
 spices scent the air
 Purr purr purr purr
 Cat content on quiet lap
 Ping ping ping ping
 Thicker, deeper falls the snow
 Purr purr ZZZZ ZZZZ
 Needles silent
 Knitter lulled in winter's keep

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

incessant sunlight no longer

incessant sunlight no longer
 azure sky graying as with age
 proud arc of heavens flaccid
 now coddled by yellowed-purple clouds
 mourning the rift between leaf and twig
 as though it knew not that winter gives
 a time of stillness, the cold quietness
 needed to repair, refresh, renew, ready
 our world for spring

mjNordgren - Forest Grove, OR - maryjanenordgren@gmail.com

Year-round lover of nature, I *cannot*
 in good conscience, trash *any* season;
 but *if I didn't have a conscience*,
 that season would be winter.
 As an adult I do not revile it.
 The bitter cold I remember
 is from when I was a child.

Icy little fingers, frozen little toes...
not really.
 My mother insulated us well.
 Decades before layering was well known
 as a protection against the cold,
 she immobilized us.
 We were heavily padded, buttoned up, zippered,
 and straight-jacketed into winter coat prisons
 except for our arms that hung suspended
 away from our bodies
 as if they had minds of their own.
 Result: my sister and I looked like penguins,
 truth be told!

I could rail about red cheeks and runny noses
 but that's petty stuff, par for the course.
 The course I remember with joy
 Was '*the big hill*' in the projects, Bronx, NY--
 the best downhill around
 for me and my Flexible Flyer sled.
 Back inside, warming up was quick and satisfying:
 hot chocolate with floating marshmallows.
 I tried to eat 'em before they'd melt.

*Bitter cold with the sweet,
 frozen-grinned and polar-bearred it, we.
 Good times.*

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

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

Thirty-two degrees outside.
I watch heavy laden clouds build
in the west. If it were summer, it
might be a thunderstorm or tornado.

In January, with the temperature
dropping, the sun moves towards
the dark clouds. It disappears, first
in the clouds then at the horizon's edge.

I feel the wind. It bites my cheeks.
The porch will be my sanctuary for a
few minutes more. Time for a wood fire.
Perhaps a mug of cocoa with whipped cream
sipped until bedtime.

Morning brings blinding whiteness. Clouds
have shed their fairy-like crystals. Coated
trees and bushes surround a magical lawn.
Small tracks have decorated the sleeping garden
with their arrow-like impressions.

On the porch again, I sweep the light snow
off the gray floorboards then watch as heavier
patches turn to ice. I stand, listen to the
sounds of winter birds.

Cardinals hide in snow covered shrubs
to keep warm and wait for a freshly
filled bird feeder. The suet hangs
nearby to tempt them out of hiding.
I hurry to refill backyard feeders. In front
of the glowing fireplace again, I wonder
how birds survive the cold. Yet they sing and
hop on frosty tree branches, ever watchful
for bounding dogs and slow-moving felines.

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

Early morning in frigid January,
I visit the five-acre frozen lake.
After six days of Wintry weather,
the liquid is a half foot of solid ice.
As the day begins to warm the waters,
shadows from trees and currents below
render the process irregular,
causing tensions in the pristine icy sheet.

A startling crackling ripping sound
starts from where I stand to the far side,
echoing and reverberating as it runs.
As the whole lake releases its pressures,
a most memorable astounding sound,
that leaves in its wake a sheer fracture line.
Since then, I have witnessed this time and again.
But the days and nights have not retained the cold
and caused the lake to sing its song.

Cedar Still Survives

Two Winters ago, she had fallen,
borne down under a heavy wet snow.
She lay flat on the ground dying,
half her roots uncovered and marred.
Branches of other trees damaged.

We brushed snow off her green needle leaves,
set a staff into the earth besides her,
tied a stout rope around her trunk
to keep her standing steady and straight,
and waited for time to tell her fate.

It is a long two years later.
A pair of trunks have grown to bolster her,
undistinguished through her verdant coat,
filling in the brown lifeless streaks--
over fifteen feet of greenery.
Today we removed the unsightly riggings.
She is no longer in need of them.

Twenty-five below zero has brought
six-inch snow;
was only days ago. Days later,
it rains;
thirty-seven degrees, warm breath of
impatient spring.
Who says only humans can display, uneven temper;
Mother startles us with hers. We only pray
she plays benign. Or, should we say, we ought to
check on our habit provoking her; we've done enough.
Listen to the cracking, arctic ice in the January rain;
sea of the jagged pieces ice; bleeding polar bear.
The red setting sun shudders; echoes in our heart.
We whisper to the sun: we try hard.
January rain sobs, silent cry;
we listen, listen more.
Mother begs: dig out the muscle in the cove
of your heart.

Byung A. Fallgren - Wyoming - pyogool65@gmail.com

Winter Berries, the Crow

Red cluster of seeds of dream;
silent scream of time
gone too soon, hanging from
the bare branches; soft snows'
empathy; lone crow ponders,
if this beauty is what death looks like.
He listens to the spirits of the season gone,
in the nature, in the human voices that
always gives him shiver,
in the drifting snow from the pine trees,
too profound to chew and swallow.
He pecks the little berry; surprised by the
firm grip on the community of its world;
tilt his head, gaze more,
feels the knot in his heart.
with sudden yearning, he takes off.

Byung A. Fallgren - Wyoming - pyogool65@gmail.com

i stride along the edge of life
imagining limbless proto-amphibians
slithering from the surf
but it's winter and sixteen degrees
a seeker of warmth
would never venture onto this land

as the tide turns
i turn to walk towards the setting sun
on glistening gray-bluish-green sand
skirting the wavelets rippling up
leaving foamy beads behind

the crimson-orange fireball
is reflected upon the undulating ocean surface
its incandescence is dazzling
it descends
ever-so-slowly sinks
almost touches
then kisses its fiery swallower
tantalizingly and deliberately submerging
finally! it is consumed
but still has one glorious act--
igniting the furrows of mackerel clouds
the heavenly crown above

Lloyd Abrams - Freeport, NY - lbabrams@gmail.com

Night Walk

Silent as the night
Snowflakes fall in city streets
Covering our sins

Underneath the "EI"
Shivering sparrows huddle
Waiting for the sun

I walk by alone
Collar turned against the cold
On my way back home

another cold winter day
bleak and gray and dreary
too easy to be weary
and hard just to walk out the door

but when i get to the street
i stop
look around
and take in the hues that are not
dazzling and luminous and alluring
as in spring and summer
but mature and seasoned...
an infinity of muted browns
mixed with dark and faded greens

and swaying in the wind
are the exposed limbs
of uncloaked trees
that reach upward
to the platinum sky

Lloyd Abrams - Freeport, NY - lbabrams@gmail.com

Wailua Walk

After welcome winter rain, the ridge flows
green, at last, around brown wisps and clods.
Low clouds nestle against the limned mountain
like a purring pet Persian cat.

The monarch butterfly's orange-and-black-bar
wings fly free under continents of clouds.
Two red-dirt-coat horses stand by a fence,
watch me and decide to wait longer.

Suddenly, dry fronds collide in the shadows
of sun-tempted breezes, cool then warmer.
Between gnarled trunks and leafed boughs,
another trustworthy Wailua winter afternoon.

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

The deer have sent out patrols
Carefully making their way across
The uncertain footing of a long winter's snow.

They grasp the weeds.
Take tall grasses that were somehow left uncut
Eating what they can find on the edges.

Different Times

We live in different times.
The seasons of the sun
Go on as was

The days get shorter
But the heat remains

When the season breaks
It breaks at once
In feet of silence
That never goes.

The season breaks again
And takes the bridges with it
Restoring a warmth

That lasts long after the sun has left.
The seasons have fallen out of time.

The Sky Has Gone to Ground

The sky has gone to ground
Emptying the space
Between tree and rock
Then making them disappear.
There are no shadows.
The world is filled with a white emptiness.

The brightest part of long, dark winters in New England
Is the making of maple syrup
Just when the season turns
Rivers run clear in cold sunshine
Air fills with wetness like a sponge
The earth steams from within
And geysers spray from unseen depths, waking

I would trek knee-deep through the wet, glinting snow
Walker hound in tow
Toddler shuffling in white meringue mountains
Baby on my back

As a young mom in Connecticut
I was determined to show our kids how maples give us food
Our town had a collective for syrup enthusiasts
One bucket at a time
For the mule in the bunch, me
To cart across the pasture from the forest
To deliver crystal clear sap
To the open air sugar shack with cauldrons cooking on fires
40 gallons sap to make one gallon syrup

This food -- this drink --
This luxury --
A fine example of the bounty that trees bestow on humans

Weeks later, we would receive our cut --
A few ounces of the amber nectar
We would gather freshly fallen snow in teacups
And drizzle with the precious syrup
Mouths full of icy tree sweetness
Life force renewed
Ready for spring

Amanda Niamh Dawson - Sebastopol, CA -
aniamhdawson@yahoo.com

Blessed with an alcove of robust, pine trees
behind my house I seek out this forest for
months at a time. My time alone in the alpine
grove is how I delineate it is wintertime.
The sharp scent of pine tickles my nose and
greet me with nostalgia.
Sitting on a sturdy log within the winds and whispers
of alpine trees ignites my imagination.
I'm now flying down a hill in my red sled in crisp snow.
Racing down the hill and landing into a pile of fluffy snow.
My favorite kind! Rolling and laughing with my little sister,
we want to race some more. It's not cold, it's thrilling.
Decades ago, we were four and five years old yet
time has not diminished the joy of riding in my sled.
Straight into piles of that fluffy snow! That soft impact
let us be shrieking and laughing while feeling
empowered and delighted. Those rides are
one of my favorite winter memories.
A feeling of renewal that grips me now in the alcove is
much like the snow did years ago. I loved the snow when
I was all bundled up in my pink snowsuit. My heart racing,
riding that sleek, shiny red sled. It's all in my head now like a
snow globe. Yet, I'm still feeling that captivating sense of fallen
snow. A fascinating time to be young of mind and free in winter.

My time spent now within this alpine alcove is always a joy!
It holds for me the deep depth and sparkle of this special season.

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

Woodland Stars

In the woodland
Stars are peeping
Through the forest
Softly sleeping,
Through the shadows
As they fall
On all creatures
Big and small.

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

*The world is cold and cruel where
everyone has the capacity to disappoint.*

So here I stand ready to immerse myself,
withstanding this beyond brisk breeze,
in just my swimsuit, alone, shivering,
with my negative thoughts
on this mid-February morning for
I have stayed far too long indoors
hiding out from the world, as
a weak sun shyly smiles
bringing me no warmth for a sense
of loneliness surrounds me for in my
dreams I am stuck in a forever winter.

Knowing not to dive in head first
sending my system into shock, I go
slow and steady, with big toes first,
I walk in as my senses wake, exhaling,
easing my way while connecting to
the water that is now up to my knees,
slowly acclimating myself
from being frozen to being comfortable
as the water embraces my body
around my waist, my thoughts are freed
to think beyond how frigid the water is.

Slow and steady now up to my shoulders,
I let go, stop fighting the cold, what a rush,
for once I trust myself, a reawakening,
feeling like I did as a kid again,
connecting to the water where I always
came and always felt safe to leave
my burdens behind back in the water,
floating, feeling buoyant,
bobbing with the small waves
washing over me, cleansing my spirit,
I start to cry having immersed myself.

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

For my husband Rex Sexton

I live in the Artic now
on an ice floe that drifts
aimlessly on the still,
cold sea of my existence,
the enormity of bergs
and glaciers dwarfed by the
sorrow of your absence.

I search for a sign from you,
a crimson corona, a fata morgana.
But these illusions are hidden
by the dense fog in my mind,
which obscures my vision
and muffles any sound
I try to construe as your voice.

Intruders, like immense shards
of glaciers crashing into the sea,
unnerve my precarious peace.
Famished artic fox stalking for
morsels from my fragile psyche
disrupt my futile pursuit of
even a mirage of your being.

I am like a polar bear hanging on
to a melting ice raft, exhausted.
I lie in wait, hoping for salvation
in the memory, not of grand events,
but of those inadvertent gestures,
ordinary then, but extraordinary
now without you.

Rochelle S. Cohen - Marlton, NJ - rochellecohen19@yahoo.com

Frozen to the bone, I bundle home across
downy drifts of mystic whiteness.

Ice angel, lifting her winter wings -- all
around me in the night, as I cut through the
city's sprawling park, like icicles dangling
from the winter sky, towers rise, sleek with
glass and reflections of the nebulous.

They almost rival nature I'm thinking,
but not quite.

Strolling below, amidst the parks, gardens,
walks, fountains, of downtown Chicago, the
quaint Victorian mansions and smug old
brownstones -- most of which have been
converted into pricey eateries, watering holes
and Gold Coast condos -- begin to assume an
illusion of fairyland as a heavenly lake effect
snow descends on the city and flakes as big
as dove feathers (angel feathers) transform
the spires and gables into enchanted castles.
A small stone bridge over a silver stream
cascading through the darkness and disappearing
around the bend. The raw winds blow. It
all seems like a dream. The bare park trees,
like waving hands, point spectral fingers at
a falling heaven -- falling on me, on all of us,
as it transforms our mundane world into an
enchanted land.

Rex Sexton

A touch of frost forms fast
to the inside of my windowpane--
its lacy pattern etched and slowly growing.

As I gaze out to admire the landscape,
beautifully beguiling from here
astride two seasons,
I catch a brief glimpse
of my reflection off the glass.

I see an aging tree nearby
with a few remaining leaves atop,
standing silent, still straight and tall
as night begins to fall.
A light snow is blowing outside.
Little white crests on the mullions rest.

Flames from the wood fire
kept burning in my pot-bellied stove
have died down from earlier.
It soon will be reduced to embers, then ashes.
I give the wood a good prod
to tease out a bit more heat,
but to little avail,
yielding just a few more crackles and pops
that cause the long ears
of my faithful friend Jack--
who knows me and my ways much better
than any of the few humans
who come round to grace my door ever could--
to perk up for a moment.

Together we sit and watch
as I wait, taking in the view,
ever more discerning
of winter's approaching cold embrace.

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

I sit in warmth and watch
the crispy night as the sky
fills with silent snow
and the waxing moon
weaves in and out playing tag
with scudding clouds.

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

Frost clings to jeweled weeds
tree limbs garbed in crystal gleam
my kingdom glistens

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

Winter Foray: A Golden Shovel Poem

--*Bone-pale, the recent snow fastens like fur to the river* - Louise Glück

Along the path, bare-*bone*
trees lift naked limbs to the winter-*pale*
sky as I walk rapidly toward *the*
cabin hunkered beneath a covering of *recent*,
shadowed, blue-gray *snow*.
Misty drizzle creates icy fingers *fastened*
on gray-green junipers *like*
dangling tinsel. A chill breeze ruffles the *fur*
of rabbits and squirrels huddled in secret places *to*
spare, or share, warmth held close to *the*
skin as ice crystalizes and spreads over the *river*.

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

bare lofty treetops
alight with moonlight and rime
arrested in time

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

Made pure by a deep coating of snow, a lonely road
Awaited any author to write a story on its blank white page,
As a wash of rose dawn light set off blue shadows
Laid over by the marble arches of naked sycamores.
Swift motion snatched away the stillness as a grey shape
Blurred through the trees -- resolving itself into the King Stag
Lolloping along at speed -- antlered crown raised high and proud.
He stamped his twin crescent seals down into the snow shroud--
Challenging any hunter to track his deep-printed trail.
He blazed single-minded towards his Queen--
A golden doe bathing in winter's pallid glow,
Attended by her court of sisters and aunts.
Surging rampant from his woodland fortress,
Trailing curling war banners of steam blown by his passion,
The Monarch of the Glen bunched himself taut--
Never dropping his crowned head--
And sailed regally over the entire width of the road,
Leaving its bright ribbon of purity undisturbed.
A second leap sent him over a hayfield's fence
To land at full gallop, scattering the flirting herd
Of hinds and fawns like ninepins--
bowed over by the raw power of the Hart-
All except his One, her liquid eyes burning unafraid.
A frigid wind tossed glittering snow crystals
Like wedding rice over the waltzing pair,
Dancing in the silence of the turning of the year,
With the sun their spotlight in the azure sky.
The herd delicately nibbled at dead weed heads
Poking through an icy crust, their dancer's hooves
Balancing on the slippery curve of a snowball earth,
Far beneath a golden hawk spinning lazily
Above a world with no borders.
And hidden inside his Christmas postcard house,
No longer part of the bleak beauty of winter,
The farmer sits by his crackling fire, feeding his eyes
On images of summer warmth through machines that lie.

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

How far that springtime candle throws its beams,
Youth yearns to breathe the sweet pollen of warm nights;
Love, love, embrace the first spark of hope in dreams.

Though newborn sons shun the sun's fierce gleams,
Toddling cubs trap lightning bugs to hoard their light--
How far those summer candles throw their beams.

Stripling youths ranging free, growing strong and supreme,
Watch over rippling green waters for lovers hidden from sight--
Love, love, embrace the blazing bright star of dreams.

Proud sires who wield their vast powers to extremes
Regret, as leaves begin to fall, careless lapses into spite.
How far those autumn candles throw their beams.

Aged lions snared in an icy world of frozen streams
Must not fear the fade into Nature's raw and sleety night.
Love, love, embrace the glowing warmth of dreams.

And you, my dying father, your vision paling to mists and steams,
Dread not the frigid darkness, for I will keep that flame alight.
How far that winter's candle throws its beams.
I give you leave to pass into the snow-white ash of dreams.

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

chilled visitor

gentle dusting
heavy multi-flakes
fierce blowing yielding drifts
snow reigns over our hillside
piling into ridges
a yearling passes the two does
foraging in the yard
struggles through heaps
of cold white to seek
shelter among the lawn chairs
on my back porch

mjNordgren - Forest Grove, OR - maryjanenordgren@gmail.com

Hands frozen
red and raw
inside mittens,
cried out
to get inside.
I could not
abide the idea
of leaving
our igloo--
snow fort,
shining
in winter
sun rays.
All iron railings
were slick
with thin sheets
of ice. The stone
turtle we liked
to climb on
was white
with frost.
Neighborhood
cats skittered
under cars,
while neighborhood
dogs rolled
into snow angels,
their black noses
bulbs of snow.
It was a day
off from school.

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

bare limbs
in blustery winter wind
dancing ballerinas

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

Thinking I'd used all my words,
that another poem was not in me
you appeared, deep brown doe eyes
pools of caution, fear, curiosity, hunger.
Close behind was a mini-you, the one
I saw tugging for milk while you
grazed across the river.
You almost ate from my hand,
thought better of it, opting instead
for a dish of cornflakes in the snow.
I admired your slender legs and tiny
hooves, the ears oversized for your delicate head.
You may not be here when I return,
I saw the coyote frantic and searching
for a scent. I know someone
will hunt you down for sport.
How can they do it? They don't look into your eyes.
That's how they do it.

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

Girl in the Purple Tutu

Look at you. Six years old or so
with your cute-as-a-bug friends
hiking with me on a dry and drab winter trail.
The lack of color doesn't matter because
you're in your purple tutu
skipping along with the other girls, giggling.
A toasty sycamore leaf is your found treasure.
You are mine...
exploding color along a dusty trail.

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

in the still of
the winter
night
listen carefully as
falling snow whispers

slow down
come walk
in my silent serenity

come through the woods
an enchanted place
draped in bridal veil lace

come through the still town
where street sounds are
swallowed in white

come through the yard
tiptoe on flowerbeds
asleep under downy softness

take tranquil steps
hushed unhurried
come walk in the snow

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

Atlantic Retreat

On a winter day in Wyoming,
my mind takes me to a Florida beach,
where I feel the sun against my bare skin,
breathe warm, salty air,
feel cool water and warm sand on my feet,
eat a sandwich under an umbrella
while listening to the ocean.
I'm already warm.

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

Woodlands crackle
beneath their icy coat
the buck's hooves
breaking a thousand tiny mirrors
after last night's ice storm

cedars weighed down
hedge trunks shining and feeders
ringed with birds anxious
to fill craw and belly

doves gleaning beneath
woodpeckers riding suet cakes
winter dull goldfinches
snatching sunflower seed
in relays while chickadees dart

the lot of them sharing space
if not feathered friendship
and if not that at least
a kind of patient tolerance

would so the world.

Silence

blankets the woods now
snow laden boughs, grasses
the very wires of the fence
bound with white strands
butcher's twine strung between
cedar posts where a hawk sits
eyeing ground around a hay bale
in case a field mouse should spring
from beneath warm rolled summer
a giant mound now frosted
shredded wheat field sized
cattle's steaming breath rising
and their munching the only sound
to break the morning stillness.

Dark and darker, it grew outside
As she sat by the frosty window
And counted snowflakes falling fast
Until even the flakes turned black.

As she sat by the frosty window,
She lit the white candle in its holder
Until even the flakes turned black
As a golden halo spread on the glass.

She lit the white candle in its holder,
Her eyes now illumined by the flame;
As a golden halo spread on the glass,
She watched him dying on the divan.

Her eyes now illumined by the flame,
She listened for the snowy owl's hoot.
She watched him dying on the divan
As White Fox scurried, a sudden flash!

She listened for the snowy owl's hoot,
Counted each breath her man had left
As White Fox scurried, a sudden flash!
Her husband was gone just that fast.

Light and lighter, it grew outside;
Her husband now haloed just like that
Until even the flakes turned golden
As he would live always in her heart.

Judith Lyn Sutton - Campbell, CA - jlsutton46@comcast.net

One cloud
drifting alone
on a blank slate
of blue sky.

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

You trudge along the riverbank through fetid
 footpaths, sodden fields. Jackdaws, crows, black-headed
 gulls lour overhead. Scores of plovers
 swoosh at a pair of wide-eyed sheep. A great blue
 heron fishes by the weir. The black sheep crops
 grass tips that spit the slush. A raven alights
 on the back of the white sheep. Ice crystals
 on the brambles, hoar frost on holly leaves
 A motte and bailey castle ruin bejewels
 a small gray hill. You skip along the riverbank.
 Enchanted

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

True Colors

Through the mist-straggled shroud
 of a midwinter morning,
 on the fells and dales of Rydal Water, *
nothing prepares you
 for this battery of color.

Pastel lilac mountain peaks,
 emerald moss, russet pines.
 Turquoise grease ice
 tessellates floors
 of Neanderthal shelters

And Loughrigg Fell;
 slathered in ginger-snap
 bracken, vermilion;
 like a meteorite,
 pulses with cons
 of occult light
 trawled from the void
 of the brackish black water.

(*Cumbria, England)

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

The theme of winter -- is a longing for Spring;
 but, of course, that's a concept in a relative sense.
 In hot countries, it's the pleasantest time of year,
 while further north, or south, it's decidedly drear.
 ...And animals that hibernate miss the whole thing,
 whilst the flutter-bys and birdies seek warmth on the wing.

Personally, I'm thankful that there's no lawn to mow.
 And grateful, likewise, the damn mosquitoes have gone.
 Skeeters, ticks and fleas make me glad winter's come,
 though, now to frolic in nature, I'll likely be numb.
 Happily, deer in the garden's a less calamitous show
 ...for a season most flora take a rain-check to grow.

And delight, do I do, that squirrels and I may commune
 ...laying mounds of shell-peanuts on the snow-bound terrain.
 They're even vaguely grateful -- to augment meager fare,
 staring sternly through windows when largesse is not there.
 Token rations help opossum, and un-torpoed raccoon;
 while cat-kill coyotes (ha!) cry unloved 'neath the moon.

That pale-frost moon... through a dark, crystal sky,
 with biting, wind-caress'd sleet, that's no friend of mine.
 Hollow-toned owls assess woodlands of ice;
 nocturnal eyes

alert (!)

for careless exposures of mice.

...While, over-insulated and joint-stiff, I reclassify
 frozen notions of appreciation, glazed fast to my eyes.

No, a winter's night is not for me... except for stars, ablaze
 ...and Alaskan adventures of the crackle-hued Aurora!

Now, my chilly glee is the lively daytime track
 of the wily critters awaiting Spring's comeback;
 with daily, desperate tenacity -- nature-worthy of praise
 ...and modest, dependence-free assist

'til more bounteous days.

Steven P. Pody - Fredericksburg, VA - s_pody@msn.com

Tiny stained-glass windows
snowflake crystals twirl,
coming to alight
on my purple sleeve bright.
Fur-lined boots in muffled steps
trudge clouds of snow,
billowy pathways that fade and go--
old footprints in ghostly array
seeking a horizon of mottled gray.

Every evergreen sculpted in white
heavy symmetry shelters at night
little eyes tucked under wing
dreams of blue skies
and forests that sing.
Or a squirrel curled at rest
her long-fingered hands
near her heart-beat chest.

A streamlined nuthatch
darts past my eyes
well defined in formal attire.
He waits on the fence, feathers fluffed out
then dives through the soft-speckled air
to the walnut pieces I threw about.
How did you know they were there?

Did you see me float through snow
with my puffy coat and my high-step boots?
Go ahead, snatch a piece fast, and off with you!
Dash to a branch, then fly to your bower
aloft inside cedar's gleaming cathedral,
at home in winter's tower.

Anne Stackpole-Cuellar - Forest Grove, OR -
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pewter skies hang heavily
holding their wintry breath
for impending stormy blow

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

The goldfinches desert the feeder I hung
just for them as the weather turns cooler
and leaves start to drop. Their departure
is unannounced, inexplicable to my way
of thinking, like house guests that depart
without an “excuse me” or “goodbye.”

One day they are just not there,
my backyard a little barer, the flutter
of wings missing, as if the season has cast
a warning: leave now as quickly as you can.

The remaining bag of seed reposes in an airtight
container purchased solely for this purpose,
the seed in the feeder growing moist
until I pour the seed out and clean the feeder.
My intention is to wait until spring to begin
anew with a bag of seed freshly purchased.
But something within me urges action.
Why not try again as snow falls, ground hardens,
and, perhaps, other food sources recede?

So, I fill the feeder once more and, battling wind
and a growing snowbank underneath, hoist
this repository of hope to its summer perch.
Although hope springs eternal, in this case it must wait
for only a few days. First, one golden bird
alights, its head bobbing as its beak gathers
this winter meal. Then another arrives, and,
before long, through my winter window I watch
my feasting guests in all their golden, winter splendor.

Edward J. Rielly - Westbrook, ME - erielly2@earthlink.net

Fierce winds howl at night
Morning dawns with knee-deep snows
Pine trees bend their heads

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

Bleak dark days, long cold nights,
brilliant colors of autumn gone
no vermilion, marigold, topaz leaves.

Migrating birds fly south,
their chirps and warbles now missed.
Hawks with shrill calls remain.

Deer and coyotes winter in lower elevations.
Through this bitter season, bears, raccoons
squirrels, marmots, even little brown bats, sleep.

The lake disappears under a layer of ice.
Our small creek slows, then stops its flow,
waiting for Spring rains to return.

Going outside, we bundle in layers--
warm raincoats, down jackets, thick socks,
heavy boots, gloves, and hats.

We burn wood in the fireplace morning to night,
take long hot baths, sleep under piles of quilts,
our furry, warm dogs snuggling in.

And we wait. Watching the sunset later each day.
Waiting for the trees and shrubs to show new growth.
Waiting for the Spring equinox promos that Winter is done.

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

The personality of trees

changes with the seasons.
Coy in the spring,
Saucy in the summer,
Showing off new fashions in fall,
and humbled in the winter.

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

Time for dormancy
time for the wait
time for the sleep
of the moth in the cocoon

Time for dormancy
time for the promise
time for the sleep
of the tree in frozen bark

Time for dormancy
time for the quiet snows
time for the designs of frost
on the windows
under a white sky

Time for dreams of elsewhere
time for hope of another time
time for whispers from the ground
time for the silent dream

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

Gleaning

crowcall
John Deere harvesters fallow
readied for winter rust
crowcall
harvested silage
woodsmoke curls
legacies of scents
crowcall
clay, earth
pigments of stuff
underneath the
grass dance of existence
crowcall
crowcall

(Previously published in Reflect)

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

The shadow of a cat outside
 my window on a winter day
A lowering sun on old brown
 leather at the back of the room
And memories full of color like dry
 leaves blown in windows by the fence
Frozen plums that I could never
 reach are holding to the trees
Clouds come so suddenly and free
 there is no rustling of
 towhees finding worms
No creaking of a tired chair in
 orange light; so still; so long
 ago; and waiting for the snow

Samuel Wells - Cedar City, UT - samuelwells@suu.edu

Sierra Ancha in the Snow

Up over Sierra Ancha in the snow
With seedling clouds like plumes
Filtering through pine
Dancing on air
Turkeys keeping to wet roads like
 mudlarks with their mincing struts
White peaks in gray are gone
Invisible
In ice
Live oaks bending from the strain, still
 breathing, still sure
Arboreal, this wintry spawn depends
 above the desert floor

Samuel Wells - Cedar City, UT - samuelwells@suu.edu

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

Standing at the edge of the clearing
Illuminated by early dawn sunlight
Which peeked through the still-falling
Mounting snow, he munched hungrily
On diamond-coated pine needles

Not much for a full-grown moose
But it would have to do; at least
It was sustenance, and as long as
It kept snowing, he knew that, despite
His ivory coloring, he would be safe

He'd learned early on that he was
Quite different from other moose
The females often shunned him and
In warmer months cougars and even
Coyotes had sometimes chased him

But as the Winter snow continued falling
Clinging to his velvet white antlers,
He blended in, the snow rippling with
Each step he took, so that it was hard to tell
Where he ended and where the snow began

Giving him some peace as he ate, protected by
The frosted cover which kept him safe
Until the clouded sun rose even higher
And he headed back into the welcoming forest
To wait for dusk and, hopefully, dinnertime

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

icy fog rises
o'er the swamp this frigid dawn
dancers cloaked in white

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

Rising above the din of the
Fierce wind-blown blizzard
That raged outside on this icy
Frigid evening, I was startled
To hear a loud and persistent
Scratching at the back door

Gingerly, not knowing what
To expect, I drew back the drape
Only to find a small, bedraggled
Black and white, long-haired cat
On the step, peering beseechingly
Into our warm, cozy kitchen

Astonished, I noticed the icicles
Clinging to her once silken fur
This poor cat had been outside
For a long time, and as my own
Four cats watched, fascinated,
I opened the slider and let her in

Then, as my daughter walked
Into the room, and began singing
“Memory” from “Cats,” I knew
Our fate was sealed; we could not
Put her back outside, and if no one
Claimed her, she would be ours

Thus, our lives were woven together
And while Mistick often roamed
She always returned in the Winter
Until the day when she was hit by a car
And called back to her truest home
Where all the good cats go

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

Flakes fly,
 all night long.
 Wind driven.
 Gradually, drifts grow,
 from fresh falling snow.
 Blanketing the ground,
 silencing all sounds.
 Wide eyed children,
 stare out across sheets of white.
 Fluffy, cold,
 dropped in the dark.
 Wrapped children
 tumble out to play.
 Good packing,
 cupping into balls.
 Taking aim,
 they target each other.
 Tossing spears of slush.
 Falling back,
 raising arms,
 sweeping upwards.
 Kicking out legs.
 Sugar dusted, they slowly rise.
 Admiring each other's creations.
 Chilled,
 they leave the angels behind,
 seeking out mugs of steaming coco.
 A soft breeze lifts the snow.
 Scattering angel's blessings.

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

On a Late Winter Afternoon

With blue sky overhead, sun no longer warm,
 day almost gone,
 I snuggle under a blanket in my recliner,
 stare out the window at treetop and sky,
 all I see with limited vision,
 thankful to be safe and warm.

Abbie Johnson Taylor - Sheridan, WY -
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I stand at the base of Taughannock Falls,
expect to see water rush
then cascade over the rocky cliff,
plunge two hundred fifteen feet
into a swirling indigo vortex.

Instead, I stand by a frozen pool.
As temperatures plummet,
super cooled waters
of Taughannock Creek slow.
Slush, frazil ice, forms.

My eyes widen. My jaw drops.
A milky, opaque curtain
hangs from the gorge precipice,
drapes the chilled rock face.
Crystalized stalactites

dangle from glazed ledges.
Clouds of mist, confectioner's sugar,
dust the frozen sculpture,
warmed by the sun.
Temperatures fluctuate,

orchestrate percussive sounds--
crackles, booms, moans as ice shifts.
Cinnamon-colored sediment
within needle ice
imitates rutilated quartz.

I shiver, not from frigid air.
Enraptured, I stand silently.

(Previously published in the Winter Poetry Quarterly)

Suzanne Cottrell - Oxford, NC - cottrell_suzanne@yahoo.com

Sun lights icy panes
Rainbows glow on bedroom wall
Birds and toes seek warmth

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

North of the tree line in the Arctic Circle
Is an unforgiving landscape, barren and cold
With months of darkness

In this remote northern environment
Tundra wolves seek to survive and nurture their pack
They hunt moose and oxen, sometimes days in between,
To keep their strength
And ward off encroaching competition

These beauties of the far north subsist
Under purple aurora nights and dim summer days
They have evolved and refined to endure the stark permafrost
With their rusty silver coats and long agile legs

Every member of the pack is unique in character
Playful, respectful, and quarrelsome with brotherly love
A family of stalwarts and misfits
Kept in check by the ice matron

She nurtures her kin with soft motherly care
Yet ferociously wards off threats to the pack
She respects wolverine hierarchy
And bonds and mates with the pack leader

But the ice matron and her family
Have a dangerous predator
One that values them for their coats
Who fears and demonizes them as violent beasts

This predator is changing the environment
Thawing the ice to mush and threatening their future
Guided by ancient bloodlines the wolves
would rather face the challenges of their known habitat

The ice matron can nurture and protect her own
From the barren chills
The nomadic hunters
Competing wolf camps
But not the deadening planet

John Reid - Vancouver, BC - jhreid@shaw.ca

Like a spilled bucket of water, the Okavango Delta flows and fingers its way through the sere Botswana plain. Its liquid blue mirrors the bright winter sky. An inland delta that knows no path to the sea, it grows from rains in Angola, bringing salvation to the thirsty biota of this burgeoning land.

We watch, entranced, as wide expanses fill with life.

Elephants plod to the water. Their huge forms and angry trumpeting signal others to wait their turn. Calves roll in the mud. Elders drink and bathe, their tough, wrinkled skin glistening in the sun. Spreading their forelegs to reach the water, giraffes drink. Warthogs wet their tusks; cape buffalo lap the cool liquid, soothe their hooves; baboons wade, while their young stay dry on mothers' backs.

For days, we drink it in, the flood of all this being, like we are dying of thirst.

Hippos' massive bodies mound above the surface like huge gray rocks. Zebras hoof in single file, their stripes reflected in the shimmering flow. Deep in acacia shade, cheetahs dream of drinking water, tasting blood. Golden grasses billow; dragonflies hover; herons step with care in the wet; waterlilies float. The stark, fleshy arms of the baobabs brush the sky.

How can we fail to be amazed, to be lightened, changed? This water cleanses us of urban scum, of clotted cities, dirty air; fills us to the brim with hope. And yet we learn the delta will die as climate change lessens northern rains. We try to imagine: No grass or trees. Hippo snorts and lion growls, gone. No ungulate thunder. No reflections of a perfect sky. And no solace, as our minds go limp without this wet awakening, without the wonder of this teeming place.

Linda Holmes - Oak Ridge, TN - holmesfamily@comcast.net

Bordered by misty, indigo mountains,
boundless plains stretch into the horizon;
the fiery sun looms overhead.
Our very beginning is tied to this place
of predator and prey, birth, and death.
Magnificent animals with noble forms
move in great waves across an ocean of grass.

Giraffes graze upon an oasis of trees
while elephants bathe in a pool of mud.
Zebras packed tightly together blend
into zig-zagging black and white lines.
Herds of muscular water buffalo drink
alongside gazelles at watering holes;
golden-eyed cats watch from higher ground.

Civilization has left its scars, a way of life now
threatened, natives squeezed off tribal land.
Wildlife once free to roam must be restricted
so, their diminished numbers can slowly rebound.
Rich men had sought only to line their pockets
and poachers with soulless eyes knew only money
from ivory, furs, and skin.

Having witnessed the treachery of man
is to bear this burden--
I am left at once feeling both joy and sorrow.
My heart aches for the beasts
and I weep for the land; yet, beyond
the noise, ignorance, greed, and savagery
there is great beauty. IF we are wise enough
to see our gifts...

Lynne D. Soulagnet - Medford, NY -
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Mountain Snow Leopard
How high will you have to climb
To hold your cold home?

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

Shy in the emerging dawn,
on padded feet, the little fawn
Treads lightly through
The powdered snow,
Not certain where
She wants to go.
She's searching for
A bite to eat,
Some buried grass
Or hidden treat,
Some sprigs and sprouts
Quite sure to please
Of daffodils between the trees...
Her eyes are soft
With faith and hope,
A baby learning how to cope
With modern man's perplexing ways
Of filling dreary winter days
With every new computer game,
But to this fawn
They're all the same.

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

Wood Duck Descent

“Ooo-eek... Ooo-eek...”
Heeding mama's high-pitched call,
young wood ducks leap boldly
from the treetop cavity,
bouncing like feathered tennis balls
on the lawn below.

Unfurling wings, crest headed hatchlings
shake off their abrupt landing
and toddle off to nearby pond
Paddling, circling merrily behind mother,
newbies are schooled to
forage for seeds and insects.

How best to train our kids?

Nick Della Volpe - Knoxville, TN - ndellavolpe@bellsouth.net

Blood red
in quick ascent
the moon intrudes
secant by secant
on the eastern view
until it looms
over Silver Beach
It dominates the sky
it decimates the night
it inundates the eye.
Caught off guard
stunned and outshone
the darkling bay below
bobs and weaves
still light on its feet.

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

Oracle

A giant heron makes her home
in the tallest trees around Brick Cove.
A great slate blue bird
she wades in the shallows
on stilt like legs,
her neck a graceful feathery ess.
She can be still for so long
that she seems in a trance
but finally takes a practiced step
without causing a ripple
as she stalks fish for food.
Because of her size
she is left alone,
if you come too close
she will burst into night
and leave you in awe
without even one answer.

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

As universe expands
star by star will dim
until someday men see
blackness in the firmament.

The last celestial fires
 sun's brightness reflected
 by moons planets and asteroids

 a trail of atomic light
 as shooting stars fly past

 bursts of fire as meteors
 incinerate in atmosphere

With so much starlight lost
 comets more visible then
 will swim their lazy course
 across the cosmic sea.

But stars are bright this night
lustrous milky way
Polaris is still in its place
five times distant
on a straight line
above the Big Dipper's cup.

Shooting Stars

The moon in the western sky
is bent like an archer's bow.

In front of the graceful arc
the evening star is poised
a glowing arrowhead
ready to be raised aimed
pulled taut against the string
and fired with just a pfsst

at the first fiery glimpse
of any shooting star.

The quiet just before dawn
hunkers down in the black oak,
the leaves quiet their whispering.
The wind for the moment
moves not a branch, not even a twig
in oak or pine or bramble or bayberry,
yet it hides before the quiet gold
lights the edges of the ebon sky,
the morning star reluctantly departs,
leaving not even a scimitar moon,
the mourning dove Hills an early song,
the mountain quail rooster-like crows
at the peak of the Dutch gambrel roof,
announcing the coming break of day,
we have no need of crowing rooster here
to announce the coming of a new day.
It's time to leave the spirits of the night,
it's time to leave the dreams of might have been,
it's time to throw back the coverlet and rise.
It's time to rinse last night's revels from the eyes,
it's time, indeed almost past time, for a first caffeine rush,
it's time to warm a cinnamon morning bun,
it's time to sip a latte from a steaming mug,
it's time to scan *The Times* and *The Guardian*,
it's time to take up the cudgel of the day to be.

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

Winter's Finale

Bundled into tired winter coats
and pulling on pilled woolen mittens,
a friend and I reluctantly
face fickle March's icy wind
as we leave the supermarket's warmth.
Only the scent of brave hyacinths
from an in-store flower stall
reminds me of hope and spring.

Sally Rosenthal - Philadelphia, PA -
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The endless beauty of a wave on the shore,
of a wave receding into the gold of an early evening sky.

The endless beauty of a grain of sand washing in on the
evening tide, of a wave opening to the falling rain as the sun
departs the sky.

The endless beauty of knowing you can feel alive today,
of a day and night, a night and day at the ocean's edge.

The endless beauty knowing our finite universe may be but
one of an infinite number of universes made from quantum
bubbles that burst.

The endless beauty of being part of seemingly timeless
days and nights of what may be universes and worlds each
more beautiful than the next.

The endless beauty of falling back into one's parts and
parcels, of becoming beings and beings too numerous to count.

The endless beauty of an endless space and possibly
limitless time, of no apparent beginnings and bounds
beyond imaginings.

And yet the bounded opportunities of a finite lifetime,
of birth and death, mysterious at their core.

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

Across Snowy Fields

like burls on branches
mourning doves hunker, mounded
north wind sweeps uphill
bare trees, blue shadows
silhouettes
crawling over snow

Winter-weary, we yearn for season's turning
Oh, Spring, bring us your tempered zephyrs

Kris Rued-Clark - Arpin, WI - kruedclark@yahoo.com

The winter of our discontent
has always been in the hearts of man
since that first, brooding being,
that first cold-blooded creature,
who harbored great hate in his heart,
picked up a stick and struck another
for having something they wanted.

These are dark times on planet Earth
for the winter of our discontent has
turned into the wintering of many hearts
for death reigns everywhere when
winter rules over our tiny blue orb--
trees that once bore fruit
are now bare and barren, skeleton-like,
with no flowers to brighten our days,
and the Earth that once grew food
to feed us all lies frozen, so
everywhere one looks is death
for the winds of winter are coming,
storming over the horizon,
sweeping across the landscape,
like a battalion of Russian tanks.

For so long the sun shone down on us
but now in the hearts of the discontent,
those that lack gratitude,
their winter has grown restless,
looming large over the landscape.
Time for those of us with
the regenerative spirit of Spring
in our hearts to rise up in peace,
like the Spring sun bringing new life
to planet Earth, a rebirth, for we
cannot have the havoc and chaos of
their winter wreak death in their wake,
allowing their darkness to overwhelm
our power as people to grow whole again.

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

Winter Portrait

Powdery white blanket
Covers Terra's breast.
Animals retire
For much needed rest.

Aeolean siren howls
Bone chilling melodies
While icicles bedeck
The silent, barren trees.

The coziness and warmth of home
Invite us to come in
To seek a reverent refuge
From winter's stormy din.

O may we not complain
When winter starts to sing
For without winter, there could never
Be the hope of spring.

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