

# *The Weekly Avocet*

## *#421*

**December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

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

**The New Year comes fast  
Slow down and let's make it last  
And then put it past.**

Joanne Stokkink - Wollaston, MA - [jstokkink@comcast.net](mailto:jstokkink@comcast.net)

**Clean water is life... Clean air is life...**

**Enjoy our poetry from Nature...**

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

**Please share The Weekly Avocet with all those you know who love  
Nature poetry. Please share Nature's poetry! Thank you!**

**We are saddened by the sudden passing of Katherine Millevolte. She was a fine poet and friend of The Avocet community. Her friendship will be missed. Her spirit lives on in her poetry, her words...**

### **Winter**

Outside  
Snowflakes and sunshine  
Glisten in the boughs of  
Towering  
Northern White Pines  
Overlooking the  
Icy-blue waters of the  
Mighty Elk River

Inside  
We savor our  
Steaming hot cocoa  
And cozy up  
In our comforters  
Looking out at  
Wisconsin's  
Winter Wonderland

Snowflakes in the air  
Sleepy bears hunkering down  
A long winter's nap

Winter sports event  
Skaters dance on frozen lake  
Break for hot cocoa

Sparrows in the pines  
Perch in snow-covered branches  
Prepare for storm surge

Katherine Millevolte

## Solstice Song

This must be commemorated.

All I can do is write words  
while the post-Stonehenge world  
rushes home, turning on headlamps  
because it seems to be getting dark.

Perhaps, if they watch the evening news,  
the shaman who delivers the augers of weather  
will note that this will be the longest night of the year,  
and that tomorrow will be winter,  
officially.

Only I know the magnitude,  
the staggering significance,  
the beauty.

I'll forgo sacrifice,  
bird, goat, or human,  
but maybe a choir of chanters  
should gather on an east-facing slope,  
singing--not hymns of praise to the sun,  
busy burning hydrogen in its hot heart  
and having no room or need in that chamber  
for affection for us--  
but singing carols of mysterious  
monosyllables signifying "we are,"  
and we are aware  
and we are filled  
with awe.

*(Previously published in "Emerging Poets of the West 2018.")*

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

**Please share The Weekly Avocet**

gingerbread people  
cooling off on a tray  
impatience can't wait

Patricia Carragon - Brooklyn, NY - pcarragon@gmail.com

## The Fox

I had been walking  
in the woods  
about an hour.  
The snow falling  
lightly but steadily,  
christening everything,  
white and glistening.  
A skier's dream,  
if it wasn't so flat here.  
The poplar trees  
surrounding me,  
protecting me,  
or possibly  
intimidating me,  
like a big brother  
who you loved,  
but respected  
and feared.  
That was when  
I noticed the tracks.  
Deep,  
precise  
holes in the snow  
and marks in the powder  
like it was swept  
with a broom.  
Whatever made these,  
their legs were shorter  
than the snowfall.  
As I knelt to investigate,  
she entered the clearing.  
A beautiful red fox,  
it's coat gleaming  
like a new sports car,  
sleek,  
yet slightly dangerous.  
She was watching me  
as much as  
I was watching her.  
Sizing me up.  
Making split-second decisions,  
as she had to  
a hundred times before.  
Was I dinner?

Or was she?  
Possibly concerned  
it was the latter,  
she bolted,  
her engine  
in peak performance,  
slightly revving,  
topping a small rise  
and disappearing,  
bewilderingly,  
into the snowy wood.  
It was only then  
that I realized  
I was covered in white.  
How long had I been here,  
standing,  
staring at something  
I now questioned  
was ever really there?  
The cold was sneaking  
through my jacket,  
nudging me  
towards numbness.  
It was time  
to get home.  
So, I started on my way.  
Out of my vision,  
she watched  
as I left.

James A. Rodgers - Pacific, WA - jameshena@msn.com

### **Yellowstone National Park at Christmas**

black bear, moose, bison  
geysers, sulfur pools, hot steam  
Kodak vacations

seen by raven eyes  
all through a cascade of white  
descending snowflakes  
gently encapsulating  
Christmas in Yellowstone Park

Daniel G. Snethen - Kyle, SD - snethen@hotmail.com

**If you don't send them,  
we can't share them!**

**Share one of your Winter-themed poems,  
Photos (4), haiku (up to 10),  
Saving Mother Earth Challenge poems+++  
Please read the guidelines before submitting  
Only one poem, per poet, per season.**

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

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

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

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

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

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

Please no more than 45+ lines per poem.

Please no religious references.

Please use single spaced lines.

**Please remember, we welcome previously published poems.**

**Please put your name, City/State, and email address under your poem. No Zip codes.**

**Please send your poem in both the body of an email and an attachment.**

**We look forward to reading your Winter submission...**

## Winter Voyage

Like a pale ghost ship  
the cheerless sun  
sails through a shroud  
of gray clouds--  
a Flying Dutchman  
bearing the flag of winter.

Bleak skeleton trees  
creak and groan  
like rigging in a storm.  
Desiccated leaves  
scud across  
swells of frozen snow.

This is a time to trim sails  
and mind the compass--  
a time to be  
vigilant at the helm  
until we slip  
into the safe harbor of spring.

Ray Staubach - Georgetown, OH - raystaubach@twc.com

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

### No Sky

I didn't see the sky today  
I didn't see its light rise in the east like a great beast  
or shred its past in restless white tatters and then hurry on  
I didn't see the sky today  
when the flurries were strewn  
wrapped gifts each holding itself in soft down  
I did not see the sky slowly pace into night  
and open a door to maps of chalkboard with prophecies written and love aligned  
for today there was no space or time  
a day ground down to heartless dust  
a day not mine.

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

## Time to Climb

the murky winter day took me  
out to slippery mountainside  
it was work to say  
this is quite a fine hike--  
it wasn't

till I spotted the cloven tracks  
of what I can only imagine  
was a line of long gone elk

I remembered  
late spring two years ago  
where mountain lupine billowed  
in the quivering wind

lavender spikes  
covered the big meadow  
in a catches breath way

out of the corner of my eye  
were twelve cow elk  
nose deep on the hilly  
part of the lupine field

I watched  
tawny long necks dipped  
in green till  
their buff backsides  
moved back into dense trees

finally exhaling  
I looked up to denim blue sky  
that held swatches  
of horse-tail clouds

and here I am now  
looking at a muddy  
elk track  
but it's as fresh for me  
as the scene two years ago

everything is answered--  
there is nothing else to muddy up  
our short climb

waste no time  
thinking of anything  
but how your life has  
glistened

Ursula McCabe - Portland, OR - ursulawmccabe@gmail.com

bright lights shiny balls  
beckon curious cats  
to attack the tree

Patricia Carragon - Brooklyn, NY - pcarragon@gmail.com

**winter's white**

winter's white  
blanketed  
our green grass  
today  
bare branched  
trees  
now covered white  
bright blue sky  
sunshine begins  
to melt  
the mornings  
snow  
as late December  
winter's white  
glows all around

Wendy Schreiner - Warsaw, NY - wendyew3@yahoo.com

southpaw kitty  
ornaments go down  
for the count

Patricia Carragon - Brooklyn, NY - pcarragon@gmail.com

December without  
Snow--barren as a rose bush--  
Thorns without a rose

Joanne Stokkink - Wollaston, MA - jstokkink@comcast.net

### **Frozen White Roses**

This frosty, snowing New Year's Eve  
I am compelled to start a new tradition,  
now that you are both here.  
100 feet apart with a view of each other forever.  
We granted your wishes, both of you wanted  
your final resting place to be under a shady tree.  
The frozen, icy snow slaps me across my face,  
jarring me into facing my new reality.

Clutching tightly onto a dozen white roses  
I walk to you alone for the first time.  
Initially, I was scared to come but,  
a new revelation forced me to be unafraid.  
A deep gratitude gave me clarity:  
you both taught me a lesson that saved me.  
There is nothing ordinary in the living  
of each day, enjoying simple rituals.

You both started each day drinking  
your morning coffee with a view, me too.  
A view of the outside, breathing in the  
fabulous painted view nature provides.  
Blue skies, fluffy clouds, and sunshine  
Or pouring rain tap dancing on the leaves.  
Each tableau the natural world provides  
refills my spirit with hope and strength.

It helps me breathe deeply and  
grounds me to another day's possibilities.  
I feel refreshed once again by the  
nurturing glow only mother earth can provide.  
An open window lets in our favorite  
scents of roses, honeysuckle, or pine  
each of us reflecting on how divine  
time spent among the greenery quiets minds.

The snow is now hail but I am so  
reluctant to let go of the roses as it cements  
this event forever onto my very being;  
kissing and placing down each frozen rose  
only happy memories flow with my tears.  
I know how pleased you both would be and  
where I can find you both now resting  
happily, under the canopy of these trees...

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

**Have a Happy, Healthy New Year 2021!!!**

**We look forward to sharing more of your work in 2021**



A Better World  
*Today*

**An Unusual Way to Rescue a City from Blight—Bees**

**J. GABRIEL WARE**

For over a decade, Detroit has been at the center of the country's urban farm movement. The gardens and farms established on the city's vacant land are a practical answer to both poverty and blight.

Now, urban bees are moving in. That's obviously a good thing for the city farms, but it's also helping with the blight.

The Detroit Blight Removal Task Force assembled by former President Barack Obama recommended the city remove 40,000 blighted properties within five years. That was four years ago. As the city bulldozed battered homes and buildings, about

24 square miles of vacant land has opened up. Some of it has become unsanctioned dumping grounds, perpetuating a cycle of blight.

“People want to see their areas cleaned up. They want to see all the blight removed,” says Timothy Paule, a Detroit resident and beekeeper. “And that costs money.”

So, bees...

**Read the full story**

**Please dare take the Mother Earth Challenge.**

**Show Mother of your love of her...**

**And you will not have to see so many of mine! These Challenge poems mean a lot to me. As editor of The Weekly Avocet, I want at least one Challenge poem in an issue, so if not you, then me.**

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

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

**A Poetry Challenge for all Nature-loving poets in 2020.** I love writing Saving Mother Earth Challenge poems. I am always on the lookout for an article about our wondrous Mother Earth. Please find a climate change issue about our precious planet and take the Saving Mother Earth Challenge, and, then send it to us to share with the community...

**Please write a poem for Mother Earth, let her know of your love...**

**We all call Earth our home - Have your voice be heard through your words!!!**

**Please do not send those poems that have already been in The Weekly Avocet.**

**[Saving Mother Earth for the Next Generation](#)**

**Please put Saving Mother Earth Challenge/your last name in the subject line of your email and send to [angeldec24@hotmail.com](mailto:angeldec24@hotmail.com)**

**Please think about giving the gift of Nature poetry as one of your Holiday gifts - give a gift subscription of The Avocet and The Weekly Avocet to family members and friends who need a little peace delivered to their door. They**

will be glad you did. A gift for the whole year to be enjoyed. Still \$24, a steal of a deal in all the small presses.



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

### **The American Avocet**

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

long, up-curved bill  
through the shallow,  
still waters, catching  
a tiny creature,  
trapping it in its bill,  
racing off to its nest to  
feed her four hatchings  
with this feast she found.  
I watch in awe  
as the male  
grows protective,  
fearlessly fending off  
an encroaching  
common black raven,  
attacking this intruder,  
striking at it with its bill.  
I watch in wonder  
as they swim as a family  
just days after  
the young ones are born,  
then back to the nest to  
rest where its kind flocks  
together in a community.

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

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

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

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

Thank you for supporting Nature poetry and The Avocet community.

Charles, Vivian, and Valerie Portolano, Editors

**If you have enjoyed reading this week's issue, please forward it to all poetry loving people that you know, with a little note about us. Please help spread the word about the wonderful world of Nature poetry. We do feel blessed to publish the best Nature poets in America. If you belong to a writing group, please share our weekly and our printed issues with your group members. Thank you. And, if you already did this for us, thank you!**

**It is free...**

## **Every day is Earth Day**

**“We must all be fighting for Mother Earth, no time to waste. We must stand up together for clean, clear air for all. We must stop the polluters, those that take in the name of greed and leave our Earth, our only home, scarred. I am fearful of what we will leave our children and our grandchildren. Will they enjoy their home as much as we have? Will they look up at the smiling sun or will they run indoors when a new day is about to dawn, hiding away from the scorching sun or one that never gets to shine through the dark clouds that cover our Earth? There is no time to waste!” - Charles Portolano**

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