

The Weekly Avocet - #685

January 18th, 2026

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

**winter
the birds gather
around the feeder**

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



Submitted by Edwina Kadera

January Couplets

Snowflakes drift in January air,
clothing branches that are bare.

Sparrows seeking berries, seeds,
flutter to fulfill their needs.

Winter branches reach to sky,
dancing as the clouds sail by.

Breezes brisk say wrap up tight,
singing songs of winter bright.

January brings a chill,
much of nature's sleeping still.

Yet each day brings moments more,
stretching longer than before.

Winter sun is cherished now,
hope it keeps away the plow

January days will pass,
underneath the snow is grass.

Tasha Halpert

January Visions

January looks back upon the old year,
sees what went wrong, weeps tears of snow.

It sees what went right, freezes that good
into icicles that sparkle to inspire us anew.

January looks ahead to what can be,
envisions snow castles, spins drifts of potential

onto sleeping roots to nourish what will grow
from old roots and new seeds in the new year.

Tasha Halpert

January dreams

Bright January brings joy
to children building forts
and sighs to shovelers.

Birds fly in search of berries
withered on bushes,
a winter feast of hope.

Cold winds blow snow;
it drifts into our longings
for spring and warm sun.

We wake to the cold and reach
to warm our hands
with our January dreams.

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

The Daytime Bird

For the second year in a row, we've had
a mockingbird who spends all day, every

day, jumping and pouncing at our windows--
all of them. He is very determined to get

inside or perhaps is in love with his own reflection.
He makes a racket pecking and pounding,

literally throwing his body against the glass panes
flying like a helicopter from the window sills

almost all the way up to the top. He's an aggressive
bird. I've seen him chase male cardinals away

for no reason. I wonder if he'll keep this up
once the freeze arrives tomorrow as expected.

I should get suet--he'll need to replenish his strength
if he plans to continue in this weather.

He's here every minute of daylight.
He never leaves--except at night.

Emily Black - Gainesville, FL - eblack@asrsystems.ws

A Chipmunk Child

A sleek, young chipmunk has found a place
to shelter from icy weather that has ushered
in our winter season. This little creature is
so demure and ladylike I think she must be

female. She's nestled between a large rock
and the trunk of a Japanese maple tree
in the protection of our courtyard. She
is munching on her breakfast, probably

crushed sunflower seeds that have fallen
from a cluster of bird feeders hanging
under spreading branches of our maple tree.
She wipes her little mouth with her paws,

a lady at a fine dining establishment,
her manners impeccable. Her cheeks are full
and round, stuffed with possibly as much
food as her full body weight--

food she will take back to her burrow to stash
away for the long winter months ahead.
The sight of her makes me think of my little
cousin I used to babysit when I was twelve.

She was a very refined child, pretty and small-
featured, small in every way except her cheeks.
where she stored half-chewed food for later
enjoyment. She was my little chipmunk child.

Emily Black - Gainesville, FL - eblack@asrsystems.ws

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

An Anhinga Wintering in Sunny Florida

There's usually an egret or two in the pond,
but the anhinga is a special treat today,
standing still as a statue with its wings held
out high sunning them like a swimmer

might stretch out on a deck chair in warm
winter sun. An Anhinga, sometimes called
a snake bird, dives to feed on underwater
creatures. With only its long thin neck

and head visible while it's hunting, it looks
like a snake. Its feathers are not buoyant like
a duck's so it must sun itself to dry out soggy
plumage. Light shining on outstretched

blue-black wings of this bird turns them lustrous
in rainbow opalescence, giving off an iridescent
glimmer. I sit still taking deep breaths, watching
the sun and clouds interplay on this peaceful scene.

I love the word *iridescent*, both its sound and meaning.
Feeling a bit hypnotized by the glory of this moment,
I wander back in my mind, letting *iridescent* linger--
a whisper, a prayer.

Emily Black - Gainesville, FL - eblack@asrsystems.ws

Please be kind, write to each other...

The Sun Sets Low

The sun sets low against the hills.
There are a few favored spots where it still strikes the ground.
These are first to clear,
The spreading targets of the remaining warmth
The first traces of a returning sun.

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

Visitor

This rather large old buck has
settled down behind my house.

I worry about him.

He isn't moving much.

In the afternoon he comes fifty feet to the lilacs

And follows the sun around them.

Why does he stay?

He is gone with the sun.

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

nor'easter aftermath

whining grinding chain saws
sound the death knell
of century-old oaks and fallen firs
amidst burning sawdust two-cycle fumes
and a fading pine fragrance

plowed over by a late-winter nor'easter
devastating in its ferocity
i've never seen anything like it
intoned as a mantra
a muffled trumpet whispering taps
drifting off with the wind

it's bad enough when
citified halfwits move in and amputate trees –
too big too many too much shade
squirrels nuts berries bird poop too messy
i want more grass

but when those furious tempests
ravage and devour
we mourn their loss
for those majestic trees
they'd belonged to us all

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

Last Dance: Elegy for a Great Blue Heron

I try not to think of that white winter day
icy flakes hissed against the windows
and across the river, you stood amidst
whirls of snow, under two sycamores,
branches crossed in a cathedral-like arch.

I try not to think of that white winter day
when through the snow-globe of my binoculars
I watched your hunched figure,
felt the heaviness of your beak.
You seemed to catch my eye for a moment,
then turned away, fluffed off a dusting of snow.

If only I could have done something old friend.
For years I admired your patience, your elegance,
your skill on the hunt. I felt blessed those evenings
the water was still, and the night sounds had begun,
you'd glide across the river like a spirit.

So, I try not to think of that white winter day
wind howled through the eaves,
and as I got into bed your lonely silhouette
stood huddled against the moonlit snow.

I woke to a brilliant sunrise. Ice gleamed
along the shoreline. Under the sycamores,
the blues and silvers of your lifeless body
rested on an altar of drifted snow.
I try not to think of that white winter day.

Instead, I think of the spring morning
I watched you spread your wings
at the top of the tallest pine and dance.

(This poem first appeared in the anthology, Rooster in the Henhouse - stories and poems)

Russell Reece - Laurel, DE - russ_reece@yahoo.com

bright twinkling snowflakes
crystals complex and unique
transforming landscapes

Floyd D. Anderson

Lessons Learned

Rote memories:
Frost's snowy woods
his road not taken

and Hugo 'making certain
it all goes on' the lot of them:
Larkin and Langston and Maya
all putting it out there

so, unlike those green bound books
with their perforated pages
we filled to move from one level
to another unlike Cummins

who knew how to teach 'in just spring'
and Ogden making us laugh and even
blush so that if asked what was learned
I can't admit to a single page
from that green book but those other
lessons remain firmly embedded
so that I pull on the storm coat
and plunge my feet into my boots
to venture out into the whiteness
of the snow to make new tracks
in snowy woods taking paths
less traveled.

Pat Anthony

Feeders sway

from summer's plant hangers
on the deck sunflower seed
and berry suet luring
birds gone silent in the woods
the great Kansas River valley bowed
by a blanket of snow
drapery tossed over treetops
billowing onto hills
dropping down to nestle
creatures big and small
overwintering in last autumn's leaves
sky sealing to snow until
day falls away leaving
a lone chickadee in the dusk.

Pat Anthony

Winter Cedars

We timber out the cedar row
back to fence lines leaving spotty trunks
and hauling fragrant branches to ash later
on the burn pile, acid for blueberries

beyond the homemade pole feeder
with Dad's rusty squirrel guard
we leave the three largest trees
massive in their feathery circumference

bottom branches sweeping frosty grass
so that come snow they will shroud ground
leaving the inside cathedral dry and warm
haven for cardinal finch and chickadee

abundant blueberries feeding mockingbird and jay
wind bruised bracts perfuming winter air
and come New Year's woven again around
the old wire frames to leave at the cemetery

wreaths of remembrance for when the dead
swung axes and timbered out the line
barbed wire grown into trunks telling their age
and the ages of those departed so that

chain sawing to prune and sustain we work
with a woodsman's respect keeping our covenant
with tree and land: gifts unearned that lift us up
that we're bound to love, preserve, protect.

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

The Snow is Falling Like a Mist

The snow is falling like a mist
Dispersed flecks of white
Noticeable as a series of fine screens
That filter the distant trees.

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

feeble January sun
struggles beneath clouds
bones shiver

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

Sheltering in Place

From pewter skies snowflakes fall
upon mountain, valley and plain
slippery coating glazes old stone wall
which frigid temps cause to remain

Branches thicken beneath layered snow
decorating shrubs and greenery below
windblown pinecone drops and cleaves
to empty path lined with russet leaves

White holds fast to frozen ground
virgin footprints leave no sound
gray squirrel nestles in ancient oak
safe from winter rain's chilling soak

As cold cuts across one's vulnerable face
small creatures seek their resting place
finding sleep and shelter for the night
before chilling glint of morning light

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

Oakdale

Paper route through Idle Hour pulling a sled.

Too much snow to bike.

Too long to the end of Biltmore Avenue
just to deliver one paper. Didn't go.

It haunts me still.

One customer invites me in for cocoa.

Then I continue on. The dark. The snow. My mind drifts.

Fred Briggs - Lake Mary, FL - fredbriggs15@gmail.com

A White Fleece

The sheep we let out regularly
in the winter to drink and eat,
and when snow fell wetting,
collecting on the back of each
ewe's thickening coat, I could
sink my fingers in a fleece and feel,
I would think, the wool that someday
might keep me warm on a cold
winter day, a day like today,
when sheep are gathering snow
white on white, a glistening fleece.

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

Nature Through the Seasons

Spring, summer, fall, winter,
nature is ever-shifting, ever wild.

One day, she dazzles--
sunlight spilling across blue skies,
buds opening, the world becoming green.

The next, she rages--
clouds gathering, wind howling,
rain or snow sweeping through the land.

Sometimes fierce, sometimes tender,
she burns with heat,
floods or withholds water,
testing what dares to grow.

Until all eyes open to the reality of climate change,
we can only stand beneath her changing face,
savor her calm,
endure her fury,
whisper thanks
for her remaining beauty.

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

January day
cold gnaws fingers through warm gloves
few flakes dot the ground

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

January Lullaby

Caressed by a gentle breeze,
Baby Bear, separated from Mama,
wanders alone, lost.
Too young to know the season's lie,
he should be dreaming in the dark,

but melting snow and softened air
have led him astray.
He doesn't know it's only January.

We can only hope
sleep finds him,
gathers him into warm arms,
keeps him safe
until spring awakens him.

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

silent winter park
a gray January day
hardly any snow

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

Wyoming winter
abnormally warm weather
what will summer bring

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

When the Birds Come Back

May is when the green returns,
and flowers make their comeback.
But what really makes May special--
is that's when the birds come back.

June bursts forth with vibrant life--
a thousand colors reappear.
Not only do plants and insects thrive,
but those marvelous birds are here.

Then September comes along,
and birds heed the southern call.
And in a matter of just a few days,
there are hardly any birds at all.

October glows with color,
as the summer days adjourn.
But my mind wanders to next May--
I can't wait for the birds' return.

December is stark and silent,
winter has whitened the ground.
It gets me thinking of lilacs--
when the birds will be around.

April is part winter, part spring,
when tulips show their survival skill.
It's nice--yet in a month or so,
I'll hear that first songbird trill.

Life has its share of troubles,
and I'm often taken aback.
But whatever happens, I'll be okay,
as long as the birds come back.

Jim Story - Corvallis, MT - Jstory4689@gmail.com

afternoon sun
icicles falling from eaves
stand in snow

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

Winter

The sky's unbroken whiteness
meets the snowy plain.
The horizon is no more--
a seamless, endless domain.

A deafening hush pervades--
everything cold and still,
barren but for stoic pines,
wrapped in a breathless chill.

A lone raven searches--
the only life today.
A sharp crack resonates--
the ice has split its way.

Season of the long sleep,
Nature's yearly rest in time.
A world of ice and silence--
unyielding wintertime.

Jim Story - Corvallis, MT - Jstory4689@gmail.com

**Please feel free to share The Weekly Avocet with all those you know who love
Nature poetry. Thank you! It's free, just email us your email address...**

Hoarfrost haiku

Morning

Sunlight reveals three
diamond sparklers hidden
in frosty branches.

Noon

Trees gleam, then some wink.
Sun creates frosty sparklers,
winter fireflies blink.

Afternoon

Fallen hoarfrost flakes
catch sunlight. Rainbow colors--
sunset's sparklers gleam.

Vlasta Karol Blaha - Colby, WI - vkb66@frontier.com

full moon
a fawn keeps
the dog barking

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

Total Disregard

Trash! trash! trash!
Does no one have
regard for gardens—
for streets in
their own neighborhood?

I walk down front steps,
see a paper cup with plunged
straw next to my
Japanese maple. A greasy
wrapper from a slice
of pizza hangs from
a bush like a deranged
Christmas ornament.

Another gripe is
dog walkers who
nonchalantly
stop to let their dogs
relieve themselves on
street, or nearby lawns.
No cleanup; they simply
walk away.

My neighbors keep frontage
well-groomed, with a
variety of flowers,
and bushes rooted
firmly in earth,
happily drinking in rain
water, honoring nature,
as we all should.

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

bejeweled
nacreous sheet of white
sun gleams on ice

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

Pristine Fantasy

Sidewalks gleam
in thin covering
of ice, swallowed by
a pale sun.
Opalescent streets
of pearl are unmarred
by human feet.

Children peer out
windows in wonder.
They dream of skating,
sledding. Parents
advise that it is
dangerous, the ice
too thin. The children
vow to find a hilly
place still swathed
in snow for sledding.
For now, streets form
a pristine fantasy.

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

Again, we get to share the work of a poet from down-under.

Attached

I've made so many foolish decisions
you'd think I'd tread differently.

In winter
empty skies turn cobalt blue.
A myna bird steps across
a table top

and the whole café is on alert.
Is that the bird's scat
on my chair,
or a small brown twig?

Take care. Don't brush
strange things away
with your sleeve like I did.

Here the cut Gerberas droop.
Who will sever the softened stems
now that you have gone?

I remember the afternoons
we walked through the cemetery
memorising names on headstones,
painful stories from our childhoods
opening us to tenderness.

So many days have passed now,
but here I am still,
stuck at the end of the road.

Libby Sommer - Sydney, NSW

Are we ...

If all we can do in this unstable world
is throw our hands in the air
and say, *this is the way things are,*
the way they have always been,
then my plan is to grow a coat of fur,
as well as a thick layer of fat under my skin,
be a bear hibernating in its winter den.
When I look up a possum runs across
the telephone line in front of my window,
escaping before the light of dawn,
and I marvel at the way he balances
on that highwire,
his skill in his nimble dance.
Compare this delight with all the
killing, bombing and destroying
and question ourselves,
are we man or beast?

Libby Sommer - Sydney, NSW - libby@sommer.net.au

Black Birds

In leafy trees.
Are they crows or ravens up there,
the bases of their feathers
crow-white, or raven-grey?
Is it true crows can recognize people
who befriend them for years after?
Alert, *National Wildlife* warns,
crows stop and watch you
rather than you watch them.
Fly away, birds, to wide open spaces,
find an anthill, let the ants climb on,
rub them into your black feathers, for
another day of blitzing aggressors--
Aren't you afraid they'll swoop? I ask
my friend who likes to walk
beneath their winter roosting sites.
She smiles, "They're crows. They know
a pal when they see one."

(Previously published in 2024 in my collection Flat White, One Sugar)

Libby Sommer - Sydney, NSW - libby@sommer.net.au

Amber Puppy

What can an amber puppy mean in a world of Siris and driverless cars?

I was older, one of the Baby Boomers. Life was a series of warnings: *Don't fall over rugs or loose cords, don't overeat, don't go to bed before nine, drink coffee after midday, watch too much Netflix*. When the new puppy arrived one birthday, rich brown as a raisin, I heard it shadowing me: *Don't trip on the dog's lead*.

There was much to be anxious about. One day, walking through the park – the rain had eased, spring waterfalls spilled into the creek, soon we would cool off under the trees – I lost my grip on the lead. Into the bushes he fled, disappearing into green. Since when did parks swallow small dogs? I drove home in a frantic car. My best friend. I'd loved him and he'd loved me.

The days staggered past like drunks. I prayed silently, absorbed sunshine, climbed steps, wrote Letters to the Editor. *Don't panic, don't shallow breathe, don't think the worst* – you could hear it all around. A reclining Buddha could show you how to deepen the breath. A bird call at first light could tell you when to get up. A storm could remember to fill the dams and the water tanks - I was meandering between the trees when I saw him

scampering through the creek. Splashing around then shaking himself dry. A muddy escapee. A barking survivor.

Where had he been these three long days? I could wash him, wrap him in a towel, take him home. Unexpected good news could still happen. Dogs off-the-leash need to stay close to their mistresses. Trees shed their leaves in winter and dogs run away but find their way back. Seventy-two hours later, what can an amber puppy tell you in a world of Botox and identity theft?

See the difference between holding on and losing your grip.

(Previously published in Quadrant September 2019)

Libby Sommer - Sydney, NSW - libby@sommer.net.au

Please be the reason someone smiles today...

**Time to share your Winter-themed poems
for The Weekly Avocet.**

Please read the guidelines before submitting

We love previously published poems!

Please send your submissions to:

angeldec24@hotmail.com

**Up to four Winter themed poems,
Photos (4), haiku (up to 10),
Saving Mother Earth Challenge poems
(as many as you can write)**

Please do not stack your info when submitting submissions, please have it: name - town, state - email address, in a line, just like it appears in both publications. Please do not make extra work for us. Thank you.

Please send your submissions to angeldec24@hotmail.com

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

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

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

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

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

There is no line limit per poem.

Please no religious references.

Please use single spaced lines.

Please remember, we welcome previously published poems.

Please put your name - town/state - email address under your poem. No Zip codes.

Please send your poems in the body of an email or in one attachment, **no pdf file.**

We look forward to reading your Winter submissions.

Please think about becoming a supporting member of The Avocet community. The Avocet is only \$28.00 for 4 - 64 pages, perfectly bound issues and 52 weeks of The Weekly Avocet, every weekend, plus other poetry surprises, with the best Nature poetry by the best Nature poets in America, a steal of a deal.

Please make your check out to The Avocet and send to:

The Avocet
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Fountain Hills, AZ 85269

All donations are greatly appreciated, so if you have been enjoying all the Nature poetry, please think about making a small donation. Each year it gets harder and harder to keep our doors open. Thank you for supporting The Avocet and The Weekly Avocet.

The Burning Question for us Earthlings is:

What are you/we going to do to stop or even just slow down Climate Change?

Do you feel like there is nothing you can do about climate change?

Well, there is, even if we all do small things it will make a great difference. Alice C. Hill (**the David M. Rubenstein senior fellow for energy and the environment at the Council on Foreign Relations.**) states the first thing we all need to do is not shy away from the subject. Talk about, write about, climate change to everyone you know and meet. Write to your congressperson and Senators. Let them know what you think and fear!

I want to have, at least, one Saving Mother Earth poem in each issue of The Weekly Avocet, so I am always looking for poems that address our most important issues of today, so please write about what you think and fear of the coming end of our world as we know it. A world our great grandkids will never know. A Mother Nature who is no longer kind.

But if we join together, maybe, just maybe, working together, we can make a difference to Save Mother Earth, the only home we have. Show your care. There are so many topics to write about when it comes to Climate Change. Please find one you are passionate about and write about it!

Write a Tell-off poem letting the world know what you are feeling about what is being done right before our eyes by those who claim to want what best for all of us. Think it out in your head, then put it down on the page, then fight with it, get your rage out, then send it to us to share, so you can see your voice, your words, being read, being heard...

The American Avocet

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

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

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

We hope we provoked you; that you leave having experienced a complete emotional response to the poetry found in each issue of The Weekly Avocet. 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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