

# The Weekly Avocet - #689

## February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2026

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

**frigid daybreak  
newly fallen snow  
catches between dead grass**

Susan M. Surette - Cotuit, MA - [suesurette@gmail.com](mailto:suesurette@gmail.com)



Submitted by Edwina Kadera

**Josephine Voigt writes, “Since you and fellow poets were instrumental in publishing and recognizing Narges Rothermel’s significant poems, it is with heartfelt consideration to inform you all of her passing on February 6th... A life well-lived resplendent with “essence love” in all its boundlessness.**

What is Motherhood?  
Far deeper than mere instinct  
An inexplicable bond  
Absolute love, compassion  
Unconditional...pure bliss.

(Dedicated to Narges Rothermel - Loving mother, Compassionate nurse, Blissful poet)

Josephine Voigt - teach4life31@gmail.com

### **winter fatigue**

I add another snow-day on snow covered calendar  
leftover days wait to meet more spills of whiteout

Aggravated pains in wrists, spasms of lower back,  
and sore shoulders cry, “Not again, no more,”

Yet cloud covered sky signals, *gray days are here to stay.*

Under piled up snow, beneath slab of thick ice daffodils are whispering,  
“This cover is too heavy, too cold, in need of a soft warm blanket.”

Pink rosebuds have turned white from cold  
every thorn and every branch have become prisoners of the Ice

Daisies under rock-hard soil of winter holding their breath

Craving bright blue cloudless-sky and a few mild-days  
distanced pale sun has not much heat to offer

After shoveling snow for the third time, sitting by the window  
sipping hot tea, trying to unchill the cold body while,

I imagine picking sweet peas from my garden in a warm summer day  
then I upgrade imagination’s viewpoint to a tropical island

watching bright-color-feathered and long-tailed-*Bird of Paradise*,  
while savoring something to mellow my blued mood.

Narges Rothermel

**I had the pleasure of meeting Narges on Long Island, NY at an Avocet poetry reading we held in 2025. A wonderfully warm human being. We both lived in Levittown. I grew up there and she spent her later years there. We both loved Jones Beach and living on Long Island. I will miss Narges and the gift of her poetry. - Charles Portolano**

### **Earth-day**

Dear Mother Earth,

From a major road, I see another shopping mall,  
a treeless parking lot, neon signs on every wall

Trees are cut bushes are burned, field stripped of shade  
what is done in the name of progress makes me afraid

Careless arrogant earthlings becoming more and more insane  
Their greed, their wars, and their poisons, bring you the pain

Pouring rains and tears not enough to wash the *Blood Sheds*  
Green fields becoming graveyards for untimely *Final Beds*

Ongoing atrocities and killings on many corners of your lands,  
leaving children naked, hungry with bloody faces bloody hands

Soul grieves for those who are destined to be killed today  
Heart grieves for fragmented-corpse that are on the way

Body parts of soldiers and innocent victims fill the lands to the rim  
Falling burned-buildings, polluted oceans, and rivers look so grim

Saddened to see you are poisoned with bullets, grenades, and lead  
don't understand mankind's endless wars, killings and their hatred

No one willing, no one can stop the killings and the wars  
Progress is okay but not these excessive malls and cars

I see no shame no regret for leaving destruction behind  
I see no end, perhaps the only *end* is *the end of mankind*

Today, with tears in my eyes, I pray for Peace in every way  
I say prayers for you Mother Earth while I plant a tree today.

Narges Rothermel

“The gist of it is that no one writes alone: one needs a community.” - Robert Bly

## Please be the reason someone smiles today...

### The Sun

One day as a curious teenager, I dared  
to look at the Sun with naked eye  
then closed my eyes and stared  
again at the Sun in the sky

Red-orange flames  
were coming out from its core  
strings of lights were wrapped  
around it more and more

I saw the yellow beams  
coming out from here and there  
as if they intended to join and braid  
millions of ropes, so bright, so rare

Then I knew not to doubt,  
not to ask why  
I saw the braided-ropes were  
hanging the Sun from the sky!

That day I was sure,  
the Sun will offer heat, light,  
and will keep the Earth and  
the earthlings warm and bright

And I believed the Sun  
will keep shining here, there  
I knew the Sun will live  
for another million years.

Narges Rothermel

“Nature is not a place to visit. It is home.” - Gary Snyder

## **Jones Beach**

Ebbing waves sweep the warm sands  
taking along plenty of pollutants,  
torture-tools, and killer-traps  
that are left behind by careless humans

Today, at the shores of Long Island,  
on sands of Jones beach,  
among  
piles of man-made trash,  
plastic shopping-bags, can-holders  
metal cans, plastic-toys, bottle-caps  
and paper-bags,

there is a glass jar,

A note is pasted on inner wall of the jar,  
a message from another time, another era,  
a message from another generation,

*"This land is lent to you  
Live on it,  
Take what it offers  
Replace what you take  
Respect the land  
Care for it  
Preserve it for the ones are coming  
in the Wombs of Tomorrows."*

Narges Rothermel

**“Have lived long enough to know, if you stay calm, if you touch the sharp-edged sword tenderly with care, you won’t get bruised.” - Narges Rothermel**

## **Garden therapy**

It is another damp cold day in June  
Clouds are veiling the sky  
Sun is hiding behind the gray curtain.

The mood is in need of a change  
The body is in need of Sun’s warmth  
Idle mind orders, “Go to garden”

Reluctant feet follow the command.

When I step out,  
Mingled aromas of rosemary, thyme, savory,  
and oregano from herb garden whisper,  
“Be patient, the soil was thirsty,  
we too are waiting for the sun.”

I keep walking,

The light purple flowers of chives in vegetable garden  
soften the frown  
The fresh tender basil leaves entice the lunch-time appetite  
Soft pink petals of peonies bring smile back to lips  
Bright red flowers of rhododendron mellow the blues  
Sweet scent of red roses rewards the soul.

On my way to kitchen, I look up  
Clouds are ready to water the soil  
I say thanks to clouds and to my garden.

Narges Rothermel

### **In A Beach-State of Mind - Winter**

Beach-towels, flippers, goggles, change of clothing,  
all fit in the carrier bag  
Makeup is not needed. It won't help  
Comb, brush, and moisturizer stuffed in side-pockets

Hurdle number one  
Clean, de-ice the stoop behind the exit-door  
Shovel enough snow and ice to put one foot  
in front of the other till you reach your car

Hurdle number two  
Crawl from passenger side to driver seat,  
Driver side door is frozen  
Car starts. Great!  
While car is running, clean your driveway  
by then car is ready to be deiced

You and carrier bag, in the car, intending  
to visit your favorite beach, Cabin-fever dictates,  
“Jones Beach is not far away from Levittown.”

Hurdle number three  
You go backward, forward many times  
Finally you are out of driveway  
You are on the roll  
Little slipping here, some sliding there  
No big deal, you are on Hempstead Turnpike!

It doesn't look too bad  
So it takes you twenty-five minutes to see  
Meadowbrook Parkway  
The roads are barely passable  
You are determent, no turning back  
You keep going till the GPS in your head says,  
“You are here.” You give a kiss to your car  
and leave her behind in parking lot #6  
You and your carrier bag in very slow motion  
heading to your destination.

The snow, the ice-patches, don't change your goal  
You and your carrier bag survive the bumpy ride  
Finally, you are on the half-frozen sand  
Oh, blue sky calm-ocean, you inhale and inhale the salty-air  
You ignore cheers of ghostly Polar Bears  
You shed layers and layers of winter clothing  
feeling ten pounds lighter,  
with your flippers and goggles on,  
as a sprint-runner, you dash towards rocking waves

No need to test the water with your toes  
Just jump in do your polar-plunge  
and disappear under  
Don't dare to come up to breathe  
Unless you wish to turn to a purplish-blue statue,  
on sands of your -- beloved -- Jones Beach.

Narges Rothermel

**“For every minute you are angry, you lose 60 seconds of happiness.” - Ralph Waldo Emerson**

wintry solitude  
wind brushes over  
chalk-white landscape

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**“Nature looks dead in winter because her life is gathered into her heart. She withers the plant down to the root that she may grow it up again fairer and stronger. She calls her family together within her inmost home to prepare them for being scattered abroad upon the face of the earth.” - Hugh Macmillan,**

### **Mountain Harbinger**

The snow has sprinkled on our mountain tops:  
The first we've seen this year.  
Sunlight dances off the frosty cones,  
a twinkle in the eye of Old Man Winter  
peeking down into our autumn reveries;  
shaking our between-season melancholia  
with chill and change.

We should hardly be surprised with the inevitable.  
The eventuality, like death, is remorseless  
and irresistible.  
And yet the suspense of its approach  
shrieks on our summer nerves  
with fingernail-on-chalkboard intensity:  
Coming, coming, coming, brrrrrr...

So now it's here. The darkness. The cold. The snow.  
Gone is our day-to-day optimism that perhaps  
autumn shall linger. The grace of pretty leaves  
harshly swept away with our wild-flower memories;  
of fragrant dreams on sun-dappled meadows.  
But winter is not death, nor the end of joy,  
but rather another dynamic cycle of reality  
which we'll get used to;  
-- perhaps tomorrow.

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### **Before Grooming the Horse in Winter**

Mare searches for old kernels with her nose  
and finds them lodged within the burry spears.  
She wants the bundled bales but she's not close  
enough behind the bales to reach the tiers.  
A loose whinny drops her liquid muzzle,  
and when Bruce the brown tomcat wraps his tail  
around her fetlock, their noses nuzzle.  
She rolls him. He leaps to the highest bale.  
Her icy tail whips against an old gray  
plank, sets Bruce upon his haunches, but she  
forgets their game, content to munch away.  
They touch like willow blossoms in the barn  
and speak a language I'm too fast to learn.

*First published in SPOON RIVER QUARTERLY and INVISIBLE STRING.*

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**“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” - Lao Tzu**

### **Snow Salsa**

Dancing with the wind, slanted snow swivels,  
salsa slashing the windows. We're snowed in.  
A corner ice sickle hangs and drivels  
like an intravenous glucose machine.  
I put on Tropicales and dance too,  
a solo sequestered salsa (of sorts),  
a solitary rendezvous, not blue.  
Midwesterners must always be good sports  
when winter comes conquering and calling.  
We dance and read, watch old movies, maybe  
paint a closet or polish brass. Befalling  
all it can befall, snow on limb of tree.  
Stay and salsa a day, you swaying snow.  
Just a day, OK? Then you have to go.

*First published in MINOTAUR.*

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quiet morning  
just an occasional caw--  
brilliant orange sunrise

Jack Maze

## Mother Earth's love - the gift that keeps on giving

### **On a Cool Winter Evening**

I go to the recycle bin  
dump in crushed  
water bottles I found  
on the neighbor's veranda

the comfort of autumn  
departed and the chill  
of the new season  
uncompromising

I pull down the sleeves  
of my sweater  
cover a dark mole  
discovered this morning

packing plastic  
down into the bin  
an earthy aroma  
rises from the bottom

perhaps a few drops  
of rum leaked out  
from a discarded glass jug  
thrown in days ago

there are more stars  
than anyone can count  
on this crisp winter eve  
the invisible moon above

ellen

## Winter

*(In memory of my son Barry 1962-2017)*

Winter has existed  
for two years

I wear knitted mittens  
in the kitchen

In a terry robe I shiver  
hugging my chest

Woolen bed-socks  
stay on all day

My bedroom mirror reflects  
merciless wildfires outside

They are ice  
I cannot get warm without you.

ellen

## Holding Things Up

The way new light  
on a field of sand  
dampened by  
soft waves  
mirrors the pier  
above it

The way sand  
strong as a thick sheet of ice  
anchors the pier's  
worn and splintered  
poles like wooden arms

The way humans hold things up too.  
Some swim cancer and win the race  
some grit teeth to avoid plunging  
into swirling catastrophe  
some float above the debris  
seeing only the new light

ellen

## **Winter in the City**

Chilled thoroughfares  
burst with blinking lights,  
controlling lights,  
green, yellow, red.

Grimy wheels roll over  
a macadam road,  
like a grey cummerbund.  
Slicing through towers of steel and glass.

Sweet acrid odors spew from tailpipes  
giving life to ancient fossils,  
polluting the crisp evening air;  
the scent of fresh bread makes  
a futile challenge to the foul emissions.

Bells ringing, chimes clinging,  
sounds of holiday fill the air.  
Bags bursting with gifts,  
dreams born and broken.

Shivering, scarf wrapped forms,  
scurry briskly over sidewalks,  
heels tapping a cacophony of codes  
each with its own tempo  
not unlike finger prints.

Puffs of steam pulse from open grates  
form gossamers in the air;  
nearby lies the crumpled figure of a man  
wrapped in a newspaper headlined:  
"Cities Economy on Rebound."

A rawboned dog, his sentinel,  
sits patiently for a signal  
to forage once again.  
It's winter in the city.

R. Duke Liddell - Malverne, NY - [dukel@optonline.net](mailto:dukel@optonline.net)

**“What a severe yet master artist old Winter is... No longer the canvas and the pigments, but the marble and the chisel.” - John Burroughs**

## Earliest Winter Tapestry

The early morning montage  
knitting together a lingering moon glow,  
a slowly setting Selene's sharpened scimitar,  
a fast dimming morning star and  
a sun just breaking the far horizon.

Early light shows darkest jade pine needles  
amid the crystal covered limbs and boughs,  
each crystal reflecting the morning light  
as though from a gleaming diamond tiara,  
the shuttlecock speeds back and forth  
across the lightening sky with yellow ribbons,  
across the lightening dun colored branches,  
across the few lingering orange-yellow leaves,  
across the deepest ochre and russet foliage  
of quaking aspens' season's final dancing leaves  
weaving each morning a more austere tapestry.

Still earliest morning renews my faith,  
renews the forest's contour and shapes,  
brings on the hope and dreams of a new day,  
encourages me to throw back the coverlet,  
to let the phantasms of night recede.  
I lower my feet into lamb's wool slippers,  
I tie the obi around the heavy cotton robe.

Rising slowly to take up the steaming cup,  
to turn on the oven warming my morning bun,  
to turn the computer to the Times and Guardian,  
to read of what happened and what was only imagined,  
to read of this war and that uprising here and there,  
of this rebellion and that oncoming genocide,  
to glide through Sheinwold and Doonesbury,  
to ponder Krugman, Stiglitz and Nocera,  
to wander through the arts and editorials,  
to take up the cudgel of another day,  
still there is the weaving of a new forest day,  
as I linger for a nonce over my steaming latte.

Sam Doctors - [samdoctors@att.net](mailto:samdoctors@att.net)

**“Winter bites with its teeth or lashes with its tail.” - Montenegrin Proverb**

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

### **Farm Girls**

Don't know the difference  
between a rock and a hard place  
it's all rocks and  
hard places all  
sweat and moans to  
no one in particular  
although the spider knows  
when the hand reaches up  
to brush the web  
clear from the face  
rats know too as they  
scamper away from  
the foot falls and  
the calf knows the  
touch of fingers  
on its nose then reaches  
gently to suck the softness  
thinking mother, mother, mother

*Originally appeared in The Cider Press Review and was awarded an Honorable Mention in the  
37<sup>th</sup> New Millennium Writings Competition.*

Dee Matthews - Brookfield, MA - teach54pe@yahoo.com

### **Winter Sun**

It's like a star seen from  
a distant planet,  
this winter sun,  
small, wan, far away.  
I have to remind myself  
that this is Earth,  
and we are merely  
tilted away  
for a span.

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

## Constellations

They only come out at night:  
Scorpion, centaur, serpent,  
Bear, giant.  
A Rorschach test of ancient fears  
Creeping from caves and crevices  
Of the consciousness.

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**“He who marvels at the beauty of the world in summer will find equal cause for wonder and admiration in winter.... In winter the stars seem to have rekindled their fires, the moon achieves a fuller triumph, and the heavens wear a look of a more exalted simplicity.”**  
- John Burroughs

## Etiolation

In winter I grow thin and wan,  
Desiccated and withdrawn,  
Conserve my strength and feed on little  
Meditate and become brittle.

In winter I grow thin and wan  
Dry and brittle and withdrawn  
Conserve my strength and feed on little  
Meditate and shiver, shrivel.

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## Cold Moon

This is the night of the Cold Moon  
Moon of the Long Nights of winter  
when the turn of the season on the prairie  
is slow and living things that herd together  
snuffle and snort and shift in their sleep  
and their breath is mist and it frosts  
their shaggy hide under the thin  
midwinter light.

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### **39 Coyotes**

In the desert west of town  
beneath a contrail-streaked sky  
in January, we find  
what sang at night in throaty howls  
and yips and cries beneath  
the stars.

what stood and ran on slender legs  
darting among greasewood;  
what yellow eyes scanned the night,  
bright and quick, alert to all  
that moved;  
and glossy noses, quivering  
to catch a scent;

In the desert west of town  
beneath an indifferent sky,  
in January, we find  
39 hanks of hair,  
taut over bone, gray and rust-colored fur  
dull and dusty, eyes opaque,  
tongues lolling, a stick in each mouth  
rudely carved with a date  
to mark this crude celebration of death.  
to mock this death of wildness.  
39 coyotes left to rot in the sun.

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**“Man is the steward of the earth like the fox is to the hen house.”**

### **Home on the Ranch**

Oh, give me a home where the cattle can roam  
And the calves and yearlings can play,  
For the coyotes are dead and the wolves are extinct,  
And we're shooting all the pumas today.

Home, home on the ranch,  
Where the calves and yearlings can play,  
The bobcats are next, we'll shoot 'em all dead,  
For their hides are worth a month's pay.

It must be a year since I've seen a bear  
But I know there must be one or two,  
And when I see one, I'll get out my gun  
And we'll have a nice rug and bear stew.

Oh, give me a home where the bovine can roam  
Where the deer and antelope used to play,  
No grass left for them, not even a stem,  
When the cows and the steers came to stay.

Home, home on the ranch,  
Where the rats and prairie dogs play,  
But not for much longer 'cause they'll soon be goners  
When we gas all those varmints away.

Oh, give me a home where the bovine can roam  
And the skies are dusty and gray.  
Millions of hooves keep the earth on the move  
And it stays in the air all the day.

Home, home on the ranch,  
Where the jackrabbits and cottontails play  
We'll have to commence a rabbit proof fence  
To keep all those bunnies away.

Oh, give me a home where the cattle can roam  
And the skies are dusty and gray  
Where seldom is heard a protesting word  
We keep all them tree-huggers away.

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**Please be kind, write to each other...**

***Food for thought – let's have a little dessert...***

***Please take a minute to read, then, reread these  
- Nature as Metaphor ideas...***

## **There is the art of metaphor to assist in truly seeing oneself clearly. Nature displays this so readily if we only observe.**

The caterpillar lives a whole lifetime in worm form. However, when one life cycle ends, another begins. It accordingly builds a cocoon when it needs to transform. Re-birth always requires this. This cocoon is not a hiding from the world, it is what is necessary for the completion of all transformation. But the best is yet to come. It emerges from its cocoon completely changed, identified with a new self. And it can fly!

**The berry represents wholeness. Every tiny seed that makes up the berry is necessary for it to be. Each particle containing a seed of the berry holds a piece of the whole.**

**Honeycomb - Even if each particle is ripped off, no matter how separate each piece is, they still contain within them the trace of the whole, the essence of the Essence.**

**Banana - Skin hides the fruit. For a long time we only know our superficial masks. Do we have the strength to peel this skin back? The time is now to know the fruit of ourselves.**

**Root Vegetables - Carrots are safe within, underground, even if its plant above is ripped and torn. At times, what is seen on the surface gives no indication of what is living within.**

**Mountains/Sky - The mountain doesn't move, trees do. The sky doesn't move, clouds do. Stability in the midst of all movement.**

**Snow – Each snowflake is unique. From afar however, it looks like a uniformed sheet of white. Be the individual and lose the individual to know your true identity.**

**Cactus - What has the trappings of 'sweetness', can sometimes get you stuck. The cactus represents Truth. It protects against, and pricks what approaches it unconsciously. But when there is no difference between 'you' and 'it', you know its secret water source.**

**Huge cloud formations change gradually, almost imperceptibly into another formation. This is how gradual the process of human transformation is. The changes are so small that the overall formation looks the same. But gradually the shift will happen, until suddenly, the cloud is entirely different--- the person is entirely different.**

**Midnight is the center. It touches both night, and a new day at once. It touches both dark and light. It exists between past and future. The point that transcends time. Neither of two opposites, but a center between them. The center beyond duality.**

**A gigantic tree doesn't become that by knowing it's a tree while still a seed. It only knows growth. Constantly changing, while still remaining the same. Not dwelling on end results, it is content just to grow and not know where it is going. The seedling, shoot and mature tree aren't the goal, but the process-- the journey.**

# 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](mailto: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](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.

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.**

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## **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 you care. There are so many topics to write about when it comes to Climate Change. Please find one you are passionate about and write about it!**

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

### **The American Avocet**

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

I watch unseen  
it swing its odd,  
long, up-curved bill  
through the shallow,  
still waters, catching  
a tiny creature,  
trapping it in its bill,  
racing off to its nest to  
feed her four hatchings  
with this feast she found.

I watch in awe  
as the male  
grows protective,  
fearlessly fending off

an encroaching  
common black raven,  
attacking this intruder,  
striking at it with its bill.  
I watch in wonder  
as they swim as a family  
just days after  
the young ones are born,  
then back to the nest to  
rest where its kind flocks  
together in a community.

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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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