

# *The Weekly Avocet*

## *#450*

**July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

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

**Heat dome over Oregon, distressed  
scorched earth in Idaho  
Will my abridged shower help, in Florida?**

Akira Odani - St. Augustine, FL - akiraodani@icloud.com



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

**We are so pleased by how many poets took the Challenge and spoke of their love of Mother earth and their fears of how quickly we are losing the only home we have. Please keep writing about issues that concern us all. Mother is mad for we have been beyond bad...**

**Here are our two 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Winners in our Saving Mother Earth Challenge poems.**

### **Fear of Global Warming**

My daughter will not talk  
about melting polar ice caps  
nor seas rising while we  
live on an island sticking out  
in the Atlantic Ocean.  
She will not discuss  
rivers overflowing where  
half-submerged cities  
look like scenes from  
science fiction movies.  
Sticks fingers in her ears  
when people on the news  
talk of monster hurricanes,  
tornadoes' giant paths  
splintering buildings,  
leaving homelessness,  
suffering, in their wake.  
Mountains once cloaked in white  
now brown with earth  
are more than she can bear.  
When fires burn across the land  
she worries about singed animals,  
if orphans have enough to eat,  
would adopt them all if she could,  
but she has her own furry children  
rescued from the shelter  
who need her care. So, when  
fear of global warming escalates,  
she must change the channel  
and the conversation  
from this nightmare  
stealing her sleep.

Lynne D. Soulagnet - Medford, NY - [LynneSoulagnet@Yahoo.com](mailto:LynneSoulagnet@Yahoo.com)

## Star Witnesses

Some stars  
saw the dinosaurs  
eyed the Neanderthals  
watched the pyramids rise  
noted explorers staking lands  
witnessed clear-cutting acre after acre.

We try to fix them in their orbits,  
connect their glowing dots,  
name the shapes we trace.

Aquarius, Leo, Libra,  
Winged Pegasus,  
Ursa Major/Minor.

Starquesting,  
we send money  
to who knows where

to name stars, as if  
even their half lives  
can ever be ours,

as if our grandchildren  
will ever view more than  
cinder-filled, fiery night skies.

How can paving over Mother Earth  
knocking down her forests, carboning  
our air be a gift to heirs?

For years our celestial overseers  
have blinked through murky smoke,  
the feeble signals we've sent

from blackened Amazon,  
torched California, Oregon melting,  
Australia, charcoaled.

Tonight three siblings  
lie head to head,  
feet forming a six-pointed star,

wing bones pressed  
into damp sand to  
cool overheated bodies

blasted by triple-digit  
mercury mid-day, limbs  
limp and languid now.

In one day under our  
human-made heat dome,  
roads buckled, plastic cable dripped.

We choked in our knowing.  
Who needed science to tell us  
what our scratchy eyes saw

how our burned skin felt?  
Tonight, we stare, drowning, anxious,  
convicted for our carelessness.

Not enough, this witnessing  
and wishing on stars. We pledge  
ourselves to act, know it is up to us.

The overhead shower of Seven Sisters  
hears our promise, enfolds us  
in shimmering waves.

For a moment the spangled indigo  
leaves us earthlings mute,  
swallows us whole.

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

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

Isn't it hot?  
Yes, isn't it! comes from my partner  
the coolness of the companionship

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This week we are pleased to share the poetry from Taste Life Twice Writers, currently from the U.S.A. and Switzerland, for this 2021 summer issue of *The Weekly Avocet*

*“We write to heighten our own awareness of life. We write to lure and enchant and console others. We write to serenade our lovers. **We write to taste life twice, in the moment and in retrospection.** We write, like Proust, to render all of it eternal, and to persuade ourselves that it is eternal. We write to be able to transcend our life, to reach beyond it. We write to teach ourselves to speak with others, to record the journey into the labyrinth. We write to expand our world when we feel strangled, or constricted, or lonely... If you do not breathe through writing, if you do not cry out in writing, or sing in writing, then don't write because our culture has no use for it. When I don't write, I feel my world shrinking. I feel I am in prison. I feel I lose my fire and my color. It should be a necessity, as the sea needs to heave, and I call it breathing.”* Anaïs Nin

### **Taste of the Sun**

Drought curls leaves, scorches earth,  
pushes roots deeper to seek water.  
Sweat trickles down my forehead,  
stings my eyes, runs down my ruddy cheeks.  
On a three-legged stool, in the shade of a dogwood tree,  
I lick salt from parched lips, praise my hearty harvest.

Deep purple, crimson, green striped, buttercup orbs  
glisten like gems in Queen Isabella's crown.  
Seeds from Aztecs sailed to Spain, spread to Italy,  
cropped up in France, returned to the Americas—changed.  
A bite of one silk-skinned, ruby hybrid awakens  
dreams of my Early Girl's ancestral journey.

Tangy juice floods my watering mouth,  
escapes my lips, dribbles down my chin.  
Gold Medal mornings, Brandy Wine afternoons,  
Black Krim evenings with family and friends  
promise summer feasts of heirloom tomatoes,  
quench my thirst for the taste of the sun.

Mary Clements Fisher - Cupertino, CA - fishermary@gmail.com

## Night Music

My windows flung wide catch a forgiving breeze,  
a whispered overture to tonight's summer sonata.  
The scent of jasmine rises and sharpens my sensibilities.  
An owl flaps her wings, soars across the lavender dusk,  
screeches her hunting call, and lands in a sprawling oak.

Alarmed, a mockingbird whistles and warbles her last notes.  
A squirrel scolds the setting sun before she flees  
the dark that deepens like ink spilled across a page.  
Words murmured fill my mouth. I swallow them.  
Another night alone, I wrap myself in shadows.

Waves of heat from the scorched earth  
awake the cricket chorus under towering redwoods.  
A humming tunes the orchestra to a perfect pitch,  
stirs my restlessness with its prolonged interlude.  
A cacophony of chirps revises the night's rhythms.

Hundreds of suitors call their mates to a fleeting embrace.  
Their passion penetrates the blackest corners of my room.  
Reaching out, the bed remains as empty as my broken heart.  
My eyes flutter open. Moonlight plays me for a fool.  
Is it you or my desire reflected in the mirror?

Keening howls of midnight maestros echo a counter harmony.  
Two coyotes' staccato yip-yip-yips reverberate from hill to sky.  
Clouds cloak their furtive search for each other.  
Scattered mesquite and scrub grass provide cover  
for fleeting moments of urgent coupling.

I rise to find a shirt saved for summer nights like these,  
breathe in sandalwood and sweat captured in its threads.  
My voice cracks then trembles as I sing  
"My love's like the warmth of the sun."  
Night music brings back the dead.

Mary Clements Fisher - Cupertino, CA -fishermary48@gmail.com

Roaring lawnmower  
Tickles the wine-soaked mirage from the night before  
Awakens my to-do-list

Akira Odani - St. Augustine, FL - akiraodani@icloud.com

## Hunting Berry Treasure

Just my dad and me  
spiral up in his truck,  
bounce on rutty abandoned logging roads.  
Wheels teeter on tight switchbacks.  
Cliff-side views steal my breath,  
canyons plummet,  
forested undulations fade into hazy blue.

On the hunt for wild berries  
that grow on a sunny slope.  
Science has yet to domesticate  
the Western huckleberry.  
Pacific Northwest, purple ambrosia,  
akin to the bridled blueberry,  
like a wolf is to a dog.

We tromp through steep clear-cut meadows.  
A monarch flutters in bear grass and lavender lupine.  
Sun shines hot on my covered head.  
A breeze carries the familiar fruit scent  
before we spy a patch of knee-high,  
pointed-oval leaf bushes  
speckled with rounded deep purple delights.

Pop one and then two, three, and more into my mouth.  
A pleasant sour crunch tantalizes my tongue.  
One by one berries plunk  
into white gallon plastic buckets.  
Stained fingers, salty skin, thin branches scratch my bare shins.  
Dad points to a mound of fresh bear scat.  
Maybe we're not alone?

The afternoon sun low in the sky, buckets filled.  
We load to go home.  
Eyes half-closed, I doze and dream  
of a big slice of homemade huckleberry pie.  
Topped with a scoop of vanilla ice cream  
to cut the sweetness.  
Flaky crust, filling oozes onto my fork.

Summer labors taste divine.

Wendy A. Miller - Portland, OR - wendyamiller@hotmail.com

Beach umbrellas, sun-bleached sails  
Glide far, sea breeze blows regrets away  
Old man sings softly to himself

Akira Odani - St. Augustine, FL - akiraodani@icloud.com

### August Night Sky

On a sleepless night, I clamor for fresh air.  
I wriggle from my swaddled sheet, rise.  
Pitter-patter downstairs to the hum of an overworked air conditioner.  
Slide the glass door open, slink into nature's freedom.  
Cool grass tickles my bare feet, skunk perfume scrunches my nose.

The witching hour conjures stillness on Earth,  
but a clear, moonless sky sparkles to life.  
Wide-eyed, I tilt my head in search of familiar landmarks,  
hazy Milky Way, twinkles of the Big and Little Dippers.

A bright fireball streaks  
in an arc across the August night sky.  
A speck of cosmic dust radiates beauty.

A flash of brilliance seen in the ordinary.

Wendy A. Miller - Portland, OR - wendyamiller@hotmail.com

**“You must prune to bloom. If the dead weight is not pruned and removed, it compromises the quality, performance, and output of the vine. When you prune what’s not working in your life, you make the space and place for renewal to happen and for new growth to spring forth.” - Susan C. Young (Theresa Cancro)**

Toads, or green frogs, invisible  
but rhythmical in rained woods, cool  
baritone chorus soothes our heated card games

Akira Odani - St. Augustine, FL - akiraodani@icloud.com

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

**“From all the misty morning air, there comes a summer sound. A murmur as of waters from skies, and trees and ground. The birds they sing upon the wing, the pigeons bill, and coo.” - B.W. Gilder (Theresa Cancro)**

Cumulonimbus overhead  
A swimmer glides the blue surface  
The only movement, here and now

Akira Odani - St. Augustine, FL - akiraodani@icloud.com

### **Jungle Rain**

Heavy drops,  
slow, lime green mirrors  
laden with the redolence of citrus, moss, and wet leaves,  
slip off every petal,  
tap a steady beat  
on fallen tree trunks  
or meander down the backs of salamanders.  
Steam rises above the spongy turf  
and the slender fingers of palm fronds,  
hovers beneath the umbrellas of coconut trees,  
clings to plump papayas and mangos  
that long to burst--  
their juice escaping,  
joy spilling out.

And I--trapped  
in the sauna of summer,  
in a golden cage too small  
for me to stretch  
my dusty wings, their faded colors  
memories of freedom  
lost--  
I perch and dream  
of jungle rain.

Tanya E. E. Schmid - Ascona, Switzerland - info@tanyaswriting.com

**“The dragonfly is an exceptionally beautiful insect and a fierce carnivore. It has four wings that beat independently. This gives it an ability to maneuver in the air with superb dexterity. A dragonfly can put on a burst of speed, stop on a dime, hover, fly backward, and switch direction in a flash. This is a hunting behavior known as hawking.” - Richard Preston (Theresa Cancro)**

## The Height of Summer

*Not the time of sowing, nor that of reaping.  
After the spark of meeting, before the fall to weeping.  
Summer's the time of ripening, worth keeping.*

In an open field  
the August halo of a dandelion  
waits.  
A kiss from the wind and  
it explodes  
like a Fourth of July firework.  
One parachuted seed lands on the shoulder of  
the young girl, legs as thin as  
green beans still hanging on the vine.

*Not the time of sowing, nor that of reaping.  
After the spark of meeting, before the fall to weeping.  
Summer's the time of ripening, worth keeping.*

She climbs the ladder towards midnight heaven.  
Her back presses rooftop barn boards  
to stargaze and await her first kiss.  
The boy wipes his palms on loose jeans.  
His shy hand picks a piece of hay from her hair.  
The crickets laugh as approaching clouds flash  
heat lightning.

*Not the time of sowing, nor that of reaping.  
After the spark of meeting, before the fall to weeping.  
Summer's the time of ripening, worth keeping.*

Tomorrow, barefoot  
run again through fields high with corn—  
tender feet on warm earth.  
The juice of green apples  
makes lips tart,  
promising the sweetness to come. Then,  
the never-ending night.  
The breath of summer delight.

Tanya E. E. Schmid - Ascona, Switzerland - [info@tanyaswriting.com](mailto:info@tanyaswriting.com)

**“Summer has always been good to me, even the bittersweet end, with the slanted yellow light.” - Paul Monette (Theresa Cancro)**

## Pollinators' Delight

Throughout the year, I anticipate  
seed gifts delivered by birds and wind  
to our raised flowerbeds.  
With spring rains and summer's warmth,

fuzzy, square stems  
erupt through the soil.  
Narrow foliage bears  
deep green, serrated edges.

An unrecognized plant,  
I rub and crush a coarse leaf  
between my fingers, now stained,  
and savor the minty aroma.

Each day I check and recheck for buds,  
hopeful for the sight of spectacular blooms  
that wave in the breeze like the colorful ribbons  
of a rhythmic gymnast.

Days later, lips of lower petals  
yield clusters of tubular florets.  
Scarlet spikes, brilliant fireworks,  
ignite our flowerbeds.

They beckon bees and butterflies.  
Hummingbirds hover,  
sip sweet nectar, and  
tempt me to take a taste.

I gather a bouquet for our table.  
The scent of oregano blossoms  
permeates the dining room  
and complements a meal of pasta.

Thankful for this floral gift  
of perennial bee balm.

Suzanne Cottrell - Oxford, NC - cottrell\_suzanne@yahoo.com

**Respect and protect that which gives you life!**

## Graced by a Dahlia

Unlike the scent of my sweat  
on a muggy summer day,  
odorless dahlias arrive,  
vibrant hues of multi-layered  
petals invigorate me.

Hardy blooms welcome the sunlight,  
declare a seasonal commitment.  
These resilient flowers prevail  
through rain, wind, and drought.  
I revere their fortitude.

A copy of *Floral Poetry*  
and *The Language of Flowers*,  
a talisman, lies open in my lap.  
I hold a scarlet-tipped  
yellow dahlia to my heart,

hope to cast a magical spell  
to dissipate my envy and dishonesty,  
like the discharge of electrons from laden clouds.  
I seek the flower's virtues  
to cleanse this soiled soul.

I press its hollow stem to my lips,  
draw in a deep breath, infuse my body  
with the dahlia's rectitude,  
through coughs, I expel my disgrace.

Uplifted by the dahlia's dignity  
I endeavor to restore mine.

Suzanne Cottrell - Oxford, NC - cottrell\_suzanne@yahoo.com

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

**If you belong to a writer's group and would like to share your group's poetry in an upcoming Weekly Avocet, please write us...**

**A Poetry Challenge for all Nature-loving poets in 2021.** 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...

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

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)

## Time to share

one of your Summer-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) **Summer**/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.

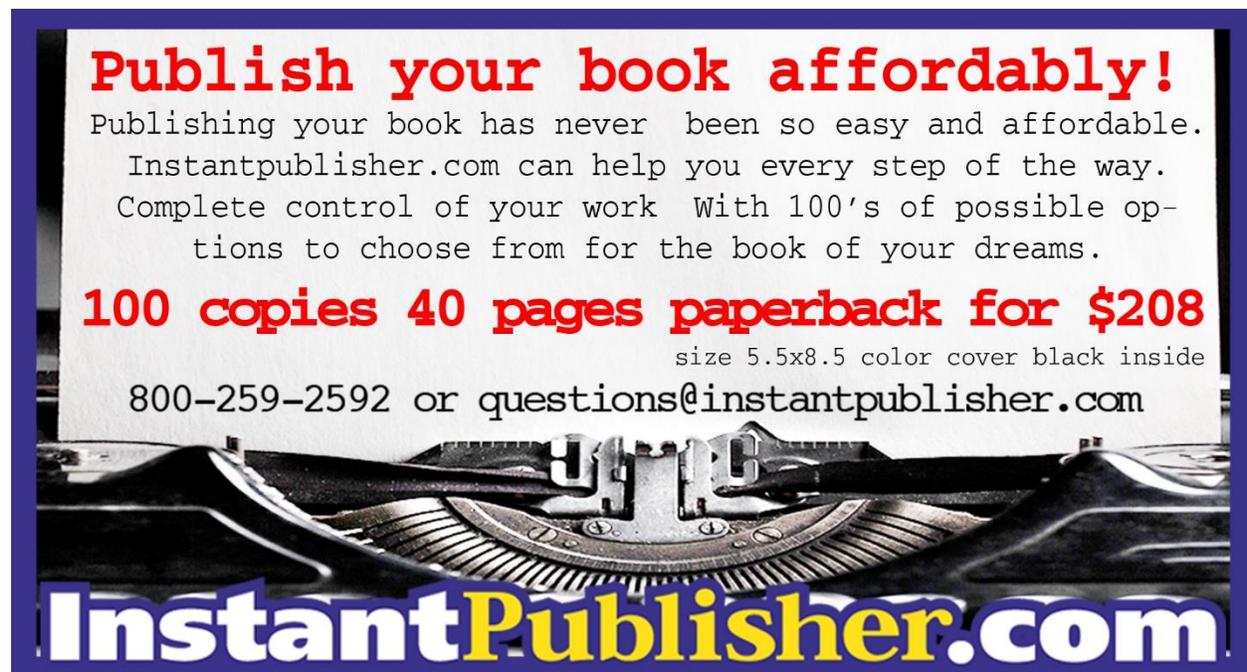
**We look forward to reading your Summer submission...**

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**Norma Bradley, an Avocet poet - normabradley1@gmail.com - writes, “When I was ready to publish my first self-published chapbook, I called Instant Publisher. Chris was very helpful and answered all of my questions. I am delighted with how the book turned out and have had many positive comments. I did have help along the way to be able to get it sent off to finally be published. What I like about self-publishing is that I made all the choices for the cover design, font, paper etc. The copies arrived within 10 days. Being able to speak directly with Chris made all the difference. I highly recommend Instant Publisher.”**

**Deenaz Coachbuilder writes, “I have treasured each poem in Charles Portolano’s new collection of poetry, *Wild with Life*. Love and reverence for nature and those you love imbues each page. Relationships between animals, between man and animals and birds, between humankind and the plants we touch, smell, taste, shelter under, respect.**

**There is a sense of almost holiness, that they were here before us, and will remain long after, that we are but ephemeral visitors in their world. Our power can be used to preserve nature or destroy it.**

**The poems enlighten, entertain, instruct. They help us understand the world around us in the best of ways, through the stories he tells, for did we not learn of the world through the stories we heard, and then read, when we were children?**

**There is a feeling that cannot be described, when we carefully and cautiously rescue a spider, a lizard, a bird, that has accidentally entered our home, which we release back into their natural habitat. It is as if something has blessed us.”**

## **A collection of Mother Earth poetry by Charles Portolano**

**Editor of The Avocet, a Journal of Nature Poetry – cportolano@hotmail.com**

### ***Wild with Life***

**Just \$15.00, which includes postage, for 90 pages of pure love for our Mother Earth.**

***Knowing I am wild with life  
but once  
on this gift we have been given,  
this precious gift that we have  
been given guardianship of...***

**Send checks to:  
The Avocet  
P. O. Box 19186  
Fountain Hills, AZ  
85269**

**“These poems are written by a seasoned poet who has reached the pinnacle of his art with a recognizable and moving voice. Charles edits the highly-successful nature journal, THE AVOCET, a must for nature loving poets and writers.”- Christine Swanberg, Poet Laureate of Rockford, IL.**

**“In Wild with Life, Charles Portolano has deepened his engagement with the natural world he began so movingly in his earlier works. It is a noble, ambitious, and moving work.”- Joel Savishinsky - Charles A. Dana Professor Emeritus in the Social Sciences, Ithaca College**

### **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](mailto: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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