

Poetry section

Edited by **Victor Postnikov**

Victor is a poet, essayist and translator whose home is in Kyiv, Ukraine.

Life far exceeds humans. For millennia, ecopoets have understood it as a far greater enterprise. In their poetry, we can hear the voices of those who came before us and those who live alongside us. Now, however, they face extinction and die in silence, deafened by the roar of civilization. The time has come to renew the old understanding that all life, including humanity, speaks a common language. Thus, the mission of ecocentric poetry, or ecopoetry, is to help us empathize with non-human entities, be they a whale, a tree or a mountain. For we are all kin. Through metaphor and imagery, it speaks directly to our hearts and genes. We begin to realize that we have evolved together and share a common fate.

CLASSIC

The Peace of Wild Things Wendell Berry

*When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.*

From *The Peace of Wild Things And Other Poems* (Penguin, 2018)

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CLASSIC

Bird Song in the Notebooks of Edward Thomas

On most days of his adult life, Thomas kept a record of his observations of the natural world in field notebooks. These especially featured birds, sometimes while travelling but often in and around the village of Steep in Hampshire, where he lived from 1906 till 1916. Below is a small selection.

6 May 1907

When turtle doves come it is summer – as if sleek words stretched themselves out
in the sun & purred.

June 1907

There must be woods & lawns in brain, how else this joy of seeming to see the rain
leavening my rain, the fair shapes of leaves etc, all seem like a pleasure of one's
own, & thro one's inner woods flies the woodpecker & sings the nightingale.

10 September 1907

... a robin sings tremulously edging and lacing the morning's melancholy silence

26 September 1907

Owls shouting into the woods, echo of Ashford valley, pitch dark, wet after a day of
rain, still after a hurricane, with the little undertone of the falling stream the
only other sound & that being continuous coexists with rather than breaks the
silence which it is the joy of the Owl to shatter, to honeycomb.

4pm 12 December 1907

Robins at fading light seem like my own thoughts, nervous, shadowy, quiet
shadows in a shade they seem so near to me & less shy than ever, as I walk
along the drenching road & see no other bird.

20 February 1908

After mild (bright & cloudy alternately) day with first chaffinches, missel thrushes,
larks & thrushes out in the short autumn-sown corn, singing too – rain comes
in just before nightfall, at 4.30 & in quiet dimness which the marketers curse the
birds are happy & I hear the 1st blackbird & even the smell of a soaking manure
heap under elms is good.

31 May 1908

Blackcaps sing with a few wildest clear dewy notes, brief & quick
Garden warblers w'out the wild notes but just quick liquid talk abruptly ending.
Whitethroats the same but broken voiced, harsher, & with more animation &
fun, as it sometimes rises into the air with its song fluttering carelessly

3 July 1908

Now the sparrows only are heard in the garden – except now & then a wood
pigeon, a blackbird at the cherries, the cirl bunting on top of the fir, & at night
the nightjar & very rarely the wren blurts out also chiffchaff, dabchick

21 September 1908

Curious passionate long sustained song of robin in an already almost bare lime,
what does it mean?

3 October 1908

*Misty moon with Ashford beeches just visible in golden rounds – dewy gossamer
on yellow hazel – starlings on chimney castanet, whine, wail & pipe & mimic,
just visible black in the white gilded haze*

23 April 1909

*Whitethroat tender & careless in thicket: blackcap sings high & passionate among
sycamore bloom*

10 May 1909

Song of goldcrest in garden like winding up a rather jerky irregular winch.

Hedgesparrows song

*Characteristic for it to burst out suddenly once late in cold gusty drizzly day like a
passing jest or pleasant memory coming to two friends who are sad before &
after it. No other song but gusts in poplars & a few birds that have hatched chit-
chitting other side of broad grass field.*

3 July 1909

Lark's song

*Sometimes spurting out a string of notes as fast as possible In a jet of liquid
bubbles. Sometime hurrying as if it could only just keep pace with mere dancing
speed, anon pausing on a note so sweet & languishing if almost fainting on it,
but mostly it is a dance in which all thought of anything but speed & keeping it
up seems lost.*

3 July 1909

Chaffinches go thru firs clinking on their silver anvils as on spring

14 September 1909

*A thrush in the garden sings clear & a few others, so that tho the 2 or 3 near are
clear the rest are a remote medley but how unlike the Spring's – yet one could
race across England this day & never be out of sound of thrushes ?descants? &
this song suggests the thought of a beacon line of birds from the East up to my
garden*

18 February 1910

*Linnets over windy hill are little grains of song scattered & gleaming as they
scatter up & away*

20 March 1910

*Wagtail spotted (grey crossed out) wagtail runs along & across roofs singing quiet
clear & happy like a lark in the sun.*

4 November 1913

*Thrush sings in anapaests & iambs & single long notes (at 10&11&12&13) chuckles
& whispers & trills. Hunt meets by smithy.*

12 April 1914 (Easter Day)

"The woodpecker has always something to laugh at" says Bronwen as she wakes.

19 April 1914

*4 goldfinches arrive on one tree & presently twitter sweet like little green blades of
song appearing cool out of earth, or flickering tongues of cool sweet fire when
all hustle together.*

28 August 1914

*Clover hay being cut or lying. Rooks about so cheerful in warm sun, cawing from
gleaning to gleaning or alighting in elms & pirouetting above them.*

1 January 1915

Great tit whetting the saw as he goes along hedge in roaring wind & rain!

4 January 1915

*Widgeon whistle the one clear sweet note going over low at 9 or so pm for about 5
minutes w[ith] intervals.*

4 February 1915

*Sometimes dozens of starlings separately on hedge & in oaks of meadow behind
are talking at same time – the sweetest voiced democratic crowd imaginable*

4 April 1915

*One of the prettiest Spring things is the wagtail running up & down the warm tiles
twittering as if the sun made the run as one's hand on a cat's back makes sparks.*

May 1915

Nightingale express joy of light & grief of dark

Edward Thomas field notebooks © Henry W. and Albert A. Berg
Collection, New York. With special thanks to Nick Denton of the
Edward Thomas Fellowship.

CONTEMPORARY

Refuge

Sandra M Grayson

*spirited dolphins
play in a sea sanctuary—
living without cues*

CONTEMPORARY

Shallow Tank

Sandra M Grayson

*“Do not tap the glass,”
the trainer warns from the stage
as three orcas swim pass.
“Do not tap the glass,”
she repeats as the marine park visitors harass
the orcas who glare at the spectators in silent rage.
“Do not tap the glass!”
the trainer warns from the stage.*

CONTEMPORARY

Classic Poems

Danny P Barbare

*Words fall like leaves.
Only evergreens become classics.
They're green under the snow of critics
That soon melts away.*

*Then, there stands the pine;
Its taste strong as always.
The sun shining on words in motion.
There is never a windless day.*

CONTEMPORARY

Zoogeographically speaking

Ann Hart

*Where ever you are, there are creatures. Among the
Xenias rustle ground squirrels, in the forests—
Wolves. Tiny Etruscan shrews drinking dew from
Violet-petal cups may be just below
Us, but do we open our eyes to see? Yesterday I
Touched a downy feather, lost by
Some small bird. Red – from a cardinal or
Robin, plucked to soften a nest or lost in a
Quarrel, either way, a treasure
Perfect in its quietness and symmetry. Our
Occupations hold our attention
Narrowly: jobs, hobbies, worries about
Money or health devour our minds, we*

*Lie awake at night, numbed hearts
Keening, oblivious to owls
Jostling in the musky pines and coyotes hunting
In the fields. Did you know coyotes in the east
Howl, in the west they purr? All see the moon
Glow, proclaim its glory. But we,
Filled with concerns, occupied with
Everyday chores and mental list making,
Die a little each night from lack of re-
Creation. Begin now, sing with the
Beasts, praise with the owls, chant the wolf's
Alleluia – raised to the rising moon.*

CONTEMPORARY

Anthropocene

Pulkita Anand

*“After such knowledge, what forgiveness?”
TS Eliot*

*A journey shouldn't begin by treading on others
Architectures of annihilation
From homo sapiens to homo rapines
Singularities of homo rapines space
From tabula rasa to raison d'être
I kill therefore, I am
From utopia to dystopia
God is dead, so I will rule
All animals are not equal; ratio is capex
God behaves the way I want
Savagery in the name of civilization
Paradise Lost or Ravished?
For every action of men, there is an equal and opposite destruction of the earth.
In cause-and-effect relation, we forget what's past will not be future
Today's comfort (plastic) is tomorrow's discomfort (microplastic)
One cannot step twice in the same receding river
To change or save, that's the question*

CONTEMPORARY

Wild Turkeys

Dolo Diaz

*At the end of the Zinfandel Trail,
after the gulch with the deep-throated creek*

*and tall interlaced black oak trunks
crested their canopy,
after the winding path
of red earth that dives into
a tunnel of greenery
and opens into the succulent field
of fresh moist grass
speckled with dainty yellow primrose,
after the pond where madrona branches
dip their fingers,
and the migrating ducks—
with their emerald mating neck feathers—
splash with abandon,
after the lone deer
that startled and showed
its downy fanning ears
before leaping back
into his forested home—
after all that:
the flock of wild turkeys.
Not a single timid bird
blending with dried branches,
but a dozen of you,
a small battalion.
In your stripped feathered armor,
I recognized
the headgear of warriors.
In your noble purple necks,
scarlet snoods and wattles—
the hallowed regalia.
You walked,
owning the path, moving
with feathery confidence,
weighty birdiness,
the stride of a noble creature.
The ancient owner of the land,
the native animal—
more than the wild horse,
the fox,
and even the deer.
Never before had I witnessed
your majesty,
your panache,
your sobering beauty.*

CONTEMPORARY

White Egret

Dolo Diaz

*Still as marble.
Walks with thready blue legs.
How can they bear its weight?
Walks and freezes
in mid-step. What did you see?
All neck looking forward.
In profile, large orange beak.
Neck,
now beak,
neck,
now beak.
Silky feathers waving in the breeze.
Revealing their length,
proving it is not marble.
Neck undulates with each step,
as if balancing out the center of gravity.
A camel of the marsh.
An impossible white.
Dwarfing all the other white birds.
And then,
as if all this was not enough,
this fantastic creature
takes flight.*

CONTEMPORARY

Dream a river

Jeff Howard

*He wanders in a dream, untouched,
stainless, inert.
Her ganglia are wired directly
to the pleasure centers of
digital commerce.
In the yard, children
toy with inertia
as children always have.
For them, nature is that vacation place,
a sunrise (rarely seen),
a thunderstorm interrupting a late summer afternoon,
rainwater carrying bits of polystyrene into the storm drain.
As the storm pulses, dusk*

seeps early into the room
 and, unnoticed, the world folds upon itself
 as it always has.
 Magnetism drives the motor, and Einstein's
 equations drive the magnetism.
 Into the stale house fan blades pull
 curlicues of air fresh as the moist breath of the
 tundra, the lake dunes, the
 trembling meadow of an era before
 time itself.
 Beneath the streetlight,
 along the granite curb,
 water and gravity move together
 as a living thing.

About the poets

Wendell Erdman Berry (born 5 August 1934) is an American novelist, poet, essayist, environmental activist, cultural critic and farmer.

Edward Thomas (1876–1917) was a British poet who began to write poems (with the encouragement of his friend Robert Frost) at the age of 36, and died in the battle of Arras in 1917 aged 39. Even so, he left us some of the finest poems in English.

Sandra M Grayson's poetry and fiction explore intersections among nature, communication and worldviews. Through her website *Anumpa Nan Anoli* (<https://anumpanananoli.lh1c.com/>), she is helping to preserve traditional Choctaw stories.

Danny P Barbare resides in the US. His poetry has been published widely, most recently in *California Quarterly*, *Birmingham Arts Journal* and *Cardinal Sins*.

Ann Hart is a poet, writer and teacher in Central Illinois, USA. Her work can be found in many publications including *Cider Press Review*, the *Bangor Literary Journal* and the *Monterey Poetry Review*. She was the 2016 Winner of the Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District 'Poetry on the Bus' and is an editor for *CU Haiku*.

Pulkita Anand is an avid reader of poetry. She has also translated one short story collection, *Tribal Tales from Jhabua*. Her creative works have been published in various magazines.

Dolo Diaz is a poet and scientist whose work explores the intersection of the physical and emotional. She began writing poetry in 2025, and her work has been accepted by *Right Hand Pointing*, *Moss Puppy Magazine* and *Star*Line*.

Jeff Howard lives in the Columbia River valley by way of the Allegheny River valley, the Mississippi River valley, and valleys beyond. His work, which has appeared in *Green Ink*, *The Thinking Republic*, *Moonflake*, *EAP: The Magazine* and elsewhere, reflects on the nature of consciousness in an era of ecological-tailspin-amid-ecological-belonging.