



BETTE HUSTED
FROM HERE TO ANYWHERE

‘Poetry allows us to find some clarity’

It's here again — April, National Poetry Month. Is poetry even relevant, you may be wondering, as images of horror in Ukraine fill our screens and our minds?

William Carlos Williams famously put it this way: “It is difficult to get the news from poems, yet men die miserably every day for want of what is found there.” Yes, men — and women and children, too, we want to add. Babies.

Can poetry help? “We are living in a time where we don't have access to the usual things that have comforted us,” current Oregon Poet Laureate Anis Mojgani told *The Oregonian*. “Poetry allows us to find some clarity in difficult and challenging times.”

That's why he has created the Daily Tele-Poems Telephone line. During National Poetry Month, if we call 503-928-7008 we can hear Mojgani or recent Oregon Poet Laureates Elizabeth Woody, Kim Stafford or Paulann Petersen sharing a poem. Today I heard Paulann's poem about coming eye to eye with a hummingbird, and for a moment the heaviness inside me lifted.

That's what Mojgani had in mind. He wanted us to be able to “turn down a little bit of the noise that is plaguing us right now and have a quiet moment or two with oneself though the voice of another person.”

Of course, not all poems are about hummingbirds. When we instinctively turned to poetry after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, we wanted Auden's “September 1, 1939.” Polish poet Adam Zagajewski offered balm to New Yorkers — and all of us — with “Try to Praise the Mutilated World,” which he published in *The New Yorker* magazine on September 17, 2001. Even in the worst of times, poetry acknowledges our human feelings and helps us live with them.

What poems and stories will come out of the suffering in Ukraine? Can words offer guidance when we see images of bodies in the streets and read of rape as a weapon of war, bodies of men whose hands are still tied behind their backs, a child's muddy toy that we know means another child swallowed by war?

Yet already we're hearing stories. Just this week I read that a woman had given ceramic cockerel jugs to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson as they walked through the rubble of Borodianka, a city north of Kyiv, where they were finding evidence of atrocities “much worse” than those in Bucha. The jugs were originally designed by beloved twentieth century Ukrainian artist Prokip Bidasiuk, whose work had been displayed at the National Museum for Applied Folk Arts. One such ceramic rooster had somehow miraculously survived the bombardment intact, and when it was photographed still standing on its kitchen shelf it became an instant symbol of Ukrainian resilience.

So there you go. From hummingbirds to roosters.

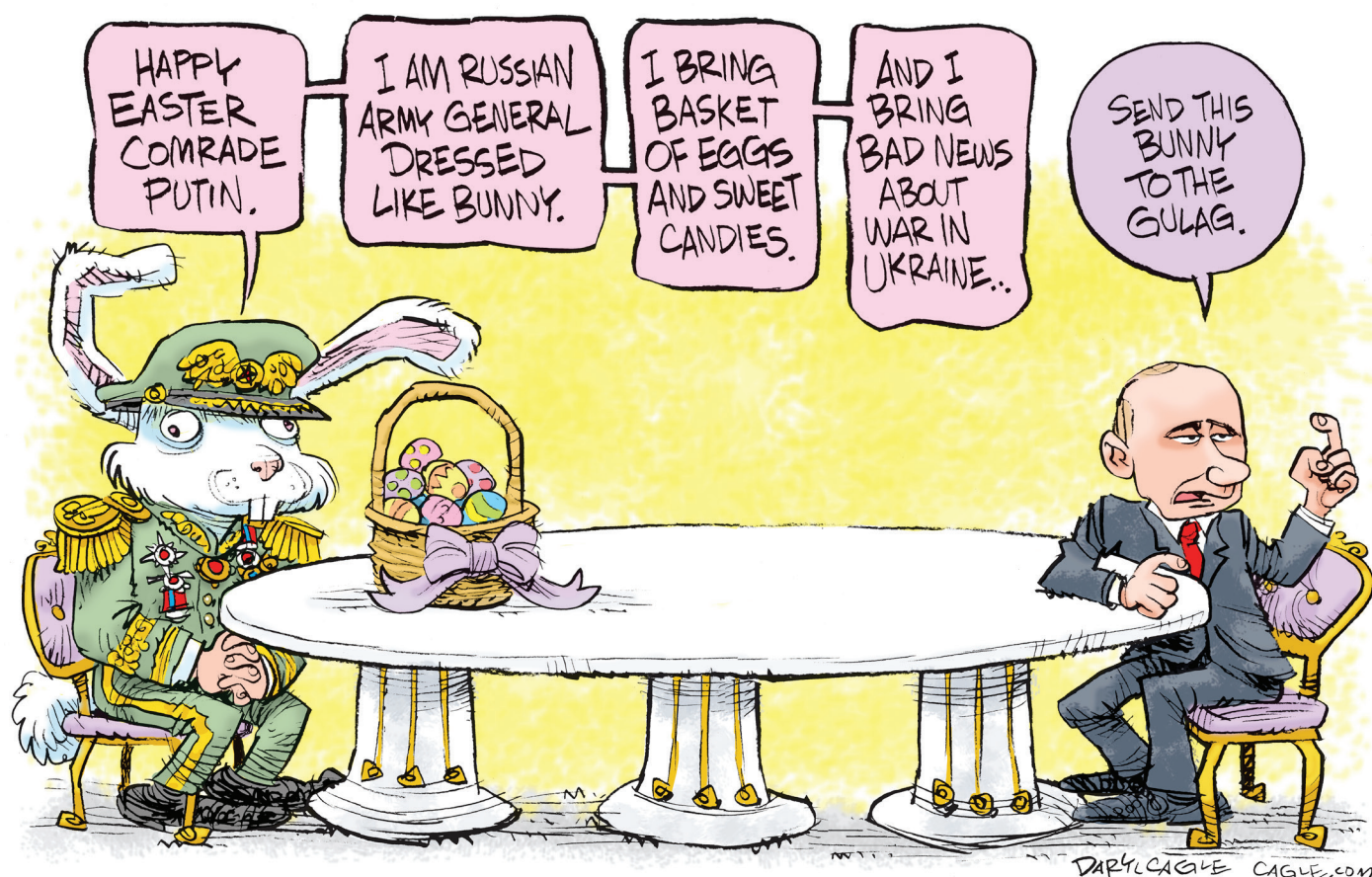
What we're watching in Ukraine is the struggle for democracy, a people's need to choose. Authoritarians tell us we are inherently wicked and therefore cannot govern ourselves. We need their moral superiority and their version of religion, which, to judge by the images bombarding us, seems a far cry from “love your neighbor as yourself.” Restrictions on long-held individual freedoms are happening in our own country too, and more are threatened.

I think of the scrap of paper on my mother's bulletin board, those lines she had copied from Robert Frost's poem about a glass of cider: “I'd catch another bubble if I waited. / The thing was to get now and then elated.” She understood the forces of repression, but she knew. Given love and a chance, life goes on. As long as it can.

Maybe it's her influence. Despite these dark times, I found several optimistic poems in my own recent files. True, one was about Alzheimer's Disease and a failed suicide attempt, but the woman who had tried to end her confusion by jumping into the river had been a championship swimmer in college, and when she entered the water, she swam. It seemed a perfect metaphor. When times are hard, swim. Just keep swimming.

It might help to call that number. After all, it's National Poetry Month.

Bette Husted is a writer and a student of tai chi and the natural world. She lives in Pendleton.



Our friends the insects



JEFF BLACKWOOD
UNDERSTANDING OUR CHANGING CLIMATE

Windshield surveys. These are often used by all kinds of people to set context or get an idea of what is happening. This could be a farmer checking weeds in wheat, a scientist evaluating the extent of damage by wildfire, or just checking out the line at your favorite drive-through coffee shop. But there is another kind of windshield survey.

It is judging the number of insects splattered on your actual windshield as you travel down the highway in the summertime. What I am noticing is there are fewer and fewer marks on the glass, and this has some major implications.

What we do know is that because insects have exoskeletons and cannot regulate their body heat like mammals, they are more susceptible to rapidly changing temperatures associated with climate change. Temperature regulates insects' physiology and metabolism. Increasing temperatures can increase insects' metabolic rates which leads to consuming more and growing faster. If temperatures climb too fast, life cycles can be damaged.

Even though insects have evolved over hundreds of millions of years, the current rate of change in our environment has made changes in insect populations less predictable. This is having significant effects on all aspects of our lives from agriculture to wildlands to public health to our food supplies.

Some native insects such as bumblebees are shifting their ranges northward. Recent studies in northern California have found decreases in butterfly populations at higher elevations. Some non-native insects are finding new footholds, sometimes with damaging effects. Forest insects, like bark beetles are expanding northward, and in some cases, are having two annual hatches instead of just one, due to longer summers and host species being more stressed.

In the Gulf Coast regions, mosquitoes

MORE INFORMATION

The OCCRI report is an important tool to help us and our communities prepare and adapt to a changing climate. Similar reports are completed for Grant, Baker, and Wallowa counties. The report is available by contacting Oregon Climate Change Research Institute, College of Earth, Ocean, and Atmospheric Sciences, 104 CEOAS Admin Building, Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR 97331. The report is also available to download from this website: <https://blogs.oregonstate.edu/occri/oregon-climate-assessments/>.

carrying diseases such as Zika and dengue, previously thought to be more equatorial in range are increasing in frequency. West Nile disease, carried by mosquitoes, also is expanding its range into the Pacific Northwest. Pathogen carrying mosquitoes and ticks are expanding northward throughout the country and are surviving our milder winters.

What we eat is highly tied to pollinators. Recent research on pollinators by Oregon State University found many pollinators are specially adapted to certain plants. When those plants bloom before the insects are able to utilize them, it can hamper plant reproduction as well as insect health.

Many bird species are dependent on rich insect populations as their main food source. Birds serve multiple roles in the environment, including pollination. Climate change risks, such as early spring heat waves, wildfire, and other habitat losses are affecting bird populations now.

A recent article in *Science* magazine stated that breeding adult bird populations have plummeted in North America since 1970 by more than 2.6 billion. Birds and insects are co-dependent, and changes to one affects the other. A report just released by the Audubon Society predicts two-thirds of our bird populations will be vulnerable to extinction by 2100 if we stay on our current climate change trajectory.

So, what can we do to enhance native insect populations? While it may be convenient for some to wait for others or

governments to act, we all share in the responsibility for a changing climate. Since insects are fundamental to the health of our ecosystems, including us as humans, there are things we personally can do to support healthy insect populations.

Healthy soils, the foundation for life, are closely tied to healthy insect populations. In our yards, on our farms, and in the wildlands, we can mulch, prevent erosion, reduce our dependence on chemical fertilizers and insecticides and prevent damage by overgrazing and other land impacting activities.

We can plant native species in our yards and create diverse habitat. Ornamental and exotic plants rarely provide the food base for native insects, some of which have very specific dietary needs. Monarch butterflies, for instance, are in peril, and are very dependent on milkweed. The Master Gardener program, extension.oregonstate.edu/mg/umatilla, is a great resource for ideas for plantings. Several communities will have plant sales this spring as part of Farmer's Markets in partnership with the Master Gardener program.

In our yards, we can plant a variety of native plants and trees to promote diverse bird habitat and healthy insect populations to help fend off invasive species.

Riparian areas and wetlands support some of the richest habitat for native insects by providing diverse food and shelter. Typically, these areas amount to less than 5% of the landscape. Protecting these areas can be a huge benefit to all those dependent on them.

Reducing our use of household chemicals including insecticides will create healthier homes for all of us.

And we can all do what we can to personally reduce our carbon footprint and greenhouse gas emissions, the major cause of our rapidly changing climate.

So, this summer, do your own windshield survey. Our native insects are essential to our food chain and our survival. Let's do what we can to support them.

Jeff Blackwood retired from a career with the U.S. Forest Service and is a member of the Eastern Oregon Climate Change Coalition.

Is the rural-urban divide myth or reality?



DICK HUGHES
OTHER VIEWS

For your political reading pleasure, the early edition of the state voters' pamphlet for the May 17 election — the Military/Overseas Voters' Guide — is online from the Secretary of State's Office.

At the tail end are three local ballot measures. One in Klamath and Douglas counties would continue the unlikely quest to merge Eastern and Southern Oregon into Idaho. The voters' guide endorsements from Move Oregon's Border ask, “Who do you trust with your child's future: Idaho government or Oregon government?”

The third measure, in coastal Charleston, would tax short-term lodging to promote tourism, support public safety and spruce up the community. An argument in favor states, “All of the funds stay within the county and nothing is sent to Salem, benefiting the area directly.”

Ah, the fraught relationship between rural Oregon and the state capital, although more often it's characterized as the rest of Oregon vs. Portland.

Is the rural-urban divide a myth or daily reality? Talking with reporters before this year's legislative session, state Sen. James Manning Jr., D-Eugene, called it a myth because he represents both urban and rural areas. He said it's his responsibility to understand all constituents' concerns.

Does that happen with all, even most, legislators? In this election year, it seems worth quizzing legislative and gubernatorial candidates about the urban-rural relationship. How many urban candidates have visited all 60 Oregon House districts? How many rural politicians have gotten to know every legislative district in the Portland metro area?

Certainly, many issues are statewide, such as child care. Or housing, which is in such short supply everywhere that Salem ranks even worse than Portland in comparative housing affordability. Hospitality workers in tourist areas, whether along the coast or in winter sports areas, cannot afford to live there.

Yet vast differences exist between big cities, with revenue to pay for government services, and sparsely populated areas. For example, much of rural Oregon must depend on state police for law enforcement protection, as Sen. Fred Girod, R-Lyons, reminds his colleagues.

Drug cartels gained a foothold in Southern Oregon for illicit marijuana grows, he said, because Oregon's population nearly doubled since Tom McCall was governor while the number of troopers dropped by more than one-third.

Other rural examples: Klamath County has the highest unemployment rate in Oregon, not having fully recovered from the Great Recession. Internet access is so poor in Jackson and Josephine counties that 22% of respondents to a recent survey said they had considered moving.

Meanwhile, rural residents have legit-

imate reasons for believing they have less say in state government. They increasingly are outnumbered. “This is why Oregon passes laws that kill Southern Oregon industries and values,” said Mike McCarter, of Citizens for Greater Idaho, in his voters' guide argument.

It's important to note, however, that the 2022 Legislature took several actions aimed at helping rural Oregon. That included devoting \$100 million for rural projects vetted by a team consisting of Reps. David Gomberg, D-Otis; Mark Owens, R-Crane; and Greg Smith, R-Hep- pner; and Senate Republican Leader Tim Knopp, of Bend.

Pollster John Horvick, of DHM Research, recently pointed out that only 42% of voters live in the Portland metro area. Of the remainder, 27% live in the other Willamette Valley counties, and 31% in the rest of the state.

However, a majority of Democrats (53%) reside in the Portland area, whereas a plurality of Republicans (41%) live outside Portland and the Willamette Valley.

Bear in mind that Democrats, Republicans, Independent, unaffiliated and minor-party voters can be found everywhere, including Democrats in drought-stricken Klamath County. Democrats included this statement in their voters' guide argument against creating a county Border Relocation Board: “It won't rain any more here just by calling ourselves part of Idaho.”

Dick Hughes has been covering the Oregon political scene since 1976.