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**Issue 1  
Autumn 2009**

EarthSpeak Magazine  
Issue 1: Autumn 2009

Presented By EarthSpeak Press  
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## Foreword

As with all new ventures, especially one committed to a certain esthetic vision, putting together the first issue of EarthSpeak was a bit of a learning process.

As the publication is still in its birth-cries and is propelled by a next to non-existent source of funding, submissions rolled in slow and though a large amount of them were high-quality writing many of them didn't quite address the issues which the publication seeks to explore.

With that said, it was also very exciting to discover the modest handful of gems that came my way and subsequently are now presented to you in this debut issue.

The five writers whose work was accepted really exemplify not only a sound, creative use of language but manage to communicate something really central to EarthSpeak's intentions.

Whether it's through the cosmic calculations explored in Becca Deysach's nonfiction piece "Holding Infinity" or through Laura Grace Weldon's prayer-like musings in "Spring Equinox", the five writers presented herein really capture and express something of our relation to this great swirling planet.

I thank all who submitted during the last few months and as EarthSpeak spreads its roots I look forward to reading the work of all future submitters.

Enjoy!

Seth Jani  
EarthSpeak Editor



# Table of Contents

Becca Deysach .....	1
Holding Infinity.....	2
Taylor Graham .....	5
High Sierra .....	6
Vinca .....	7
Phil Lane .....	8
Autumn-Tinged.....	9
Storm fear.....	11
Stephen Mead .....	13
Grass Patch.....	14
Laura Grace Weldon .....	15
Spring Equinox.....	16
Why We Walk The Dogs .....	17





## Becca Deysach

Becca Deysach is a bread-baking, cross-country-skiing, coffee-drinking collector of bones and stones. She writes from Portland, Oregon where she facilitates writing workshops both online and in-person through *Ibex Studios: Adventures in Creative Writing* ([www.ibexstudios.com](http://www.ibexstudios.com)). She is endlessly grateful to Glendon Brunk and Phil Condon for giving her a chance to write.

## Holding Infinity

I.

Walking down the driveway to get my mail this afternoon, I kept my eyes glued to the slippery slope. The ice on the gravel was melting, making a few branching streams out of my driveway. Plucking up a striated thumbnail-sized stone, I realized that the whole world is in my driveway, embodied in the small rocks that comprise it and in the still smaller stones that make up the cement mixture my landlord poured over it last fall. And the world is embodied in the melting snow that consists of water that has been recycled for the past four billion years. *Four billion years.*

My dad used to say that a billion was, what? Something like, "Think of it this way, Bex. One thousand seconds are less than an hour. One million seconds are eleven-and-a-half days. But *one billion*. If you were to count to a billion, one number per second, it would take you thirty-two years." Eleven days from now, I don't expect to be much changed; in thirty-two years, I hope to be eccentric and grey.

I didn't remember the specifics of that analogy until just now when I took the time to scribble down some calculations on my kitchen chalkboard:

$$60 \text{ seconds/minute} \times 60 \text{ minutes/hour} =$$

$$3600 \text{ seconds/hour} \times 24 \text{ hours/day} =$$

$$86400 \text{ seconds/ day} \dots$$

Those equations glare at me from across the room and, until a more pressing topic arises, I am going to leave them up. I need to. For I ache to hold in my head, no, in my gut, an understanding of just how big a billion is. Four-point-seven of which make up the history of this Earth in years, twelve to twenty of which the history of the universe is made. Because maybe then I will be able to grasp both the resounding insignificance and profound exquisiteness of my relatively brief life.

II.

I am a collector. I don't mean to be. I don't mean to pocket artifacts from the land and display them on my wall, my bedside table, and in my notebook, but I do. Settling into my new apartment this fall, I was embarrassed by all the treasures I have gleaned from ventures into unknown territory. The bones, alone, filled two plastic tubs for the move to Missoula. Now hanging on my cobalt kitchen wall are the skulls of a moose, a deer, and a bird; a starfish skeleton; a cow pelvis; two tibia and three femurs of ungulates I can't identify; three large vertebrae; one elk sacrum; two elk mandibles; and two deer antlers.

Each time I put one in my hands or in my backpack, a part of me cringes. Maybe I should leave them be, let them return as calcium, phosphate, and carbon to the soil. But I pick them up anyway; they are simply striking. True beauty, bones reveal the smooth curves of structural integrity. They remind me of the contours of my insides, and of the land from which they came.

I collect other things, too. On the low table next to my bed is a violet in a tiny vase, a piece of pumice as light as a foam ball, the three perfect slices of a twice-cleaved stone, and a quarter-thin triangle of smooth sediment eight layers thick. Shells and stones from the Pacific, Great Lakes, high and low desert, and mountaintops line up on my windowsills and tumble together in a crooked coil pot on my kitchen table.

I picked up each of these items because I was struck by its glaring beauty or rarity. I held each one in my fingers and rubbed it clockwise with my thumb as I studied its cross-sections in search of striations, and then turned it over from front to back hoping to find fossilized life. If it had an optimal combination of decorative beauty and stunning reminders of time, I pocketed it.

My collection reveals that I am particularly struck by long-weathered pink shells and the dinner-mint-sized charcoal, rose, and jade stones from Lake Superior with the forms of extinct creatures impressed on them. But the stones that slay me the most are those tiny layered ones that reveal tens of thousands of years in a space no thicker than my thumb.

I examine these treasures for their stories the way I walk the canyons near my home to learn theirs. I long to be a part of the slow collision of tectonic plates and relentless scouring of rock walls. I go to the mylonite's jagged shiny surface for the active past it reveals just as I run my fingertips along my deep

scars to remember the forces that have shaped me. I go to sun-bleached bones, rocks, shells, canyons, and my own skin for a gut understanding of all that has come before me in hopes of grasping how I got to this place in time. I gather these things as reminders of the topography I have known, as reminders of both the land and the knowing of it. And I gather them to remind me of a past I will never know. They are incomprehensible vastness held in my fingers, on my windowsill.

## Taylor Graham

Taylor Graham is a volunteer search-and-rescue dog handler in California. Her poems have appeared in *American Literary Review*, *International Poetry Review*, *The Iowa Review*, *The New York Quarterly*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Poetry International*, *Seven Circle Press*, *Southern Humanities Review*. Her book *The Downstairs Dance Floor* (Texas Review Press) was awarded the Robert Phillips Poetry Chapbook Prize.

## High Sierra

Way up here  
we listen for angels bringing news  
from places too high for  
us to breathe. Even the spirits  
of the aspen grove  
shiver with burdens in their wings.  
Raven and ground squirrel,  
comet and alpenglow,  
each keeps its story.  
Listen to the gnawing of earth  
underfoot, lift and yearning  
of subduction and fault, river  
and rock on the way to becoming  
something else.  
Way up here we balance between  
blue sky and thunder.

Vinca

*Not to talk about the dead in that way* - Dave Eggers

What used to be a periwinkle slope  
before the sheep came through

nothing but dust and dead stubble  
and then the rain; mud.

Today, all these green fingers reaching,  
signing in their own language

telling me who they were  
in their old life

what they're going to be.

## Phil Lane

Phil Lane's poems have appeared in various small magazines and journals. He teaches English for a private tutoring company, and spends his time reading, writing, and hiking with his dog throughout his home state of New Jersey.



## Autumn-Tinged

Autumn-tinged wind blows

today

in mid-summer,

suspended between

old and young,

manicured landscape

stretches out

green as youth,

uneven sky

numbers the years,

caught in the midst

of this unending decade,

interchangeable seasons

intersect

the immutable self,

rain and sun encounter,

try to determine

which remains to keep

and for how much longer—

## Storm fear

Before the snow, the fear  
of being homebound  
with only my thoughts,  
my brain overfilled with time  
like too much fodder in the shock.

After the snow, the fear  
is realized, the mind stutters,  
eyes scour the same walls  
for a change in landscape  
when out of the tundra  
comes the sound of nothing,  
the distant buzz  
behind the bunker of winter,  
the pang of pins dropping  
like long thoughts falling  
into snowy stillness—



## Stephen Mead

In the 1990s Stephen Mead's poems began appearing in literary journals, but after moving to Massachusetts, Stephen again began concentrating more on painting. In 2000 Stephen started seeking publication again for his writing and art combined. Since then his work has appeared internationally thanks to the World Wide Web. In 2004 Stephen began experimenting with poetry/art hybrids, creating award winning e-books such as Heroines Unlikely. From there Stephen began experimenting with his art/poems as films. In 2006 Stephen released a CD of poems set to music, Safe & Other Love Poems, (CDBaby.com), as well as three DVDs, (Indieflix.com). Print editions of his novels and poetry-art hybrids began being distributed by Amazon.com and Blurb.com in 2007. Ever-revising, Stephen Mead released an re-mastered version of his CD re-titled Love Lullabies via Amazon in 2009, as well as a new poetry-art hybrid Our Book of Common Faith, a meditation on world cultures/religions as a force for unity as opposed to violence.

## Grass Patch

The blades lift & split,  
This music the best sense-----  
Wind riffling each twitching  
Of green, & yet, depths down,  
Terrific calm yawns...

You fall into this,  
Step by step, learn the aging of roots,  
The tired, the weather trod, & come up  
Still, stiller, stillest...

How transcendent is the glass of these  
Tufts! I breathe stains, tones, shades,  
Bleed emerald to opal, the pearl  
Of a bubble where I set my eye,  
Head, foot...

Lips are rarely like such, even  
When whispering or kissing, & if  
My mouth has no song, my ears  
No sirens, then this silence is  
More promising, absolving  
With its jets, stalk after stalk,  
An apex of light, truest, the only  
True thing

There.

## Laura Grace Weldon

The author lives on a small farm ([www.bitofearthfarm.com](http://www.bitofearthfarm.com)) with her family. Her poems have recently appeared in *Atlantic Review*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Mannequin Envy*, *Flashquake* and *Dirty Napkin*. Her book *Free Range Learning* is due out from Hohm Press in June 2010. Visit her at [www.lauragraceweldon.com](http://www.lauragraceweldon.com)

## Spring Equinox

Road gray snow piled  
along the parking lot  
melts in rivulets  
streaming between cars and carts  
with the same eagerness I smell in the warming air.

Inside, displays are piled high  
with bags of sterilized soil, compounds  
in bright spray bottles, plants overflowing  
small plastic pots.

I think of wise ones teaching  
that answers await us.  
Sorrel, plantain, dandelion  
grow at our feet. Instead we tend a weed  
serving nobody. We clear wild places  
where graceful pollinators fed and  
sleeping creatures dreamed. We confine what grows,  
wondering why our children no longer pretend.

Sun-lit windows cast light across faces in checkout lines 1 to 9.  
A gray-haired man hoists a sack of peat moss to his shoulder,  
muscles cording his skin. A baby sleeps in a cart laden  
with orange and purple petunias, bought too soon to plant.  
Tags flutter ceremoniously over the head of a woman  
carrying a shovel out the door.

The impulse to welcome spring  
lies deep as memory. My pulse catches with unexpected love  
for each person here. Now in the marketplace and later,  
our hands tucking tender seedlings into blessed ground,  
I see the many ways we are called to worship.



## Why We Walk The Dogs

Yawning, you say you're too tired  
yet we can't refuse  
brown-eyed pleading at the door.

Away from these walls we more easily silence  
sorrow, hardship, loss  
by looking, only looking.

Cows in the lower pasture raise their heads as we pass.  
A Baltimore oriole alights on a hickory fencepost  
twined with yellow flowers. The sun stretches  
generous arms of light cloud to cloud.

The old dog walks alongside,  
as the puppy bounds through ditches  
up hillsides, joyously muddy  
collecting scents for his dreams.

When grief or fear catches in my throat  
I remember to look at the sky  
letting higher possibilities  
hover over our steps.

Then, through evening brightness  
dozens of blue and green dragonflies  
swoop around us in some unknown ritual.  
We wonder which of nature's perfect gestures---  
migration, mating, defense---this may be.  
Standing in the middle of our complicated lives,  
we feel a lift of hope requiring no effort  
and turn toward home, wide awake.



## About EarthSpeak

EarthSpeak is a newly-founded online literary journal that hopes to open up a small but honest space where writers of various persuasions can pursue a dialogue concerning one of the most crucial issues of our times, namely the fitful relationship between humanity and the natural world.

It also hopes to support an array of different conservation/restoration organizations through its Donation Program, which aims to funnel some of the magazines modest proceeds into organizations which exhibit a strong sense of environmental stewardship and integrity.

EarthSpeak is interested in essays, stories and poems that explore a wide gamut of different issues and experiences as they pertain to nature and our own place within it. Submission deadlines follow a seasonal rhythm, further information for which can be found on the websites submissions page.

All submissions and inquiries may be sent to:  
[submissions@earthsspeakmagazine.com](mailto:submissions@earthsspeakmagazine.com).

[www.earthsspeakmagazine.com](http://www.earthsspeakmagazine.com)