

TURTLE POETRY

Editorial Introduction. — This section is devoted to poetry involving turtles, representing either reprinted previously published or new unpublished material. We encourage our readers to submit poetry or songs for consideration, either their own material or work by other authors. Poems may be submitted to Anders G.J. Rhodin, Chelonian Research Foundation, E-mail: RhodinCRF@aol.com.

Our desire is to share with our readers the beauty and wonder of turtles as expressed through the art of the poem or song. In the sense that the relationship between man and turtles is multifaceted, so too is turtle poetry. The poems we publish here will reflect that complexity, from poems of pure admiration for the creatures themselves to others reflecting the utilization of turtles and their products. Some poems will reflect man's use of the turtle for sustenance, others will stress man's need to preserve and protect turtles. Some will deal with our emotional interactions with turtles, others will treat turtles light-heartedly or with seeming disrespect, but all will hopefully help us to better understand both the human and the chelonian condition, and remind us that the turtle holds a sacred place in all our hearts.

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Turtle Glade West¹

RAYMOND A. SAUMURE

Carapace of pyramids, Plastron worn down
Eggs off white, Soil so brown
Far she travelled, There to nest
By a Stream, in a Glade, to the West

Predator moves in, Quick to shell
Chewed up edges, Healed quite well
Far she travelled, Over a crest
To a Tree, in a Glade, to the West

Men come through, Turtles they find
Harvest they take, Last of kind
Far she travelled, Searched her best
Through the Grass, in a Glade, to the West

Struck by contrast, Shell against moss
Long since departed, Leaving a loss
Far she travelled, Now to rest
By a Fern, in a Glade, to the West

Editorial Comment. — I received this personal turtle poem many years ago from my good friend, collaborating editor, and turtle colleague, Ray Saumure. Like many of us turtle biologists, conservationists, and enthusiasts, Ray has a deep appreciation not only for the natural history and conservation needs of turtles, but also their roles as sources of inspiration for artistic and poetic expression. When he submitted the poem he wrote to me: "I do not consider myself a poet, and have no means of knowing if this is a "good" poem. I wrote it very late one night in 1998 while sick of reading research papers. It is a poetic expression of the natural history of a turtle in our current world. Although it was written with the Wood Turtle (*Clemmys* [now *Glyptemys*] *insculpta*) in mind, it could very well apply to many of the Asian species we hear so much about these days. I feel that this poem celebrates the beauty of nature, its textures, its colors. It speaks of the delicate balance of nature. It laments man's short-sightedness as well as human-induced extinctions. However, it subtly offers hope . . . in the next generation of men and turtles. I guess poetry is an intensely personal thing . . . but I hope you like it nonetheless." Well, I do like it, and I am pleased to finally be able to publish this poem here, both in honor of the kind of natural history studies Ray was pursuing while following this Wood Turtle to his "glade to the west", and for Ray himself and his efforts in helping to disseminate and publish peer-reviewed scientific knowledge about turtles.

¹Composed 1998 in Québec, Canada.

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