



# turtle tracks

Friends of Misery Bay  
400 Misery Bay Road  
Evansville ON, P0P1H0

## SPRING 2024

### **In this issue... Lots of Spring Goodies!**

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**Thanks to John and Rose Diebolt, Rachel Windsor, Sue Meert and Phyllis Cacciotti for all their help and contributions!**

**Edited by Marcel Bénéteau**

## Chair’s report

submitted by Rachel Windsor

As we leap into spring, the newish Friends of Misery Bay Board has been working hard to find its flow and to adapt as we move into an exciting new era here at Misery Bay.

Looking to the future, FOMB plans to focus on educational talks about Misery Bay, guided hikes and ways to attract the younger generation. As many of our long-time and hard-working volunteers are getting older and are not as active, it's time for the new generation of nature enthusiasts to join us in keeping Misery Bay a beautiful and protected place. FOMB will be participating in trade fairs, markets, local events and school presentations in 2024. Since the board decided not to hire and supervise students this summer (Ontario Parks has hired a Park Warden), we will use our time to focus on increasing Misery Bay Provincial Park’s profile on Manitoulin Island while welcoming the multitude of visitors from around the world.

Our current board members are:

Chairperson/President - Rachel Windsor

Vice-Chairperson/Vice President - Dagmar Werkmeister

Treasurer - Jim Cahill

Secretary - Phyllis Cacciotti

MEMBERS:

Ken Mackenzie

Peg Balkind

Dale Scott

Michael Hobson

Ken Mackenzie will be completing his years on the board this June and we have already recruited Kathryn Ritzie to replace him as the Volunteer Coordinator for Misery Bay. As far as we know, the other board members will be forging on. Thank you so much for your leadership and contributions to Misery Bay in working with the volunteers, Ken!!

### **DON'T FORGET OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING!**

Our AGM is scheduled for Saturday, June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at 10:00 AM. The guest speaker will be the amazing Dr. Joseph Shorthouse who will be presenting on "Northern Ontario's Lowbush Blueberry: Masters in the Art of Adaptation". These blueberries grow at Misery Bay and it will be fascinating to learn about them. We hope to have Erika Poupore from Ontario Parks remote into the meeting as well to update you on their plans for the park. Please join us at the AGM!!

## Update from the FOMB Secretary

Submitted by Phyllis Cacciotti



*I am pleased to share that after my email campaign (sorry for being a pest), our paid members have increased by 13%, from 87 last year to 98 in 2024. Thank you all for sending in your annual membership dues and please know that your ongoing support means a lot to Misery Bay!*

The Board of Directors of the Friends of Misery Bay has been busy over the winter looking after administrative tasks and communicating with the Ontario Parks Superintendent, Erika Poupore. We have been working to improve our communication and on becoming a cohesive board with most of us being new or being in new roles. We are getting ready for the grand opening of the Visitors' Centre and the park in general on Friday, May 17<sup>th</sup>, and hope to welcome many of you.

That May long weekend—May 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>—will be a very busy one with FOMB having a booth at the Park Centre in Kagawong for the Manitoulin Streams Trade Fair. We have opted to become a "Sprout" sponsor of this event in support of the amazing work being accomplished by Manitoulin Streams across the Island in restoring shorelines, planting trees, doing outreach in educating young people and adults and generally protecting

and restoring streams since 2001. We will be looking to educate visitors on Misery Bay Provincial Park as well as to recruit volunteers and/or members. Come out and visit our booth which will be alongside the Manitoulin Nature Club as well as Friends of Manitoulin Turtles...conservation is in good shape on the Island!

In terms of our own outreach, FOMB has been invited to participate in Earth Month in April by visiting Little Current Public School to do a nature presentation to the students. The President, Rachel Windsor, and I are working on a presentation on Misery Bay and some of the features of the park, as well as talking about protecting the flora and fauna on Manitoulin Island. We hope to have a fun and informative time with the kids.

As a board, our goal is to enhance the visitor's experience at Misery Bay and to facilitate their enjoyment of all features of the park—everything from

the alvars, the beautiful wildflowers, the birds and wildlife that make the park home and all the educational displays in the Visitors' Centre. With Ontario Parks having hired a fulltime Park Warden, we hope to offer guided tours. We will have interesting

merchandise for sale and hope to have enthusiastic volunteers there to greet everyone.

We look forward to seeing you at Misery Bay because, as we all know, "Misery Loves Company!"



Black-bellied Plovers on Misery Bay beach (*Marcel Beneteau*)

## **Birding at Misery Bay & Across Manitoulin Island**

Submitted by John Diebolt, aka the neophyte birder

- All photos by Rose Diebolt, unless otherwise noted

One has to wonder why anyone would call a popular destination, where all manner of beings flock to, Misery Bay Provincial Park (MBPP). People from all over the world descend on the park to take advantage of the many unique viewing opportunities that abound there: endangered plants, animals, rock formations, fossils, etc. Friends of Misery Bay took advantage of the above name and came up with the moniker phrase that has become associated with MBPP "Misery Loves Company". Misery Bay has not only become an international mecca for people, but also is a location where one can view the largest number of bird species on Manitoulin Island.

If one checks on the E-bird system (an international online data system for bird observations) you will see the following top three areas on Manitoulin for bird counts:

1. Misery Bay Park 157 species
2. Little Current Lagoon 154 species
3. Gore Bay Airport 153 species

A lot of these entries have come from our very own FOMB and Manitoulin Nature Club (MNC) members, Joan and Chris Bell, Rodney Thompson and Will Kershaw. It's worthwhile to note that the highest count of species recorded for Manitoulin is around 240.



Common Yellowthroat

The number of species in Canada and Ontario vary depending on the source one references, but for Canada, 462 species regularly appear and in Ontario 318 species regularly appear. It is very special to see the ones we have here on Manitoulin.

This does not mean that if you wander the trails at MBPP for a day that you will see up to 157 species of birds. A lot of the birds counted at Misery Bay—such as a Ruddy Turnstone—are migrating through this area and might only be there for part of a day. A White-Crowned Sparrow might spend several days there during its spring migration north to the Arctic and then again in the fall migration south to the southern US. A Tree Sparrow will spend all winter in the park and then migrate to the Arctic Region for the summer while birds like a Sandhill Crane will nest at Misery Bay and then retreat south to the US for the winter. Birds such as the Black-Capped Chickadee, Blue Jays, Ravens, etc., stay with us year-round. These are my favourite birds.

There are of course a small group of birders out there—let's call them twitchers, ornithologists, bird counters, life listers—and their passionate focus is to count and record as many birds as possible. In some cases, it becomes their life focus.



Yellow Warbler

For the rest of us neophytes of the birding fraternity, of which I include myself, we are birdwatchers or backyard birders! We simply like to wander/walk/drive about and look at birds. Some of us have bird feeders and keep track of birds that we see throughout the season and we might even become a citizen scientist and record birds on E-bird or Project Feederwatch. This all helps keep track of the trends in bird populations which sometimes track the health of the planet we live on.



Great Blue Heron



Caspian Tern

To help us greenhorns out with bird observations at MBPP and on Manitoulin Island in general, I asked respected birders Rodney Thompson and Chris Bell

to provide us with a list of the more easily identified birds one might encounter at MBPP:

*Canada Goose ~ Mallard Duck ~ Common Merganser ~ Common Loon ~ Herring Gull  
~ Caspian Tern ~ Ruffed Grouse ~ Turkey Vulture ~ Common Raven ~ Blue Jay ~  
Sandhill Crane ~ Belted kingfisher ~ Hairy Woodpecker ~ Northern Flicker ~ Killdeer  
~ Red-Eyed Vireo ~ Tree Swallow, Black-Capped Chickadee ~ Red-Breasted Nuthatch  
~ White-Breasted Nuthatch ~ American Robin ~ Song Sparrow ~ Chipping Sparrow ~  
Red-Winged Blackbird ~ Veery ~ Yellow-Rumped Warbler ~ Golden-Crowned Kinglet  
~ Dark-Eyed Junco*

This is a great list to start with remembering of course that there are as many as 157 or more possible species you might encounter, depending on the time of year.



White-throated Sparrow

As you prepare to wander the trails of MBPP, consider the following to enhance your outing:

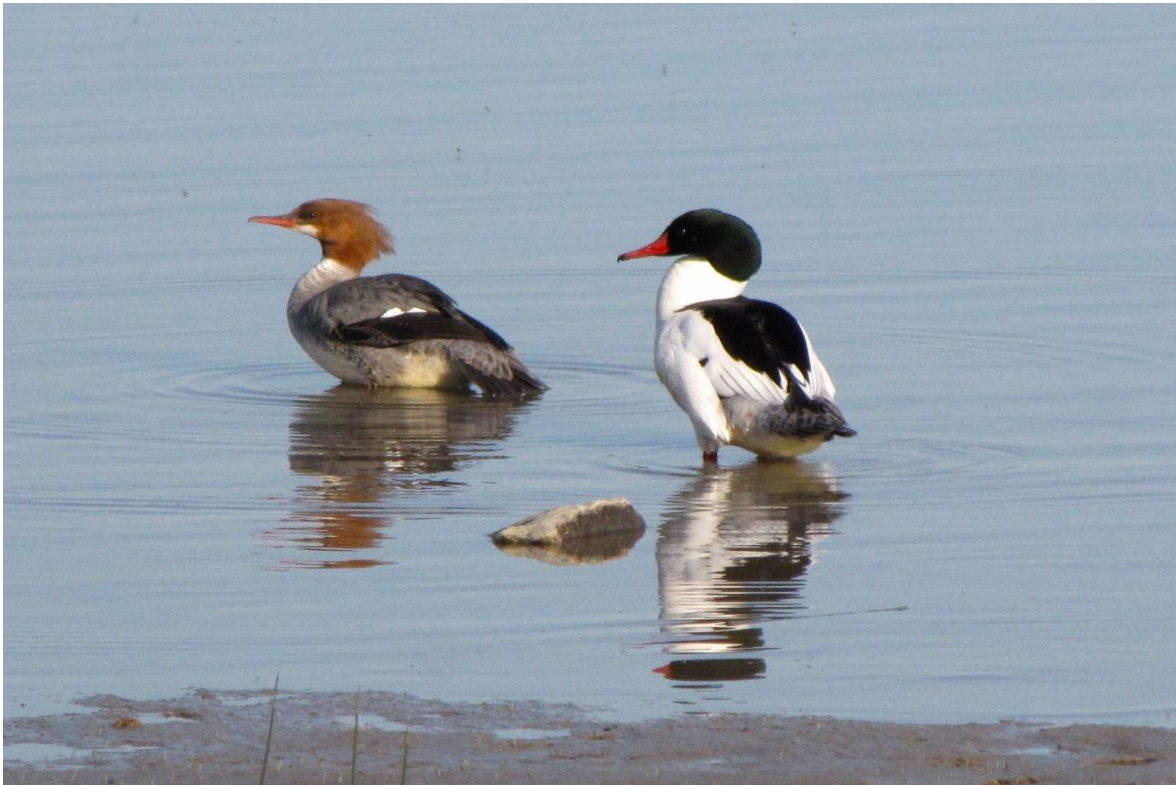
- a good set of **8X42 entry level binoculars**—Vortex, Nikon or Bushnell are all good brand names to start with.
- a good birding field guide—I have settled on the **Sibley's Guide to Birds of Eastern Canada** as our go-to guide. We still like the paper copy but have also gone to a downloadable copy that is on our smart phone (the

beauty of the e-copy is that it has the bird calls for all species which is good for call-backs and helps to identify birds you cannot see)

- an app that will totally enhance your birdwatching and is totally fun to use is the **Merlin ID App available free from Cornell University**. Pick the one that has Cornell in the identifier line. It has all the pictures and sounds to help you identify birds, but what is really cool is that you can record bird calls that you hear, wherever you are, and it will identify the bird (qualifier: it is about 80 to 85% accurate on this feature, but still very beneficial and fun to use).

A Merlin feature that we use along with Rose's Canon camera is for her to take a picture of a bird and we then take a picture of that bird in her camera's viewfinder with the Merlin App on our phone and it will identify that bird. Another plus, because one uses Merlin on smartphones, our older grandchildren use it also. They love the technology and being able to identify birds that we cannot hear (hmmm—little brats have better hearing than we do).

As I write this article, it's another great day on Manitoulin Island and the trails at Misery Bay beckon me because “Misery Loves Company” (as do all the trails and roads on Manitoulin)!



Common Mergansers (female and male)

*photo by Marcel Bénéteau*



## "Alvar"

*The Friends of Misery Bay are excited to have been part of Georgia Hathaway's recording of her new song "Alvar" at Misery Bay Provincial Park. Please take a look and listen to this haunting and magical song/video on our website:*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=8&v=5FI8yZ7BnIY&embeds\\_referring\\_euri=https%3A%2F%2Fmiserybay.ca%2F&source\\_ve\\_path=Mjg2NjY&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=8&v=5FI8yZ7BnIY&embeds_referring_euri=https%3A%2F%2Fmiserybay.ca%2F&source_ve_path=Mjg2NjY&feature=emb_logo)

### **Between the Green ~ Released April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

The songs on this album are inspired by the people and places I encountered during my artist residency with 4elements Living Arts on Manitoulin Island. They also represent the journey I've taken to heal from trauma, and the transformative power of going somewhere new to find yourself.

Born from a glacier thousands of years ago, the Alvar ecosystem on Manitoulin is the only one of its kind in Canada. Picture flat rock, extending far along the shoreline, tiny holes embedded in it. These little depressions in the rock are homes to many species of mosses and algae, the only organisms that can survive the harsh climate of the area. They are exposed to the elements all year round - hot sun, winds, freezing temperatures, snow and rains. Every living thing that ekes out an existence here has had to carve out its own path and live through incredible challenges.



For me, the Alvar is a teacher: the very harshness of the ecosystem contributes to its beauty. Having lived through multiple brain injuries causing me to live with disability, the Alvar inspires me in its capacity to

embrace limitation. It's a symbol of resilience - the drive to keep going no matter what life throws at you.

Thanks to Misery Bay Provincial Park, who allowed me to film this incredible place, and 4elements Living Arts with whom I did my artist residency. Thank you also to everyone who collaborated on this song - Kathryn Merriam on piano, Tristan Murphy on drums, Elena Spanu on fiddle, and Chris Adriaanse on bass.

*ALVAR*

*Glacier cutting through  
The comma and the groove  
Ancient shoreline sands  
The thistle roots command  
Roots command, roots command*

*Algae, dolostone,  
The Mosses make their home  
Feather scale and skin  
Exoskeleton*

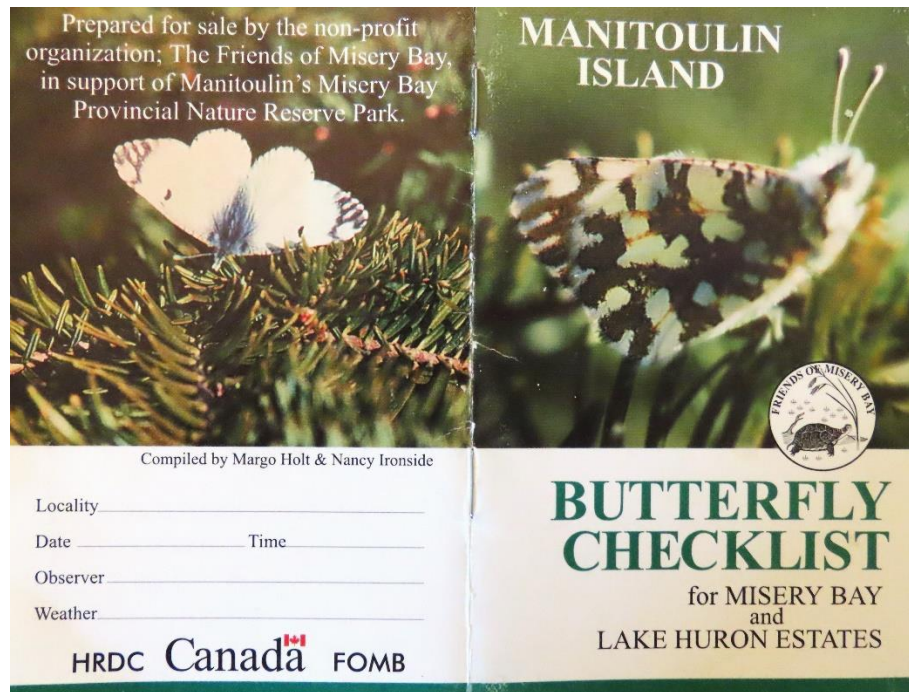
*Alvar, thrives on the edge  
Alvar, carving a way ahead  
Carving a way ahead*

*The soils freeze and thaw  
The acid decomposes all  
The soils freeze and thaw  
The acid decomposes all*

*Alvar, thrives on the edge  
Alvar, carving a way ahead  
Carving a way ahead*

For more information on Georgia and her tours, go to: [georgiahathaway.com](http://georgiahathaway.com)

## April showers bring May flowers and... Butterflies!



Former FOMB members Margo Holt and Nancy Ironsides used to organize a yearly butterfly survey every summer at Misery Bay. They also compiled a checklist of butterflies seen in the park – an astonishing 56 species that people could check off as they walked the Misery Bay trails! Margo and Nancy’s little pamphlet is still available at our Visitors Centre. The yearly butterfly survey would be an amazing event to revive in the park – any volunteers to get it going?

In the meantime, here are a few of the more notable park species to get you going on your own personal list:



Eastern Comma



Little Wood Satyr



Red Admiral



White Admiral



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail



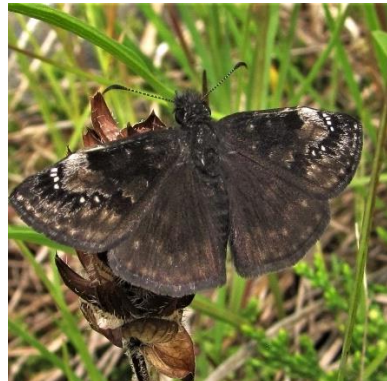
Red-spotted Purple



Dreamy Duskywing



Eyed Brown



Columbine Duskywing



Great Spangled Fritillary



Orange Sulfur



Milbert's Tortoise Shell



Bronze Copper



Spring Azure



Dorcas Copper



Northern Crescent



Eruopean Skipper



Leonard's Skipper



Painted Lady



Atlantis Fritillary



American Painted Lady



Viceroy



Dun Skipper



Monarch



Mourning Cloak

*Photos by Marcel Bénéteau*

## Roses are red, Violets are Blue...

by Marcel Bénéteau

Well, not always... The *Violaceae* genus comprises a large family of plants – over two dozen species in Ontario – that range in colour from various shades of violet and blue to pinks, whites, yellows and even greens. Manitoulin Island is home to 15 species and 6 of these can be found in Misery Bay Provincial Park. Most of them bloom in early Spring, so they are something to look forward to along the trails, alvars and beaches on your early visits to Misery Bay.

Violets, however, can be a confusing bunch, even for experts. Most species are rather small and many of them look very much alike at first glance. Your best bet is always to look at the habitat, as different species will colonize different environments. Other subtle differences will help you sort them out, such as the shape of the leaves, whether or not the flower stems come straight out of the ground or branch off from a leaf stalk (stemmed or stemless), whether or not the lateral petals are hairy or smooth (bearded or beardless).



Fig.1 Early Blue Violet

All violets have five petals, with four of them upswept and spread out more or less in a fan shape, while the fifth one – often with distinct markings – points downwards. This bottom petal often has an elongated spur filled with nectar to attract pollinators.



Fig. 2 Early Blue Violet; note hairy white "beard"

One of the earliest violets to bloom in Misery Bay is the aptly named Early Blue Violet (also known as Hook-spurred Violet) (*Viola adunca*) (**Fig. 1 & 2**). In fact, it is one of the very first flowers you will see blooming in the park, some years as early as the end of April. As you can see in

Fig. 2, it is a good example of a “bearded” violet, with long white hairs on the two lower lateral petals. The leaves are smooth and somewhat spade-shaped and the flowers stems branch off from the axils of leaf stalks, making it a “stemmed” violet. You will find it where organic material has accumulated on the alvars and in drier open areas along forest trails.



Fig. 3 Kidney-leaved Violet



Fig. 4 Kidney-leaved Violet close-up

The Kidney-leaved Violet (*V. renifolia*), on the other hand, is a beardless and stemless violet, as the flower grows at the

end of a stalk that shoots up directly from underground rhizomes (**Fig. 3**).

This small white violet has dark purple veins radiating from the centre of the lower petal and has no hairs on the lateral petals; the two upper petals are often curled back (**Fig. 4**) The stem has sparse bristly hairs all along its length. The shape of the leaves is what gives the plant its name. It can be mostly be found in cool shady areas of coniferous forests.



Fig. 5 Shore Violets

On to another habitat: the Shore Violet (*V. nephrophylla*) is also known as the Northern Bog Violet and both names give you an indication of where you might find this beautiful little flower (**Fig. 5 & 6**).

Wet shorelines and marshy areas are ideal habitats for it. The long stemless blooms often rise high above the leaves, probably as a precaution against fluctuating water levels. Shore Violets are definitely bearded, with thick tufts of long thin white hairs on either side of the strikingly marked central petal. The triangular-shaped leaves are another helpful identifying feature. However, just to confuse things, it should be pointed out that this species sometimes throws in a

few white-formed flowers mixed in with the blue ones. (**Fig. 7**).



Fig. 6 Shore Violets, close-up



Fig. 7, Shore Violet, white form.

The next species is also white, and is our smallest violet. The Northern or Small White Violet (*V. macloskeyi*) also thrives in wet, boggy environments, mostly on the west side of the park. The dime in **Fig. 8** will give you an idea of the diminutive size of these flowers. The smooth, heart-



Fig. 8 Northern or Small White Violet

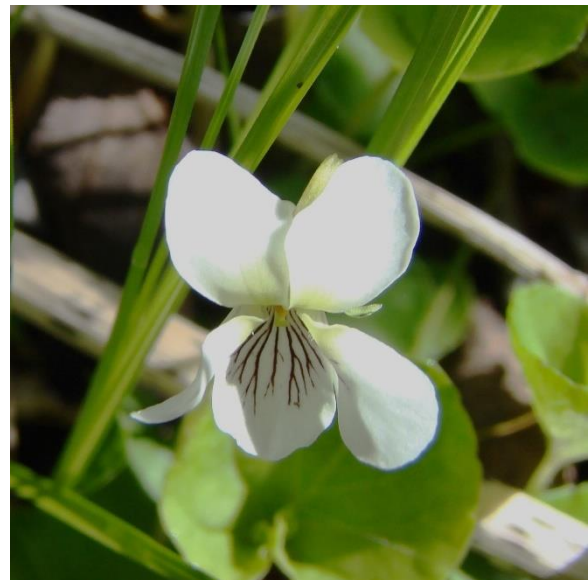


Fig 9 Close-up of flower

shaped leaves are rather tough and leathery to the touch. Stemless and beardless, this tiny little bloom is easy to miss but is well worth the effort to get down low to see the delicate purple veins etched into its central petal (**Fig. 9**).

The next two species are a little easier to find and next to impossible to misidentify. American Dog Violet (*V. conspersa*) (**Fig. 10 & 11**) is widespread throughout Manitoulin: to quote John Morton, it is



“common in woodland, the forest edge, paths and openings, grassy and rocky places, etc.” It grows in fairly large clumps, with long-stemmed flowers branching off from the leaf axils. The pale blue (sometimes nearly white) flowers feature a large and prominent and much darker spur that protrudes well past the back of the petals (**Fig. 12 & 13**).



Fig. 12 American Dog Violet

Our last species brings a bright splash of colour to the spring woodlands. The Yellow Forest Violet (*V. pubescens*) (**Fig. 14**) comes in two varieties, smooth (glabrous) and hairy (pubescent). Some of the literature suggests that they could be split into two different species. Both are larger than most of our violets, with multiple stems and heart-shaped leaves up to 2 inches (7.5 cm) in length.



Fig. 13 American Dog Violet; note large spur



Fig. 14 Yellow Forest Violet

**Ref:** J.K. Morton & Joan Venn, *The Flora of Manitoulin Island*, University of Waterloo Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition  
- Ontario Wildflowers: <https://ontariowildflowers.com/main/group.php?id=54>  
- Minnesota Wildflowers: <https://www.minnesotawildflowers.info/search?family=Violaceae&w>



April Sunrise

*Photo by Marcel Bénéteau*

### **Awaken**

As Mother Earth awakens, from her  
Wintry solace slumber  
She yields her wand of willows  
made of green, blue, red and umber  
A stretch of peaceful song  
with vast radial charm  
And her children sing new songs learnt  
from lands explored beyond.  
With Her, new hope arises  
Her land she gives once more,  
The sun will dance on green top hills  
and soft rains again will pour.

*Submitted by Sue Meert*