

Skipping Stones

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*Koi keep on swimming
Against the rushing current
Trying to get home.*

The 2020 Haiku Exhibit • Wonders of the Wilderness

Art: Michelle Ying Zhang, grade 7, Shanghai, China.

Where Deer Play

There are four ideas to keep in mind when hiking through the woods looking for deer. I'll walk you through our journey.

Charles steps up on a fallen log and points the way ahead. Jake pulls back a branch covered with leaves; and holds it for us to pass. Lilly hops straight in front of me, onto flat rocks crossing the creek. And I, Nina, hear birds singing a hundred different notes and melodies.

Listen to Bird Songs is Number One.

"Thanks" I say to Jake as he snaps the branch back behind us.

Charles jumps next to me, and we leap onto rocks side by side. Jake bounds upward onto a very long vine and glides over the brook!

"My turn!" Lilly taps Jake's shoulder. He hands Lilly the vine and gives her a push; she swings back and forth until Jake catches her.

"Jump off," Jake says swinging the vine my way.

I step back and jump grabbing the vine, riding over the creek to their side on a dirt mound.

Charles takes off next, jumping very high up on the vine, while crossing by us he hollers, "Deer prints! First to find them." We follow the footprints to another brook where the tracks end.

Discover Deer Footprints is Number Two.

Jake lunges grabbing the top of a high hanging vine; he swings to a tall tree branch. Shinningy further up the tree, he points, "That way!" Jake swings on the vine landing beside Charles.

Lilly and I stay close behind the boys skipping through the creek on small mounds of mud.

Seeing their beige bodies at last through the wall of trees, "Deer!" I say in a loud whisper so as not to frighten them. Peering beyond slits between wide tree trunks, my friends and I watch a group of deer leaping, nuzzling, nibbling on leaves and eating grass.

"We'll never get through here," Charles says running alongside the stacked line of trees.

"And watch out for snakes—" Jake yells rushing

forward! He suddenly stops seeing Lilly's foot is on a giant snake. Jake grabs Lilly's arm keeping her still, while she stands on the long, thick black snake. **Never Step on a Snake is Number Three.**

Jake lifts Lilly's chin up to draw her attention away from the snake; she trembles less. He opens his pocket-knife and holds it up.

Lilly sneaks a look down moments later, "Ahhh!" The big black snake lifts his head looking at her!

"Breathe, your comfort will calm him," Jake suggests.

Jake takes Lilly into his arms (tilting the pocket-knife away) and carries her, up-off and around the snake. "Lilly thanks you very much," Jake smiles passing by. He sets Lilly down on a tiny knoll of rock-hard mud above the stream.

"Oh Jake, thank you," Lilly wraps her arms around Jake's muscular neck. He picks her back up and hugs her tightly.

"You did great." Jake gives her a thumbs up.

Meantime, the snake slithers over and settles directly beneath Jake's feet. "It's okay—he'll guide us now," Jake says.

Moving deeper into the forest, we are Lilly and Jake, the big black snake, singing birds, an occasional croaking toad, Charles, me—Nina, and of course the deer in the hidden meadow behind rows of trees. And somewhere, there is a secret path to them.

"Why don't you name him?" Lilly takes a few steps back. "You don't have to be scared." Jake bends over tapping his calf. The big black snake rests his head against Jake's leg. "I'll call you Racer." Racer taps Jake's leg with his head in agreement.

"Why?" Lilly blinks at Jake.

"Didn't you notice how fast he is?" Jake shrugs.

"I did!" Charles says.

Racer rubs the side of his head around Jake's calf, and we all look toward the hidden deer. "Let Racer lead!" Jake gently strokes Racer's head. And so, Racer bends forward unraveling his very long body into the water, winding around rocks and rushing deeper down



through the stream.

Jake hastily tracks Racer. As Jake sets our pace, he promptly closes his pocketknife and slips it into the leather case at his side.

“There seems to be no way in there,” I sound off, keeping my distance from Racer, while balancing on rocks in and around the stream, near an endless line of trees.

“This way,” Jake stands on a giant rock, after Racer slithers around it. And at that moment, to our surprise, birds sing louder, the hooves of prancing deer are closer, and Racer raises his body up and forward toward a wide heart-shaped opening (about three feet above ground) between two curved tree trunks.

When we step through this passage between trees and into the once hidden meadow, every deer stops to look at us. We stand completely still, watching each deer, grateful at last, to be there with them.

Then, as if we had been together all along, we leap, run, slither or fly: birds, reptiles, deer and kids. One deer even nuzzles her chin on my arm and lets me pet her soft coat before prancing away.

In a little while, we hear a booming bari-tone sound over and over. The toad’s ongoing croak, deep and throaty, is our signal that the sun is setting, and we should return home before dark. There it is, we see a giant toad in front of us. Number Four: **Rhythmic Repetitions from a Croaking Toad is a Timekeeper.**

Charles stumbles over a rock and lunges forward in front of us, “Follow me.” When Racer veers off, I run past Charles and we compete for the lead all the way through the forest until we pass the very last tree. Out of breadth, we keel over, looking back in tempo seeing Jake and Lilly holding hands. They let go and catch up with us.

We decree to respect the space of every creature, and to always be ourselves since animals, reptiles, and birds act naturally in the woods.

—Nicole Borgenicht, traveler and writer, California.
Art on page 15 by Daemion Lee, Oregon.

These pages feature nature scenes seen through the photographic eyes of Paul Dix. He is a friend of mine who has captured over 20,000 images showing the incredible beauty of the world we live in. He has traveled far and wide from Antarctica to Alaska, from Chile to China, from Japan to Norway, and from Amazonia to Kenya. He is fascinated by the beauty and diversity of cultures, traditions and life-styles of the people he encounters while traveling.

Paul was born in the southern U.S., and he spent several years in Chicago area as a teenager. His dream was always to be close to mountains. He was ecstatic when his father got a job in Washington state where he could be close to both the Cascades and the Rockies.

As a young man he joined one of the early expeditions to climb Denali, the highest peak in North America. The ascent lasted 45 days and included 90 miles on skis to reach base camp. Later, he would continue climbing in the Andes (Peru and Chile), and other mountain ranges.

He says, “*My photography grew out of the mountaineering: documenting the climbs and wanting to share that alpine world of glaciers and granite peaks, blue sky and wild mountain storms. It also grew out of my interest in peoples of other cultures and the social justice issues they faced. I witnessed how people struggled to overcome their poverty and bravely organized to fight the political repression they faced. This led me to a career in photojournalism.*”

In Glacier Bay National Park (Alaska), Paul kayaked extensively photographing calving glaciers and areas that were recently under tons of ice, but are now lush green forests (see pp. 18-20). In Hawaii, he visited the area devastated by the volcanic lava flow of 1990 on the Big Island (p. 18).

Mountains and natural areas allow wilderness to flourish on our planet. High mountains offer an environment for snow pack to accumulate, and thus provide a steady source of fresh water even during dry, summer months. For hikers and visitors, they offer a place for reflection, rejuvenation, and a time to appreciate nature.

Paul made Livingston, Montana his home base for about 30 years. His exquisite images have been published in many publications and books over the last four decades. *Skipping Stones* has featured his photos of people—young and old—from Nicaragua, Mexico and other parts of Latin America.

Currently, Paul lives in the Willamette Valley of Oregon. He and his partner, Pam Fitzpatrick, live simply; they grow and preserve much of their food (for use during winter months). At the age of 84, he continues to enjoy gardening, camping, hiking, and skiing in the Northwest. —A.N.T.