

Speaking Prairie— Accompaniment

edited by Roy Beckemeyer

"...are there other words we need to imagine and create for the natural world?...Let's try a few."—Cindy Crosby

Cindy Crosby, in her illustrated essay in this issue titled "How to Speak Fluent Prairie," included a series of nature photographs she had taken during her prairie walks and invited readers to add to a *prairie lexicon* by putting words to the images.

I asked a number of Kansas wordsmiths to look at these evocative pictures and to make their own creative contributions. And I concocted some of my own.

Here, then, are some words and thoughts scribed by April Pameticky (AP), Annette Hope Billings (AB), Dennis Etzel, Jr. (DE), and Roy Beckemeyer (RB), in response to Cindy's lovely photographs.

Feel free to pen your own impressions of these delightful images. Build new words, write a paragraph if you wish, a poem, an essay. Enjoy!



Compass Plant Leaf in Winter © by Cindy Crosby

- "Cicada shell leaves" (AP)
- "Skeletal leaves" (AP)
- "Leaves my daughters crush as if they were nature's bubble wrap." (AP)
- "Crisp-claws " (RB)



December Sunrise © by Cindy Crosby

- "Sunrise blush" (AP)
- "Innocent blush" (AP)
- "The hue of carnival's end" (DE)
- "New day pale" (AP) (That time of morning when I was breastfeeding, a strange peace between exhaustion and total anxiety"
- "Salmon-belly sky" (RB)



Wild Indigo Seed Pods Rattling in the Wind © by Cindy Crosby

- "Click-rustlers" (RB)
- "Rattle pod" (AP) ("My girls are a constant noise, and hiking becomes an adventure in silence. We are hunters of sound, searchers and explorers. We discover rattle pods of indigo seeds and the blessed soft of stillness.")
- "Wind-clicks" (RB)
- "Windigos" (RB)



Messy Coneflower Seed Head in Winter © by Cindy Crosby

- "Nesting material" (AP) ("My daughter, Leia would say that coneflower seeds were the wind's hairbrush, for who is better to know all the detritus caught in a brush than a little girl?")
- "Cone clutter" (RB)
- "Flower-spike-bling" (RB)



Prairie Stream Murmuring through Ice © by Cindy Crosby

- "Breath of spring" (AP)
- "Tinkle of a new spring" (AP)
- "First stream song of spring" (AP)
- "Hum of water commuting through cold" (AB)
- "Shiver-splash" (RB)



Pair of Coyotes © by Cindy Crosby

- "Couplet of coyotes" (AB)
- "Reverent" (AP)
- "Coyoterie" (RB)



Clump of Snow in Stem of Figwort © by Cindy Crosby

- "Lonely puffs" (AP)
- "Twigsicle" (AB)
- "Snowort" (RB)



Canada Wild Rye Seedhead © by Cindy Crosby

- "Stemmed centipede" (AB)
- "Crusty-curl" (RB)
- "Awns akimbo" (RB)
- "Rye-etous" (RB)



Frosted Wild Quinine © by Cindy Crosby

- "Quinine crisp" (AP)
- "Eau de frost" (AB)



Green Plants Persisting Under Snow © by Cindy Crosby

- "Enduring verdant" (AP) (Even my girls find it reassuring that beneath layers of snow is the green, just waiting for a breath of warmth to emerge again.)



Milkweed Seeds Bursting from Pod by © Cindy Crosby

- "Albert Schweitzer's hair" (AB)
- "Flung fluff" (RB)
- "Spuzzeeds" (RB)

Concept Originator, Photographer:

Cindy Crosby is responsible for the photographs and the concept. She is the author, compiler, or contributor to more than 20 books. Her most recent book, [*The Tallgrass Prairie: An Introduction*](#), was released in April 2017 from Northwestern University Press. One of her prairie essays is included in [*The Tallgrass Prairie Reader \(University of Iowa Press, 2014\)*](#). She teaches prairie ecology, prairie literature, and prairie ethnobotany in the Chicago area, and is a prairie steward who has volunteered hundreds of hours in prairie restoration. She may be reached at her website: <www.cindycrosby.com>.

Contributors:

Annette Hope Billings, an award-winning poet from Topeka, Kansas, is the author of two books. Her first book, "A Net Full of Hope," won the 2015 ARTSConnect ARTY Award for Literature. Her second book, "Descants for a Daughter," is a collection of affirmations published in 2016. Billings also has work published in print and online periodicals and in a short story anthology. She is currently working on a collection of poetry due out in the Fall 2017. Her website is: <http://anetfullofhope.com/>.

Dennis Etzel Jr. lives with Carrie and the boys in Topeka, Kansas where he teaches English at Washburn University. He has an MFA from The University of Kansas, and an MA and Graduate Certificate in Women and Gender Studies from Kansas State University. He has two chapbooks, *The Sum of Two Mothers* (ELJ Publications 2013) and *My Graphic Novel* (Kattywompus Press 2015). His first poetic memoir *My Secret Wars of 1984* (BlazeVOX 2015) was selected by *The Kansas City Star* as a Best Poetry Book of 2015. *Fast-Food Sonnets* (Coal City Review Press 2016) is a 2017 Kansas Notables Book selected by the State of Kansas Library. In addition to *My Grunge of 1991's* publishing in 2017, *This Removed Utopia* (Spartan Press 2017) was published as part of the Kaw Valley Poetry Series. His work has appeared in *Denver Quarterly*, *Indiana Review*, *BlazeVOX*, *Fact-Simile*, *1913: a journal of poetic forms*, *3:AM*, *Tarpaulin Sky*, *DIAGRAM*, and others. He is a TALK Scholar for the Kansas Humanities Council and leads poetry workshops in various Kansas spaces. Please feel free to connect with him at dennisetzeljr.com.

Originally from Oklahoma, **April Pameticky** now calls Wichita home. She spends her days as a high school English teacher and her evenings with her husband raising two girls. In between, she writes poetry and edits [River City Poetry](#). Her work can be seen in *Mikrokosmos*, *Chiron Review*, *Epiphany*, along with many others. Her most recent chapbook, *Anatomy of a Sea Star* is available from *Cinco de Hermanas Press*. Visit aprilpameticky.com.

Contributor/Editor:

Roy Beckemeyer is an engineer, scientist, photographer, and poet who practices his peripatetic habits in Wichita, Kansas. He is author of the [2015 Kansas Notable Book Award](#) winner [Music I Once Could Dance To](#) (2014, Coal City Press). He blogs at <https://phanaerozoic.blog/>.