



Life is a balancing act – ask a squirrel, they are masters of the process, swift and sure on their finger-like feet, keen of sight and hearing, no stranger to the perils of life on the ground. Watch them on a powerline, chugging along down it as if it was a four lane highway. Never a misstep, never a miscalculation, never a doubt as to where they are headed and that they will arrive safely. Journey and goal are seamless achievements.

In our processes, we humans call on careful planning, trust, trial-and-error, even faith (depending on how philosophical one wishes to be). But scientists will state that the squirrel actually *doesn't* think things out, or consciously know what she is doing. Like little machines, they say, (discounting AI, of course) squirrels act out of 1. Fear, 2. Hunger, 3. Nestingbut not out of Thinking It Through, relative to whatever is to be accomplished. Again, watch a squirrel conquer the so-called squirrel-proof bird feeders. Until new data comes in, it still stands at Squirrels – One; Bird Feeders – Zero. That takes planning, calculation, determination, and maybe a sense of humor?

Squirrel says, studying feeder from all angles: “Ha! I got this. Wanna see how I do it?” Well, maybe they just quietly go about their work and eventually subdue that tricky feeder. No comments needed.

Life is full of balancing acts as well as careful calculations. Just ask a squirrel, she'll show you the correct way to proceed. ~

laJoie

Vol. 35 No. 4

Fall 2023

- Like a Necklace of Pearls - *Tera Thomas* - 3
Yes! - *Susan Easterly* - 9
Doris Mary (Wardale) Waltz - *Rita Dulaney* - 11
Trees - *Bernie Siegel, MD* - 18
Pretty Boy Perry - *Mary Alice Santoro* - 19
Brotherhood: Learning the Ropes - *John Kevin Cole* - 21
By the Grace of Catbird - *Bonnie Farmer* - 25
Welcome, Fideau Huckleberry Rousseau! - 28
Emrys - *TJ Banks* - 29
Lessons From a Bird: Verdi - *Isabel Guixa González* - 31
How Tori Got Her Wings, a review - 35
Snowflake - *Christy Caballero Doherty* - 37
In Remembrance: - Angel Queen Talley; Macx; Gracie - 38
Afterlife 101: Another Look at Getting Old - *Rita Reynolds and..* - 41

Cover Art: *Toby* © 2023 (courtesy of) *Nancy White*

laJoie is a quarterly publication dedicated to promoting appreciation for all beings. *laJoie* welcomes unsolicited manuscripts. Editors: Rita Reynolds & Mary K. Birkholz. Editorial Office: 540-456-6204. Email: lajoiecol@aol.com
Contributing Poetry Editor: Susan Easterly; Contributing Editors: Kay Pfaltz, Rita Dulaney, Mary Alice Santoro, Raymond Greiner, Christy Doherty, Sue Winthrop, Sally Rosenthal, TJ Banks, Karen F. Ohta, Bernie Siegel, MD. **laJoie Journal** (ISSN 1047-9252) is published at a *suggested donation* (to cover expenses) of \$25.00/ 4 issues per year by Animals Peace Garden, P.O. Box 145, Batesville, VA 22924. Subscriptions outside of the US, *also voluntary*: Canada: \$30. international money order only. Overseas: \$35. international money order only. Copyright 2023 Animals Peace Garden. All rights reserved. *laJoie* is printed on recycled paper. All profits donated to animal and Earth-supportive organizations.

Emrys

(6/30/17 – 9/6/22)

Emrys is one of the names of the legendary wizard Merlin. It is the Welsh version of Ambrose and means “immortal.”

The morning light
slips through the window,
spilling onto the bed
where you slept.

Part of me still listens
for your purr
burbling over with joy
your plaintive, friendly miaow
that charmed the heart
out of every human
you met.

Part of you still lingers,
filling the room
with all the vibrant, poignant beauty
of a September day....
you, my magical mystery boy,
my shoulder-jumper and ear nuzzler
with the round cougary face.

I almost see you
watching me
from the far corner
of the room,

your golden Aby eyes
affectionate & questioning.
What I buried among the peonies

29 *la Joie* Fall 2023

& foxgloves in my garden
was never you,
was it, wizard cat?

~ TJ Banks



T.J. Banks is the author of *A Time for Shadows, Abys Among Us & Other Stories for the Feline-Inclined* (winner of the 2020 Cat Writer's Association Muse Medallion for Non-Fiction Books), *Catsong* (winner of the 2007 Meriel Human-Animal Bond Award), *Sketch People: Stories Along the Way, Souleiado*, and *Houdini*, a novel which the late writer and activist Cleveland Amory enthusiastically branded “a winner.”

Banks has written for numerous anthologies, including *Chicken Soup for the Soul: The Magic of Cats, The Widow's Handbook, Their Mysterious Ways, and At Grandmother's Table*. Her poem “Moonlight” won the 2020 Cat Writer's Association Muse Medallion for Poetry, and both her fiction and non-fiction have received awards from *ByLine* and *The Writing Self*. She lives in Simsbury, CT. Photo by TJ Banks.

30 *la Joie* Fall 2023