

Juneau's Unique Poetry of Place

"Orcas in the channel! Orcas cruising toward town!" So goes the cry around town on a sunny spring day. I love living in a place where that is the phone call I receive. Other days the call might be "cohos hitting at Outer Point." The more I got to thinking about the specialness of these neighbor to neighbor alerts the more I realized that when you put them together, these alerts comprise a poetry of wildness.

Orcas in the Channel

Bubblenetting at North Pass

Goats galore on Juneau

Butts biting at Handtroller's

Bears out the Glacier

Sockeyes strong at Sweetheart

This is the language of home. Add a splendid sunset at Shaman Island or a shifting fog-shrouded morning at Auke Bay and these moments take on mystical dimensions. Not only do I live in a place where this poetry of wildness rings out, but I have an equal opportunity to experience first class art and culture.

Rosenthals together

Salsa Borealis at Centennial

Perseverance Premier

Tlingit Celebration

Blues Cruise

Symphony Showcase

With the twenty-fifth start of the Juneau Jazz and Classics, following another successful folk festival, Juneau's culture is at a full spring apex.

Yet for many of us the great outdoors is what draws us here – hiking, boating, skiing, kayaking and camping in spectacular settings. I just tell my visitors, "Welcome to the National Park of Juneau". And here too our desire for outdoor play as a sweet ring to it.

Ptarmigan's open

Lake track set

Around Admiralty

Windfall's available

Spaulding meadows sweet

These alerts sing poetry to my playful spirit. When the sun shines our play in basking beauty profoundly balances our chores, duties and work life.

The phone rings again with "orcas in the channel." I let my friend know that I'm already on it. Soon a dispersed pod of ten, maybe twelve, orcas breaks the surface with their imposing dorsal fins. I share this moment of wildness with a group of neighbors perched on the breakwater at the Douglas Harbor. It's not the first time any of us have seen orcas but something sublime draws us out of our homes and offices to share in the passing of these magnificent creatures. It is the bonding our noble place in the world. For a few moments we are transported out of everyday lives, down into our common souls of wonder.

When I get these alerts of wildness, culture happenings or play opportunities, I realize that all together it is the poetry of place, the poetry of living in a mountain-framed rainforest in the heart of the Alexander Archipelago where wildness, art and play flourish side by side. Pure and simple, the language of life here resonates uniqueness.