

10-15-2020

## Three Poems

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### Recommended Citation / Citation recommandée

Shepherd, Kelly. "Three Poems." *The Goose*, vol. 18 , no. 2 , article 6, 2020,

<https://scholars.wlu.ca/thegoose/vol18/iss2/6>.

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## **Kilometre Pan Pipes**

Early in the day,  
before the drone string of traffic,

23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue hums to itself  
its own melodies.

There are small round holes  
in the hollow metal streetlight poles—

and what is their purpose,  
if not to make music—

when the wind is high  
they sound like mourning doves.

## Clear

oh grass! oh  
tree! you god  
dess of oxygen,  
energy, beauty!

There is no cere  
mony among any  
people for clear-  
cutting an entire forest.

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**Note:** “Clear” is a collage poem, composed of found texts.

### **Works Cited**

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## Empty Forest Syndrome

“Working to save the world’s most trafficked animal”

– traffic.org

Pangolin: from Malay *pengguling*, from the root word *guling*, “to roll.”

A primitive mammal—because of the scales often mistaken for a reptile.  
Called a scaly anteater, but similarities are due to evolutionary convergence  
not family resemblance.

How do we cause a species’ extinction?

Nocturnal, secretive, solitary. Poor vision and hearing, keen sense of smell.  
No teeth, highly specialized diet of ants and termites,  
powerful claws for termite mounds. Prehensile tail, excellent tree climbers—  
mothers carry their young on their backs.

How do we cause a species’ extinction?

The largest can weigh up to thirty kilograms—the smallest two or three.  
Scales account for twenty percent of their weight but don’t cover  
the pangolin’s underbelly. Natural predators include tigers and leopards.  
Four species in Africa, four in Asia—but populations are in serious decline.

How do we cause a species’ extinction?

This—the most heavily traded mammal from Southeast Asia  
to China and Vietnam where the meat is a delicacy,  
and the scales used for traditional medicine.

Pangolin tongues and fetuses are used for medicine  
in local trade and by Indigenous cultures.

All pangolin trade is illegal, but we trade anyway—

this is how.

This—palm-oil plantations attract termites, who attract pangolins,  
who attract plantation workers who need the money—

this is how.

This—pangolins are sold by the kilogram.  
When transported live, sometimes starch is pumped in  
to their mouths to increase weight.

In the 1990s, black-market pangolin meat sold  
for ten American dollars per kilogram.  
In 2011, one kilogram was two hundred American dollars—

this is how.

This—sometimes pangolins are boiled,  
scales removed, bodies frozen for shipping.  
Some restaurants keep pangolins in cages  
to ensure the meat is fresh when we order it.

As Asian pangolin populations declined,  
African species began appearing in the Asian trade.

Prices were still rising as the pangolin became increasingly rare—

this is how.

This—in 2004, sixty tonnes of live specimens were seized by authorities.

It is impossible to know how many  
more were shipped successfully, undetected.

In 2011, an estimated forty to sixty thousand  
specimens were plundered from the wild.

Although the commercial trade in pangolins was banned in 2016—

this is how.

This—in 2019, in one week, two fourteen-tonne shipments  
of African pangolin scales—the scales, the lives  
of an estimated 72,000 pangolins—were intercepted in Asia.

In 2020, most pangolins consumed in Asia were poached from Africa.

Twenty tonnes of pangolins and their parts  
are trafficked internationally every year—

this

**KELLY SHEPHERD**'s second full-length collection, *Insomnia Bird: Edmonton Poems* (Thistledown Press, 2018) won the 2019 Robert Kroetsch City of Edmonton Book Prize. Kelly has written seven chapbooks, and is the poetry editor for the environmental philosophy journal *The Trumpeter*. Originally from Smithers, BC, Kelly lives and teaches in Edmonton.