

Hoverflies

by [Josh Dugat](#) in the [November 2023](#) issue

November grins her best impression
of September—warm enough to swim!—
except her light at noon is long
and the water pooled atop the falls
is cold. *So cold*, our son says, almost two,
and imitating you. His shirt and shoes,
his shorts and socks are sunning
on the rocks. Our miniature
skinny-dipper, giddy for the rush
of rosy feet—sting made sugary
by trust of warmth to come.
How can I say I wish this wouldn't end,
when the aching of the moment's leaving
gives the wish its breath?
He slides on algaed slicks.
He scatters tiny fish
and water striders.
Maybe thirty minutes pass
or pool, what minutes do
before slipping from the falls
in mid-November. I scramble down
the shale to gather up his clothes,
stopping when I see—
not yellowjackets—
hoverflies—sentineled above each article,
steady as the minnow
that doesn't know it's watched.
Ringed in black and yellow,
the flies shiver their fly-wings
furiously, silently,
not trying to be anything

but flies. Burning
to be still. Patient
for the absences
we practice, fragrant
with our moisture
and our salt.