



# 11th Annual RRAS Nature Writing Contest

*Results for 2016: Winners & Honorable Mentions for Divisions I (Grades 4 & 5), II (Grades 6 & 7), and III (Grades 8-12)*

This year's entries set a record (nearly 100 more than in 2015!) of 141 works of prose and poetry received. Some \$150 in prizes were awarded at a ceremony at Godwit Days in mid-April. — Tom Leskiw, Contest Organizer



***Division I: 1st Place***  
***Elizabeth Schroer***  
***5th Grade, Six Rivers***  
***Montessori***

### ***What Is Nature?***

Nature is the grassy field  
Of which we play in.  
Nature is the estuary  
In which we fish.  
Nature is everything having a place in the world,  
like  
An arachnid or a crawfish.

But that's not all, there's  
A lot more places and things  
to name. Nature is the  
Extravagant colors, of the  
Birds in South-East Asia  
or hikers in the wood.

To me, nature means the  
People, animals, and plants  
Thriving without conflict. Of  
Course, predators will hunt,  
And prey will hide  
This s all natural.

Nature is one of those  
Precious items that you don't  
Know how special it is until  
It's gone. Nature is like a gem:  
Beautiful and dependent  
on us to help it survive.

We should respect the Mother  
Earth, we use her resources  
Every day. Hopefully in the  
Future, those who are destroying  
The forest will know that!

Respect Nature!



***Division I: 2nd Place***  
***Kayla Fielder***  
***4th Grade, Six Rivers***  
***Montessori***

### ***Nature Poem***

Light shining down from the big  
Sun rising up from the horizon  
Magical across the sky the trees.  
Swaying the whole forest getting illuminated  
Most of the animals awaken some  
Go to sleep. A new day begins to  
See what nature brings.  
All around there are sounds of birds  
Singing and small animals crawling  
On the damp floor. Lovely colors  
Of the flowers, plants and trees  
All coming together becomes the  
Nature around us see it, smell it, feel it,  
And taste it animal full,  
Sense full, colorful, forests  
Wetlands, savannas and all the other landscapes  
Is what nature means to me.



***Division I: 3rd Place***  
***Bella Fratkin***  
***4th Grade, Six Rivers***  
***Montessori***

Bashful sky hiding sun,  
 The forest is calling everyone.  
 Come on, Come on, Come on,  
 And play 'cause everyday in nature  
 Is a good day,

When I am in nature,  
 my senses explode!  
 My ears open up to the simple "Chirp"  
 of a sparrow, or the "rush"  
 of a nearby stream.

The silhouette of a nearby cat,  
 And Chester be his name.  
 He follows me,  
 and in a tree  
 He hides.

Berries, foxes, finches, and more  
 Dwell here, and that is all I'll say.  
 Nature is a poem as you can see,  
 But it is also my home  
 And it always will be.



***Division I:***  
***Hon. Mention***  
***Cadence Brown***  
***5th Grade, Six***  
***Rivers Montessori***

What nature means to me,  
 Hiking, climbing, hiding behind trees.

What nature means to me,  
 Splashing, diving, splashing in the waves.  
 Snorkeling, colors all around.

What nature means to me,  
 Throwing snowballs, sledding, snowboarding.  
 Making a snowman.

What nature means to me,  
 Running through meadows, hiding,  
 Prancing deer.

What nature means to me,  
 Forests swaying, protective, climbing,  
 Quiet but then loud.

All this is what nature means to me.



***Division I:***  
***Honorable Mention***  
***Landen Olsen***  
***5th Grade, Kneeland***  
***School***

***Spring***

Wind on water, creating ripples over the surface,  
 Rustling oak branches like wind through whistling  
 grass,  
 Snow melt quickly flows through worn mountains,  
 Morning's first dew on a web, sparkling like a  
 diamond on a ring,  
 While a fawn takes its first steps,  
 The sun slowly fades away giving the moon one  
 more reason to shine over every dream that  
 dreamers dream.

***Division I: Honorable Mention***  
***Taylor Nada***  
***4th Grade, Six Rivers Montessori***

When I go out into nature,  
 I feel as if I'm at home.  
 Joyful, peace and quiet,  
 Strolling through the woods.

Changing colors on all the trees,  
 Letting the symphony of nature come to me.  
 And all around me,  
 Much too far to see, are animals,  
 Friendly and fierce.

I run and leap  
 Over a fallen log  
 Climbing every stream  
 This is what nature means to me.

***Division I: Honorable Mention***

***Violet Cloutier***

***4th Grade, Six Rivers Montessori***

In nature the grass blows  
The clouds move and  
Somewhere a mountain  
Is being formed. As birds fly  
In circles around each  
And every Redwood tree as the  
Sun shines. I can see  
Snow or morning dew melting off  
The trees as nature works  
Together to make these things  
Happen.

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***Division II: 1st Place***

***Jessica Rutter***

***6th Grade, Redwood Christian School***

***That Little Seed***

The time I planted that puny seed,  
Grew that amazing tree.  
Being young —  
My mother sung.

“You there, you there,  
Take this seed that’s not a pear,  
With care, of water, sun and air,  
Take good care my little bear.”

Over and over I sang in my head  
Falling asleep to the song in my bed  
Next day with care, I took that seed  
Running, and running to find the spot it needed.

On my knees I dug a hole,  
With that seed in a bowl  
Then easily I set the seed down with care.  
Hoping the seed would survive there.

Running back home with much excitement  
Thinking how slow time went.  
One year gone by,  
The tree one inch high

Waiting and waiting  
Winter had passed,  
Which was so fast.

Summer is gone,  
but not for long,

Spring’s here,  
and fall near.

Twelve years old  
That tree looking bold  
Running out with a swing  
My father who I bring

Six feet off the ground grew that willow tree  
That grew through the years from a tiny seed.

Twenty years old my mother passed  
Grieving by the tree that grew so fast  
Swinging on the swing  
That kept life going.

Sadly doing a thing that is life-harming.  
Like smoking with friends,  
And drinking a lot of alcohol.

But soon it came to a stop  
When Christ saved me  
Right by that little tree  
that grew with me.

***Division II: 2nd Place***

***Julia Runnion***

***7th Grade, Castle Rock Charter School***

***Unpredictable***

Sometimes she’s gentle,  
she sometimes makes you think she’s crazy!  
What do you think she has against you?

But then again, she seems to hate everybody,  
but just when you think she’s made up her mind,  
she loves you again.

She shows a variety of emotions,  
anger, love, sadness —  
showing them in different ways.

She partners up with wind, rain, hail  
causing mayhem everywhere she goes,  
sending people running hither and thither.

People may feel as if they know her better than  
everybody else,  
but really, no one knows her that well.  
She has surprises at every turn,  
some people spend lifetimes studying her, but what  
do they find out?

*(continued on page 4)*

*(Runnion, continued)*

She changes her look every three months,  
yet, even though you know how she's going to look  
every time,  
you praise her stylist.

She gives shelter to a variety of beings,  
being a mother to animals  
she shows lots of love,  
though you may not see it.

She's rebellious, she *is* mother nature.



***Division II: 3rd Place  
Abigale Cornwell  
7th Grade, Blue Lake  
Elementary School***

***What Nature Means To Me***

I love the night. I love to go outside and watch the night sky. It's one of my favorite things to do! At nights, when there is a clear sky, I look out my window to see if the street fog has rolled in yet. Usually, that would be negative, but, I can still see my breath when I exhale. The reasons the night interests me so much is the soft breeze, whispering noises, and the animals.

The soft breeze can send a chill through you or the breeze can be humid and warm you up with one single rush. I happen to not mind either one. On nights where my mother has had the furnace going all day, it's nice to open the window and take that first wiff of cold air that is so refreshing. I often have this as a night routine.

Then the wind blows, I can hear the trees shifting their leaves to the way the wind pushes. At my house, large and powerful winds push themselves toward my window to make a soft whisper. Sometimes, the pine needles come off of the tree and onto our driveway, but I don't mind. We also have a blossom tree that blows off many petals, making our grass look more pink than green.

Then animals like foxes, skunks, mountain lions, squirrels, and more roam the grounds. The insects also interest me because the crickets chirp loudly when no sound of disturbance is made. The raccoons scurry across the streets and attack garbage cans they depend so much on for food. Sometimes, you can even hear the screeching

sound a fox makes, not very pleasant, but it's a sound. Even the skunks make slight noises as they waddle down the sidewalk. The owls hoot and fly overhead silently. Sometimes, you can even see a cat's reflective eyes looking back at you.

The night is a time full of mystery. Sometimes it's loud, sometimes it's quiet enough to hear the rustle of leaves disturbed on the ground. I then go to my bedside and sit there, my window open and welcoming in the sound of the animals. Then the wind blows its air at my curtains. My eyes close and the sounds of the night engulf me. I love the night.



***Division II:  
Honorable Mention  
Sarah Brauning  
7th Grade, Blue Lake  
Elementary School***

To me nature means alone thinking just with the sounds of the trees swaying back and forth on a sunny day. As you sit alone thinking of all your problems they seem to drift away. You hear the birds chirp and sweet sound makes you laugh. Other parts of nature are out there too. I think of a snowy mountain as snowflakes run through my hands. Every time I think of nature I think of peace, quiet, and a breeze.

Nature can make you feel good when you're in the worst mood. When I'm sad I think of laying in the warm hot sun in the middle of the open fields. I dream of this magical place where no one pollutes and the environment is kept safe. A sanctuary where anyone can go to feel better. When I'm mad I think of nature and it makes me feel a little bit better every minute. When I'm in nature I feel like nothing other than nature matters.

I dream of a safe world where if someone sees trash on the ground they pick it up. You are surrounded by nature everywhere you go. Everyone is so caught up in technology I think we all need to stop and take a deep breath and go and play outside. Nature is the times spent at the beach or the woods and more. Nature is the peace in all this destruction.

You lay in a redwood forest alone just with the sound of the birds. A deer comes up and stands in the distance quiet and peacefully. You watch as it

trots off scared of what the human will do to you. You lay back down and all that is seen is the large tree trunk and the dirty ground. You fall into a long slumber, that is what nature means to me. Nature is the happy feeling I get when I'm in the rain. It is the feeling I get when I clean at the beach. When I'm alone in nature I forget my worries and despairs. Nature makes me feel safe when I hear the birds chirp. I can't wait to drift away in the breeze of nature.



***Division II:  
Honorable Mention  
Gunnar Bowman  
6th Grade, Blue Lake  
Elementary School***

***Camping***

I love camping in nature on the river bank because there is a lot of stuff to do when you are camping including swimming, watching animal life, listening to the sounds of night and day, and protecting the environment. My least favorite of these activities but still an activity I love to do when I'm camping is protecting the environment. Some people just throw stuff on the ground that can affect the wildlife there and even kill some mammals, fish or reptiles but I will pick it up if I see it. I even found a rusty axe on the river bank right next to the destroyed dam in Blue Lake, and I brought it to our campsite to chop wood for a fire. (It was lucky we never brought anything to chop wood.)

Listening to the sounds of day and night because they make me happy during the day and sleepy during the night. There are lots of sounds that are relaxing when you are camping including birds chirping, water flowing, wind blowing, owls hooting, and frogs croaking. These sounds are my favorites; you might have one more that I don't.

Watching animal life because it is cool seeing how certain animals figure out how to survive. The animal that I thought was the coolest to survive was the otter because they would dive down and grab like a crab and smash it against a rock to get the meat inside of it. Then the ant is my second favorite creature to watch (even though they are very annoying) because they search everywhere for food and take it back to their home and their food usually weighs twice the weight of them.

My favorite part about camping is SWIMMING! I love swimming a lot because it is fun, and you can jump off rocks and make a big splash. Some people don't like swimming very much but it is my most favorite part about camping in my opinion. Swimming is my favorite because I have been swimming since I was about five or six.

These are the reasons why I like camping so much. The birds chirping, the water to swim in, the rocks to jump off, the animals surviving, the fresh air, and the colorful flowers. Camping is amazing! It is very fun when my dad and me go. My dad jumped off a huge rock: it was around 35 to 40 feet high. It looked very scary to jump off the huge rock. My campsite is super cool with two huge rocks that are very fun to jump off.



***Division II:  
Honorable Mention  
Caleb Weiss  
7th Grade, Northcoast  
Preparatory Academy***

***The Life Of A Redwood Tree***

Swish  
Pop  
Sshhh

The plant comes out of the ground  
The rain comes pouring down  
The plant goes up and then it grows and grows and grows

It is now a redwood tree growing strong and firm  
Its roots are extending near and far to reach for the water

The drought is bad but wait...

What is that rain?

Ah the rain

Its roots are overflowing with water and the liveliness is back

The drought has diminished and now it's free from the clutches of the drought

Boom  
Crack  
Bang

There is a storm!

Everything is shaking

AAAHHHHH

Boom!!

The tree falls down and a life of 56 years goes down  
The forest has lost a great friend but they have now got a new one

A sapling is growing out of the tree  
Now there is life again



***Division II:  
Honorable Mention  
Lila Rose Cohen  
6th Grade, Six Rivers  
Montessori***

Nature is the true  
Love of life. It is the  
Pureness in your  
Hear of belonging  
Nature resides in you.

Nature is a helping  
Hand behind my back  
It is a bright light  
In the darkest times.  
Nature resides in me.

Nature is soothing  
Like a stream bubbling  
Next to us putting  
Us into a deep dream  
Like state.  
Nature resides in us.



***Division III: 1st Place  
Elizabeth Sloan-Rouse  
8th Grade, Blue Lake  
Elementary School***

***The Ocean Speaks to Me***

The ocean speaks to me. I feel its energy seeping through the crashing waves. We have another way of communication between not our physical beings, it's something else, but we're in constant communication.

I sit on the sand with my shoes off, occasionally laying on my back. The sand seeps between my toes, warm and soft. Deep breaths, I take in the excitement of the swirling sea. It smells fresh, yet dirty, like a child just out from under the rain. I see the horizon, and the colors blasting from the sky to the water, and back again. I feel comforted by the warmth of nature.

To some people, the ocean is just water, boring water. To some, it's exciting, the water. People who

live near it take it for granted. People who don't, long to see it. But I live near it and away from it. I feel close to it, even when I am too far away. I am close to it with my heart, not my body.

I feel so close to it because it resembles my own life. The tide is high: I'm drowning in stress or overwhelmed by love. The tide is low: I long for something more, and it feels as though all I can do is wait for it to come. It is cold: the sadness of one thing or another build up, and I begin to spiral and be pulled under. It is warm: I feel exhausted, overwhelmed by life. It is bright: I can do nothing but expect to need the water. It is dark: my emotions feel what they need to. I let in the fear and the hurt, I let it consume me for the time that it needs. Then, when I've heard what it has to say I can let it go. I can accept it, and set it free.

The birds glide along the skyline and await the storm that is to come. The sun begins to evaporate into earth and sea. The clouds roll in, darker and darker they become. You feel the air. It has something to scream. It needs to be heard. It needs to be felt. I stand on the edge of the water, though it feels like the edge of the earth. I await whatever is about to come. Because it deserves to be heard. To be listened to with love and compassion, not turned away from and made to need to burst through and through with darkness. But at this point, it is too late. There's nothing to do but await, and stand in peace. To stand in harmony, with the sky and sea.

***Division III: 2nd Place  
Christopher Johnson  
8th Grade, East High School***

***My Utopia***

We all have a special place to go when we need to get away from the bad thoughts of society. Some places only exist in people's heads, some are close, but my special place is far away from the problems of society. My unique place is inside a small town, off the beaten path. This place, in nature, is what I call home.

One of the most important sights of my sanctuary is the walk there. It's not easy to get to the spot, but it's well worth the journey. The trip there is almost as astonishing as the place itself. To get there, I have to walk along a pebbled dirt path, intertwining with the trees. There's nothing to do with human life, only nature and its unchanged surroundings.

Everything is green and full of life, from the tall trees, to the tiny new sprouts. The songs of numerous birds fill the woods with calming music. The smaller critters lurking in the shadows join in with the song of unity and tranquility. As I get closer, all sounds silence from the crashing of ocean waves against the rocks.

Once I get closer to the opening, I see a large tree, with fat branches and viney roots that peer through the surface of the ground. On one of its biggest branches that overhangs the cliff, there is a swing. It holds the swing like a caring father playing with his child. The cliffs and rolling lush hills meet where the sky has no end. The blue of the ocean, and the crashing white waves, are like the blue and white clouded sky above. The best part of this scenery is seeing serene sights from above the swing.

When I'm on the swing, the wind brings many different sounds and feelings to me. The salty air brings a smell of good memories of friendship. The breeze brings the sounds of laughing children from the beach below, as they play in the cool aqua water. Dogs run towards where the water hugs the grainy sand as they chase the flying discs. The swing and sounds bring a peaceful ease from everyday problems. Time has no meaning in this place, it's just me and nature. The higher I get, the more I want to stay, because nothing else seems to matter when the swing takes me off the cliff.

My utopia isn't like everyone else's: it's freedom, timeless and peaceful. It brings forward all good memories and leaves the bad with the tree. It doesn't only make me feel good during my visit, it keeps me feeling joyful long after I'm gone. When humans fail, nature will always be there for me.



***Division III: 3rd Place  
Chase Nielsen  
8th Grade, Blue Lake  
Elementary School***

### ***Duck Hunting***

Do you duck hunt? Duck hunting is by far the best outdoor sport ever. I love the sounds of guns firing right at shooting time, ducks whistling

right over your head and the sounds of thousands of Aleutians getting off of the bay. There are many very pretty ducks in Humboldt County and throughout California.

The sounds of guns firing right at shooting time is like an alarm going off telling you that you can shoot now. Sometimes people shoot early so don't always follow by this little trick: always check your watch just in case. Remember if you shoot early, it's a fine if a game warden catches you, so don't try it.

Sometimes right before shooting there is a duck called a Green-winged Teal and they fly like five feet over your head. Sometimes you can actually feel the wind from the duck. It freaks me out sometimes because I think they're going to hit me and these birds don't fly slow.

My favorite sound altogether is the sound of thousands of Aleutians getting off the bay. It's really cool because the sky turns black because there are so many of them. Usually they split up and go into different fields. A place I really like to hunt is the Humboldt Bay Wildlife Refuge and the Aleutians are always in the bay at Teal Island right next to the refuge. Before daylight all the geese get off the bay and go on the property on the border of the refuge. On the south side of the refuge there is a field that the Aleutians love and almost all of them go to. There is also a field on the east side of the refuge that only about two hundred Aleutians go to.

There are many very pretty ducks such as Mallards, Wood Ducks, Wigeon, Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintail, and many other ducks. I listed these ducks because they're all dabbling ducks, which means they feed on the surface of the water, in shallow water and in fields. Other ducks such as Bufflehead, Ring-necked Duck, and Scaup are known as diving ducks because they feed underwater. I think the prettiest duck in California is the Wood Duck. I like the Wood Duck because it has many different colors.

I would suggest to go duck hunting at least one time in your life. Once you go it is life changing. I know some people think it's mean to go out and kill an innocent animal but it's not about killing the birds, it's about the time you spend with family and friends.



***Division III:  
Honorable Mention  
Elsie Swiderski  
8th Grade, Crescent  
Elk Middle School***

***Saving Januellie***

I was born on the California Coast during El Nino's furious, tumultuous bursts.

Three weeks of fresh air, gusts a blowing, I lay by my mother for comfort and love.

Winds picked up early one morning and increasingly got worse by the minute.

I was pushed away by the wind, being separated by my mother as she tried to save me.

Being too young to swim on my own I twisted and turned like a tornado.

Crashing into rocks made me have critical flesh wounds.

I blacked out.

Woke up

Very mysterious place

All kinds of people around me.

I was very timid, shy, and nervous.

Pointy things and other medical looking stuff surrounded me.

But as they nourished me back to health, I soon realized they were helping me.

I was in the Marine Mammal Center in Crescent City, California.

There were other type of seals there but they were mostly older and wiser than me.

It wasn't fun being in pain all the time, plus I was too young to swim in the deeper water.

Not sure why, but they kept putting shiny objects in my pool that looked like fish.

I soon realized that they were very slippery and super tasty for my growling stomach.

The people started calling me "Januellie". I think that is a mix of January and Ellie.

I don't know when I am going back to the big water but I miss my mom and her soft fur.

'Till then I am happy being here with all these nice people and fellow seals.

***Division III: Honorable Mention  
Faith Cannafax-Anderson  
11th Grade, East High School***

**Beauty above me,  
Beauty below me,  
Beauty before me.**

In every aspect that you can look at nature, there is beauty.

Yet, there is a sincere life and death feeling to it, which is also beautiful through the right eyes.

Perfection and balance are seldom reality when it comes to humans, but in the case of the kingdom of nature, it is 100% present. When I think of nature, it tickles all of my emotions. It angers me that some humans have no respect for her, however it excites me that some fight on her behalf. It saddens me to know that she is disappearing little by little each day. I am embarrassed to know that I am of the species that is destroying her, yet cheerful to know that I have individuality, and I am not a human who takes part in this destruction.

When people stand among the trees of a forest and put all of their thoughts aside for a moment, how do they feel? Each person would feel differently and sense various things depending on how much of their instincts that they are in tune to. Those who dwell in the city might only notice the smell; the aroma of wet fertile soil and pine needles, compared to the odor of burning fuel and fast food. One might also take note of the sounds; the gentle breeze rustling leaves as it wanders, the sounds of birds singing their morning songs, and even the sound of a lizard as it scampers off. Some who are more in contact with their instincts might feel the energy. They might taste the sweet air or see the interaction of the birds and fish. A human who is 100% present might even have all of their senses awakened.

Something often overlooked about nature is that it possesses more knowledge than any human that has ever lived. Nature can teach us many things if we are willing to learn. Our world can teach us that nothing can last forever; not one thing on this planet is immortal.

Another lesson we can learn from nature is that nothing in life worth having comes easy. One has to work for everything that is good. Nature can also teach us that the greatest and most beautiful things happen over a long period of time. Beautiful

islands of white sand didn't just appear one day. They were made up of years upon years of erosion from water on ancient terrain.

Without nature, there would be no life; one would not be reading this. So, just let that sink in. One has so much power over how healthy our nature is. We control everything, but know nothing other than what our world means to us.

### ***Division III: Honorable Mention***

***Angel Millett***

***12th Grade, East High School***

#### ***Sweet Nature's Songs***

Nature is serene. Nature can be the calm or the storm. There is so much beauty of untouched nature that blooms and expands all over the globe, developing into wide range mountains that stand to touch the skies.

The flora and fauna flourish with the massive, twisted jungles that give birth to new animals, providing them with a fantastic, grand home in which they can find shelter and warmth, where they naturally thrive. However, with that beauty comes a touch of fear; fear of the unknown; fear of the predators. The ferocious, bloodthirsty killers that stalk whatever prey may be caught in their cold, unmoving eyes. But even these predators have magnificent grace that cannot be rivaled by anything man has made. Even the unknown of nature holds endless amounts of wonder that can inspire humans to explore and preserve the earth so that it may remain naked and unmolested by the ugliness that other unsympathetic beings create and pollute with horrible contaminants.

I will always be in awe of the quiet, coolness of forests, but beautiful sounds are also found in these paradises, singing brilliant songs that can wash calm over even the most hostile of emotions. Crashing waves, falling rain, roaring beasts, and sweet, soft ocean songs, enrich our world with such great sounds. These melodies enhance the beauty of nature to the extent that humans even try to recreate them, so that they may share them with the rest of the world that falls in love with them so easily. The rest of the universe craves to listen to these harmonies while the world lulls to sleep through a dreamy haze.