



# 12th Annual RRAS Nature Writing Contest

*Results for 2017: Winners & Honorable Mentions for  
Junior (Grades 4-6) and Senior (Grades 7-12) Divisions*

We received 48 works of prose and poetry this year. Some \$100 in prizes were awarded at a ceremony at Godwit Days in mid-April. — *Tom Leskiw, Contest Organizer*



***Junior Division:  
1st Place  
Kayla Fiedler  
5th Grade, Six Rivers  
Montessori***

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

A great ball of fire pushing the stars  
away higher, working together to make  
a symbiosis of peace.  
I see roots tangling, trees twisting  
coming softly the rain is misting.  
Fields of flowers will draw you close  
but the image of sunsets will be remembered most.

I know the obscure oceans,  
the most hidden animals, the most obvious trees  
the quite secret bees.

Up above the birds do glide  
down below the rivers stretch wide.  
Tropical coral reefs look up  
to see sun touched leaves.

Tiny insects scatter across the damp forest floor.  
Up above, jumping around from vine to vine  
come the groups of monkeys, twenty maybe more.  
The blossoms on your tree at home,  
far out beyond them will animals roam.

The saddest cry, the happiest smile  
berries and bushes,  
trees and turtles processing and growing  
all the while.  
Streaming waters, driest sands  
encased in this world of spectacular lands.



***Junior Division:  
2nd Place  
Liam Roberts  
6th Grade, Six Rivers  
Montessori***

What nature means to me—  
Waves crashing on the shore  
tide pools filled with life  
seals lying on the rocks  
surfing the waves  
swimming in the waves  
building sand castles  
and having fun at the beach.

What nature means to me—  
Taking walks in the forest,  
hearing the sound of the wind in the trees  
building forts,  
mountain biking through the forest,  
hearing the birds sing a song.

What nature means to me—  
Being able to take walks at the marsh  
hearing the wild geese fly overhead in a big flock  
seeing the bay and lakes filled with birds and  
wildlife.

What nature means to me—  
Being able to ride bikes through the forest  
having the birds sing a song  
seeing all of the animals.  
Taking walks on the beach, the forest, the marsh  
Being able to enjoy all of the nature that that  
surrounds us.

***Junior Division: 3rd Place***

***Ayla Weiss***

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

***A Walk Through the Wood***

Walking through the snowy wood,  
Snowflakes falling all around.  
I see a fox running by,  
His white patches match the snow.

The trees are covered in powdery flakes,  
There's not a glimpse of green on the branches.  
An owl hoots and flies by,  
His silvery wings shimmer in the frosty air.

The path is covered but my dog knows the way,  
He knows not to cross the frozen pond.  
I catch the eye of a deer from across the water,  
Tiny icicles hang from his elegant tail,

The sun is starting to set,  
And I see the end of the woods.  
A bunny scampers across the trail,  
With its ears straight up and alert,  
Anticipating to run from the nearby fox.

As I walk in the door,  
I'm grateful by the warmth of the fire,  
As I inhale the spicy aroma of dinner in the oven.



***Junior Division:  
Honorable Mention  
Liam Hodgson  
6th Grade,  
Freshwater School***

***What Nature Means To Me***

Snap! A twig snaps behind me, I'm in a forest.  
Then, the bush behind me rustles, and out jumps  
a little bird. I pick it up and it jumps up to my  
shoulder. As I walk through the forest with Jeff  
(that's what I have named my bird) I realize that  
the forest is more than just a forest, it is a life  
force. Without it we would all die, there would be  
no air or wildlife. The forest contains most living  
things from worms to birds.

I walk out of the forest and into the marsh. Jeff  
flies away into the forest and I see hundreds of  
birds. They are flying in a formation that looks

like a giant black cloud. Without nature, we  
would never ever see anything like this. Then I  
see a Godwit looking for food in the sand with  
its extremely long beak. I am walking along the  
marsh trail, all of a sudden I see ducks paddling  
with their feet, they are like little motor boats, they  
even have the wake.

I turn onto the trail, it goes down to the beach, so  
naturally I follow it. As I am walking on the beach  
I see out in the distance a whale jump out of the  
water. Wow I think without nature this would  
never EVER happen. I walk towards my beach  
house in the distance I see another godwit looking  
for food with that amazing beak. As I go up to my  
beach house I ask myself, what does nature mean  
to me. Natural beauty, animals, and the beautiful  
things that are better left alone not to be disturbed  
so everyone and everything can enjoy them.

***Junior Division: Honorable Mention***

***Autumn Landando***

***6th Grade, Six Rivers Montessori***

What does nature mean to me?  
It's as big as an elephant, small as a bee.  
It has scales and fur  
and nothing so pure,  
as the beautiful sound of the sea.

It's the loud splash of the tail,  
of the royal, blue whale.  
From plankton to shark,  
life deep in the dark,  
in the ocean on which we sail.

All the creatures that live on land.  
They roam in the jungle and walk on the sand.  
With or without fangs  
free from any chains,  
they are their own to command.

The silent owls who rule the night sky,  
the hummingbirds who quickly fly,  
the lively insect  
who craves respect,  
and the sound of the loud seagulls cry.

On the land, in the sky or in the sea,  
nature flies like a chickadee.  
It runs like a puppy,  
it swims like a guppy.  
That is what nature means to me.



***Junior Division:  
Honorable Mention  
Bella Fratkin  
5th Grade, Six Rivers  
Montessori***

To me nature is—  
a blooming flower, a crashing wave, a touched soul.  
To me nature is—  
a hideaway from life’s hubbub and expectations.

When I am in nature I don’t have to be anyone but myself.  
I can just be me.  
I can let creative ideas flow through me like glowing energy of the soul.

To me nature is anything and everything.  
Nature is the place of life & death,  
beginning and end and everywhere in between.

Nature lives within us all  
it guides us through life’s many twists and turns  
and when we pass,  
we truly become it.



***Senior Division:  
1st Place  
Ellie Pumpkin  
12th Grade, Academy  
of the Redwoods***

***What Nature Means To Me***

I feel most myself with dirt caked under my fingernails and evergreens looming overhead. When I see grey storm clouds form outside my windshield, I don’t think of how wet my socks will be by the end of the day or how slow I’ll have to drive on the freeway. I imagine the joy of feeling thunder rumble through my bones and the familiar scent of rain on fresh soils. When the sun peeks through cloud banks on quiet Sunday mornings, I feel every cell in my body catch fire. It is often impossible for bad days to exist when sunshine is tapping on my shoulder.

Having lived in a rural pocket of northern California all my life, nature is no foreign concept to me. I spent my childhood climbing Coast Redwood trees, splashing through clear streams,

and making magic potions from flowers growing in my backyard. The past seventeen years have bestowed upon me a deep connection to the natural world, a bond that only grows stronger with time. Some days I wake up at 5 a.m. and drive to Avenue of the Giants to watch the sky give birth to the sun. As light filters gently through branches, the whole forest bathes in yellow and gold. Red tree bark patterns swirl and curve like they’re dancing and water droplets fall gracefully to the floor. The earth has a heartbeat that is in sync with my own and I realize that I have never felt more at peace with the world.

The complexities of nature humble me in a way that nothing else can. From the tip of a rose thorn to the fin of a blue whale, I am in awe of the life this earth has created. I cherish thoughts of morning dew, watermelon sunsets, and sea anemones dwelling in coastal tide pools. The fierceness of the sea and the pumpkin spider spinning webs on my front porch spring poems from me like daffodils in April. I’ve lost count of the number of times that cherry blossoms and the rush of the Mad River have brought me to tears, for these phenomena remind me that there are entities far greater and timeless than myself.

Nothing will ever move me as much as the essence of nature has. The power and beauty it possesses have taught me of resilience, modesty, and gratitude all within the brief course of my lifetime. Inspiration pours from every MORE!!! and seeps from every blossom, a source of eternal divinity. Ingrained with an undying appreciation and respect for this existence, I will continue to draw strength and knowledge from the nature that surrounds me for the rest of my life.

***Senior Division: 2nd Place  
Eliana Horowitz  
7th Grade, Northcoast Prep Academy***

Today the skies promised rain.  
Rain in the form of  
A heavy storm.  
I stepped outside  
And the winds were unleashed.

First as a gentle breeze  
Then a gust  
Then a gale.  
Powerful,  
Wild,  
And chaotic.

*(Horowitz, continued)*

The wind shrieked with rage,  
like an angered bear.  
Roof shingles shook.  
Rain, falling like stones.  
Trees,  
bending,  
creaking,  
moaning.

Thunder rolling across the sky,  
Lightning cracking the skies apart,  
Like the sliver of light  
Created by a slightly opened door.

The winds screamed to be heard,  
The lightning fought to be seen,  
The rain lived to drown anything,  
Everything,  
That it laid upon.

I smiled  
knowing nature had looked into me  
and pulled the weather right out.



***Senior Division:  
3rd Place  
Raylani Reis  
12th Grade, Academy of  
the Redwoods***

***What Nature Means to Me***

I am laying on a fallen tree, my body in line with its trunk. I gaze upward through a gap in the tree canopy and watch the clouds drift slowly by. The treetops sway slightly in the breeze. I think it might rain.

When I am in nature I sense a higher existence that I believe to be the power of the natural world. Its presence surrounds me as I lay here on this tree. Even in this quiet place I am in awe of nature's ability to humble me. Here, I can forget about the responsibilities and commitments that day to day life evokes because the most important obligation I have is to the Earth.

Time is a fascinating concept. We grow older, we learn more, and time goes on, never stopping. Nature only knows time in the form of the sun, the moon, and the seasons. I have grown up exploring Southern Humboldt County's forests. As a child

I conducted experiments on which dirt tasted the best, and now as a high school student I study the ecological effects of climate change in my classes at school. Even though almost everything since those dirt experiment days has changed, my connection and fascination with nature has never wavered. Here, in the forest surrounding my home is where I find my escape. Here, it feels like time slows, and I am alone and able to think. In nature I am at peace with the world.

When I first saw the Grand Canyon I was lost for words. The canyon's walls seemed to be painted with the purple and pink haze of a sunset. Despite its breathtaking beauty I realized that it wasn't the most beautiful thing I had seen, because I don't measure nature's beauty on a scale that ranks the colors of a tree in autumn over an ocean view. Every sight I see is beautiful in its own way and every time I visit a new place or see a different aspect of a place, I am thankful.

Nature is constantly taking my breath away in the form of its colors, shapes, and patterns. Nature gives me life, brings me happiness, and inspires me. Being witness to the natural world's beauty is reason enough for me to be thankful I am alive. The first rain drop hits my forehead as the blue sky begins to be overtaken by clouds. I feel the forest start to buzz with anticipation. I smile to myself.



***Senior Division:  
Honorable Mention  
Nai'a Ryman  
7th Grade, Northcoast  
Prep Academy***

***Not too late***

Have you ever simply gazed a seemingly blank sky,  
and wondered why we have made such a mess of  
our world?

Watch the young curled ferns as they yawn to  
open.

Admire the beauty of the fawn laughing lively and  
being wild.

Feel the crystalline mist brush your face.

Touch the lush pines as they lay on the earth.

Watch the delicate lithe branches sway in the soft  
wind.

Watch the cascade tumble down from above.

Listen to the wind murmur,

Hear the symphony of nature,

*(Ryman, continued)*

Nature is something remarkable,  
Nature is magic,  
It can turn the sky into a bright flaming sunset.  
Transform a familiar place into a snow covered  
wonderland.  
It can fill the sky with splashes of color to form a  
rainbow  
It can paint the trees in warm autumn colors.  
It can turn a black sky into an illuminated show of  
lights.

The complex patterns of nature intrigue those who  
give in to their curiosity.

The radiance astonishes those who care to look.  
The exuberant tranquility will enchant you, if you  
take the time to notice

Enjoy the little things,  
the small flower,  
as it emerges from the earth.  
The sun-kissed petals  
folding perfectly over each other.  
Now those days are gone  
Only blurred memories remain

What would I give just to feel the cool touch of soft  
moss on this barren earth?  
What would I give to feel one more raindrop on my  
face?

What would I give to climb one more tree?

I wish to go back  
Back in time  
To when the Earth was green  
But now it's too late  
Too late for me  
Not for you  
What can you give?

Reach up into the vast sky  
Grow and learn  
Grow strong  
Strong enough to fight for nature

Our world has been broken,  
how are we going to save it?



***Senior Division:  
Honorable Mention  
Lila Cohen  
7th Grade, Northcoast  
Prep Academy***

When times harden  
To the cohesion of a stone  
You must wonder  
Who will catch me if I fall?

You must believe in the power of life,  
Of nature and its healing  
You must believe that things will change.

The wilderness it calls with a voice of adventure,  
And provides a true answer  
for all the hard times.  
Yes it will scrape you and scratch you,  
Yes it will challenge you,  
But you will come out  
as strong as the current  
in a swollen river  
during spring.

It has taught me  
to reflect and remember,  
to be Open-minded and an inquirer.  
Nature has shown  
above all  
the true quality of adventure  
And by default  
life.

***Senior Division: Honorable Mention  
Meadow Jennings  
7th Grade, Northcoast Prep Academy***

***Nature***

Look up in the sky  
What do you see?  
Tell me, do you see the dying world I know?  
Or do you see it as it once was,  
Long, long, ago...

Nature is the sighing trees,  
The roaring seas,  
The whistling breeze.  
Nature is the evergreens,  
With needles that never change.

*(Jennings, continued)*

It's the roots entwined in the forest floor,  
The blue waves lapping on the shore,  
Nature is the thunder's roar  
From deep inside the gathering storm

Nature is the wild things  
The birds that sing  
And their voices ring  
With determination

With every breath, and step we take  
Nature is the one to thank,  
Tell me, what will we do,  
when all that's left is aquariums and zoos?  
Poor copies of the nature we knew,  
The lakes of blue  
The trees' green hues,  
Memories of what once grew  
Before human civilization

Now is the time to give it back,  
What nature lacks,  
To protect,  
To save,  
Nature

***Senior Division: Honorable Mention***

***Sage Crain***

***7th Grade, Northcoast Prep Academy***

I sit perched on top of a fence  
Staring at the world around me  
My feet constantly moving to keep me from  
Crashing down onto the cold hard ground  
I look around I'm in nature  
I can hear cars racing down the road  
Just behind the trees  
I smell the air wet with the morning mist that  
blankets the ground  
I want to melt into the mist  
To be able to float around the world  
Light up with the sunrise and glow with the sunset  
Drift in with the dawn  
I want to be the mist  
But all I can do is sit here perched on a fence  
Staring at the world around me