



13th Annual RRAS Nature Writing Contest

*Results for 2018: Winners & Honorable Mentions for
Junior (Grades 4-6) and Senior (Grades 7-12) Divisions*

We received 80 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
Bella Fratkin
6th Grade, Six Rivers
Montessori***

The Many Shades of Life

Blue

Flowing, tricking, turning moving Blue as the
Sky on a sunny day, reflections of my life
I can see clearer now.

Green

Piney, pokey, tasty, leafy, Green as an abstract
So forcefully created splatters and strokes dotted
with the
Artist's identity Green a pencil, a colored pencil
green as grass. This pencil ready to be used on the
abstract, the abstract the painting of my life, I am
the artist.

Brown

The toasted crust of bread, warm, steaming, fluffy,
delicious crafted by hand mixing, pouring, patient
waiting, baking, then producing a loaf, a work of
art, food one of the many sources of life after all.

White

White as the moon the great pearl of the sky,
Shining, glowing, illuminating light, craters and
imperfections
Stand out and glow in the night defiantly refusing
its' place in a world
Of beings constantly striving for perfection, the
moon gently guiding our current, waves of emotion
moved back and forth, back and forth
Rhythmic in its simplicity the thump of my heart
The beat of my life.

***Junior Division: 2nd Place
Shuhan Hunter
4th Grade, Six Rivers Montessori***

Nyctinasty

I sit by a stream
So peacefully watching
The moon rising
The flowers closing their petals
As I fall asleep, on a cool rock

The sun will rise
The flowers will bloom
Later in the evening
The sun will set
The flowers will close their petals again.

***Junior Division: 3rd Place
Ella Wegis
4th Grade, Six Rivers Montessori***

Growth

Sunlight and Energy
A new seed has fallen
In the splotch of sunlight
The bloom of the seed watching,
The droplet of water
Has dropped on the blooming seed
The seed is blooming into a beautiful tree
Chirp, chirp, birth has begun
Sunlight, energy has planted a new hatchling
In the tall Redwood trees.

Junior Division: Honorable Mention
Violet Curtis-Gabriel
5th Grade, Six Rivers Montessori

Stream

I sit on a rock
A warm warm rock
I put my cold toes
On the warm rock
It feels great.

Underneath runs a stream
I dip my warm fingertips
In the cool stream
A cool cold stream
I feel hopeful.

As I sit on my boulder
I hear the wind
I smell the trees
And I see a picture
more beautiful than ever.

Junior Division: Honorable Mention
Ben Letts
5th Grade, Six Rivers Montessori

The Meadow

Lava covering, lava dries.
There's a grasshopper, in it flies.
Sunlight beaming down,
Trees sprouting up.
Energy flowing down,
Forests growing everywhere.
In the field, flowers bloom,
Exploding with colors like blue.
After the night, droplets are dripping off the grass,
Giving the ground a bath.
Snakes hiss, biting their prey,
I could lie in the grass and watch this all day.

Junior Division: Honorable Mention
Reed Berman
4th Grade, Six Rivers Montessori

Nature

Solar system in a galaxy
Planet in a solar system
Continent on a planet
Country on a continent
State in a country
Forest in a state
Meadow in a forest
Blade of grass in a meadow
All is nature to me



Senior Division:
1st Place
Amaya Bechler
10th Grade, Northcoast
Preparatory Academy

Birding

Two scaup glide silently across the steaming water, slicing wakes through silver light. Their finely vermiculated feathers glisten with the rising sun. They watch beneath the surface, dipping heads in near-synchronization, then sliding down below reflections, leaving concentric circles rippling. The silence and cold of the dawn is so complete it's choking. The pair of ducks are in breeding plumage, both males. A Red-breasted Nuthatch bleats somewhere. That silhouette a half-mile away? Common Raven. And flitting among the bristly clusters of spartina, a Marsh Wren begins to sing.

I lower my binoculars and exhale, watching my breath turn to steamy vapor. Birding is an act of careful concentration, of organization, categorization, and attention to detail. The subtleties are what matter the most. Like the faint, dark edges to the primaries of that gull flying over, which otherwise would seem diagnostic for a Glaucous-winged Gull, but with that one detail, would be a Glaucous-winged x Western Hybrid. And most of birding is that; mechanical sorting, and standing in the cold marshlands quite early in the morning.

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But there's a saying, or quotation, that "the beginning of wisdom is calling things by their name." When one spends the time, learns the names and behaviors of the birds, inevitably one will come across something else. Or rather everything else, the interlockings and the complicated, dynamic balance of life unfolding all around us. At least to me, no one can truly value the natural world without at least attempting to understand it. The first step of that is learning to what the proper names of every creature, every plant, and therein learning a little more about each. And in learning of birds, all their great diversity provides a glimpse into the massive, incredibly complex, and living thing that surrounds us.

I could stand at the marsh and identify and count and observe every common species forever. With every moment I spend watching them, the avocets, brushing their beaks methodically over mud, teach me something new. There will never be a point when there won't be more to learn. So I keep going back, taking my binoculars and slipping the practice of birding into every single day. The sun rises, the peregrine dives on panicked shorebirds, and the two Greater Scaup surface, water running in rivulets off their pure white flanks.

Senior Division: 2nd Place

Dylan Berman

7th Grade, Northcoast Prep Academy

Nature

What, you ask, is,
Nature?

It is the glint of the golden sunlight against the
morning dew,

It is the soft cool grass against
the bottoms of my feet

It is truth.

It is the drops of water sliding down
the smooth red skin of a freshly picked apple

And the sweet pure smell of mountain air
It is beauty.

It is the warped reflection of the sky
in the glassy surface of a lake
And the deep green needles of the pine tree

It is pure.

It is the primal awe,
Shaking us from the stupor of our daily lives,
Reminding us what matters,

As it quietly, persistently demands to be noticed.
To ask what is nature is to ask what is everything.

Senior Division: 3rd Place

Moana Mao

7th Grade, Northcoast Prep Academy

The Tiny Wonder

A flight of great beauty
One rarely gets to see
The tiny wonder thrusts her feet
Off the dew covered maple limb

Her miniscule wings start up
Beating fifty times a second
A blur of shimmery color
Sparkling in every direction

She pops up her tiny head
Turns left, right, and left again
Then
Zooms off with a streak of color

Could I ever fly as fast as she?
Flutter away in the morning breeze?
Catch the current and drift away
A tiny little dandelion seed

Carries wherever the wind takes me
Drifting
Drifting
And finally
I land,
In the nest of a
Wonder.

Senior Division: Honorable Mention

Brandon Cady

11th Grade, East High School

What Nature Means to Me

What is nature? Nature is my beautiful place out at Ruth Lake. I am looking forward to the summer to head up to the lake to hang out with friends and family. This is when I enjoy looking out at the giant redwood trees, sitting around the campfire, and riding on the boat on the beautiful blue waters. The other boats are skimming across the water, creating ripples that rock the boat back and forth as we park in a cove. I love looking down at all the fish swarming around the bait on the hook of my fishing pole. Eagles and hawks are flying around in circles looking for food, diving down into the water for fish. As we are leaving the lake we go straight to the marina, load up the boat, and start heading

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back to the camp with my head out the window as the nice warm breeze hits my face.

My favorite place to be while I'm out at Ruth is at the river with my dog, running across the hot rocks to get to the water. I love the sound of the loud croaking toads in the distance, and the panting of my dog as she is swimming. I enjoy looking at the rocks trying to find the flattest rock to skip across the water. Suddenly, I see some deer in the distance coming down off the hill for some water, as the sky changes from a bright blue to a dark orange. As I'm walking up the trail I hear the brush rustle behind me, but it's just my dog. When I get up the trail I am welcomed back with a hug and a burger from my mother. We sit down and talk about the deer I just saw down at the river. We like to sit around the fire and tell stories and look for satellites. When the fire starts to lose its flame we start to head off to bed.

As morning comes we are woken up to the chitter chatter of the squirrels in the trees above and the pecks of a woodpecker in the distance. As I sit around the fireplace with a nice warm cup of coffee I listen to the sounds of the creaking trees all around me. Pretty soon I smell the bacon that my grandma is cooking for breakfast for us. After we eat and some time has passed we get ready to go down to the river. We pack up snacks, water, towels, and start to head on down the trail. Later on around noon we head back up the trail to the campsite and pack up to get ready to go home.

Senior Division: Honorable Mention

Tahvo Stephan

7th Grade, Northcoast Prep Academy

13 Ways of Looking at Water *(Inspired by Wallace Stevens)*

I

Space and time are vast
Water can fill both.

II

I don't know which is more beautiful
The sound of water
Or the glimmer of light
that comes off of it.

III

Birds glide
In the calm sky,

churning
water underneath.

IV

Everything needs water,
Water does not need everything else.

V

The rays of light
Shine down,
hit the water,
and keep going.

VI

People in boats
notice the sea life under them
the sea life
needs the water.

VII

The cold heart
stopped beating,
as the water froze.

VIII

Water honors all things,
few things honor water.

VIII

"Pain is a gift.
Without the capacity to feel pain
we couldn't feel hurt we inflict" — The Doctor
water feels all kinds of pain,
silently.

IX

There are many wise people in this world,
Water knows all.

X

He wanders far and wide
looking for something
Water is always easy to find.

XI

Water is not limited to one form,
It can fill any space,
be solid
or fluid.

XII

The tree and the leaf are one,
as the water and fish are one.

XIII

Water is needed.
Water is life.



***Senior Division:
Honorable Mention
Calia Thompson
10th Grade, Alder Grove
Charter School***

When Nature Calls

We sped through the forest, dodging bushes and leaping logs. Tegan was in front, with me just behind him and Joey bringing up the rear, our rhythmic breathing the only sound to penetrate the silence. Well, except the breeze flowing through the leaves. And that sullen crow that wouldn't shut up. And the rustling of the ferns that we were constantly brushing against. Plus there was a stream nearby, and those are notorious for their constant bubbling and splashing. But other than that, complete silence.

We three met nearly every week for our sojourns into the forest, and, though it's been years since we last struck out together, it is, more than anything else, those adventures that comes to mind when I think of nature.

It might seem a tad odd that I find running through a park with a few friends more conducive to the idea of nature than, say, lying in a untouched fen as the clouds float past, or feeling mud squish between my toes, but nature doesn't sit still. It is in constant motion, from caribou traversing the arctic tundra to the creeping expansion of ancient forests.

For animals in particular, the ability to move is considered a key trait—allowing us to flee, hunt, seek shelter, and find others—but all organisms do it to some extent. In humans, our entire bodies are fine-tuned for moving and reacting, from our legs to our brains to our hands to our eyes, and it is one of the few things that we are genuinely amazing at. Think about it; we can do park our, ballet, fencing, gymnastics, and hockey—things that take incredible precision and instantaneous reactions. With moving as such an integral part of our natural heritage, maybe it isn't so strange after all that flitting through the woods makes me feel more at ease than sitting around a campfire ever has. But that isn't really the point, is it? The only thing that really matters is that I can go out into the forest, quicken my stride, and feel all my instincts come to the fore. All of a sudden, my eyes are automatically scanning my surroundings, my feet can dodge every single twig without making a sound, and it

only takes me an instant to know whether or not a log is too slippery for me to keep my balance, or if a branch is too rotten to hold my weight. My brain enters a different mode, one that understands at least this one little piece of the world, and loves it dearly.