



# 14th Annual RRAS Nature Writing Contest

*Results for 2019: Winners & Honorable Mentions for  
Junior (Grades 4-6) and Senior (Grades 7-12) Divisions*

We received 65 works of prose and poetry this year.  
Some \$100 in prizes were awarded at a ceremony at Godwit Days in mid-April.

## ***Junior Division: 1st Place***

***Ben Letts***

***6th Grade, Northcoast Prep Academy***

### ***What Nature Means to Me***

Nature means a lot of things,  
Both beautiful and strong.  
From the mighty bear to the elegant swan,  
To see, it won't take long.  
Just take a hike, a walk, a run,  
On the forest floor.  
Nature is all around us, you see,  
Right outside your door.

Nature means a lot of things,  
Both tall and short and long.  
From lofty trees to tiny grass,  
Outside you will hear their song.  
On the rolling hills you'll find  
A world of brown and green.  
From animals to bushy plants,  
A hidden world you'll see.

Nature means a lot of things,  
Both bitter, sour, and sweet.  
From the buzzing bees to the busy ants,  
These little creatures are neat.  
From snowy mountains to the hot desert,  
The climates are extreme.  
You don't know what the world is really like,  
Until you go out and see.



## ***Junior Division: 2nd Place***

***Amalia Baugh***

***4th Grade,  
Freshwater School***

### ***My Backyard***

Did you know that you can find nature right in your own backyard? Nature can be found wherever you live.

In the winter, my backyard transforms into a winter wonderland. Also, because of all the rainwater we get, it makes beautiful streams in my backyard. The streams are crystal clear! Each week the rainfall increases and makes the streams flow more quickly.

When winter changes into spring, baby tadpoles can be found in my once-fast-moving stream in my backyard. Also, the plants begin to come back alive. The baby fiddleheads begin to sprout. In addition, the wide variety of flowers begin to blossom from taking a cold winter nap.

In the summer, the days get longer and the forest comes alive. My backyard grows giant blackberry bushes. When we pick the blackberries they are so sweet and some are incredibly sour. Also, sometimes when I look up, I see a hawk and a crow fighting over food in the sky because neither of them wants to share.

By the time fall rolls around, the mushrooms are in full glory. Also, there is a fantastic amount of mushrooms. Some of my favorites are the Amanita and the Bolete. The Amanita is a true sign of fall. While the Bolete lets us know that Thanksgiving is

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not too far away. Also, the Amanita with its bright red cap and its deadly white dots gives a signal that danger is in the forest. Unlike the Amanita, the Bolete is edible. In the fall, the leaves scatter on the well-worn path of my backyard.

In my backyard, nature can be found everywhere you look! There are so many beautiful places, but remember, sometimes all you have to do is go in your backyard to find all of the nature that comes and goes with every season.

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

***Anya Woodruff***

***6th Grade, Northcoast Prep Academy***

***What Nature Means to Me***

What nature means to me is shade, food, water, and much more. Nature has wonderful life, views of the valleys, oceans, mountains, and volcanoes. One thing I love to do is walk in the woods or on the beach, then look out on a beautiful view. Nature is also animals, and I love animals. Animals to me are other forms of life that live in the wilderness and not in a house. Most of nature I adore, but spiders, ants, and that mucousy stuff at the bottom of a lake I despise. Nature is a way for me to get out of the reality of this reality and into a new world of my imagination. I go into my backyard a lot and forget about my worries. Nature is the one thing in the world other than my family that I will never forget about. Whenever I'm at home and stressed, but my brother is asleep and no one else is at home, I go outside and relax in the sunlight. I will most of the time pick a place with nature than the city. That is what nature means to me.

***Junior Division: Honorable Mention***

***Haley Brown***

***6th Grade, Northcoast Prep Academy***

What nature means to me is wind in the trees and birds chirping. It means grass under my feet, the smell of wildflowers wafting through the air. What nature means to me is something left untouched by humans, a beautiful place where animals live and plants grow. Nature is a place where there are numerous amounts of flowers, and when you look up, there is only sky as far as your eyes can see. Where the clouds are as puffy and white as little tufts of cotton.

Some things I love to do in nature are walking under the redwoods when the sun is leaking through the branches. I love the smells of the flowers and the sounds of birds chirping when I walk through a field. I love to go backpacking and sleeping under the stars. I like the satisfaction of finishing the long hike and going back to civilization. I love to go to the marsh and look at the birds. I love to capture the moment in my mind when they take off into the sky.

That is what nature means to me. It means all the beautiful things on Earth. It gives you things to do with the people you love. It means things that live. It is snow on the ground, wind in the air, and birds in the sky. That is what nature means to me.

***Junior Division: Honorable Mention***

***Margot Roscoe***

***6th Grade, Northcoast Prep Academy***

***Life in Nature***

The wind howling past trees,  
The grown tadpoles becoming frogs,  
All flowers getting pollinated by bees,  
And how spores become moss on logs.

Going on beautiful hikes in the woods,  
As I fall in cold snow,  
I do not dare touch my hood.  
When I look above my head,  
And observe an amazing rainbow,  
I do not wish to go to bed.

When an adorable cub is born,  
In a cave out of sight,  
When we get stuck in a storm,  
But we are still full of delight.

As I hear creeks streaming across rocks,  
To see the horses run free,  
And how fish live safely under docks.  
That's what nature means to me.

***Junior Division: Honorable Mention***

***Atticas Rudd***

***6th Grade, Northcoast Prep Academy***

***Nature's Beauties***

I love nature  
Like the lovely glacier  
There is always something new to see  
New species are found in the deep blue sea

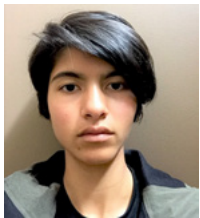
Like the giant squid which is found in the great big  
ocean  
It moves with a fluid motion  
And the great sea turtle it travels solitary  
Facts you can find in any library  
Even though mother nature  
Can be like a moody teenager  
Like the twisted tornadoes that blow through the  
valleys  
That we can't keep tallies  
And the active volcanoes in the tropics  
Those are some of nature's violent topics  
But I still love nature



***Junior Division:  
Honorable Mention  
Peyton Gardner  
5th Grade,  
Casterlin School***

***What Nature Means to Me***

What nature means to me is a place with peace and  
balance  
With no pollution or buildings in sight  
We enjoy the fresh air nature gives to us  
Nature provides us a home, water and food  
The beautiful sights nature gives us  
Nature is a second mother to all of us  
What nature means to me is a beautiful sight of  
trees and plants  
Nature takes care of planet Earth and all of us  
Nature welcomes us home  
Even though nature can be cruel sometimes  
Nature is very beautiful



***Senior Division:  
1st Place  
Amaya Bechler  
11th Grade, Northcoast  
Preparatory Academy***

***Bird Banding***

It's just a moment after the sun has broken the  
far-off ridgeline. Geese go over in waves, filling the  
air with a frothing, raucous sound. The gold light  
touches along their breast and beneath their tails.  
*Good morning!* they seem to exclaim, *We've lived  
another day!*

As I afford a glance upwards to the geese, the robin  
shrieks at me from my hand. All but his leg has

been freed from the netting, and that comes out  
quite easily. The bird flaps and struggles; his  
eye is rimmed with immaculate feathering. With  
immense satisfaction, I place the large bird into a  
bag. It's the first net round I've done by myself, and  
I extracted the robin without any problems.

Now, with the bag clipped to my collar, I look up at  
the Cackling Geese again. The geese are a singular  
embodiment of life, being tugged at by the breezes,  
yet persevering, and keeping of their voices all  
together, acting as one to cut the air in imprecise  
V's. The day promises to be a warm one; the rosy  
tone of early winter skies is fading into a jubilant  
blue.

The dunes have a musty odor, one of lichen and  
wet forest duff. As I blow back the breast feathers  
of a Wrentit, I breathe that scent. The passerine's  
uncanny gaze fixes on my fingertips. Adjusting the  
bird's body in my hand, I measure its stubby wing  
and read off the length. Bird banding is about the  
data. Each bird, flicker to hummingbird, is a data  
point, marked by the metal around its leg. After  
the birds' safety, data are the priority.

Yet, as the Wrentit steadily gazes at me  
through its wide pupil, I can't help but think  
there is something very wise in that gaze. It's  
the interaction with the individual; the textile  
sensation of the heat beneath feathers; the living  
perfection of each covert; that is so rewarding.  
By the delicate, yet surprisingly tenacious, claws  
of the chickadee, I gain a new reverence. It's an  
inherent love and awe; biophilia, of which each  
new bird is new reminder. With their little necks  
clasped between fingers, I grow closer than ever  
before to life.

And perhaps it is the same that sends my gaze  
upwards to watch the geese, leafed with gold,  
ascending above the lung of the bay. Their  
existence is eternal, everlasting. The red alders  
are bare of leaves; it seems inevitable they shall  
bud come spring. But through the tendrils of mist,  
gunshots split the silence. The geese arise in panic.  
The bird's neck is clasped between my clumsy  
fingers. I let it fly from my palm. This warbler will  
not find home among untouched wetlands, but  
among splinters of marsh, between power lines,  
roaring engines, and bright lights on concrete.  
After all,

The survival of *all of life* rests on the shoulders of  
*humanity*.

**Senior Division: 2nd Place**

**Sofia Potter**

**11th Grade, McKinleyville High School**

I have loved birds since before I could write my own name. At six years old, I was dragging my mom to the Arcata Marsh, pointing at black-crowned night-herons half hidden in barren trees, debating whether the plumage of a particular bird deemed it to be a purple or house finch, thrilled at the sight of the iridescent emerald crest of a male wood duck. Today, I remain as captivated as I was then, if not more so.

However, being in nature has become less and less frequent for my peers in the age of rapidly developed technology and instant gratification. Whenever I mention birding to a friend or acquaintance, I receive gawks and confusion. The reality of today is total technological dependence, both in school and the workplace, and that dependence has resulted in the neglect of nature in our day to day lives. Whether one succumbs or not to technology is largely based on one's need for a means of escapism. In the minds of many, noticeably in today's younger generations, nature cannot rival the countless options for free entertainment now available via a screen at one's fingertips. Being in nature for most requires a commute, and as a form of escapism does not render one fully removed and distracted from one's sources of stress quite like the Internet does. Within the last two decades, birding has been replaced with *Angry Bird*-ing.

Still, recent events have given me a great deal of hope for the future of the environment. Previous generations have left my future torn by rapid climate change, and current administration in the United States refuses to stand by the young people of today in reversing the massive amounts of damage done. I have seen protests both local and nationwide, and I suspect I would find it difficult to encounter someone my age, especially in this area, who is not willing to change their ways for the benefit of the planet. I have new confidence in my generation, and while a full reversal of the havoc wreaked by climate change is at this rate not feasible, I have faith we will salvage and adamantly protect what remains.

I stand surrounded by nature and I am proud. I am proud that protecting nature is still a priority in the modern technological age. I am proud that those herons and finches and ducks I have always

watched will be safe and advocated for in the hands of my generation. I am proud that the young girl I once was who fell in love with the Arcata Marsh would be proud of our generation, too.

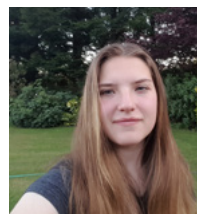
**Senior Division: 3rd Place**

**Anderson Young**

**9th Grade, Academy of the Redwoods**

***The Goddess of Nature***

My heart pounds to the rhythm of the harmony of  
screaming frantic thoughts in my head  
My hands shake with enough force to break the  
physical solidity of touch  
My breathing is as harsh as the wind outside:  
quick and strong and ragged  
Then I go outside and find her  
The goddess of nature calling to me  
She calls to me from the ducks squawking in the  
pond  
She calls to me from the cold wind biting at my  
skin  
She calls to me from mud beneath my feet gripping  
my shoes and pulling them closer to the center of  
the Earth  
She calls to me and tells me to calm  
She tells me things will be okay  
She tells me even though I'm not safe in my own  
body she will always be here to comfort me  
She'll be here after every relapse and collapse  
After every sink and loss  
And even though I feel like I'm drowning  
She'll make sure I always end up floating  
She's always here.



**Senior Division:  
Honorable Mention**

**Sarah Privat**

**9th Grade, Academy  
of the Redwoods**

***What Nature Means to Me***

Nature means many things to me, a safe haven, somewhere to be, and somewhere to explore. When I was younger I didn't really like being cooped up inside my house most of the time, so I would go outside and I would explore. I live on a four-and-a-half acre property and we're surrounded by trees and even have a creek, so I would just have fun doing things outside. Being outside and in nature just seemed much more exciting to me than being in a house all day. Nature allowed me to get away from man-made machines and find peace.



Sometimes I just want to get away from things in my life and nature aids me in that way, It allows me to get away from things that are bothering me in my life.

Throughout my whole life, nature has always been around me. Living in Humboldt County has given me the privilege of getting to see amazing forestry. After living in Humboldt all my life, I don't think that I would even be able to live in a big city. Living most days without seeing plants and big redwoods every day would be a pretty big change and I'm not so sure that it would be a good one. I think living around nature-filled areas is much more rewarding than living in a big city.

As a human being that needs air to breathe to sustain life, I feel that living near or in nature is comforting because it can rest your mind at ease about an air source. I know most people probably don't think about the air that much, but to me, having that comfort makes me feel better. Also, I think that just being around nature makes breathing easier and the air just seems so much better and healthier. In addition, nature is my life source; without it, none of us would be alive because there would be no air. So to me, nature is very important and should not be taken for granted or destroyed.

In conclusion, nature has meant many things to me and has always been around me for as long as I can

remember. Nature is my safe haven and my life source, giving me fresh breathing air that keeps me going and offers safety in its coverage. Nature has allowed me to live my life and for that nature is and will always be the thing that has allowed me to keep going and stay happy, healthy, and alive,



***Senior Division:  
Honorable Mention  
Sam Petersen  
8th Grade, Loleta  
Elementary School***

***I Am***

I am a Black Bear  
I am as free as America  
I go everywhere, I walk  
I am not going to be hunted  
I have been through the mighty forests  
I know the majesty of the forests  
I eat the delicious berries of the wild  
I don't mind the noisiness  
I love the beautiful natural nature around me  
I am a Beautiful creature  
I am a part of this cycle called Life  
I have hope about my amazing future  
I dream about an imaginary place  
Where everything is beautiful and peaceful



*Nature writing contest winners at Godwit Days awards ceremony. Photo by Jay Seeger.*