It’s not long after we cross the Humboldt County line that we can feel the sun on our faces and smell the mixture of fresh air and trees. As my father drives, singing to whatever country song is on the radio, I begin to marvel at the new surroundings we find ourselves in. The water looks like green tinted glass, the sky is a robin’s egg blue and dotted with a couple of birds. The grass and trees are so lush and green. You can never find anything like that in the city anymore. As my dad pulls into the campsite, I begin to ponder what this weekend will bring. Will there be fishing, Wakeboarding? Or will we just sit out staring at the beautiful scenery like we have done in the past?

The minute my boots touch the ground, I’m unpacking, putting up my tent, and beginning the adventure that my father has planned for us. Our campsite begins to be like a little home for us. The picnic table becomes the kitchen, the truck become our power source, charging our phones, lanterns and other items. My father begins stacking firewood in a cone shape preparing us for the bonfire we are to have that night. The lake is our backyard, a small patch of grass for our dog to lie on, and a bed of rocks for my father to skip, and the lake to give us endless possibilities for the next four days.

We head full force into activities, such as fishing, wakeboarding on the boat we have, the driftwood bonfires at the end of every night. The possibilities are endless! It’s a great time for me and my dad to bond. He’s not home a lot, and with our busy schedules, we rarely ever see each other. With these trips, we bond and become closer, letting the each other know that we love them dearly.

Nature means a lot to me. It is a route to freedom and a test to see how we survive. But it taught me that it’s okay to get out of the city once in a while and to let loose and to bond with the one we love. Nature is my lifeline. It keeps me sane in the and to bond with the one we love. Nature means a lot to me. It is a route to freedom and a test to see how we survive. But it taught me that it’s okay to get out of the city once in a while and to let loose.

I wade downstream to the big rock we found last summer that we used as a water slide. The rock was rough, but it was shaped perfectly for sliding.

The sky above is a bright blue; simply gorgeous with the milky colored clouds hovering in the beauty of the sky. I feel the sun, warm on my face as the wind caresses my cheeks. The redwood trees are all around me, filling my heart with joy that I live in such a wonderful area.

It’s so natural, so lively, and just great. All around me there is beauty. The birds are singing to each other nearby, while the frogs are jumping towards the sky. The squirrels are scampering up trees, and the elk are running through the breeze. As I see this, I feel completely at ease. So relaxed and not confused, clear minded with no case of the blues.

I walk slowly around, hearing the sticks crunch underneath my shoes. I walk down the nature trails leading me down to the sandy beach not too far away. The sand tickles my feet as I take off my shoes one at a time. I smile while looking upon the crashing waves in front of me. I smell the salty air and my grin gets bigger. It feels so amazing that I begin to run, feeling the life pulse through my veins.

Living natural, free, the place I can be calm, and be me. If nature wasn’t around there would be no beauty to life. Nature is what life is all about. Seeing sights that are never the same, always with a flare, the nature will always capture people’s eyes and their hearts.

I see the night approaching and the first star comes out, I close my eyes and let my wish out. I open my eyes and see one thousand more stars above me. To one side is the shimmering sea, glistening under the moon so beautifully. I slowly walk back through the trails to my car. I am sad to leave the nature behind, but I always know the nature will always be my real home.
Nature is a sparkling river traveling down the hill.
Nature is a flowing waterfall.
Nature is a peaceful lake.
The ocean is deep and full of wonders.
Waves make me feel calm.
Nature is a misty marsh.
Nature is a steep mountain.
Nature is a still rock.
Marsh mud is thick and brown.
Nature makes me feel joyful.
Nature is a lush garden.
Nature is a blooming flower.
Nature is a purple blossom.
Pastures are filled with dew on the grass.
Buttercups make me feel small and beautiful.
Nature is an autumn leaf.
Nature is the canopy of a forest.
Nature is a tall tree.
Ferns are fragile and ancient.
Redwood trees make me feel tall and strong.
Nature is an orange, darting fish.
Nature is a scurrying animal.
Nature is a bird soaring in the sky.
Nature is a slimy, yellow slug.
Lady bugs are spotted and lucky.
Turtles make me feel playful.
Nature is a blue sky.
Nature is a rainbow after it rains.
Nature is the thick fog.
Nature is the colorful horizon as the sun is setting.
Clouds are floaty and white.
Clouds make me feel like I can fly.
Nature means peacefulness and care to me.
Nature is a quiet place.
Nature makes me feel loved.
Nature is our home.
What Nature Means To Me by Coby Stolz
Honorable Mention, Grades 4-8 Division; Alder Grove Charter School, Grade 6

What nature means to me, is everything! I love to hunt, fish, and catch butterflies. I also really like to just sit and watch the animals. There is just something about the colors in nature that catches my attention. Watching ducks chase each other around can really make you laugh. I have loved nature for as long as I can remember!

Spring and Summer is when I like to catch butterflies. Some of my favorite types to catch are Swallowtails, California Sisters, and Painted Ladies. After I catch them I take them home and put them in a butterfly pavilion. I feed them sugar water on colored cotton balls to make them look like flowers. It is so neat to watch their tongue uncurl to suck up the sugar water. I try to breed them and sometimes they even lay eggs. Butterflies do not live very long, so when they die I keep their beautiful wings to make crafts with.

Something else I like to do is watch birds and follow them to their nest. Then I watch the babies as they grow. Sometimes I collect the feathers and use them to tie flies with. A fly is a hook disguised as a bug. I love to fish, and I cannot wait to catch a fish on a fly I have made.

In the Fall and Winter I really enjoy hunting with my Dad. Being in the woods while tracking an animal is so quiet and peaceful. I like hunting because it is challenging. It is not as easy as some people think! I hope to someday be able to shoot a bird while it’s flying. In my opinion, wild animals taste the best.

I dream of living off the land someday. I like to save seeds and plant them. It is so cool to be able to go into your garden and pick a fresh vegetable to eat. Sometimes I go outside with only what I might need to survive. I bring my pellet gun, knife, flint and steel, and char cloth. Char cloth is charred cloth that catches sparks from the flint and steel and creates an ember for starting a fire. I try to see how long I can stay out. One time I stayed out with a friend until around 11 at night! I hope someday my skills will come in handy.

What does nature mean to me? Nature means everything! I wish that more people could look around and enjoy the beauty of nature around them.
Humboldt County

Greater White-fronted Goose: 10, Arcata Bottoms-V St. Loop, 15 Mar (BE); 1, Arcata Bottoms-V St. Loop, 4 Apr (FH); 5, Arcata Bottoms-Jackson Ranch Rd., 2 May (AM, JH); 4, Arcata Bottoms-Jackson Ranch Rd., 7 May (KR) • Snow Goose: 3, Loleta Bottoms-Cannibal Island Rd., 21 Mar (AM, JH); 1, Ferndale Bottoms, 6 Apr (KO, PC); 1-2, Arcata Bottoms-V St. Loop/Arcata Marsh, 18-20 Apr (CO, KB, MO) • Harlequin Duck: 2, Humboldt Bay-Samoa Boat Ramp, 11 Mar-6 Apr (RF, MM, MC, MOB); 1, Humboldt Bay-King Salmon, 18 Mar (KB); 2, Humboldt Bay-N. Jetty, 12 Apr-9 May (MatD, EF) • Long-tailed Duck: 1, Humboldt Bay-King Salmon, 18 Mar-28 Apr (MW, RF, MM, MOB) • Murphy's Petrel: 5+, Repositioning Cruise, 16 Apr (MH, MarD); 6+, Repo Cruise, 3 May (PL, BW, BC, DW, BT, RM, RS) • Hawaiian Petrel: 1, Repo Cruise, 3 May (PL, BW, BC, DW, BT, RM, RS) • Cook's Petrel: 1, Repo Cruise, 16 Apr (MH); 2-4, Repo Cruise, 3 May (BW, DW, RS) • White-faced Ibis: 15-16, HBNWR, 2 May (VB); 1, Ferndale Bottoms-Dillon Rd., 3 May (IG) • Swainson’s Hawk: 1 (juvenile), V St. Loop/Ma-le’l Dunes, 6-12 Mar (TK, MS, DC, SM, BE, MOB); 1, Blue Lake, 24 Mar (BZ); 1 (adult), Arcata Marsh, 28 Apr (ZS, MJ) • Ferruginous Hawk: 1-2, Bear River Ridge, 13 Mar (BE) • Rough-legged Hawk: 1-2, Bear River Ridge, 12 Mar-18 Apr (RH, JO, TK, KB, MOB); 1, V St. Loop, 15 Mar (BE) • Golden Eagle: 1, Kneeland, 19 Apr (TL) • Sandhill Crane: 1, Arcata Bottoms, 20 Apr-5 May (KS, RF, JO, TK, DC, CR, MatD, MOB) • Black-necked Stilt: 2, HBNWR, 6-19 Apr (CR, RF, PC, KO, KB, MOB); 2, Arcata Marsh-Bradish Pond, 6-9 Apr (RF, MOB) • Solitary Sandpiper: 1-3, Arcata Bottoms-Moxon Rd. Dairy/Bayschool Rd. Area, 25 Apr-10 May (TK, CR, AT, RF, DC, AM, MOB); 2, Ferndale Bottoms-Centerville Rd., 27-28 Apr (BE, GB) • Ruddy Turnstone: 1, Elk Head, 30 Mar (CR, AT); 1, Arcata Marsh-Klopp Lake, 24 Apr (EF); 1, Humboldt Bay-N. Jetty, 30 Apr (RF); 1, Humboldt Bay-Vance Rd., 1 May (AM, JH) • Red Knot: 1, South Spit, 21 Apr (UO); flock of 20, HSU Ornithology Pelagic, 27 Apr (RF, MOB); 1, Humboldt Bay-Vance Rd., 1 May (AM, JH); 23, Repo Cruise, 3 May (BC, RM, PL, BW, BT, BS) • Rock Sandpiper: 1-3, Humboldt Bay-N. Jetty, 12 Mar-24 Apr (RF, BE, CR, AT, MM, AM, MOB) • Glaucous Gull: 1, Mad River Mouth, 21 Mar (GL, LL) • Arctic Tern: 3, Repo Cruise, 16 Apr (MH); 6, Repo Cruise, 3 May (PL, BW, BC, DW, BT, RM, RS) • Parakeet Auklet: 5, Repo Cruise, 16 Apr (MarD); 34, Repo Cruise, 3 May (PL, BW, BC, DW, BT, RM, RS) • Tufted Puffin: 30+, Repo Cruise, 16 Apr (MH) • Long-eared Owl: 1, Kneeland Airport, 8 Apr (KO, PC) • Common Poorwill: 1, West End Rd., 9 Apr (KO, PC) • Black Swift: 1, Blue Lake, 6 May (TL) • Barn Owl: 1, Potawot Health Village Restoration Area, 9 May (JO, KO, PC) • White-throated Swift: 1, HSU Campus, 13 Mar (CR); 2-5, Blue Lake, 18 Mar-8 May (BE, TK, JO, RF, MOB); 24, Redway, 31 Mar (JS); 5, Benbow, 7 Apr-5 May (JS, DC, MOB); 1-2, SoHum Community Park, 19-21 Apr (JO, MOB) • Prairie Falcon: 1, North Spit-Bay St., 14 Apr (CR, AT); 1, Arcata Bottoms-Jackson Ranch Rd., 14 Apr (KO, PC) • Cassin’s Kingbird: 1, Ferndale Bottoms-Russ La./Centerville Rd., 27 Apr-2 May (BE, TK, MS, DC, GC, RF, AM, JH, MOB) • Western Kingbird: 1 (FOS), SoHum Community Park, 9 Apr (BE) • Northern Shrike: 1 (HO), Arcata Marsh-V St. Loop, 15 Nov-5 Apr (JO, TK, RF, DC, CR, AT, MOB) • Horned Lark: 1, Bear River Ridge, 12 Mar (JO, JL, RH, MOB); 1, Bear River Ridge, 23 Mar (IG); 1, Bear River Ridge, 18 Apr (TK, MOB) • Bank Swallow: 1, Arcata Marsh, 15 Apr (RF); 8-12, McKinleyville-Vista Point Colony, 19 Apr-8 May (GL, CO, MS, KO) • Rock Wren: 1, Fleener Creek Trail, 14 Apr (IG) • Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: 1-2, Friday Ridge Rd., 20 Apr-10 May (TL, MM, CO, GC, MOB); 1, Blue Lake Cottonwoods, 21-26 Apr (TK, CR, AT, CB, MOB), 5, Alder Point-Cain Rock, 4 May (PC, KO) • Northern Mockingbird: 1, Arcata-D St., 31 Mar (CR, AT); 1, Eureka-D St., HO-5 Apr (GC); 1, SoHum Community Park, 21 Apr (JG, MOB); 1, Arcata Marsh-Klopp Lake, 21 Apr (RC); 1, Brown Rd., 6 May (JG); 1, Table Bluff Overlook, 6 May (MM) • Sage Thrasher: 1, Clam Beach, 6 May (MC, RF, GC)
Sage Thrasher. © Rob Fowler.

MOb) • Worm-eating Warbler: 1, Arcata-Shay Park, 19-22 Apr (KB, RF, CR, PC, KO, SB) • Northern Waterthrush: 1, Arcata Marsh-Allen Marsh, 10 Apr (MS)
• Palm Warbler: 1-4, Arcata Marsh, 14 Mar-27 Apr (MOb) • Rufous-crowned Sparrow: 2, Alder Point-Cain Rock, 4 May (KO, PC) • Clay-colored Sparrow: 1, Arcata Bottoms-Moxon Rd. Dairy, 10 May (MatD) • Grasshopper Sparrow: 5, Alderpoint Rd./Dyerville Loop Rd., 4 May (PC, KO); 1, SoHum Community Park, 7 May (KB); 1, Humboldt Hill, 9 May (DC); 1, Alderpoint Rd./Dyerville Loop Rd., 10 May (JG) • Swamp Sparrow: 1, Arcata Bottoms, 31 Mar (BE); 1, Arcata Marsh, 21 Apr (AM, JH) • White-throated Sparrow: 2 (LOS), Potawot Health Village Restoration Area, 10 May (SB); 1, Arcata-Zehndner Ave., 10 May (GB, JB); many reports of 1-4 individuals.
• Rose-breasted Grosbeak: 1, Arcata-Brigid La., 25-26 Mar (RF, JO, KB, MOb) • Hooded Oriole: 2, Potawot Health Village Restoration Area, 9-10 May (TK, CB, RF, JO, MOb) • Lawrence’s Goldfinch: 2, Alder Point Rd./Dyerville Loop Rd., 4 May (KO, PC)

Del Norte County

White-faced Ibis: 1, Alexandre Dairy, 10 May (LB) • Wilson’s Phalarope: 2 (females), Alexandre Dairy, 6 May (LB); 1 (male), Alexandre Dairy, 10 May (LB) • Gray Flycatcher: 1, Mill Creek Acquisition, 10 May (TK) • Say’s Phoebe: 1, Terwer Valley, 17 Apr (LB) • Solitary Sandpiper: 1, Bailey Rd., 17 Apr (LB); 1, Mill Creek Acquisition 10 May (TK)
• Black-necked Stilt: 1, Crescent City Harbor, 24 Apr (AB, LB) • Harlequin Duck: 4, Crescent City Harbor, 1 May (BY, CY) • Clay-colored Sparrow: 1, Lake Tolowa, 6 May (LB) • Lark Sparrow: 1, Lake Tolowa, 6 May (LB) • Baltimore Oriole: 1, Crescent City, 13 Jan-8 Apr (SL, MOb)
• Trumpeter Swan: 1, Lakeview Dr., 18-23 Mar (LB, AB, SL, MOb) • Crested Caracara: 1, Ft. Dick, 19 Mar (AB)


Rose-breasted Grosbeak. © Rob Fowler.

(Top to bottom) Winning pieces by Lesl Sleeth-Kepler, Nancy Lee, Hezekia Blandford, Gabe Masters, and Finn Murphy.
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