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**For Immediate Release**

## **Seneca Park Zoo Announces 2024 “Water into Words” Poetry Contest Winners**

***Co-sponsored with Writers & Books, National Competition Celebrates Poets of All Ages***

**Rochester, N.Y.** – Seneca Park Zoo is excited to announce winners of its second annual Nature Poetry Contest, a national competition that inspires experienced and emerging writers of all ages and backgrounds to share their creativity and appreciation for the wonders of the natural world. The public is invited to a **virtual celebration of Water into Words on Tuesday, November 12, at 7 p.m. EST**, when winners and honorable mentions, alongside esteemed competition judges and reviewers, will showcase original poems inspired by water, bodies of water, waterways, rain, or water in any form. Details and registration can be found at [senecaparkzoo.org/poetry](https://senecaparkzoo.org/poetry).

Inaugurated in 2023, Seneca Park Zoo’s contest aims to foster a deep connection between participants and nature through the art of poetry. By engaging with the beauty and diversity of the animal kingdom and the natural environment, poets express thoughts, emotions, and observations grounded in an ethos of conservation. In 2024, 113 poems were submitted from all corners of the nation.

Unlike many other contests, the Zoo’s effort has categories for youth, teens, and both published and unpublished poets, an approach that encourages emerging writers to submit. All poems in each category are reviewed and rated by a review panel comprising regional and national writers. The top ten ranked poems in each category are then forwarded –without ratings – to 14 nationally known

poets and writers who serve as final judges., This year’s judges included Sean Hill, Alison Meyers, Tyler Barton, and J. Drew Lanham.

“The caliber of poems received through this contest continues to be impressive, and it’s gratifying to see people connect with nature through their poetry,” says Zoo Society President and CEO Pamela Reed Sanchez. “Great thanks are due to our judges and reviewers for ensuring as objective an adjudication process as possible.”

The contest is co-sponsored by and curated in partnership with Writers & Books. The organization’s executive director, Alison Meyers, also a competition judge, observes, “This contest is such a refreshing vehicle for encouraging people from all walks to engage with poetry. It places the art form squarely within the center of popular culture, a democratic space where it can work its wonders.”

### **Age Categories and Winners**

Youth: Poets aged 12 and under

*White Water* by Mallorie Brown

Teen: Poets aged 13 to 17

*Red Tide at Noon* by Finley Uffman

Emerging Adult Writer: Unpublished poets, ages 19 and above

*Shape Shifter’s Lament* by Colleen Spiwak

Published Adult Writer: Poets published in print and/or online, ages 19 and above

*Spring Tide* by Robert Wilson

Please visit the website to read all winning and honorable mention poems, as well as learn about the judges, reviewers, and contest rules: [senecaparkzoo.org/poetry](http://senecaparkzoo.org/poetry).

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*Internationally, and in our own backyard, Seneca Park Zoo plays a key role in species survival. Chartered as an educational institution in 1957 by New York State, the Seneca Park Zoo Society plays an integral role in supporting Monroe County, the owners and operators of the Zoo. Together, we are working to bring animals back from the brink of extinction.*

*Writers & Books, 740 University Avenue, Rochester, NY, promotes reading and writing as lifelong activities for people of all ages and backgrounds to enrich their lives and the intellectual, social, and cultural vibrancy of their communities. Incorporated as a 501(c)3 nonprofit in 1981, the organization engages youth and adults with the literary arts through writing workshops, readings, presentations, and intersectional activities. Writers & Books owns and operates Ampersand Books, an in-house independent bookstore, and Gell: A Finger Lakes Creative Retreat, sited on 24 acres in Naples, NY.*