

## Virginia Outdoor Writers Association, Inc.

### 2023 Collegiate/Undergraduate Writing/Photography Contests

The Virginia Outdoor Writers Association, Inc. (VOWA), along with award sponsors **Dominion Energy** and **Cooperative Living Magazine**, are proud to again host a Collegiate/Undergraduate Writing Photo competition. The objective is to encourage young adults to write about and photograph their outdoor experiences and interests in wildlife or natural history.

The competition is open to any undergraduate student enrolled during the school year 2022-2023 or 2023-2024 at a Virginia college or university, including two-year community colleges, public, and private post-secondary institutions, or to students who are Virginia residents attending similar out-of-state schools.

**ESSAY CONTEST**—The theme for the contest essay writing about **a memorable outdoor experience** or special interest. Each writer must title the essay. **Essays must be between 800-1,000 words**, not including the title, and must be representative of the student's best, most carefully edited work.

If you have questions, contact the VOWA Collegiate Contest Essay Chair **William F. Funk**, at [williamhfunk@icloud.com](mailto:williamhfunk@icloud.com)

**PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST**—For the **Best Outdoor Photo Award**, each entrant may submit up to three of **your best outdoor photos in JPEG format along with a 50-75 word paragraph identifying and telling us about the photo**. Ideally, photographs should be sized to 1028 pixels on the longest side at 96 ppi as this is the size image that works best in PowerPoint for showing at the Annual Meeting on a digital projector. However, if you are unable to do this, a larger image that we can resize is acceptable. Some light sharpening can be used after an image is resized from a larger, fully prepared image. A high-resolution image must be available if you are chosen as our winner.

Permitted photo editing includes: cropping; resizing; rotating the photo; red-eye removal; simple enhancement such as auto-fix, quick-fix, auto-levels, etc.; filters to sharpen, blur, or reduce noise; and corrective functions to improve the natural appearance of the image, such as white balance, brightness, contrast levels, exposure, saturation, and color balance. Not permitted are techniques such as adding, removing, or replacing elements; artistic filters; and added borders or frames.

The file name for each image should have the camera number removed and the photographer's name and the image title put in its place. It is best if you copy and rename your original image so you can retain the camera number on the original image.

If you have questions about how to prepare or rename your photo files, you may contact the VOWA Collegiate Photo Chair, Marie Majorov at 434-406-3164 or email at [mariemilanmajorov@gmail.com](mailto:mariemilanmajorov@gmail.com)

## **Prizes**

Prizes will be \$150, \$100, and \$50 for the first, second, and third place essays and photographs respectively. A special award for the **Best Essay Relating Specifically to the Virginia Outdoors** (a story set in Virginia and written about a traditional Virginia outdoor activity such as hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, etc.) will be presented by *Cooperative Living Magazine*, which is published by the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives (WMDAEC). The winner of this award will receive \$100 and have his/her entry published in *Cooperative Living Magazine*. This award can be won by a first, second, or third-place winner, or by another entry. The judging of all essays and photographs will be by an accomplished panel of professional writers/editors.

Winners will be notified that they have won in advance, but actual placements and award presentations will occur at the Virginia Outdoor Writers Association annual membership meeting at the DoubleTree Hotel in Charlottesville in the fall of 2023. Winners in attendance will be asked to read their winning essays at the meeting. The winners and two guests (parents, mentors, or teachers) are invited to the awards presentation as guests of VOWA. Additional guests will also be welcomed, but will be charged a \$20 fee for lunch.

This is a very special opportunity for students to showcase their writing and photography talents before many of the best outdoor journalists in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Last year's essay and photography winners can be viewed at [www.vowa.org](http://www.vowa.org). Winner entries might also be showcased in other Virginia outdoor publications.

All winning entries will be published on the VOWA website. In addition, honorable mentions may be awarded as the judges see fit and these talented individuals will also be featured on the VOWA website. Rewarding excellence is our goal.

## **Contest Rules:**

1. Open to all full-time or part-time undergraduate-level college students enrolled in a Virginia college or university, including two-year community colleges, public and private post-secondary institutions, or to students who are Virginia residents attending similar out-of-state schools. Students should not already possess a four-year degree or higher.
2. Only non-fiction essays pertaining to the directed theme of a memorable outdoor experience or special interest can be entered.
3. Essay submissions must be typed, double-spaced, and between 800 and 1,000 words.
4. Electronic submissions must be as a Microsoft Word document (no pdfs).
5. Supporting photos are not required with essay entries however; they are very much welcomed if appropriate. Photographs must be in digital JPEG format.
6. Best Outdoor Photo entries must be submitted in JPEG format. Ideally, photographs should be sized to 1028 pixels on the longest side at 96 ppi, but larger images that we can resize are acceptable. A high-resolution image must be available if you are chosen as a winner. Each image must be accompanied by a 50-75 word paragraph identifying and telling us about your photo. The file name for each image should have the camera number

removed and the photographer's name and the image title put in its place. If possible, include your name and photo title in the "file info."

7. A Biographical Cover Sheet and a photo of the student entrant must be included with each essay and photo entry; this is a paragraph or two describing who you are, where you are from, your college, academic year (first year or freshman, second year or sophomore, etc.), interests, and goals. The student photo can be a headshot or an action shot.
8. Writer's name, school, and email address must appear in a header in the upper right corner of each page of his/her work. This establishes authorship and avoids any confusion with another person's work.
9. A completed SUBMISSION FORM (downloaded from [www.vowa.org](http://www.vowa.org)) must also be included with each entry. Signature of parent or guardian is required for entrants who are younger than 18 years of age.
10. Submissions not following the above contest rules will be disqualified.
11. Submission Deadline: Electronically dated no later than Sept. 15, 2023.
12. If there are too few quality entries, the judges have the right to declare a "no contest." Judges also retain the right to choose not to award a prize for any given place.
13. By entering our contest, writers and photographers grant VOWA permission to use their entry/entries on the VOWA website, contest flyers, or social media.

It should be an exciting contest and VOWA members look forward to receiving and reviewing your entries!

- Send essays and associated submission materials to William Funk  
([williamhfunk@icloud.com](mailto:williamhfunk@icloud.com))
  
- Send photographs and associated submission materials to Marie Majarov  
([mariemilanjmarov@gmail.com](mailto:mariemilanjmarov@gmail.com))