

Virginia Outdoor Writers Association, Inc.
Collegiate Undergraduate Writing/Photography Competition

**Virginia Outdoor Writers Association 2019-20 15th Annual
Collegiate Undergraduate Writing/Photo Competition**

The Virginia Outdoor Writers Association, Inc. (VOWA) along with award sponsors **Dominion Energy**, and *Cooperative Living Magazine*, are proud to once again host a Collegiate Undergraduate Writing/Photo Contest. 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 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.

The theme for the contest essay is to write about **a memorable outdoor experience or special interest**. Each writer must title his/her essay and be careful not to exceed the allotted word limit of 800 to 1,000 words of his/her best, carefully edited work.

For the **Best Outdoor Photo** Award, each entrant may submit three of his/her very best outdoor photos in JPEG format 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 the best in PowerPoint and shown with a digital projector or monitor. 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-res image must be available if you are chosen as our winner.

Permitted photo editing includes: cropping; re-sizing; 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.

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The file name for each image should have the camera number removed and 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 any questions about how prepare or rename your picture files, you may contact Marie Majarov at 434-406-3164 or e-mail mariemilanmajarov@gmail.com for help.

Prizes:

A cash award of \$500.00 will be presented by **VOWA/Dominion Energy** for the First Place Essay. The Second Place Essay will receive a cash award of \$200.00. The Third Place Essay will receive a cash award of \$100.00. 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, or similar pursuit) will be offered by *Cooperative Living Magazine*, which is published by the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives (VMDAEC). The winner of this award will receive \$100.00 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. Judging will be accomplished by a panel of professional writers/editors.

Our **Best Outdoor Photo First Place** winner will receive a \$500.00 cash award. A Second Place photo will receive a \$200.00 cash award, and a Third Place photo will earn a \$100.00 cash award. Judging will be accomplished by a panel of professional photographers.

Winners will be introduced at a special Awards Luncheon during our VOWA Annual Meeting in Charlottesville, on March 28, 2020. Winners and four guests each will be invited to the awards presentation as guests of **VOWA/Dominion Energy**. Additional guests will also be welcomed, but will be charged a \$10.00 fee for lunch. This is a very special opportunity for students to showcase their writing and photography talents before many of the best outdoor writers/photographers in our Commonwealth. Last year's essay winners can be [viewed here](#). Last year's photography winners can be [viewed here](#). Winning entries will be offered to various publications throughout Virginia.

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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 (www.vowa.org). 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 memorable outdoor experience or special interest need be entered.
3. Submissions must be typed, double-spaced, and fall between 800 and 1,000 words.
4. Electronic submissions in a Microsoft Word document are required.
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-res image must be available if you are chosen as our 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 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** 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 freshmen, second year or sophomore, etc.), interests, and goals.
8. Writer's name, school, and e-mail 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** (available for download) 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 **February 15, 2020**.

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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 writing or photography in the contest, writers and photographers grant VOWA permission to use their entry(ies) 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!

VOWA is very grateful to all the schools across Virginia who join with us to encourage collegiate undergraduate students to care about, write and, photograph our natural world. We thank **Dominion Energy** for their generous support of our Collegiate Contest and our Annual Membership Meeting/Awards luncheon. We thank *Cooperative Living* Magazine for the special awards to our collegiate contest that make our contest extra special.

Send essay submissions to:
Mellisa Butcher, at MellisaVOWA@gmail.com

Send photo submissions to:
Marie Majarov, at mariemilanmajarov@gmail.com