

The Peterson Young Naturalist Award Program

PURPOSE

The purpose is to reward a student in a Loudoun County elementary, middle, or secondary school who completes the best journal in nature investigation and who demonstrates keen interest in the natural world.

GOAL

The goal is to encourage first hand observation skills practiced by naturalists worldwide and exemplified by Roger Tory Peterson (1908-1996). Peterson was a world-renowned ornithologist, naturalist, artist, teacher and author who played a pivotal role in popularizing the study of natural history. The Peterson Field Guide series consists of over 50 titles on such diverse topics as birds, butterflies, fish, trees, mammals, minerals and stars. His countless contributions to the fields of conservation, natural history and ornithology resulted in his earning numerous honors and awards, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom. His system of field identification made bird watching a popular worldwide activity practiced by millions. Peterson often told the story of an experience he had at age 11 when his teacher, Blanche Hornbeck, rewarded him for his watercolor sketch of a blue jay. He credited her encouragement for his lifelong passion to learn as much as he could about the natural world.

This award seeks to provide the same encouragement for a student who demonstrates keen observation and recording skills and to reinforce self-motivated discovery of the natural world.

EDUCATIONAL VALUE

The primary skill of the scientist, writer, and artist is to make accurate observations and to truthfully record what has been observed. Such observation and recording skills do not develop on their own; they are learned and practiced. Teachers who have been trained in nature observation, sketching and note taking in personal field journals are prepared to teach these skills to their students, and so to teach them how to learn from nature the way scientists, writers and artists do. These “discovery readiness” skills include the proper use of a hand lens, contour drawing of natural objects, gesture drawing of moving animals, and identification of plants, butterflies and common birds.

REQUIREMENTS

- The award is made to one student per school during the school year.
- The student attends a primary or secondary school in Loudoun County.
- The student provides a record of his/her field observations of natural objects and phenomena in the form of journal entries that include both sketches and written notes.
- The student records observations in nature over a period of at least two months.
- The student demonstrates to their school teacher(s) a keen interest in the natural world through activities such as feeding wild birds, collecting, and learning about natural objects or participating in local conservation efforts.
- The teacher submits a completed Teacher Assessment form for each student journal (below) using a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high) for participation (in or out of school) in outdoor nature-related activities such as feeding birds, collecting natural objects, or participation in conservation programs or clubs.
- The teacher submits the five best journals from his/her school via LCPS pony to Norina Treanor at Tuscarora High School by the due date (TBD, usually mid-May). The winning journals are displayed at the annual LWC meeting where the award is given to the student. The four non-winning journals are returned to teachers via pony after the judging.

THE AWARD

Each school that submits five nature journals will receive an award for the student with the best journal. The judges represent Loudoun County Public Schools, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, and Peterson family members. The award consists of cash and a Peterson field guide. The award is presented to the student at Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's annual meeting at the end of the school year. For more information contact info@loudounwildlife.org or Peterson.naturalists@gmail.com

JUDGING CRITERIA

1. Drawing process

The journal is judged for demonstration of techniques of contour drawing and or gesture drawing, use of color, observations over at least two months' time, accuracy, and neatness.

2. Writing process

The journal is judged for accuracy and amount of written descriptions of observations, standard journal information (date, time of day, location, weather), observations over at least two months' time), and neatness.

3. Observation process

The journal is judged for demonstrations of use of field guide, hand lens, binoculars, microscope, resource materials, and the five senses. Observations may also be supplemented with photos, sound recordings, video, but the primary product is the journal.

TEACHER ASSESSMENT

INCLUDE THIS TEACHER ASSESSMENT INSIDE EACH OF THE FIVE JOURNALS YOU SUBMIT

Teacher name:

Teacher phone number:

School:

Student name:

Student Grade:

Teacher rating of student level of participation in outdoor nature-related activities (Circle one): 1 (Low) 2 3 4 5 (High)

Comments about student: