

A call for BirdLife Poets

Title

Following the outstanding success of its first competition in 2012, The Rialto Magazine have teamed up again with the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK), to launch a second Nature Poetry Competition, and are seeking entries from across the BirdLife Partnership. Poetry draws on our deepest associations with nature. Writing on all the zoology and botany books he owned, the Chilean poet, Pablo Neruda, explained how they, ‘allowed him to embrace the infinite world, the never ending labyrinth of nature. Books in which the earth is explored have always been my favourites, and rarely do I go to sleep within admiring the portraits of adorable island birds, or insects as complicated as clocks’. With a deadline of the end of September, work submitted will be judged by the poet, Ruth Padel, whose most recent book, *The Mara Crossing*, took journeying and migration as its core theme. The competition will help raise funds to support RSPB, and its critical conservation work, and will also help raise the profile of contemporary poetry and bring new audiences to The Rialto. Prizes include publication in the magazine, cash of up to £1,000, and a place on a creative writing course at Welsh National Writers’ Centre Ty Newydd. Rialto was established in 1984, and its first edition included poetry by the Honorary President of BirdLife’s Rare Bird Club, Margaret Atwood, as well as by the current British Poet Laureate, Carol Ann Duffy. Matt Howard, who works for the RSPB, and is a Rialto adviser, says: “Poets have always written about the natural world and this competition is a way for them to take a direct step to work for the well-spring that provides so much inspiration. Creative engagement with our shared environment is ever-more important, particularly at a time when the state of nature is under such pressures from the way we live our lives.” Indeed, writing in his introduction to *The Poetry of Birds*, the author, Tim Dee, noted it was the Blackbird which emerged as the most popular subject in a UK competition he judged in 2005, far out-numbering all other poems. He echoed Aldous Huxley’s argument that taking birds out of English poetry would mean losing half the canon. Nonetheless, Michael Mackmin, editor of The Rialto, makes it clear that “The judges will give a very wide interpretation to our theme of nature poetry.” Last year’s competition saw more an astonishing 1,800 entrants contribute more than 3,500 poems from a total of 17 countries. The winning entry by Pat Winslow, recalls a memorable encounter with a spider. It would be a huge boost for the RSPB, BirdLife more generally, for The Rialto, and for the role of poetry in celebrating birds, biodiversity, and the environment, if someone from the BirdLife family won in 2013. To entire the competition, please follow the link here: www.birdlife.org/community/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/comp.jpg