

# EMERALD REVIEW ZINE

On the Brink



Spring 2022

---

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

Page 3: Letter from the editor

Page 4-5: Wonder in the Woods

By: Nobel Chan

Page 6: Remember When

By: Iffany Zou

Page 7: Green Iguana

By: Nina Gulbransen

Page 8: The Aperion

By: Jessica Ferrelli

Page 9: Gone in a Flash

By: Jeanna Cooper

Page 10: Crossroads Conversation

By: Elizabeth Mutka

Page 11: Eastern Box Turtle

By: Abby Van Selous

Page 12-13: A Eulogy for the Colorado River

By: Natalie Clott

Page 14: Honey Bee

By: Nina Gulbransen

Page 15: Earth, Our One True Home

By: Abby Van Selous

---

# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

---



The bald eagle is a bird of prey that today dominates the North American skies, but there was a time when the species nearly went extinct. During the 1960s, bald eagles were listed as endangered because of the pesticide DDT, which severely weakened egg shells and led to fewer bald eagles hatching and surviving. Efforts to save the bald eagles began in 1972 when the Environmental Protection Agency was founded and DDT was banned. Under successful conservation efforts, environmental protection laws, and the enduring strength of the surviving birds, bald eagles were successfully saved from extinction.

Taking inspiration from the bald eagles' run-in with extinction, I decided to focus this edition of the *Emerald Review Zine* on the concept that there are many plants and animals that can go from endangered to species of least concern, just as how there are those that can go from endangered to extinct. The subheading *On the Brink* stems from this idea because there are currently many species that teeter between extinction and recovery.

In this *Zine*, questions about the possible consequences of extinction and if people are responsible for species going extinct are explored through poems, short stories, and photographs.

- Abby Van Selous, creative editor

## Wonder in the Woods

By: Nobel Chan

The sun hung goldfinch-yellow in the sky. I leaned against a coffee tree, inhaling its heady scent. No sign of anything nearby. Not a warble, whisper, or wail.

“There,” the man had said the day before, gesturing to a clump of trees. “There, there!”

He hadn’t known much English. Not many people in Sumatra did. We had spoken as best we could, me with my Indonesian dictionary and him with his hands. Shaping in the air an unknown figure, about the height of a person, the length of a cougar.

There. He had pointed to the forest. Something there.

Verdant leaves ranged high and far above me, stretching to a vivid blue sky. The humidity stuck to me like cling film. As a rule I hated heat. I normally explored only cool, dry places. But this was an exception. I wiped my forehead and carried on.

The man hadn’t come with me into the woods, but I wasn’t lonely. You couldn’t be lonely in a place like this. The Sumatran forests were teeming with life, the only place on Earth where tigers, rhinoceroses, orangutans, and elephants could meet each other by a blooming flower, kill each other by an aging tree. A place to visit before you die. A place that’s dying.

I gripped my backpack and soldered forward, searching for that figure of air.

Yesterday, the other Indonesians had done their own pantomimes. One girl had put two fingers to her head, signifying antennae, maybe, or horns. Another boy had prowled around on all fours, indicating a

land creature, not a bird. None of them made any call. Instead they repeated the word ‘*heran, heran*’, over and over. Wonder, wonder.

The light grew sad and orange. A breeze whistled through the leaves, upending a caterpillar eating her dinner. Silently, she fell like a raindrop to the ground. Fell into a peculiarly shaped hole.

I knelt to look closer. The hole was small, around 20 centimeters in diameter, and looked like a hand with three short, wide fingers. I sketched the image carefully into my notebook. Something had walked here and left prints in the dirt. Something solid and substantial that made absences in its wake.

I had a trail.

Straightening up, I shoved my notebook back in my bag and set off. The footprints were regular, rhythmic, symmetrical on each side like a rhyme. My eyes stayed glued to those holes, one after one after one, leading me to the figure of air that grew heavier in my thoughts every second. I wondered what it would be.

*“Are you a hunter?”*

*The woman had looked at me through narrowed eyes. We sat around the wooden table, her father pouring me a cup of clear, cold water.*

*“No, I’m not.”*

*“Then why do you want to go into the forests? Only hunters want to do that.”*

*“The Sumatra forests are the only place on Earth where tigers, rhinoceroses—”*

*Yes, yes, I know. I live here. So you’re just here to see the sights, then? Gawk at exotic animals, and the locals too?”*

*Her father had looked between us, uncomprehending. Turning to me, he had shaped the figure in the air again. Person-high, cougar-wide. Heran.*

*"I'm only looking."*

*"People say that." Her voice was bitter. "People say that and come out of the woods with fresh stains and fresh skins. I'm sorry, but I can't help you. You'll have to find your mystery figure yourself."*

She had seen me off, standing at the edge of the forest with a wooden smile. I didn't take it personally. She was the best guide in all of Sumatra and she was used to being used. Everything here, every person and every animal, was used to being used.

Something snapped to my right. A branch or a bone, I couldn't tell. I crouched low, advancing towards what seemed to be a clearing. Brushing aside a large leaf, I looked ahead. And looked. And blinked, and looked again.

In the center of the clearing was a Sumatran rhinoceros, distinguished by its two horns on its face, one in front of the other. The front horn was longer, curved into a sharp tip, while the smaller horn was rounded. Its gray skin wrinkled into folds at the neck, then stretched smooth against its heaving body. Its head moved slow, steady, side to side like a metronome. Listening to the music of the woods.

I pushed the leaf aside and entered the clearing. The rhino's head did not move, but its small, black eyes latched onto me. I stared back, wondering. That was all I could do—wonder.

"Hi," I said.

The rhino lowered its head in a bow. I thought about going closer, but something in me held me back. This was the figure of

air the man had traced, alive with blood and warmth. A beautiful creature. An endangered creature. The smallest living rhinoceros in the world, with the smallest population.

How lonely. Its black eyes said nothing but softness.

A human voice suddenly boomed through the woods, spooking the rhino. It lumbered away through the trees. I stayed rooted to the spot as the voice came closer. A man appeared from the other side of the clearing, trampling a budding corpse flower underfoot. He was holding a gun.

"Hey, you!" His voice was soaked with cheer and booze. "Didja happen to see a rhino around here, about yay high?"

He made a figure in the air. I stared at him.

"You mute, son?"

"No."

"Then did you see anything? Anything at all?"

I looked towards where the rhino had been.

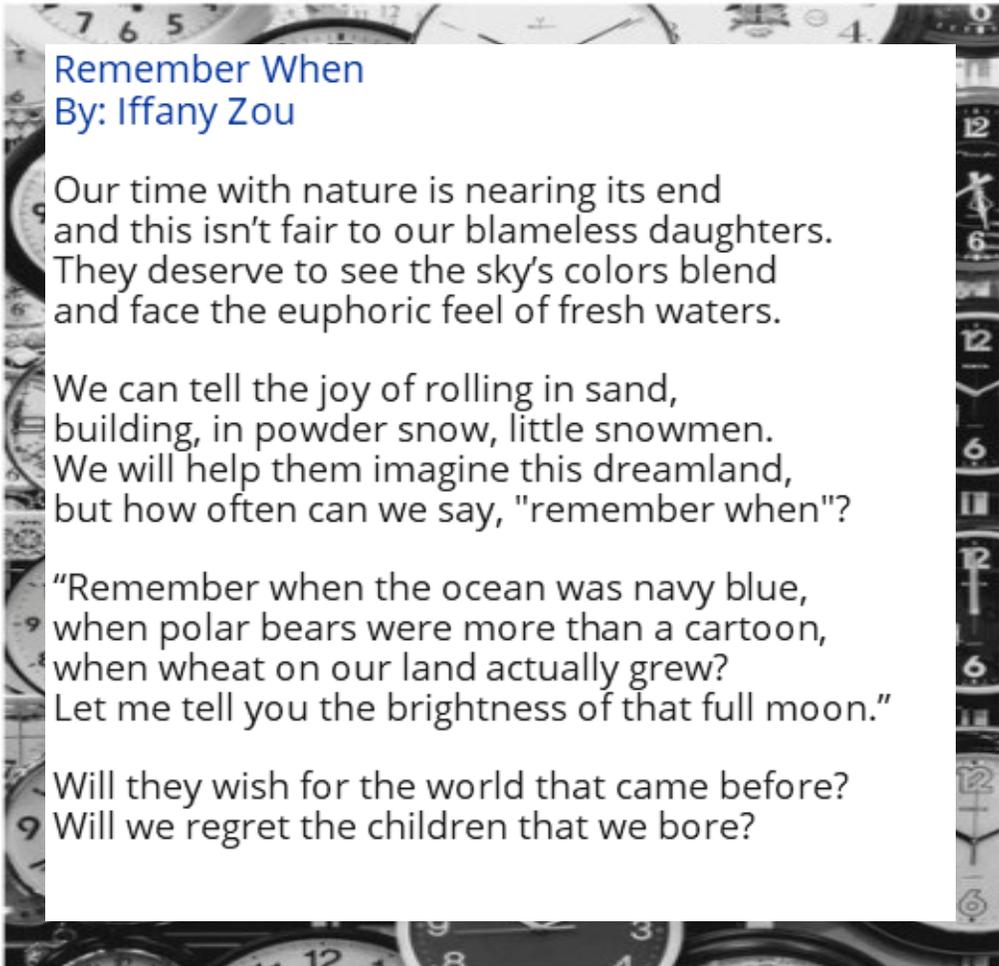
"Nothing," I replied. I waved at the empty clearing. "Only air."

A week later a reporter on T.V talked about the Sumatran rhino, statistics scrolling across the screen. HEIGHT: 3.3-5 FEET. LENGTH: 6.5-13 FEET. POPULATION: LESS THAN 80. CRITICALLY ENDANGERED.

I turned off the T.V. Pouring myself a cup of coffee, I went out onto the porch. The trees seemed to dance in the distance.

*Heran, heran.*

The air felt good today.



Remember When  
By: Iffany Zou

Our time with nature is nearing its end  
and this isn't fair to our blameless daughters.  
They deserve to see the sky's colors blend  
and face the euphoric feel of fresh waters.

We can tell the joy of rolling in sand,  
building, in powder snow, little snowmen.  
We will help them imagine this dreamland,  
but how often can we say, "remember when"?

"Remember when the ocean was navy blue,  
when polar bears were more than a cartoon,  
when wheat on our land actually grew?  
Let me tell you the brightness of that full moon."

Will they wish for the world that came before?  
Will we regret the children that we bore?



## Green Iguana

By: Nina Gulbransen

The green iguana is not endangered, but it is an invasive species in Florida that has thrived on consuming food sources critical to endangered native species, so I thought it was relevant to extinction as their presence in Florida is largely human caused as they were likely introduced as exotic pets that were released into the wild. They are a serious threat to Florida's ecosystem as they impact a great deal of native species but regulation on how to deal with them has been contentious.

The Apeiron  
By: Jessica Ferrelli

we look down  
away from the rest of the world  
not noticing  
the ground is crumbling underneath us  
as we run away from our actions

now the sky is falling  
pieces of sunrise falling  
onto the ground, we're falling

into nothingness  
into a void  
the apeiron  
well, everything has to get there sometime  
doesn't it?

the beautiful song of the ivory-billed woodpecker  
heard no more  
its red plumage escaping into the dark sky  
except we cut down the tree where it landed  
destroyed the ground where it stood

and so it fell  
the woodpecker, it fell  
one last dying cry, it fell

into nothingness  
into a void  
the apeiron  
well, everything has to get there sometime  
doesn't it?

like everything else  
these badly written lines of prose  
a cry of despair, a warning  
or whatever you want to make of it  
will be forgotten in about a week or two

and these words will fall  
every letter will fall  
as dead leaves will fall

into nothingness  
into a void  
the apeiron  
well, everything has to get there sometime  
doesn't it?

## Gone in a Flash

By: Jeanna Cooper

There will be nothing left for my children and my children's children to enjoy.

They won't see the animals and plant life I saw growing up.

I grew up in a time when nature decided to close its doors on so many animals because of human activity.

Humans have taken too much for granted and now we are paying the price as more and more animals I never heard of drop dead.

I have always wanted to see animals in their natural habitat, but before I have saved up enough money to see them, they could be gone.

I love all animals, big and small and seeing them fall one by one gives me a bad feeling in the pit of my stomach.

I want to save these species because they were here long before we were and they lived happy lives unaware of what we would bring to them.

Then we came and started to take more than we gave; this is a bad habit of ours.

I blink and another species has gone extinct and I wonder if even more will fall when I fall asleep and wake up ready to start another day on Earth.

The species who go extinct will not have the same gift I do because they can not wake up and see the sun; they will not wake at all.

Or they are shot dead because something we value is on their body.

I wish this wasn't the case, but unfortunately, this is the world we all live in; we should learn to share before we hurt our planet more than we already have.

All of these species are gone in a flash, never to be seen again.

## Crossroads Conversation

By: Elizabeth Mutka

Water bears will inherit the Earth.

*Maybe life knows how precious it is  
spinning on a dot through the stars  
more stubborn than any of its creations.*

Am I a fool to love the ones always walking the line?

*But then, someone has to.  
it could turn out a comedy  
of errors, maybe  
but with a happy ending, or at least  
an ending unpreventable*

The thing about a tragedy

*is that it could've gone differently*  
but all the world's a stage  
and these players would have always made  
these choices  
*but even still, they always mattered  
worst come to worst, we in all ways mattered*

*In life, in death, the love we felt mattered  
though I'd like to set down the hammer, now.*

pick up a pencil  
the mad scribblings of a toddler  
on the walls of the world

Water bears may inherit the Earth.

Always the little ones,  
how little are we talking?  
who will rise to mourn our shrinking world  
Whooping cranes like dinosaurs  
tigers the size of house cats.

*Nine lives, right?  
Yet if awe were oxygen  
the sky would be branches  
and the Devil's Hole pupfish  
would be like the wolves of storybooks.*

The ending of everything  
is really only the ending

*of something that could go on*  
We know it's a double-edge sword going through the vines  
the vines that will bury it someday

*but that's only then*

That's only when  
water bears inherit the Earth.



Eastern Box Turtle  
By: Abby Van Selous

This is a photo of an eastern box turtle in the backyard of a New Jersey home. While eastern box turtles are not currently endangered or extinct, they are listed as a species of concern. This means that eastern box turtles could become threatened or endangered under certain conditions, such as habitat loss.

## An Eulogy for the Colorado River

By: Natalie Clott

How does one recover from the loss of someone so loved and cherished? A beautiful entity. A living, breathing soul. A provider of life. An indulgence of spirit. How we will miss you.

We witnessed your beauty and all of its services. The pristine flow of water, acting as a life source for everything surrounding.

You prevailed through extenuating odds. Carving a path for yourself using your own might. You were able to create a direction for yourself. You created a wall of rock which provided you with unconventional protection. They were brilliant colors of burnt sienna and fiery red. Your toughness and adaptability prevailed when winding through these acquainted boulders. You were glad to accept their challenge. The sounds of your powerful flow exemplified the fight you presented. It was strong and fair.

You overwhelmed our eyes with colors of sea blue, emerald green, and aquamarine. When gazing upon you, we saw how these colors were broken by the beaming sun. Its light further illuminated your original beauty. You ac-

quainted yourself with fair friends as well. Beautiful pine trees huddled around you, bewildered by your kindness. The eagles which dove into your presence to appreciate your energy and accept your bountiful offerings. You protected with all your might. You sheltered the rainbow trout and their brilliant variety of color and complexity.

We remember your most lovely smell of pine and the crispness of the air which fell upon our faces. The eloquent song you sang to us, even when we could not listen. The crackling of your water as it overcame an obstacle. The clarity of thought you offered when we gazed upon your many attributes.

But, you hid too well what you did not want to show. Or, perhaps, we did not look hard enough. Your death came slowly. A barrier became of the rocks. This barrier grew continuously. A scar that ripped through your valley. It was a reminder of what you were becoming. A sickly look overcame the nature which surrounded you. The beautiful and vibrant rock adopted a pale, feeble appearance. This illness only grew. You continued to lose more of your vibrance and light.

As your death became more prominent, perhaps we started to notice. There were signs, and the symptoms of your sickness caused great attention. Different species of fish which you provided for, vanished. The vagrant and bright pines that shaded you caught fire. The smell of burning pine transcended through the atmosphere. It overwhelmed our senses and reminded us of your destruction.

How could we not have noticed?

You became quainter and quainter, barely having the willpower to continue your flow. Your strength had diminished, and we knew. You stood steady, appearing as deceased. But we didn't help. We watched you suffer. This malady that you had to undertake stripped you of every beauty we cherished. Until, one day, you were gone. Your illness vanquished and replaced your purity with sinful fire and drought.

And the worst part is: we were your illness, and we are spreading.



Honeybee  
By: Nina Gulbransen

The honeybee is obviously one of the more well known cases of possible extinction as their loss would cripple our crop system and ecosystems across the globe. I personally tried to plant a lot of plants that they would frequent and pollinate back home in Florida, which is how I got this shot.

## Earth: Our One True Home

By: Abby Van Selous

Is it the birds in the trees or the stars in the sky?  
Is it the way the breeze feels against my cheek when I walk through the meadow?  
Is it the smell of the earth, the smell of the trees and their leaves?  
I can not say what it is.

There is a certain freshness to the world out of doors  
Like a dam is released and your soul can be free without ever leaving your body.  
When your soul leaves, so does your sorrow and your stress  
Your worry leaves, too, if even for a moment.

It is almost as if a person becomes animal again,  
Remembering the days before fire  
when homes were built in caves instead of out of wood  
The body becomes connected once again with the earth.

The birds,  
The flowers,  
The animals

Contributors to what makes life, life.  
A certain setting is created  
A perfect blend of each element  
Not too much scent, nor too much sound.

The perfect blend is created for the perfect home,  
A home, no matter how old a person gets,  
They can find a way to enjoy  
For, the earth will forever be our one true home.

## Interested in submitting to the Zine?

Environmental poems, short stories, photographs, and artwork are all welcomed and can be submitted all year round!

Submissions can be sent to: [zine.emeraldreview@gmail.com](mailto:zine.emeraldreview@gmail.com)

## Questions/Comments/Concerns?

Email [zine.emeraldreview@gmail.com](mailto:zine.emeraldreview@gmail.com)

“There is but one world and everything that is imaginable is necessary to it.”

- Cormac McCarthy

The *Emerald Review Zine* is a student-run environmental literary magazine at Boston University