

Judges Report from the [Poets XYZ](#) (Elena de Roo, Kathryn Dove and Melinda Szymanik)

Wow! We were so impressed by the enormous flock of entries that landed in the Box of Birds entry box. There were Tūi, Whio, Pūkeko, Kuaka, Pīwakawaka, Phoenix, Moa and many more. The poems came in many different forms: haiku, acrostic, rhyming and free verse, some factual and some mysterious and magical. A massive thank you to all the talented young poets who entered and to the amazing team from the Cornwall Park Information Centre who ran the competition.

There were 179 entries in total and the overall quality of the poems was outstanding. Between the three of us we came up with a shortlist of 36 from which we had the hard task of choosing a winner. But first big congratulations to all the poets below who made our, not so short, shortlist.

Shortlist

Shining Cuckoo	Theo
I'm a Bird	Julie
Pīwakawaka	Keira
Untitled (Bird perched on the wire...)	Isabella
The Madness of Nature	Zoe
Untitled (A bird sails by, on windy air...)	Kaia
Oh Wind, You Lift Up My Wings	Matilda
Forest's Breath	Alyssa
Eye to Eye	Ellsa
Untitled (Dipping beaks...)	Harland
Phoenix	Harshawn
Dodo	Aaron
Penguin	Suvreen
My Pet Budgie	Isaac
Pūkeko	Esther
A Day in the Life of a Seagull	Riaan
Under the Moon Lit Night	Frida
Kiwi	Aarav
Autumn Friends	Alya
Birds Soaring in the Sky	Aizen
Kōtare	Taylor

Kuaka/Godwit	Hazel
Pīwakawaka	Jesse
Moa	Alexa
Untitled (Birds, birds...)	Nico
Watch Out Birdie!	Annie
Kiwi	Shirley
Tūī	Elodie
Untitled (Kokako wailing...)	Lucy
In My Backyard	Shanaya
Tūī	Onyu
Who am I?	Rita
Te Manu Tūhono	Rudra
The Fantail	Ruth
What is a Bird?	Jediah
Hurricane Bird	Lauretta

Comments and special mentions from the three judges:

Melinda

Kaia's untitled poem had a well crafted rhythm and sentiment. Isabella and Zoe both wrote exciting and ambitious poems which show great promise for future endeavours. I loved Ellsa's particular take on the popular Tui with some evocative imagery and Harland's poem was dramatic and compelling. Isaac's haiku on the subject of his pet budgie was surprising in the best way, giving me a genuine insight into his relationship with his pet – a remarkable achievement. Taylor's 'Kotare' beautifully demonstrates how a brief poem can effectively capture a moment, while Nico's poem cleverly used repetition to good effect. And Onyu's poem 'Tui' with its wonderful collection of imagery was a beautiful tribute to one of our best loved birds.

There were many wonderful poems and it was an honour to be a part of the judging. However I did see that one student had submitted a poem that wasn't their own work. I think we all agree we would much rather read your own original poems – something to keep in mind for future competitions.

Kathryn

Firstly, I was impressed with the creativity, effort and care many entrants had also put into illustrating their poems. I would like to give a special mention to Shirley for her shape poem 'Kiwi'. I enjoyed the humour in Aaron's 'Dodo' and Isaac's 'My Pet Budgie', the creative ways that Jediah's poem 'What is a Bird?' attempted to answer the question and Lauretta's wild, atmospheric

‘Hurricane Bird’. I liked how Lucy’s Untitled poem used haiku to introduce native birds. Annie’s short poem ‘Watch Out Birdie!’ told its dramatic story in a fun, energetic way. Onyu’s language and imagery cleverly conveyed a sense of performance in ‘Tūi’ and Taylor’s short, simple ‘Kōtare’ evoked the colours and movement of this bird. Well done to everyone who entered and congratulations to the winner and all shortlisted entries.

Elena

I loved Isaac’s haiku ‘My Pet Budgie’ which made me laugh out loud everytime I read it, the beautiful image and moment in time Taylor created in Kōtare and the simple but perfect rhythm of Kaia’s untitled poem which begins ‘A bird sails by, on windy air...’. I want to give a special mention to ‘Autumn Friends’ by Alya and ‘Birds Soaring in the Sky’ by Aizen, both of which gave me a lovely gentle, cosy feeling when I read them. I also really enjoyed the way Alexa (Moa) and Annie (Watch Out Birdie!) spoke directly to the birds in their poems and was super impressed by the beautiful and sophisticated imagery in ‘Tūi’ by Onyu and ‘Te Manu Tūhono’ by Rudra.

After much discussion the three of us decided upon two highly commended poems and one very worthy winner which stood out from our list of 36. Massive congratulations to all three of these outstanding young poets.

Highly Commended

My Pet Budgie (Haiku) by Isaac

Kōtare by Taylor

Winner

Tui by Onyu