

For Immediate Release

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Department of Communications

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***Learning to Surf* Article Wins
John Burroughs Award for an Outstanding Published Nature Essay**

***Learning to Surf*
Orion, 2006**

The John Burroughs Association has made its selection of an outstanding periodical natural history essay. Selection is based on the work's content and excellent literary value.

John Burroughs (1837 - 1921) was a distinguished naturalist and superb essayist whose twenty-three volumes of essays is an important part of American literature.

In recognition of Burroughs' contribution, the John Burroughs Association presents an AWARD OF RECOGNITION to the author of the selected essay. Appearing in the 2006 March/April issue of *Orion*, ***Learning to Surf*** by David Gessner has won the 2006 John Burroughs Award for an Outstanding Published Nature Essay. This award recognizes an outstanding periodical essay of the type that John Burroughs himself wrote and made famous. This selected essay stresses the author's own connection with nature involving either original natural history research or one's own life experience.

Gessner has given us a gracefully written essay, and the intelligent intensity engagement with nature is evident throughout. He interweaves past and present, autobiography and an environmental perspective that is sharply observant and accurately descriptive. Gessner describes parallel learning experiences between pelicans and humans in relation to the surf. He brings an awareness of experiencing the present with the long past history of the pelicans in the natural world.

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John Burroughs—

David Gessner is the author of five critically-acclaimed books and a winner of the 2005 Pushcart Prize. His third book, *Return of the Osprey*, was called a “classic of American Nature writing” by the *Boston Globe* and “a master essayist” by *Booklist*. His most recent book is, *Souring with Fidel*. It documents the migration of the osprey from the Northeast south through Cuba and on to Venezuela at the same time that the BBC was filming *Incredible Journey* for Animal Planet. His fourth book, *Sick of Nature*, is already recognized as a groundbreaking and landmark work in the field. Much-anthologized, the book breaks down, redefines and re-builds the nature writing genre.

Gessner, who has been a Bakeless fellow at Breadloaf and has taught environmental writing as a Briggs-Copeland scholar at Harvard, is currently a professor at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. He is the editor-in-chief of the national literary journal, *Ecotone*. You can find out about *Ecotone* by going to www.uncw.edu/ecotone. He is also a regular contributor to the Ideas section of the Boston *Sunday Globe* and his essays have appeared in *Creative Nonfiction*, *Orion*, *The Georgia Review*, and *American Scholar*.

The John Burroughs Recognition Award For An Outstanding Published Nature Essay has been given annually since 1993. Past Burroughs recipients include John Daniels, Kenneth Brower, John Mitchell, Michael Pollan, Gary Noel Ross, Gerrard Vermeij, Carl Safina, Freeman House, and Edward Kanze.

The John Burroughs Association, a membership organization that encourages writing in the Burroughs tradition and maintains sites associated with the great naturalist’s life and writings, gives the award. This literary award will be presented at the reservations-only luncheon to be held on Monday, April 2, at the American Museum of Natural History. For reservations and more information and/or a complete list of award winners, write the John Burroughs Association, 15 West 77th Street, New York, NY 10024, contact Lisa Breslof at 212-769-5169, or go to the John Burroughs web site at <http://research.amnh.org/burroughs>.

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