



AMERICAN MUSEUM  
OF FLY FISHING

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**The 2026 Robert Traver Fly-Fishing Writing Award: A Call for Submissions**

The John D. Voelker Foundation and the American Museum of Fly Fishing (AMFF) are pleased to announce that submissions are now being accepted for the 2026 Robert Traver Fly-Fishing Writing Award (the Traver Award). The award is named after Robert Traver, pen name for the late John Voelker, author of *Trout Madness*, *Trout Magic*, *Anatomy of a Fisherman*, the 1958 best seller *Anatomy of a Murder*, and the historical novel *Laughing Whitefish*.

The Traver Award, which includes a \$2,500 prize, was created in 1994 to encourage and recognize "distinguished original stories or essays that embody the implicit love of fly fishing, respect for the sport, and the natural world in which it takes place." The Traver stories and essays must demonstrate high literary values in one or more of these three categories:

- The joy of fly fishing: personal and philosophic experience
- Ecology: knowledge and protection of the natural world
- Humor: piscatorial friendships and fun on the water

The 2026 Traver Award will be granted for the winning short work of fiction or nonfiction essay in the English language not previously published commercially in print or digital media. "Short work" means 3,000 words or less. An entry fee of \$25 will offset the administrative costs of the award program. Previous Traver Award winners are not eligible. All entrants will be required to certify that no part of their entry was generated by artificial intelligence (AI).

The deadline for submissions is midnight on May 31, 2026. The submission form and additional rules and instructions can be found on the Voelker Foundation website:

[www.voelkerfoundation.com](http://www.voelkerfoundation.com).

The Traver Award winner will be notified in September 2026. The winning entry will be published in the Winter or Spring 2027 edition of the *American Fly Fisher*, the journal of the American Museum of Fly Fishing, as well as on the AMFF and Voelker Foundation websites.

The winner of the 2025 Robert Traver Fly-Fishing Writing Award was "**Oncorhynchus**" by **Joseph Jackson**, a touching story of man on a quest to catch a king salmon and choose a name for his soon-to-be born daughter while contemplating his future as a father. Mr. Jackson is a social studies teacher and outdoor writer in Alaska. He is the author of two books of outdoor essays, *It's Only Fishing* (2023) and *Chasing the Dark* (2024), and his writing and photography have appeared in numerous magazines. Mr. Jackson won Honorable Mention in the 2024 Traver Award contest with his story "How to Say Gila."

The Traver Award judges also bestowed Honorable Mention recognition on three other entries:

**"Upstream from Forgetting" by Michelle Oxford of Kentwood, Michigan**

**"The Midnight Fly-Fishing Society" by Cynthia Jones of Santa Cruz, California**

**"Well, I Never" by Henry Hughes of Monmouth, Oregon**

The three honorable mention stories are available on the American Museum of Fly Fishing and Voelker Foundation websites, and their writers each received a \$250 prize.

The 2025 competition drew a field of 118 stories and essays. Entries were judged anonymously, resulting in seven finalists. The other three finalists were:

"The Fish Counter's Daughter" by Lucas Cunningham of Chicago, Illinois

"The First Day of the Year" by Julie Zapoli of Maple City, Michigan

"Conflagration" by Jon Tobey of Duvall, Washington

Since 1994, twenty-seven Traver Awards have been given. Two anthologies of the Traver Award winners and finalists have been published: *In Hemingway's Meadow* (2009) and *Love Story of the Trout* (2010). A new anthology of winning or honored stories since 2008 will be published in November 2026 by Stackpole Books.

For more information, see [www.voelkerfoundation.com](http://www.voelkerfoundation.com) and [www.amff.org](http://www.amff.org).

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