



# POETRY IN THE PARKS

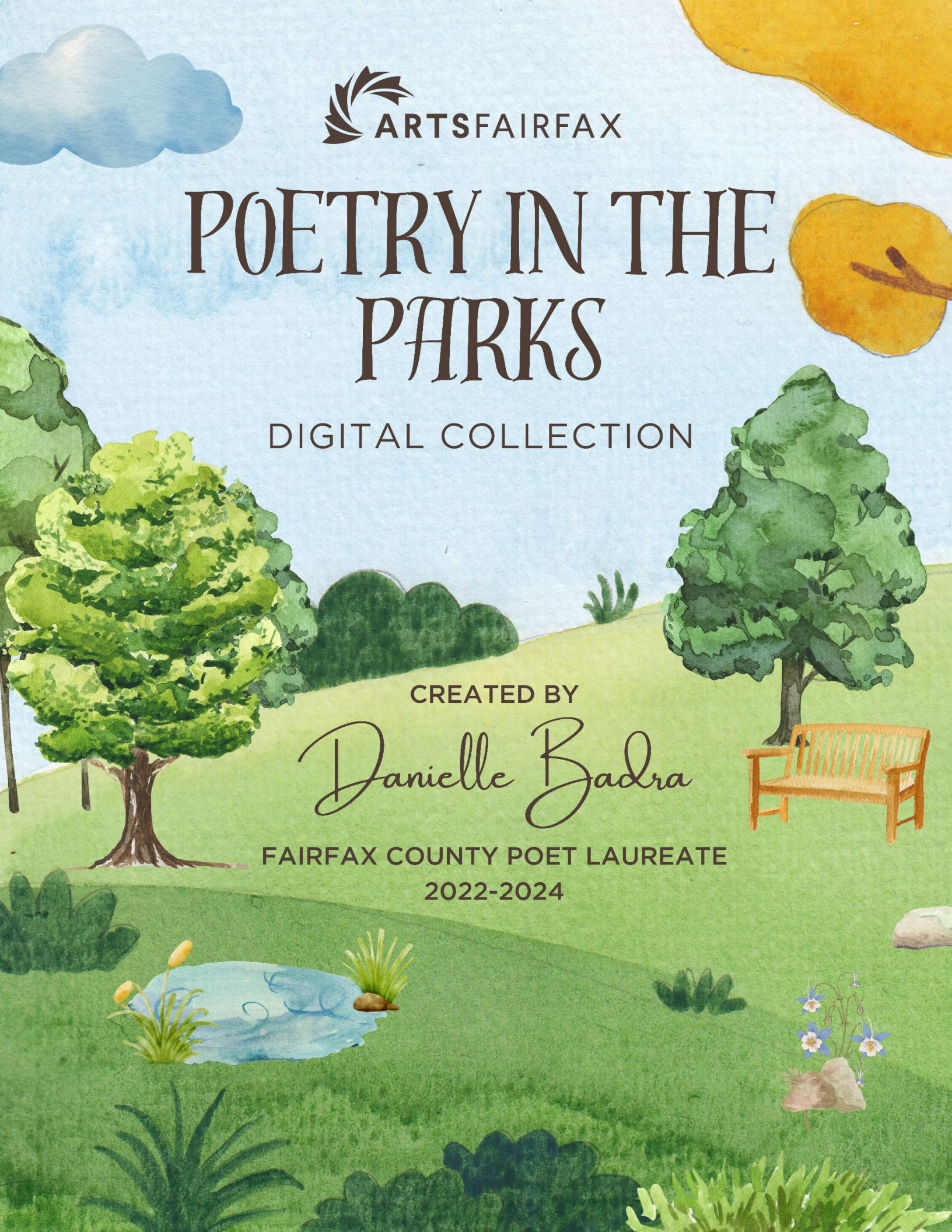
DIGITAL COLLECTION

CREATED BY

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FAIRFAX COUNTY POET LAUREATE

2022-2024



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# A Message from Danielle Badra, Fairfax County Poet Laureate 2022-2024

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The Poetry in the Parks Program was created by Fairfax County Poet Laureate Danielle Badra, sponsored by ArtsFairfax, and facilitated in collaboration with the Fairfax County Park Authority. The program included several poetry readings and workshops held at Fairfax County Parks from 2022-2024. We intended to bring together nature lovers and poetry lovers at local parks to explore the connections between nature and poetry. There were two Pride Month poetry readings, one at Ellanor C. Lawrence Park and one at Green Spring Gardens. One National Poetry Month poetry reading was held at Green Spring Gardens. We held a ghazal workshop at Ellanor C. Lawrence Park after the Arab American Heritage Month poetry reading. At Huntley Meadows, we held a guided nature tour and poetry workshop to incorporate the sights and sounds of the wetlands into our writing.

The most popular event was Poetry Beneath the Stars, hosted three times at the Turner Farm Park, with volunteer support from the Analemma Society. Poetry Beneath the Stars offered up poems inspired by the cosmos. We asked participants to gaze through telescopes at Saturn, the moon, Venus, star clusters, and more, while considering the ways in which the cosmos flows through us into our poems. We wrote poems by amber reading light surrounded by fireflies and the sounds of late summer crickets.

At each poetry reading and workshop, a call was made for participants to submit their poetry to a Poetry in the Parks Digital Collection. Below you will find poems that are inspired by the Poetry in the Parks workshops as well as the Fairfax County parks. These poems feature an astro-doggie, the moon, a turtle, dying stars, A.I., and Delilah's Bowl. Poems by children, teenagers, adults. A poem for a granddaughter. A poem for the parks. Poems that take on both traditional and experimental forms. These poems inspire me to go outside, find a quiet spot, sit down, and write. I hope that these poems will inspire you to do the same.

If you want to contribute to this collection, visit one of the poetry plaques available at Riverbend Park and Ellanor C. Lawrence Park. Each plaque has a poem and poetry prompts for you to respond to when visiting that park. Help us keep building this digital collection of poems inspired by the parks!

# A Message from Stuart Holt, ArtsFairfax President & CEO

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This Poetry in the Parks Digital Collection is a celebration of nature, community, and art. Launched in 2022, this series of programming has amplified and celebrated the literary arts in Fairfax County. From Danielle Badra leading poetry workshops, to presenting accomplished poets in poetry readings, Poetry in the Parks truly encouraged Fairfax County's creativity.

Thank you to Fairfax County for designating the position of the Fairfax County Poet Laureate and allowing ArtsFairfax the opportunity to support this role. To our partners at the Fairfax County Park Authority, thank you for sharing our passion for community engagement, and the generosity you have shown in hosting events at Ellanor C. Lawrence Park, Green Spring Gardens, Huntley Meadows Park, Riverbend Park, and Turner Farm Park. Finally, special thanks to our funders, your support made this program possible: National Endowment for the Arts, Virginia Humanities, Virginia Commission for the Arts, and the Dimick Foundation.

To Danielle Badra, Fairfax County Poet Laureate 2022-2024, thank you for the time, passion, and artistry. You have ignited our creativity and engaged the residents of Fairfax County through the art of poetry. ArtsFairfax is honored to continue your legacy through this Poetry in the Parks Digital Collection.

# Poetry in the Parks

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By Danielle Badra

a park is a history that spans habitats  
a pond inside a garden

explore a green gold mine of  
inspiration and horticulture

a stream valley  
open dawn to dusk

nestled inside  
a rain garden

undisturbed and tranquil  
these are reasons to visit

a haven  
a wonder

a park is home to  
wildflower-speckled life

wildlife on a river bend  
isolation and beauty

a complete  
place

a [redacted] Park is [redacted] a history that spans [redacted] habitats [redacted] a pond. Inside [redacted]

[redacted] a [redacted] garden [redacted]

Explore [redacted]

[redacted] a [redacted]

Green [redacted] gold mine of [redacted] inspiration [redacted] and [redacted] horticulture [redacted] a [redacted] stream valley

[redacted] open dawn to dusk.

[redacted] nestled inside [redacted] a rain garden [redacted]

Undisturbed [redacted] and [redacted] tranquil [redacted]. These are reasons to visit [redacted] a [redacted] haven [redacted] a [redacted] wonder [redacted]

[redacted] a [redacted] Park [redacted] is home to [redacted] wildflower-speckled [redacted] life. [redacted] wildlife [redacted]

[redacted] on a [redacted] River bend [redacted] isolation and beauty [redacted]

[redacted] a [redacted] complete [redacted] Place [redacted]

# Astro-doggie

---

By Cecilia Patrick

My doggie tried to bounce on the sun.  
He thought it would be very fun.  
Turns out he sizzled up  
and there ain't too much left of that poor pup.

When he tried to bounce on Mercury  
Out he flew in a hurry.  
Venus was too much like summer.  
It was too hot. What a bummer.

Bouncing on Earth was like a puddle.  
My doggie got much too confuddled.  
Off to Mars he had to go  
But where that was he did not know.

Bounding on Mars, he accidentally crushed  
the Curiosity Rover, smush, smush, smush.  
Catching the Comet Bus,  
he went through the asteroid belt in a rush.

Bouncing on Jupiter he went through  
the gas, holding his breath 'til he was blue  
He wanted to visit Jupiter's moons,  
but he also wanted to hear Saturn's tunes.  
And off he went, bouncing on its rings,

pausing only to with it sing,  
the tune of delicious doggie treats,  
warm doggie beds, cheese, and meat.

On Uranus and Neptune, he almost froze.  
This was no place for a doggie doze,  
for he was tired from bouncing all day.  
And he thought of his bed far, far away.

So the Big Dipper picked him up.  
Virgo bent down and kissed the lil pup  
and placed him in his cozy bed.  
“Good Night, Sweet Dreams, sleep well,” she said.



# Laughing with the Stars

---

By Suzanne Patrick

Stars staring down at me  
Twinkling  
I hope they're laughing  
Because I am  
There's the big dipper, my husband says  
And that's the little dipper.  
There's the medium dipper,  
And that's the chip and dipper.  
Ceci has told us a thousand times.  
Their names and why they are important.  
But to us they are simply bright and beautiful  
Like our children.

# At Last

---

By Suzanne Patrick

Peace

Quiet

Stillness

Stars

The World beneath my feet

God's arms around me

I am complete.

be to all

the Soul

inside and out

above

and above

Wonderful

# Stopping by the Moons on a meteor shower night

---

By Grant Gibbons

Whose moons are these, I think I know  
Her home is on the Planet though

My stopping here is clearly out of her sight  
As I observe her moons get pelted by meteorites

My starship's A.I. must think it odd  
To stop without a re-fueling pod

From Ursa Major to the far side of Lynx  
They are the only moons getting hit like from a firing squad

I turn to the A.I. warning light as it Blinks  
To confirm us being here is not flawed

The only other sight is just to the West  
The Planet of the moons, as we drift abroad

The moons stand defiantly, even as they are distressed  
But I'm behind schedule, and haven't progressed

And light years to go, before I rest  
And light years to go, before I rest

Note from the Author:

My mother read to me Robert Frost's "Stopping by the woods on a snowy evening" every night when I was a child. It was the first (and only) poem that I ever memorized. My poem was inspired by the prompts from "Fairfax Poet Laureate: Poetry Beneath the Stars at Turner Farm Park Observatory", as I took Robert Frost's poem, line structure, and rhyming scheme; and move it of our planet and into the stars.

# You Are a Star

---

By Kasey Hatch

a star never knows  
the impact they have,  
how many worlds they burned up,  
or frozen planets they thawed  
and brought to life,  
how much their gravity kept  
others close,  
or whose hearts they touched  
with their tender rays,  
visible on eternity after they  
have passed on,  
or what a massive void they  
create in the universe  
when they die

# Box Turtle in Summertime

---

By Aziza Bayou

I spotted her immediately:

    a child's delight as she crossed the paved path.

Her orange eyes, streaked neck,

    perfectly patterned carapace.

All 12 segments hard and bright.

    Each ridge a year, each scute a moon.

A half-chewed slug dangling from her toothless beak.

    Her shell could fit in the palm of my hand, but

I'm grown, and would no longer subject her to that.

    We are both more vulnerable lately.

Head aloft, hind claws pushing off the blacktop. Directly toward the thick shine

    of a poison ivy patch. Quickly engulfed in tangled green.

Our homes are near one another.

    Neither of us far from where we were born.

We might live the same duration, in the same wilderness.

    Ensconced in our boxes, both.

In fall she will search the leaf litter for what remains.

    Needn't busy herself with harvests, packing, and storing.

She will simply slow.

When in winter the air dries and light diminishes, she will become dormant.

I may wish to be.

In spring, if in abundance, somehow she and a male will find one another.

She will lay her clutch of eggs, in a secret place where they cannot be smelled or seen.

This is where she and I depart.

I leave to rejoin my family, to talk of this turtle and nuzzle my children's warm scalps.

I want to see her, but would never enter the poison ivy patch.

Later, when I looked for her again, I saw a steady rustle in the tall grass.

Note from the Author:

The main lines are the thoughts, and the indented lines are the feelings, thoughts arise from the overwhelming feeling/sense of kinship I have with this turtle.

# Shared

---

By Starpoppa Dan

We chased the “Messiers” across the night  
Savoring their feathery elusiveness  
Not to check some arbitrary box  
Choosing instead to fill our cups

Dissing the learned-old-men’s labels  
We found new names for our times  
Not unlike done by Greek Astronomers of old  
“Ptolemy’s Cluster” became “Delilah’s Bowl”

A thousand tribes have named the stars  
And the stars paid no heed to their hubris  
Creatures from Vega’s system care not  
What silly light-shifted humans call them

We watched the Milky Way scale the sky  
As it has for billions of years  
And will for billions more  
But tonight, we share the sky - our sky



# God of Flies

---

By Allister Nelson

And the fly, too, is beauty.  
God loves all things great,  
but moreso, the  
small.

Thousands of beetle gems,  
the soft breath of dragonfly  
wings upon silky river, spiders  
milking for their young, the jump  
of katydid, and the small

Tenacity

of roach.

E.O. Wilson found G-d  
in ants.

And maybe I

find happiness

in flies.



# Unmute

---

By Michael Reinemer

Silenced dirt, surrounded by invasives  
fenced by infrastructure  
compacted by people  
impoverished by “landscaping”

let’s return some of the life that first belonged  
in this tiny plot: trees that boast roots in  
this geography, native flora that flourish when  
embedded with their critter and insect kin

and leaves that stay where they lay  
sheltering and enriching so Nature can  
begin to have a say, at long last,  
in what comes next

# Posed as Landscaping

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By Michael Reinemer

Canvasbacks sooth the surface  
fog whispers low along the river  
herons pose as landscaping  
as the river's undercurrent  
like the thirst for freedom  
nudges mountains into  
the next time zone.



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