



Great Lakes Book Honored in 2023 Indie Book Awards

The Accidental Reef and Other Ecological Odysseys in the Great Lakes, by Michigan author Lynne Heasley (with illustrations and cover art by Glenn Wolff), has been named a top indie book by the Independent Book Publishing Professionals Group.

Published by Michigan State University Press, *The Accidental Reef* received a Grand Prize for Nonfiction in the 2023 Next Generation Indie Book Awards, and first place in the categories of education/academic and animals/pets. The book was also a 2022 Nautilus Silver winner for Lyric Prose. Awards judge Martha Kennedy commended Heasley for environmental storytelling that “is at once scientific and lyrical, humorous and deathly serious.”

In *The Accidental Reef*, Heasley takes readers on journeys through the ecological wonders and stewardship challenges of the Great Lakes. The St. Clair River (part of the international connecting waters between Lakes Huron and Erie) animates the first two parts of the book, as a center of action ecologically and historically. At the reef, said Kennedy, “Heasley establishes a position that resonates throughout the book. People and animals are inextricably—and unconsciously—involved in each other’s success in this world.”

Kennedy’s favorite chapter was “(Seeing + Knowing) x Time = Hope?”—“a beautiful chapter and an inspiring equation.” The chapter completes one underwater storyline featuring Port Huron scuba divers Greg Lashbrook and Kathy Johnson.

“It was both an honor and a huge challenge,” said Heasley, “to introduce these kaleidoscopic worlds emanating from a river through the Great Lakes, and from so many perspectives—like the physicality of lake sturgeon at an unknown spawning reef, to the history and modernity of the St. Clair River, to the Great Lakes’ epic natural abundance and equally epic and shocking resource extraction.”

“I’m gratified that the Next Generation Indie Book Awards found the Great Lakes as fascinating and important as those of us who live here and advocate for their care, especially because we’re in the middle of biodiversity and climate crises that demand new environmental relationships to restore our lands and waters.”

The Next Generation Indie Book Awards is the world’s largest book awards program for independent publishers. Separate from the major corporations dominating the book publishing industry, Indies include small presses, university presses, larger independent publishers, e-book publishers, and self-published authors