



Khaled bin Sultan Living Oceans Foundation

821 Chesapeake Ave. #3568 • Annapolis, MD 21403
443.221.6844 • LivingOceansFoundation.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A Tribute to the Ocean's Keystone Species: Announcing the Winners of the 2025 Science Without Borders® Challenge

ANNAPOLIS, MD — The Khaled bin Sultan Living Oceans Foundation is proud to announce the winners of the 2025 *Science Without Borders® Challenge*, an international student art contest that promotes ocean conservation. This year's theme, *Marine Keystone Species*, invited students to create artwork highlighting species that play a critical role in maintaining the structure and health of ocean ecosystems.

Open to primary and secondary school students 11-19 years old, the competition received an overwhelming response this year. Over 1,300 young artists from 75 countries submitted artwork—each piece a unique interpretation of a marine keystone species, from sea otters and mangroves to corals and sharks. These species may not always be the most numerous or well-known, but they have an outsized impact on their environment. Their presence helps maintain biodiversity, balance food webs, and support ecosystem resilience. If a keystone species is removed, the entire ecosystem could shift dramatically or collapse. Through their art, students explored these complex ecological relationships and made a compelling case for ocean conservation.

Artwork in the competition was judged in two categories based on age. The winning entries are not only beautiful pieces of artwork—they are a tribute to the animals that keep our ocean ecosystems in balance.



In the 15-19 age group, the first-place winner of the 2025 *Science Without Borders® Challenge* is Hyungjun Chin, with his enchanting piece, "The Keeper." An 18-year-old student from the Republic of Korea, Hyungjun's artwork depicts a sea otter eating sea urchins in a vibrant kelp forest, highlighting the otter's role in protecting the kelp from overgrazing.

"Winning the *Science Without Borders Challenge®* means a lot to me," said Hyungjun. "It feels incredibly rewarding to have my artwork recognized on an international level, especially when it's about a topic I care deeply about—the environment. I wanted my artwork to show how every species has a role and how protecting even one can save many."

Second place in the 15–19 category went to Kimin Kim of the Republic of Korea for her artwork, "Bridge Between Waters and Worlds." Her piece highlights the importance of mangrove trees as habitat for species both above and below the waterline, and their role in purifying the water for nearby seagrass meadows. Daniel Yu from Hackensack, New Jersey, claimed third place with "The Sea's Yggdrasil," a striking portrayal of mangroves as

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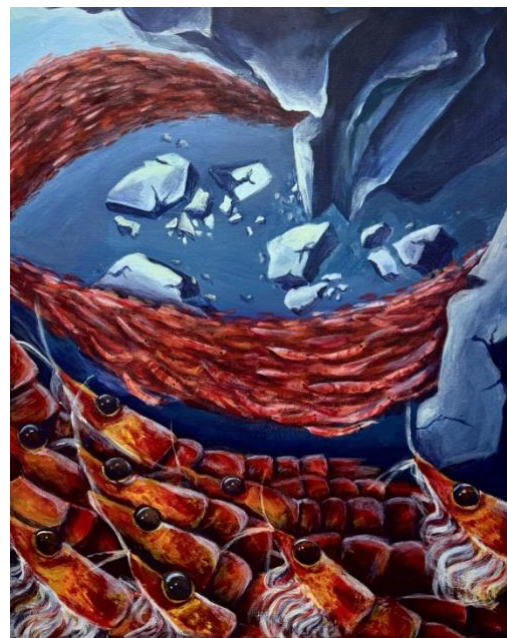
ecosystem engineers—stabilizing coastlines, preventing erosion, and filtering pollutants from the water to support surrounding marine life.



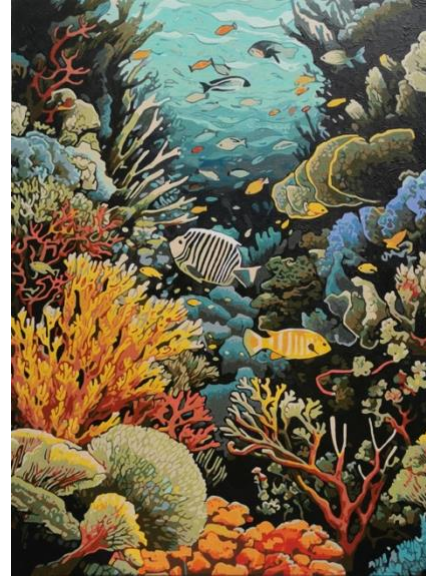
In the 11–14 age group, Gia Kim, age 12, from Los Angeles, California, earned first place for “Melting Grounds,” her powerful painting of krill—tiny but vital creatures that form the heart of the food web in the Arctic and Antarctic. Her artwork illustrates how the loss of such species, due to threats like climate change and ocean acidification, could lead to ecological collapse.

“I hope this piece raises awareness about our damaged ocean and what could happen if we continue to harm it,” said Gia. “This is our planet, and we can make a change, starting with our warming ocean.”

Second place in the 11–14 age group went to Kate Wang from Canada for “Seagrass Savior,” which illustrates how the large appetites of tiger sharks help protect fragile seagrass ecosystems. Third place was awarded to Annie Douglas from The Bahamas for “The Beauty of Coral Reef,” celebrating reef-building corals. Although coral reefs cover less than 1% of the ocean floor, they support roughly 25% of all marine species, including over 4,000 kinds of fish.



Each of the winners will receive scholarships of up to \$500 from the Khaled bin Sultan Living Oceans Foundation to celebrate their achievements and help them pursue their interests in art and ocean conservation.



Now in its 13th year, the *Science Without Borders® Challenge* continues to engage students in important ocean science and conservation topics through art. The Khaled bin Sultan Living Oceans Foundation created the competition to educate students around the world about the need to preserve our oceans and inspire the next generation of ocean advocates.

“The goal of this contest has always been to educate students about the ocean through art,” said Amy Heemsoth, Chief Operating Officer and Director of Education at the Khaled bin Sultan Living Oceans Foundation. “This year’s theme helped them understand how essential certain species are to the health of marine ecosystems. Their artwork serves as a powerful reminder of our responsibility to protect our oceans for future generations.”

The Khaled bin Sultan Living Oceans Foundation extends its heartfelt congratulations to all the winners and participants of the 2025 *Science Without Borders® Challenge*, and thanks them for using their creativity and passion to inspire positive change for our oceans.

For more information about the *Science Without Borders® Challenge* and the Khaled bin Sultan Living Oceans Foundation, visit www.LOF.org.

The Science Without Borders® Challenge:

The *Science Without Borders® Challenge* is an international student art contest run by the Khaled bin Sultan Living Oceans Foundation to engage students in marine conservation through art. The annual competition welcomes entries from all primary and secondary school students 11-19 years old. Scholarships of up to \$500 are awarded to the winning entries. Students and teachers interested in next year’s competition can learn more and apply at www.livingoceansfoundation.org/SWBchallenge.

Khaled bin Sultan Living Oceans Foundation:

The Khaled bin Sultan Living Oceans Foundation is a nonprofit environmental organization dedicated to protecting and restoring the health of the world’s oceans. Through science, outreach, and education, the Foundation works to conserve coral reefs and other tropical marine ecosystems, enhance ocean literacy, and inspire conservation action. As part of its commitment to *Science Without Borders®*, the Foundation provides educational resources and programs to empower people worldwide to protect our living oceans for future generations. Learn more at www.livingoceansfoundation.org.

Images of Winners and their Artwork: <https://adobe.ly/4mem5Js>

Available for Interviews:

Amy Heemsoth

Chief Operating Officer and Director of Education, Khaled bin Sultan Living Oceans Foundation

heemsoth@lof.org, +1 443-221-6844 #200

Media Contact:

Liz Thompson

Chief Communications Officer, Khaled bin Sultan Living Oceans Foundation

thompson@lof.org, +1 443-221-6844 #100