WINNER! The Grizzly Mother  
by Brett D. Huson, illustrated by Natasha Donovan, Highwater Press

This book weaves a story of a grizzly bear mother, from awakening from hibernation with her new cubs, to foraging for berries and salmon, and watching her cubs leave on their own journeys. The story walks the reader through the seasons of the Pacific Northwest -- and the corresponding months of the Gitxsan Nation. Stunning artwork entwines the bears with nature and the lives of the local indigenous people. Kids reading the book love learning words from the Gitxsan language as they follow the life of the grizzly mother.

FINALISTS:

Growing Up Gorilla  
by Clare Hodgson Meeker, Millbrook Press

For an endangered species, a newborn baby is a precious gift. But what happens when the new infant is rejected by its mother, who was herself was raised in captivity? “Growing up Gorilla” is the story of Nadira, a western lowland gorilla, learning how to raise her first infant in Seattle’s Woodland Park Zoo. From the first few precarious days, in which the zookeepers held the infant continuously, until the joyful moment when Nadira began caring for her child, this story illustrates of power of mothers-teaching-mothers, and the tireless care of humans working to preserve wildlife. Accompanied by intimate photographs of family life in Nadiri’s enclosure, this story will remind you of more familiar families, and the joy of childhood.

Hawks Kettle, Puffins Wheel And Other Poems of Birds in Flight  
by Susan Vande Griek, illustrated by Mark Hoffmann, Kids Can Press

One of two poetry books to be finalists this year, Hawks Kettle, Puffins Wheel is a delightful collection of poems, each addressing different ways birds move through the air. Twelve species are featured, and the poems use words associated with each species’ mode of flight (“kettle” and “wheel,” of course, but also “murmurate,” “dive,” and others) to evoke imagery of the birds. Every poem is accompanied by a prose paragraph
explaining the flight behavior, making this book both enjoyable and informational. Hoffmann's richly colored illustrations bring the poems to life (dare we say they “fly off the page”?). Hawks Kettle, Puffins Wheel is a treat for children, parents, and teachers alike, and was richly deserving of its place as a 2020 ABS Children’s Book Award Finalist!

Seashells, More Than a Home
by Melissa Stewart, illustrated by Sarah Brannen, Charlesbridge
This book takes examples of the shells that many people find on the shore and bring home. It matches each variation in how the shell is used to something people or other animals often do, like the lightening whelk prying open a clam and a person prying apart boards to prepare to mend a boat, or scallops flapping their shells like butterflies flap their wings. It is nicely illustrated, too with paired pages showing pictures of each. The only problem for the biologist is that the author suggests that shells do these activities when they are in the ocean, and of course it is the mollusc inside that not only makes the shell, it also manipulates it to create these actions.

Wild in the Streets
by Marilyn Singer, illustrated by Gordy Wright, Words & Pictures
Author Marilyn Singer was inspired to create lyrical images of animals once thought of as only living in the wild but now live in cities across the world. Her poems capture the spectacular uniqueness of each animal in their new residence; from mosquitoes, spiders, crabs, storks, falcons and tree frogs to coyotes, hyenas, deer and boar. The author includes a brief description about how each animal came to live in their urban home and along with vivid illustrations by Gordy Wright, portrays each animal through prose. This book is a delight to read and re-read with audiences both young and old.