

Southlands Contributor Guidelines

Founded in 2025, Southlands is a media company celebrating the wild South in all its forms—and the diverse ways Southerners connect with the natural world. Our flagship product is our biannual print journal.

We are accepting submissions for Issue No. 03. The pitching window will close on February 13, and we anticipate making assignments by the end of the month, with drafts due in June.

The theme for the issue will be (RE)BIRTH. The endless cycle of things recurring—that's one way of succinctly describing this thing we call “nature.” There is birth and rebirth over long timescales: over millions of years, carbon soaked into rock and spewed into the sky again; over thousands of years, cultures and civilizations that ebb and flow. There are annual cycles—rivers flushing snowmelt, seasons turning—and daily cycles, the sun rising again and again. For this issue, we want stories exploring how these rhythms have shaped the South. How are these cycles changing, given our shifting climate and politics? What do these patterns mean for those of us who venture into the wild? As always, though, we encourage you to reflect creatively on this theme.

How to Pitch

After reading about the sections below, please send your pitch to editorial@southlands.media, with “[freelance pitch - DEPARTMENT]” included in the subject line. For the department, please note if it’s a feature, a Field Notes story, or a Parting Shots story.

Be sure to make clear not just the subject or topic of your story, but how you will pull it off. How will the piece be structured? What is your reporting plan? Your writing should reflect the quality of the prose that the finished piece will contain. If we have not worked with you before, please include a brief bio and links to previous clips.

Note that due to the high volume of pitches, we are unable to respond to every submission. If you have not heard from us within two weeks, please assume we are unable to use your story. Alternately, if, for reasons of timeliness, you need a quicker response (or if a piece is a simultaneous submission) please notify us in your initial email.

Feature Well

This is where we go longer or deeper. Photo essays depicting some essential tradition. Deeply reported journalism. Thought-provoking essays.

Note that we have *very* limited remaining space in this issue's feature well; **we anticipate making one to two feature assignments during this submissions window**. What stories feel absolutely essential to someone who cares about experiencing the outdoors in the South? That's what we want to assign.

Features, which must be tied somehow to the issue theme, are generally 2,500 to 4,000 words and pay from \$1,000 to \$1,500 per contributor. We are open to pitches from photographers as well as writers.

Front of Book (“Field Notes”)

Our front-of-book stories typically run from 1,000 to 2,000 words and pay \$400. The conceit of this section is that it is an ongoing field guide, or an encyclopedia, educating readers the wild South. Each story is filed within a department, though the list of departments varies from issue to issue. Past departments have included:

- Cohabitant: a profile of a species in the South
- Larder: a look at something from the landscape that we eat
- Gear: history or details about the tools we use to experience the wild
- Landscape: a glimpse of a very specific place or a particular kind of landform

Note that we are always open to creating new departments. Dream big! We also typically run one front-of-book “Dispatch” that is more open in form—a report from an important event, an essential update on legal developments, etc.

The trickiest component of the Field Notes stories is that they need to be much *more* than a simple encyclopedia entry. The essay itself needs to be an experience of its own. Perhaps it's just very well written. Maybe there's a lesson we can learn, a philosophical insight, a new way of experiencing the world. Make that extra element clear in your pitch, please.

Note that “Field Notes” stories do not need to be pegged to each issue's theme.

End of Book (“Parting Shots”)

The final section of the magazine typically includes poetry, personal essays, and other ephemera that does not fit into the strict rubrics above. Note, however, that “Parting Shots” material ideally *should* be tied to the issue's theme. These stories can vary in length, but typically are less than 2,500 words, and payment ranges from \$250 to \$400, depending on the assignment. Note that for some kinds of essayistic material—and for any poetry and fiction (which we are open to considering, but have not yet found an ideal *Southlands* story—we may need to see a finished draft in order to make an assignment.

We typically assign one “Bookshelf” essay, digging into—and critically reflecting on—some writer or work of Southern literature. We are interested in expanding the scope of this department to include visual arts, television, film, and music as well. How do media depictions of Southern landscapes color our sense of the place? (Again, ideally these essays will have some tie to the theme.)