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**PRESS RELEASE**

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## North of Scotland Storyteller Wins Scottish Children's Fiction Prize

### Winner of Kelpies Prize 2009 Announced

#### Kelpies Prize 2010 Launched

Floris Books yesterday announced Janis Mackay's novel *Magnus Fin and the Ocean Quest* as the winner of the 2009 Kelpies Prize. The announcement was made at a packed award ceremony at the Edinburgh International Book Festival.

The Edinburgh-based publisher re-launched the Kelpies Prize in 2004. It is awarded annually to encourage and reward new Scottish writing for children.

Janis received a cheque for £2,000 on the night (see attached photograph). Her book will become the latest release in the Kelpies imprint published on October 22nd, 2009.

Joan Lingard, the author of *The Eleventh Orphan* and the *Kevin and Sadie* series, presented the award. She sympathised with the nervous nominees, sharing her experiences of being shortlisted for awards, and talked passionately about the importance of encouraging and remembering great Scottish children's authors. Storyteller Peter Snow brought the shortlisted stories alive by reading an extract from each of the manuscripts before, after a tense moment, Joan presented the award.

A shocked Janis expressing her excitement at winning the award. In a tearful speech she went on to thank her supporters especially her two nephews who she said "allowed her to practice stories on them."

Originally from Edinburgh, Janis now teaches Creative Writing at North Highland College and lives in Caithness. *Magnus Fin and the Ocean Quest* will be her first published novel.

Sally Martin, Commissioning Editor of Floris Books, commented: "This year we had our biggest ever number of entries and the standard was high, with some creative storylines and very good writing. All three shortlisted entries were excellent in their own ways. *Magnus Fin and the Ocean Quest* stood out for us – an action-packed fantasy adventure story with some lovely touches of humour and truly memorable characters."

The other shortlisted authors were Edinburgh-based Helen Magee, author of *Rory's Reivers*, and former Sociology lecturer Georgia Paton, author of *The Witching Stone*, who flew in from her home in Chile to attend the event.

#### Kelpies Prize 2010

At the same event, the 2010 Kelpies Prize was launched. Manuscripts are invited for submission by 26 February 2010. As usual, they must be set wholly or mainly in Scotland and be suitable for children aged 9 to 12. They may not have been previously commercially published, although the author may have been. The judges are still looking primarily for a cracking story with strong characters, believable dialogue and a compelling atmosphere.

For full rules and guidelines, see [www.florisbooks.co.uk/kelpiesprize](http://www.florisbooks.co.uk/kelpiesprize)

See over for info on the winning book and photographs

## Winner of the Kelpies Prize 2009

*Magnus Fin and the Ocean Quest* by Janis Mackay

There has always been something unusual about Magnus Fin, the school misfit. On his eleventh birthday Magnus throws a message in a bottle out to sea, wishing for a best friend and to be more brave – and he gets a lot more than he bargained for. Magnus discovers that he is half selkie – part seal, part human – and his selkie family urgently need his help.

Can Magnus save his new-found family from the evil force threatening all the ocean's creatures? And will he find the friend he has always dreamed of?



Janis Mackay

**Janis Mackay** was born and grew up in Edinburgh, but moved to London when she was nineteen to study journalism. After university, she travelled throughout Israel, Turkey and Greece, before returning to the UK to work as a voice coach and storyteller. She has an MA in Creative Writing and has held writer-in-residence posts in both Caithness and Sutherland. She currently lives in the north of Scotland, where she teaches creative writing and works as a writer and storyteller.



Joan Lingard (left) handing Janis Mackay (right) her cheque for £2,000  
(Photograph can be emailed on demand, in colour or b/w, up to a size of 15cm wide.  
Other photographs of the award ceremony also available.)

## About the Kelpies series

Floris Books revived the Kelpies imprint of Scottish novels in 2003 with the publication of Gill Arbutnott's *The Chaos Clock*. Since then, the imprint has gone from strength to strength, propelling Scottish children's literature firmly into the twenty-first century. Successes include *Chill* by Alex Nye, which won a Royal Mail Award for Scottish Children's Books in 2007, and most recently runner up in the Kelpies Prize 2007, *First Aid for Fairies and Other Fabled Beasts* by Lari Don, has been shortlisted for a 2009 Royal Mail Award.