

Hi. My name is **David Rosen**. Thanks so much for the opportunity to judge your nature photos again for the Padre Trails Camera Club! You all have such wonderful work and it's a pleasure to have the opportunity to view it. Let me take a minute or two and introduce myself to you and share some information about how I judged your images.

I'm a naturalist, environmental educator, and photographer, by passion and profession.

I've been photographing nature and wildlife for over 40 years. I started in my mid-teens because I was passionate about birds and birding. I love bird photography, however, my photographic interests range from high-magnification macro work with tiny aquatic invertebrates to broad sweeping landscapes and panoramas, plus everything in between.

My work has been published in numerous national magazines including *Audubon*, *Ducks Unlimited*, and *National Wildlife*. Many book publishers have used my photos including National Geographic Society, John Muir Publications, Grolier Educational Publishing, Chanticleer Press, and Falcon Press Books. Lots of conservation agencies and organizations have used my photos to illustrate their brochures, calendars, post cards, exhibits, reports, etc. I've also shot specific assignments for Audubon magazine, Tamron Inc., CA Rice Commission, Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E), and others. A couple springs ago, I had the pleasure of guiding a film crew from the BBC's Natural History Film Unit around the Sacramento area so they could get footage of Burrowing Owls.

My philosophies regarding nature and wildlife photography:

1. To be a better nature and wildlife photographer, be a better naturalist. The more you know about your subjects, the better you'll be able to represent them photographically.
2. No photo you get is worth jeopardizing the welfare of your subject. Be sensitive to an animal's "personal space" so you don't make it deviate from its normal behavior. For example, keeping a mother bird away from the nest too long can leave the chicks in the nest vulnerable to heat, cold, or predators. Making a bison in Yellowstone National Park during the winter move away from you because you're too close causes it to use valuable calories that it needs to stay warm and survive the winter. Try not to trample a hundred wildflowers to get a good shot of one of them.
3. No photo you get is worth jeopardizing your own welfare. Don't put yourself at risk by getting too close to wildlife. Even deer can cause serious injury and any animal will react aggressively if cornered, or if you get between an adult and its young. Know your subject and watch for signs that it's becoming agitated by your presence. Don't stand on the edge of a cliff just to get that perfect angle for a scenic shot. Rocks can crumble when you least expect it. Watch for Poison Oak, rattlesnakes, beehives, etc. Be aware of your surroundings and stay safe!

4. To be a better nature and wildlife photographer, look at more nature and wildlife photography! Your camera club is a great forum for this. See how others photograph certain subjects. If you see something you like, try it!
5. Be creative and have fun with your photography! Don't be afraid to try something new with your angles, composition, focal length, or subject matter. You need to keep it fresh to keep yourself excited about photographing.

Here's how I judged your images:

1. All photos were viewed on my 27", high-resolution, color calibrated, iMac. I have really good eyesight too.
2. I imported photos into Apple Aperture for viewing because I can see them full screen surrounded by nothing but a black background on the monitor.
3. I first evaluate a photo for its technical excellence regarding focus and exposure.
4. I evaluate the photo for its composition. I realize composition is a subjective concept and what appeals to one viewer may not appeal to the next viewer. That being said, I feel a well-composed image should not have distracting elements that take your eye away from the main subject. The main subject should be placed in the frame so as to best attract the eye to it (rarely dead center in the frame).
5. For nature and wildlife images, I place a lot of emphasis on the story-telling value of the image. A shot showing interactions between animals, or a critter engaged in an interesting behavior, will rank higher than a beautiful, yet static, portrait of the same animal.
6. For nature and wildlife photos, I typically place a great deal of value on the title of the image. In nature competition, cutesy titles usually aren't as appropriate as informative titles. However, given that this competition is "Backyard Nature," the titles may not be quite as important. I do feel strongly that the subject in the photo should be identified correctly. We now live in an age where the resources we have available at our fingertips to properly identify plants and animals leave little excuse for misidentified subjects.
7. Normally, I tend to consider the difficulty of creating a particular image. For example, being a wildlife photographer, I have hiked my butt off following Pronghorn for an entire day, sat many a morning in a freezing blind photographing waterfowl, driven myself crazy with high-magnification macro work on little invertebrates that just won't stay still, laid in a mosquito-ridden wet meadow waiting an hour for a lull in the breeze so I can get a wildflower photo, and rented a 40-foot boom lift so I can photograph hawks in a nest. It can be WAY easier to pull up to an overlook and snap a scenic shot at Yosemite. So, I tend to favor images that probably took more effort to create, whether they be macro, telephoto, or anything in between.

All that stuff about difficulty of getting the image being said, since this competition is "Backyard Nature," it's obviously open to wider range of subject matter that might not require as much effort to get a good shot. So, I definitely took that into account while critiquing your images.

Thanks again for the opportunity to enjoy and judge your beautiful images! I hope our paths cross in person out in the field someday. Happy shooting!
David