

2011 Nature #3 (Open)

Judge's Comments

Hello Padre Trails Photo Club:

For this competition you get two judges for the price of one! **Mich Avant** and **Dean Follis** have worked together professionally and remain friends for over 30 years. Their work includes independent short films, studio and outdoor photo shoots.

MICH AVANT – has had the pleasure of judging two prior competitions. I'm always impressed by the high quality and creativity of the club members. I am a graduate of the USC School of Cinema and have worked in digital photography for the last 12 years as a consultant and photographer.

DEAN FOLLIS – is a graduate of the Art Center College of Design and worked in advertising as well as Fine Art Photography for over thirty years. My clients include, Getty Museum, Bonaventure Hotels, Universal Studios, Disney and SeaWorld, Cannon and Playboy Magazine. I have also worked with photographic architectural signing and graphics with Follis Design whose clients include, San Diego Zoo, National Zoo, Waco Zoo, Colorado Springs Zoo, as well as numerous wild life centers.

I was fortunate to study with many Masters of Photography while attending Art Center, and continued to learn from their endless love of Photography. Sadly many have passed away leaving the following generations to pave their own path with photography.

I learned quickly that we improve through a critical review of our work. Not the compliments. Lastly and maybe most important, when photographing large wildlife, such as grizzly bears, make sure you can run faster than your assistant.

And now our comments...

Group A 2011 Nature#3
Returns: 9/7/11
(Judged by: Mich Avant & Dean Follis)

1. Blue heron loses trout Ardea herodias Oncorhynchus mykiss (Greg Magee)

A great nature story. Nice stop action. Photo somewhat muted due to mono tones of subject and overcast light. Water droplets form a nice visual, drawing viewer toward the fish. The awkward upside down position of the fish final moment adds to the shot as well.

2. Egret chase Ardea alba (Greg Magee)

Good image with nice composition. Having the image further to the right side of frame would give the birds more direction moving into open space. The backlight on the wings brings out the repetitive nature of the Egrets feathers in great detail. This along with the top Egret legs falling away from its body gives both Egrets a nice interaction with one another.

3. Great egret catches fish Ardea alba (Greg Magee)

A stunning shot. Lighting, compositing, depth of field outstanding. Detail of feathers, water ripples, and reflection captured brilliantly. I would suggest cropping out the small plant at the bottom of frame, it takes away from the reflection on the water surface. Make sure to leave open space at bottom.

4. Brown pelican landing Pelicanus occidentalis (Greg Magee)

Technically flawless. Focus exceptionally sharp. The Pelicans feet gently breaking the surface gives both direction and softness to an otherwise large bird. Both wing tips in almost perfect mirror image work great in the overall reflection. Cropping gives a nice feeling of a downward motion. This could be a cover on several publications.

5. Bald eagle with fresh kill (coot) (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) (Info not available)

Another great nature story. Excellent placement in frame. The exposure is good and the image is sharp. The eagle moving through both blue sky and surrounding bush, gives a great flow within the frame.

6. White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*)

A nice image. The deer is clearly the point of focus, however the vibrant green bush in foreground is too bright and too large thus distracts the eye. A tighter crop might solve this problem and bring the viewers attention to the deer's soulful eyes. If the deer was back a little bit it would allow you to crop most of it out.

7. Black Tail fawns watching each other's back (*Odocoileus hemionus columbianus*) (Ken Jones)

A nice image. Good colors and depth of field. Certainly shows the environment. Composition is a bit confusing. Having two fawns looking in different directions is hard to pull off. Wait for the fawns to move away from the gravel road then see what you get.

8. Buck with Veil. One morning, this black-tail buck brought the neighbor's deer netting with him when he came to browse the iceplant outside my window. (*Odocoileus hemionus*) (Brooks Lefler)

Terribly sad photo that really shouldn't be included in Nature competition, but rather Photojournalism since the "hand of man" clearly evident. The composition is ok, but would like to have included left ear and netting that's out of frame.

9. American Bumble Bee (*Bombus pennsylvanicus*) gathers pollen from sea daisy. (Ken Jones)

Colors and clarity jump out. Excellent contrast of the white flower against dark brown background. The bee almost becomes an afterthought since its activity isn't visible. This would have worked better with the bee in profile. That may also better display its his rear legs packed with pollen.

10. Burrowing Owl search for food in sand dunes, Sand City, Ca. (Jin Lambert)

Very striking photo. Great colors and dept of field. The markings of the bird are extraordinary and the owl's steely gaze captivating. The vibrant red hues of ice plant set off the bird's muted brown coloring. Excellent shot.

- 11. California Sea lions in cooling pod (*Zalophus californicus*). These sea lions are gathered together for protection as they are cooling off, with their flipper in the air after returning from a long trip in the open ocean in search for food. Location: Monterey harbor along the wharf. (Jim Lambert)**

Seal team six never looked so good. Fun shot with great composition and colors. Interesting to see the seals' social interaction. This was a hard photograph to pull off with so many sea lions in small area, but you did a great job.

- 12. Dove with Child. Mourning Doves (*Zenaidura macroura*) raised three broods in this nest built on our front porch lamp in 2007. Apparently, they'll nest anywhere -- this was certainly a pretty lumpy place to sleep, but they were undeterred by all the front door traffic. By the time the kids were almost ready to fledge, I could get pretty close. (Brooks Lefler)**

Nesting birds are difficult as they tend to nest on or near man made structures. A new view, tighter and maybe defusing the foreground with some small branches and leaves might hide the lamp post and give more of a "natural" feel.

- 13. Eared grebe with perch (*Podiceps nigricollis*) (Info not available)**

Excellent exposure and sharp focus. Really shows the environment. Nice placement in frame. Particularly noteworthy is reflection of bird's head in water. However, the dirty water also distracts from the subject. A little more movement in the water would help make a more artistic reflection.

- 14. Fossil Falls Chuckwalla basking (*Sauromalus ater*) (Info not available)**

Interesting use of environment to compliment the form of your subject. The lines of the Chuckwalla flow along the rock fracture. Nice use of found art.

- 15. Giant Devil's Flower Mantis Nymph (*Idolomantis diabolica*) (? Non in mailbox)**

Great colors and detail. The simple background without any clutter works well with the very complex Mantis. You have too much space below the main twig. Crop out about 1/3 of the twigs and bring more attention to your Mantis. Think of your photograph in four sections, does each section tell a story? You'll see that the bottom two quarters have little to no content.

16. Great Blue Heron-Ardea herodias-after catching gopher while it already has a gopher in its throat, Monterey California (Peter Monteforte)

A simple but powerful image, maybe if the gopher were a little less graphic. A few seconds later might have missed some of the harshness. This shot could be a bit much for children.

17. Great egret bathing (Ardea alba) (Info not available)

Interesting photograph, lots of action, works well as a series of three or more. Images tell a story start to end. Also works well in a layout of several similar images. Very nice.

18. California Ground Squirrel (Otospermophilus beecheyi) blends in with habitat while enjoying a stem-ka-bob. (Ken Jones)

A little tighter shot would help separate the image; the yellow flowers help frame this guy. Good use of nature to help bring the subject out.

19. Gulf Fritillary-Agraulis vanillae on Beach Daisy (John Avera)

Excellent cropping! The long bare flower stems draw the viewer up to the butterflies giving the feeling of flight. Very nice color and background. The flower adds to the photograph without taking away from the butterflies.

20. Harbor Seal - Phoca vitulina - after giving birth to pup which is still in embryonic sack, Pacific Grove California (Peter Monteforte)

I'd like to see the baby closer to the mother, forming more of a bond. Moving to the side would make them appear much closer. Nice timing, the newborn -- maybe less than 30 min. old. Nice work!

21. Honey Bee Gathering Pollen (Apis mellifera) (Info not available)

This needs some additional color to separate the flower and bee. Lots of yellow, but still interesting.

22. Immature bald eagle coming in for the kill. (Haliaeetus leucocephalus) (Info not available)

Powerful image, stands alone in neutral background, would prefer to see more of the wing spread.

23. Lenticular Cloud Owens Valley (Mary Ann Avera)

Very dramatic use of negative space. The earth harsh landscape beautifully balanced by the threatening sky. You can feel the wind across your face with this image. Interplay between vibrant blue sky, white clouds and reds & greens of the earth are stunning. Great shot!

24. Black crowned Night Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) feeding chick, Point Lobos State Park, California (Peter Monteforte)

The yellow flowers and second Heron frame the nesting site nicely, however the background is somewhat cluttered. (Jim Lambert)

25. Oregon Junco, immature in nest (*Junco hyemalis*). Found in Moose Head firn plant located in the back yard. (Jim Lambert)

The birds are somewhat lost in nest. More direct light may help add some snap to this photo. But good attempt at a very tough subject.

26. California Sea Otter - *Enhydra lutris* - with Pup eating Spiny Lobster, Monterey California (Peter Monteforte)

Nice Otter Couple. I like the head to head position in this photograph. The shot works well with both Otters looking in different directions. Looks a little staged with both Otters eating lobster at the same time.

27. Pacific tree Frog (*Hyla regilla*) (John Avera)

One of the best photographs of the group. Excellent cropping. The leaves form a nice visual along with the frog. The leaves on the right gently bring you back into the frame. Very nice work.

28. Sky Lupine - Toro Park (*Lupinus nanus*) (Info not available)

Nice use of open space as a framework to display the subject. Colors work well and the soft light adds to the peaceful image. Adding a white horse grazing in the meadow would bring a nice separation... you did bring a white horse, didn't you?

29. Ten-lined June Beetle (*Polyphylla decemlineata*) (Info not available)

Good position of Beetle on leaf. Could use a bit of color in background to soften the green leaf. Focus seems a little soft.

30. Trumpett Spiders in action with each other (*Atypoides riversi*) (Info not available)

Are the spiders in the wild or on a sheet of paper? They need a more natural environment, some wood chips or log would help out. Without an environment to relate them to, only an arachnologist can love them.

31. Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*) eating gumboot chiton, (*Cryptochiton stelleri*) (Info not available)

Confusing shot. Hard to see the birds when both heads are looking down. Sometimes you can make a little noise to make them look up. You might catch one looking over the others shoulder and frame both birds together. Then again, they might take off and you're left with two clams. In any case, the birds will soon return to the clams.

32. Young elephant seals practicing battle. (*Mirounga angustirostris*) (Ken Jones)

Juvenile Elephant seals practice fighting when young, as they age they engage in long violent battles. Maybe wait until they are moving toward each other to get a greater sense of movement.

1 st .	Brown pelican landing (Photo #4)	Greg Magee
2 nd .	Great egret catches fish (Photo #3)	Greg Magee
3 rd .	Pacific tree Frog (Photo #27)	John Avera
HM	Lenticular Cloud Owens Valley (Photo #23)	Mary Ann Avera
HM	Burrowing Owl (Photo #10)	Jim Lambert
HM	California Sea Otter - <i>Enhydra lutris</i> - with Pup (Photo #26)	Peter Monteforte
HM	Gulf Fritillary-Agraulis vanillae (Photo #19)	John Avera

Group AA Nature #3
Returns: 9/7/11
(Judged by: Mich Avant & Dean Follis)

1. **A Bird's Eye View Cyanocitta Stelleri This Stellar's Jay had a bird's eye view of us walking through his park at Lake Tahoe. (Carol Silveira)**

Nice placement in open space. The darker Jay jumps right out at you, good use of contrasting colors. The birds spacing looks to fit the golden rule, very nice.

2. **A mass of Matilija Poppies outside Yosemite National Park (Jared Ikeda)**

This would be a good use of more rather than less, a rolling sea of white and Yellow would make a strong image.

3. **Banana Slug (Ariolimax columbianus) Redwood Forest (Carol Fuessenich)**

Great colors and detail in your slug. UCSC would be proud of your work.

4. **Birds of a Feather Pelecanus Occidentalis Brown Pelicans resting on the rocks in Pacific Grove (Carol Silveira)**

The grouping adds a nice warmth to the cool mono tones of pelicans and rocks. This may have been lost with a lesser number of pelicans.

5. **Blue-Heron-Ardea-Herodias-under-fishermans-wharf (Chris Johnson)**

Lovely solitude of the single bird, the broken wood and cables are unfortunate as they distract from the bird. The light is just great, but may have too much of human form. Would work in other applications such as Pictorial competition since the pier represents the "hand-of-man."

6. **Butterfly (Speyeria aglaja) feeds on a Japanese Camellia (Camellia japonica) (Gerald Gifford)**

Good composition and powerful placement, the soft mottled background add To your image. Very nice touch.

7. **Long-eared Owl (Asio otus) "Cloaked Owl" (Karen Schofield)**

Our next cover shot, strong aggressive posture but posed in a field of softer pine needles. Good color, good overall setting. Excellent shot.

8. Cobs Lily (*Darlingtonia Californica*) Redwood Forest (Carol Fuessenich)

Simple and beautiful. No more needed. Very nice

9. A California Condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*) flies by on the California Coast. (Ben Grasmuck)

Very cool close up. Perfectly captures power and majesty of the condor in flight. Depth of field almost has 3D quality, but needs more supporting images to establish a story line.

10. Desert Paintbrush (*Castilleja chromosa*) growing near Mono Lake (Jared Ikeda)

Wonderful soft colors, color repetition in background adds to a strong composition. The background orange flow very nice left to upper right.

11. Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) screeches to slow approaching Brewer's Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*) (Gerald Gifford)

Nice stop action. The smaller bird appears as bold as his much greater adversary.

12. A dragonfly (*odonata anisoptera*) rests on a branch in Bay City Texas (Ben Grasmuck)

Striking, stunning, beautiful. Focus is perfect. Colors are amazing. The detail in the dragonfly's wings makes the shot. Excellent work.

13. White-eye on the persimmon Japanese White-eye (*Zosterops japonicus*) (Gerald Gifford)

Very nice feeding shot. The colors work well. Background colors give good reference to the environment.

14. Falling rhododendron petals, *rhododendron macrophyllum* (Chris Johnson)

Most of the flower pedals have fallen off leaving just one half of a flower. Nature photography is at its best when the subject is also at its best.

15. Fighting Elephant Seals, *Mirounga Angustirostris* (Chris Johnson)

Top notch nature story. Another great moment captured. Wide field of view gives us a good understanding of a playful environment. Very nice lighting form beautiful shadows on the elephant seals.

16. Gleaning Pollen.jpg Honey Bee (*Apis mellifera linnaeus*) on a Calla lily (*Zantedeschia aethiopica*) (John Drum)

Interesting placement of flower in frame. Unfortunately, the flower has a bruise on the front left which takes away from the flowers natural lines. Also, the shadow of pistil on back of lily is distracting. Having the bee come out of the flower toward the camera would give more depth.

17. Grazing at Twilight.jpg Black Tailed Deer(*Odocoileus hemionus columbianus*) (John Drum)

Eerie and powerful. Nice highlights on the deer's antlers. Great nature story of deer at night. Colors are striking but flash in eye of buck is distracting.

18. Hawking Success.jpg, Pacific Slope Flycatcher(*Empidonax difficilis*) (John Drum)

The branch is a little heavy for this little fellow, but his position is nice leading us across the photo. The bird's natural color sits well with the natural background.

19. Hawksbill Turtle on Cozumel Reef, (*Eretmochelys imbricata*). Photographed at 65 foot depth. (Karen Schofield)

Turtle washed out from flash. Darken up the photo would be better. Very nice interaction between the turtle and the reef.

20. Western Honey Bee (*Apis mellifera*) collecting nectar on Lizardtail (*Eriophyllum staechadifolium*) along Big Sur Coast Road. (Elke Ikeda)

Nice to see the face of a bee! Strong image of bee collecting pollen. Very nice placement of flower leading into the frame that presents the bee to the viewer. Unopened flowers in fore and background give excellent depth to the photograph.

21. A common European honeybee (*apis melifera*) polinates a netctarine blossom (*prunus persica*) along the blossom train in Fresno County California (Ben Grasmuck)

This bee's rump shot actually works. He brings us with him into the flower. The colors are fantastic with wonderful combination of the flower's pedals and stems at intersecting angles. Top notch bee!

22. Leafy Sea Dragon (Joni Zabala)

Very nice light and composition with incredible detail. Good image flow throughout the photograph.

- 23. A mother and baby gray whale (*Eschrichtius robustus*) migrate past the California Coast on their long trek from the birthing grounds in the Bay of California, Mexico to Alaska. Big Sur, California. (Ben Grasmuck)**

Amazing photo that captures the grace and beauty of the creatures. Composition works nicely. Camera movement softens image in wonderful way. Would make great application for gift or note cards. Would make nice addition to wildlife series.

- 24. Marmot on Mount Dana (Joni Zabala)**

Razor sharp detail. Almost expect the little Marmot to move.

- 25. Matilija Poppies (*Romneya coulteri*) along Merced River outside Yosemite National Park (Elke Ikeda)**

Light and focus are excellent. Composition gives a nice flow across the frame. A delicate step upwards. Nice texture on white pedals not easy accomplishment.

- 26. Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) resting on leaf in Foster Garden's Butterfly Garden (Honolulu, HI) (Elke Ikeda)**

Good detail and nice composition. The lower green leaf is placed perfectly in the frame to draw us across in the direction of the butterfly and the second darker leaf draws us back into the center of the photograph.

- 27. Moon Jelly Fish (*Aurelia labiata*) Coast Guard Station May 2011 (Carol Fuessenich)**

Beautiful warm tones to the colors and help highlight the jelly fish. The detail in the jelly fish is amazing. Very nice.

- 28. Pussy Willow *Salix discolor* While hiking in the forest next to Lake Tahoe, we saw these plants in abundance. It was a sign that spring was near and a promise of new life and new beginnings. (Carol Silveira)**

The use of background to highlight the pussy willow is well done. Shot would be a little more striking if the pussy willow was in sharp focus.

- 29. Oaks and Sun In Smokey Air (Joni Zabala)**

Disturbing but beautiful. Excellent composition and use of light. Color and hues are excellent. Very nice work but the plowed field and fence in lower right of frame may reveal too much human intrusion for nature competition.

30. Sea Otter Grins, *Enhydra lutris* (Karen Schofield)

Fun shot. Loving interaction of marine life.

31. Put your left foot in and shake it all about Marbled Godwit (*Limosa fedoa*) (Gerald Gifford)

A great nature story. Composition and colors are very strong. Warm and inviting earth tones compel the viewer to join in the dance. Wetlands and reflection of Godwit add nice balance to shot.

32. Raindrops on a California Lady's Slipper *Cypripedium Californicum* (Chris Johnson)

Amazing focus and attention to detail. Water droplets add refreshing touch to lady slipper. Good composition and image placement in frame.

33. Curious Red Crested Cardinal (*Paroaria coronata*) - a Brazilian immigrant in Hawaii (Jared Ikeda)

Shot is a colorful but a little static. Could use interaction with plants, flowers or another bird. The cardinal is very striking.

34. Richardson's Geranium (*Geranium richardsonii*) growing in a canyon near Mono Lake (Jared Ikeda)

Subtle beauty. Muted hues are quite stunning. Depth of field gives nice mottled background.

35. Short Beard.jpg Juvenile Wild Turkey(*Meleagris gallopavo*) (John Drum)

Nice detail of a juvenile turkey. The background leaves something to be desired. Would like to see more of an open, foraging environment.

36. Caribbean Spiny Lobster (*Panulirus argus*). A huge spiny lobster walked out from under the reef to admire his reflection in the glass dome that protects my underwater camera. (Karen Schofield)

Lobster is lost in busy environment. Could use some separation, maybe just a field of blue behind lobster with hint of reef would be nice.

37. Yellow Throat (*Phacelia fremontii*) at Mono Lake Basin (Elke Ikeda)

Very nice shot. Nice positioning of the flowers gives a unique composition not usually presented to the viewer. Excellent color accents well placed in composition.

38. Zebras on the Range Hearst's land 2011 (Carol Fuessenich)

Nice nature story. Interesting scenery. Colors and lighting are strong. Zebra stripe pattern add a nice contracting effect to the wild grass.

1 st - Long-eared Owl (Asio otus) "Cloaked Owl" (Photo #7)	Karen Scholfield
2 nd - Marbled Godwit (Photo #31)	Gerald Gifford
3 rd - A mother and baby gray whale (Photo #23)	Ben Grasmuck
Honorable Mention – Desert Paintbrush (Photo #10)	Jared Ikeda
Honorable Mention – Butterfly (Speyeria aglaja) feeds on a Japanese Camellia (Photo #6)	Gerald Gifford
Honorable Mention – Marmot on Mount Dana (Photo #24)	Joni Zabala
Honorable Mention - A common European honeybee (Photo #21)	Ben Grasmuck