

PTCC13 – NATURE #3 - GROUP A SUBMISSIONS

01. Bald Eagle – Immature *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* on Kill with Waiting Turkey Vultures
I saw the title before the image and I was anticipating something wonderful. Unfortunately, I cannot see the eagle feeding nor the kill very well. The waiting turkey vultures are captured quite well and I like how they are waiting on either side of the eagle. Birds just don't like to cooperate with us photographers!

02. Big Wave in the Sun

Nice wave capture. I like the foam and curl and the bit of color spectrum caused by sunlight hitting water spray is nice too. This is a stronger candidate for Pictorial in my humble opinion, especially since your title is not geared toward Nature. Try mentioning waves and tidal action caused by the moon, wind and currents if you want this to fit the category.

03. Brown Pelican (*Pelicanus occidentalis*) in Flight

Here's a shot that is a bit too tightly cropped since the pelican is flying. A bit of room on the left and bottom could help. I am not loving the exposure. The background is a strange white and the yellows of the head and red tones of the beak are almost gone. The image is bordering on monochrome but not quite and there is quite a lack of detail in the underbody.

04. California Condors (*Gymnogyps californianus*) After Mating

Whether this is just after mating or not, the moment captured is quite good. The heads together and even the shadows of the condors nicely formed make this a good capture. The ocean way down below shows us the precarious habitat. Images that make you want to know more are very effective. Knowing how rare they are, it makes me want to know how you got there, should you be anywhere near them (marine mammals have very strict protection), and how do you know this is just after mating? The band (#51) is allowed in Nature for those who don't know. The only distractions that are not in your control are the out of focus grasses on the left side.

05. Common Garter Snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis*) Eating Perch

Well, I don't know what to say. This is both a good capture for its Nature story, yet sadly it needs to be Disqualified! You are in Group A and should know better. There is obvious cloning (a bit sloppy at that) at top and bottom right. What was in the original that you felt you needed to remove/change it? I must also say that the rest of the post processing has left the lighting looking too unnatural. I know I've been giving advice on getting details out of the shadows but I mean it to leave the image more natural looking than this.

06. Cow & Calf Gray Whales (*Eschrichtius robustus*) in the Giant Kelp (*Macrocystis pyrifera*) Forest

I love the lighting and the composition here. The kelp patterns at the bottom and right side are very pleasing. The position of the whales is nice – both the body positions to each other and within the frame. Makes me want to know if you were on high land or in flight to get this!

07. Devil Mantis Nymph (*Idolomantis diabolica*)

I found out that this "Devil's Flower Mantis" is a master of mimicry and camouflage – so obvious here! I would definitely add some of that information to your title! You really show the ability here with foliage that matches so well, that I had to look hard to distinguish the two! Lighting is excellent with the black background making for no distraction. Out of curiosity, was

this shot in a native habitat (parts of Africa, I believe) or somewhere in the U.S.?

08. Eared Grebe (*Podiceps auritus*) with Perch Minnow

Good angle on both the grebe and the fish. Your crop shows you chose a good composition while eliminating what would not add to the Nature story.

09. Elephant Seals in Pre-mating Ritual

I don't think you could ask for a better angle to show this large male on top of the smaller female. The large proboscis and the flipper both straddled over her has a oddly tender look, despite the thought of thousands of pounds on top of such a smaller body!

10. Florida White Butterfly (*Appias drusilla*)

There is some good detail here and well focused body of the butterfly. The angle chosen has 2 problems for me: First, the only bright, orange flower in the whole picture is distractingly near and parallel to the body of the butterfly. Second, the moment of capture has the closer wing practically edge-on, giving the insect a body shape imbalance. Always try to take lots of images with different angles if possible before the subject flies away.

11. Golden Globe Lily (*Calochortus amabilis*)

Compositionally, you could not have a much better display of open flower, budding and leaf and stem array. Tones are very nice too.

Even though you have a shallow depth of field, I find the background bokeh conflicts with the subject. For this reason, I would crop in tighter (from the top) from just above the loop in the flower stems down to just a tad below the tip of the downward turned leaf. That way, my attention really goes to the larger version of the main subject with focus on the flowers and how they develop, rather than the background. Oh, and don't forget to add "Detail" to the title if you did this!

12. Great Blue Heron Rests While Bathing

It's a beautiful capture. Clarity, color and exposure on the heron is wonderful. The water drops and partial ripples with reflections is a plus too. Background shows the environment well without much of a distraction.

13. Great Egret (*Ardea alba*) Against Cattails (*typha*)

You filled the frame with this egret and this one works pretty well without leaving much space on the left for it to fly into, but that should be a consideration. It has a more graceful appearance here because it hasn't tucked its neck back very far as they do when in flight. Lighting on the wings is very nice but the head and neck could benefit from a little 'careful' dodging. A few of the reeds are a bit distracting or overlapping the egret, but that is a difficult remedy since cloning and removing are not allowed here.

14. Great Egret (*Ardea alba*) in Flight

I do like the gentle shading on the heron, especially the neck area.

This however could stand quite a bit of cropping. There are distracting branches, leaves and even the partial reflection all around the subject that do not help the image at all. I think some of the unwanted elements however are too close to the subject to eliminate for this competition, but if you like the image for your own enjoyment, clone, heal out and fine tune this as much as you like.

15. Gull Eating Humboldt Squid

Good photo. You managed to get a great angle on this scene without it flying away, although I think it would be reluctant to abandon this prized meal! Nice exposure and a fine moment where the beak is tugging on the squid. Only negative criticism here is the tight crop on the right. The dark strands of seaweed on the border present a visual tension and it looks like a tail feather was clipped too.

16. Male Elephant Seal Bites Female While She Protects Pup

Great capture! Not only is the title description accurate, but the 3 main subjects are all shown in sequence and with expressions that would tell the story without reading the title! The bewildered and/or frightened look of the pup is powerful enough, but the female with open mouth is fantastically caught too, Even an almost smug look of the male (now I'M doing that Anthropomorphizing thing too!) is interesting. Steven Spielberg would have a hard time with his actors getting this as perfect. Nice even lighting too. BRAVO!

17. Morning on the Water Lily Pond

You have some nice elements here but the overall composition and your title scream "Pictorial". This could use some cropping. The top of the image is not strong and cropping that to show us the flowers and unopened bud larger is my suggestion. The biggest problem is the leftmost flower. It is not sharp like the others, but cropping wouldn't be clean enough. It looks like it comes down to leaving only about 1/4th of the original image with the right front flower at or near the center. Then of course, your title should be something like, Water lily pads and flowers (Latin name optional).

18. *Mycena haematopus* and *Aminita parcivolva*

I love the two main subjects. Seeing those smaller fungi growing out of a pine cone is very interesting. Getting low to the ground was a good choice. I think you are trying to include too much however. KISS – Keep It Simple S_____ usually works best. I suggest cropping the top and a bit of the left side. Keep us looking at the main subjects.

19. Nursing Harbor Seal (*Phoca vitulina*)

Once again I will invoke the suggestion of using Shadow/Highlight or a similar way to bring out some detail in the darker areas. It is not easy to see the seal nursing or it's facial details. I checked it out in Photoshop and managed to get a little bit better rendering. Watch for little things like clipping the young one's tail on the right.

20. Pelicans (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) Over Breaking Wave

The pattern of the 4 pelicans in similar wing extension over the arcing spray of the wave makes this a 'pretty' shot. This may be a better candidate for Pictorial however, since you don't mention anything about how pelicans fly in a pattern or anything else that could relate it more to a Nature story. The overall image is a bit on the dark and dreary side and could use a little boost in exposure or some post processing to render details a bit better. It has a stormy look and perhaps that was the weather when this was made. There is a pattern to the upper part of the photo that suggests that this may have been taken through glass. It is not consistent like 'digital noise' but is a detraction nevertheless.

21. Storm Over Arches National Park

Details of the wood and the shapes of it up close are interesting but you chose to mention a storm and nothing about what species of tree this is! The storm clouds are not nearly as eye-catching as this tree. I also think the composition is not as strong as it could be. I don't like the bottom crop that just misses showing us the bottom of the trunk meeting the ground, and the ultra wide angle lens stretched the left side of the tree as to appear unsharp and distorted. Could you have stepped back a little?

22. Wood Ducks Flying (*Aix sponsa*)

Good details, good composition. Coloration and markings on the 2 sexes is easily seen. You managed to just get the 2 birds separated and left space for them to fly into on the left. I would strongly recommend stating that this is a female (top) and male (bottom) in your title. I only wish that the wings of the male were caught at a different moment. The left wing is barely seen and the left one is bit too blurry. A faster shutter speed when photographing birds flying is usually a good thing unless you are purposely trying to show the motion of the wings – not an easy thing to do. I've deleted many an image for my own failures.

23. Yellow Patch Mushroom (*Amanita flavoconia*)

A decent capture. I think I would have tried bracketing exposures. The mushroom is a bit on the light side and the little yellow clusters on the stem are hard to see. I would definitely crop the upper part of the image. I think the lighter object in the 2 upper corners is tree or branch but they do not help the competition and pull my attention. Also, cropping would make the mushroom larger and easier to see more detail.

24. Yellowstone National Park Bison Stare Down (*Bison bison*)

I think the Bison won the stare down because this image is suffering from camera shake! Sorry to say, it's not sharp at all and I also don't like that the extra bit of fur under the chin is clipped off. It's pretty easy to get bison images at Yellowstone so hopefully you will have another chance or already have better ones.

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6th HM: 12. Great Blue Heron Rests While Bathing

5th HM: 18. *Mycena haematopus* and *Amanita parcivolvata*

4th HM: 08. Eared Grebe (*Podiceps auritus*) with Perch Minnow

3rd HM: 15. Gull Eating Humboldt Squid

2nd HM: 09. Elephant Seals in Pre-mating Ritual

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