

Padre Trails Camera Club Nature Open Competition

Judge: David J. Gubernick/www.rainbowsprite.com

Group A

Winners:

1st Place: Egret and sardine - this is a striking image. The S-shape of the egret's neck and head and its bill directs the viewer to the sardine. The cross-line created by the sardine's position in the mouth with its fins almost parallel to the bill creates tension and a strong graphic element. Both egret and sardine are well lit and sharp. Excellent image. A little bit more room on the left side of the neck would reduce the sense of the egret almost being cut-off or too close to the frame edge.

2nd Place: Juvenile Green Heron - An excellent image of the juvenile heron with one foot captured in mid-step. The color, even lighting, and sharpness of the heron make this an image with impact; well-composed; gives the feeling of being there waiting for it to move.

3rd Place: Otter resting in kelp - the combination of the placement of the otter in the frame and its reflection in the water create a lovely image. Good lighting. Detail in the otter's face stands out.

Honorable Mentions:

California gull with sea star - Good composition created by the almost square cropping and where the gull is placed in the frame. The angle of view works well because of where the sea star is in the gull's mouth. Even soft lighting allows more detail to show, although the light is a bit flat - a small amount of contrast adjustment would enhance the image as would darkening down the bottom left corner.

Haliotis rufescens - Nice composition and colors with even lighting; light colored pebbles in upper left pulls my eye away from the lovely shell; cropping off the left a bit would help with that as would a bit more sharpening to bring out the details in the shell.

Mushroom with bones of small carnivore - Lovely arrangement of elements in the frame, almost looks set-up because of how well the bones are placed and separated from other elements in the picture; good even lighting and colors. A bit more sharpening would enhance the details and create a bit more contrast and "pop."

Pair of Green-winged Teal - Lovely composition. The reflection of the log and teals increases the impact of this image. Nice graphics created by the shape of the log, placement of the ducks and reflections in water. Even lighting enhances the overall image. Could use a bit more sharpening.

Red-Tailed Hawk - excellent portrait against a nice blue sky, well composed with head turned and catch light in its eye. Beak would benefit from a bit more sharpening.

Yosemite's El Capitan in Winter - panorama format (whether at time of shooting, combining images, or cropping) is a good choice here. Low angle of view works well, except for the cutting off of the foreground rocks, particularly the center one. A small contrast boost would enhance the image.

Group AA

Winners:

1st Place - Snowy Egret - wonderful light, perfect timing of capture of egret taking flight with wings spread out and visible from underneath and legs nicely separated. Well-composed with egret's placement in the frame. Has almost a dance feel to it. A bit of sharpening would bring out more details in the wings.

2nd Place - Foster's Tern - excellent timing of capture, wings spread out and arched allowing use to see the whole tern, with a fish in its beak. Good lighting on the bird with catch-light in its eye; well-placed near the top of the frame with enough space above and more below - well balanced. The bit of catch light in its eye gives the tern more "life."

3rd Place - Japanese Kingfisher - good timing of capture of kingfisher with lifted wings and beak open. Nice light on its profile and catch-light in eye gives it more "life." Placement of the bird in the frame is well composed. The kingfisher's colors are well-presented. Toning down the background will help make the bird stand out even more. There's a subtle grittiness (luminance noise) in bird's body that can be easily reduced.

Honorable Mentions:

An Osprey Lightens the load - nice composition, with good lighting and captured just at the right moment; a bit more sharpening would bring out more detail.

Great Egret collecting nesting material - the square format, the window created by the branches surrounding the egret, and the shape and direction of the egret's neck and bill creates a lovely composition. The even lighting helps create a nice soft feel to the image and at the same time feels a little flat. A bit more sharpening of the egret's head and bill would enhance details and give it a bit more contrast and "pop".

Green Darner in flight - well-captured and composed. The lighting and soft even colored background makes the darner stand out. Head could use more sharpening.

Juvenile Condor - this portrait is well composed with nice lighting on condor; good placement in frame. Could use a bit more sharpening to further enhance details; upper right corner could be toned down to keep eye from drifting away from the condor.

Live Tiger Moth - nicely composed; colors show well; a bit of uneven lighting on the right wing and bark could be toned down to create more impact. The moth feels a bit too close to the right side of the frame. More sharpening would bring out more of the details in the moth's wings, body and antennae.

Male Peregrine Falcon - wonderful portrait, well composed, nice lighting, and head nicely sharp. Catch light in its eye adds a nice element. More sharpening would bring out more details. Good bokeh - soft background.

Tule Elk with Calf - lovely lighting on elk; dark clouds in background help make them stand out and creates more drama; Time perfectly to capture their heads being illuminated by late afternoon sun. Catch-light in their eyes adds to the image. More sharpening would further bring out details in their heads and bodies.

Group AAA

Winners:

1st Place - Anemone mouth - Great lighting and colors. The out of focus tentacles provide a frame leading the eye to the mouth parts that are in focus and sharp. The mouth is well illuminated and well-placed in the frame creating a well-composed impactful image. Impressive given the challenges of underwater photography.

2nd Place - Night climbers on Half Dome -well done nighttime image of Half Dome. The soft, subtle light on Half Dome helps it stand out more than the other peaks and ridges. At the same time, the differential lighting on the foreground and ridges and peaks draws the viewer in to explore other areas of the image. The two lights tell the story of intrepid climbers. The tiny bit of luminance noise can be easily removed.

3rd Place - Rainbow waterfall - nice quiet, intimate landscape of this small waterfall and the rainbow created by sun reflected off the mist. Good composition with waterfall a little left of center and the rainbow near the bottom right. Good angle of view with lower rocks providing a frame and the rainbow creating a bridge between rocks. Nice even lighting overall; highlights in upper left could be toned down a bit.

Honorable Mentions:

Green Sea Turtle resting -nice light on side of the turtle. The close-in view emphasizes the designs and texture of the turtle's skin and head. Could use more space to right side so the turtle's eye doesn't feel almost cut-off. More sharpening would enhance details.

Mendocino Headlands - this quite, peaceful image is nicely composed, with the caves separated from the shoreline in the back and left so they stand out. Nice graphics created by the foreground rock and the "7"-shape of the water. The clouds enhance the image and keep the eye focused on the center and foreground. More sharpening would bring out more details. The foreground rocks on the left could be toned down some.

Mini Brittle Star atop Sunstar - good capture of this interaction; good graphics of the lines of the sunstar's legs; could use a bit more exposure on bottom tentacle and a bit more depth of field to get the other 3 tentacles more in focus.

Pfeiffer Beach - Portal to the Sun - Well composed and striking image. Even though it appears to be an HDR image, and thus not suitable for Nature competition, I want to acknowledge it as a wonderful image. To give it a somewhat more realistic look, tone down the foreground and the face of the formation. Some additional sharpening will bring out more details in the foreground rocks and formation.

Solidification in Motion - the graphic elements of the "lines" moving from one side to the other creates a nice composition. Nice even lighting. More sharpening would bring out more details. A slight toning down of the white upper left would help keep attention on where all the "action" is. More sharpening would bring out more details and texture.