

## PTCC Nature 3 Competition Group AAA

*12 submissions from 4 members*

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### **01-Young California Towhee Cooling Off.jpg**

Very sharp shot. Love the reddish eye of the CA Towhee. Neat to see the feathers all ruffled and wet. That's different than what you normally see in bird photos. Going by the PSA definition of an eligible photo for nature competition, "*Human elements shall not be present, except where those human elements are integral parts of the nature story.*" The fact that the Towhee is bathing in a puddle on concrete lends itself to the nature story that these birds have adapted to coexist with people in an urban setting. No problem. I would, however, crop the image more tightly to eliminate the brownish/orange right edge of the frame. You'll lose very little of the bird and it will eliminate a very distracting element from the photo. It also will place the bird's eye smack dab in the upper right thirds intersection (rule of thirds) for dramatic placement.

### **02-Swamp Trees.jpg**

I like that you incorporated the reflection into the composition. This shows the overall habitat, which is nice to see. It would be great to be able to see more detail on the tree. I'm sure your eye saw more detail but it didn't record on your digital sensor due to the bright foreground and background. Something you can try is shooting a few images (perhaps 5) from a tripod at varying exposures. Start by exposing for the shadows so you get detail in the shadows, leading to blown out highlights. Then incrementally work your way up to expose for the highlights, which will render the shadows as silhouettes. Then combine all the shots in Photoshop or other software to create a High Dynamic Range (HDR) image that's well exposed throughout. PSA nature competitions rules state that an image is ineligible if it involves, "*any form of manipulation that alters the truth of the photographic statement.*" HDR photos don't alter the truth in any way, but rather restore the truth to what the photographer saw with their eyes at the time they clicked the shutter.

### **03-Squadron of Pelicans.jpg**

Sharp. Well exposed, given the contrast in the scene. I like the more panoramic crop, which lends itself to more emphasis on the pelicans themselves. I would even crop it a little tighter. You'll only lose a couple pelicans on both the right and left and you'll keep the sea lion to the right. That sort of crop will eliminate the distracting sea lions at the lower left, eliminate some of the really dark rocks at the bottom, and place more emphasis on the pelicans. Use the same aspect ratio, as I think that's a good format for the image.

### **04-Southern Sea Otters.jpg**

Sea Otters are tough to shoot with a good exposure, especially in bright sun as you had when you shot this. The otter on the right is perfect, the one on the left is a bit overexposed on the face. Perhaps the highlights can be toned down just a bit digitally. Great composition incorporating both of them in the frame. It achieves a nice balance in the image. They're so darn cute!

### **05-Rock Cap Moss (Dicranum Polysetum) on Granite Rock.jpg**

Seeing the moss makes me want to go up to it and rub my hand against it. The overall composition is good and shows the context in which the moss is growing to help tell the nature story. It looks as though the light when you shot this was nice and diffused, however, it appears you over-processed it digitally. It looks like you added contrast and too much of a digital sharpening filter, which itself adds contrast to edges. The result is that the image almost hurts my eyes. It's usually better to go lightly with digital adjustments, especially sharpening and saturation, in nature competition images. Try to make the image the best it can be in camera, in the field, and minimize the need for major adjustments afterwards. My typical process is to take the RAW image from camera, add just a tad of contrast, a smidgen of saturation, and very light sharpening. Depending on the image, those things are usually all it needs.

### **06-Palm Tree Trunk Close-up.jpg**

Interesting shot. It's definitely sharp, well exposed, and has wonderful color. There are lots of things going on in the shot, many places to explore. I like that, however, my eye doesn't really know where to land on a central point of interest. The abstractness of the image may make it more appropriate in a color pictorial competition.

### **07-Melica Stricta At Sunset.jpg**

Love the backlighting! Nice job with the exposure, which can be tough in that situation. The composition is good with the grass on the right side of the frame and the repeating colors and patterns out of focus in the background. Good use of a relatively wide aperture to achieve that effect. Nice and sharp on the main subject too.

### **08-Lichen (Disambiguation) On Granite Rock-1.jpg**

Hmmm. I'm just not sure what to do with this image as it relates to the competition. I love lichens and both of the images are really good and well executed. I think, however, for nature competition, the image entered has to be just one photo. The PSA nature rules state, "*All allowed adjustments must appear natural.*" I really like the idea of providing the inset with the macro shot of the lichen but it appears far from natural in the photo. Perhaps a way to accomplish your goal would be to just enter the macro shot of the lichen and title it, "Lichen on Granite Rock at 2X magnification" or whatever the magnification was. That lets the viewer know the field of view is very small. This shot you entered would be a perfect illustration for textbook. You could probably sell it!

### **09-Grey Heron Sunbathing.jpg**

Your photo shows an interesting behavior. The light is rather contrasty and harsh. It's nice that you captured the heron with its head turned. If you were able to shift your position a bit to the left or right, perhaps you could have eliminated the distracting white structure in the background. It's often the case that when we see a cool animal, we just try to get our shots of the critter itself and sometimes we forget about the background and its importance in the overall composition.

### **10-Great Egret and Chick Ready to Fly.jpg**

There's a wonderful nature story going on here. Good action. This was a difficult egret nest to work with because of all the distracting branches and sticks in the way. They draw

the eye away from the adult and chick. Egrets are typically colonial nesters so there may be another nest nearby that has a clearer view of the occupants. It's a very contrasty photo, like it was shot right at mid-day. This makes it especially tough to photograph white birds. Revisiting the site in the early morning or late evening, when the light isn't as harsh can help that.

**11-C'mon\_sweet face\_give me a hug--Nah\_I've got a headache - Garden Snails (Terrestrial pulmonate gastropod mollusc)-1.jpg**

Beautiful snails! Good exposure with the diffused light. The sharpness really shows off the intricate patterns on the shells. Great that there are two of them and they're interacting. Many nature photographers don't bother to photograph invertebrates, primarily because most people don't pay any attention to them. Insects, mollusks, and other invertebrates provide so many wonderful photographic opportunities. Kudos to you for capitalizing on that! My only suggestions would be to have removed the pine needles and simply title the image "Garden Snails," without the cutesy stuff.

**12-Anemone QUEEN CHARLOTTE.jpg**

This is a very nice shot, especially the exposure. It's often difficult to properly expose delicate white and pink flower petals so they don't wash out. Looks like you may have used a diffuser, which helped create the nice soft light. You did well with that. It's sharp as a tack and has good composition too, incorporating the open flower and the bud. Good balance. But, here's the thing... I know your club goes by the PSA definition of what's eligible in a Nature competition. Those rules state, "*Photographs of human created hybrid plants, cultivated plants, feral animals, domestic animals, or mounted specimens are ineligible.*" The flower you photographed is a human-created hybrid between two cultivars of Japanese anemone flowers.

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**First Place: 04-Southern Sea Otters.jpg**

**Second Place: 11-C'mon\_sweet face\_give me a hug--Nah\_I've got a headache - Garden Snails (Terrestrial pulmonate gastropod mollusc)-1.jpg**

**Third Place: 07-Melica Stricta At Sunset.jpg**

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