

PTCC-2016
NATURE #3
GROUP AA

17 images from 6 members

01 - Anna's Hummingbird Holding On.jpg

You captured the little hummer in a very interesting pose, not a position you normally get to see. It's unique. I like the angle looking up a little bit at the bird, which enables you to see plumage aspects not visible in most hummingbird shots. It's nice that you caught a highlight in the eye. The shot doesn't appear really crisp. A bit flat, colors muted. I think the focus was correct but it looks more to me like it was shot a pretty high ISO. This may have been needed due to what appears to be low light. It just has that high ISO grainy appearance. You can possibly avoid that by using a flash projection setup. That may allow you to use a lower ISO and get a higher quality image.

02 - Blue Collared Lizard (*Crotaphytus collaris*) uses stillness defense in Arizona desert copy.jpg

Very nice shot of the Collared Lizard! You created a great composition, getting the entire lizard in the frame from tip of snout to tip of tail. There's even still just enough negative space in front of the lizard. You focused on the eye and head of the lizard, which is perfect. The tail can be out of focus and that's OK, the information is still there for the viewer. This is a perfect example of a situation where a little bit of flash would help to fill in the shadows on the lizard. Judging by the depth of field, you weren't using a real long focal length, which means you were relatively close to the lizard. Even using the pop-up flash on your camera could have lightened the shadows a bit and enhanced the detail on the lizard itself.

03 - Blue Jay.jpg

It is a jay and it is blue, however, it's not a Blue Jay. Blue Jays are an eastern species of jay. The jay that we have out here is called the Western Scrub Jay (*Aphelocoma californica*). Your photo is nice and sharp and well exposed. I like that overcast, diffused light. With that sort of light, you don't get harsh highlights and shadows to worry about. You caught the bird engaged in gathering food, which is way nicer than a static portrait. Having the bird occupy more of the frame would be an improvement, either by using a longer focal length or cropping in on the computer. That would eliminate lots of the surrounding stuff that distracts attention from the bird.

04 - Coyote Thistle (*Eryngium articulatum*) in final burst.jpg

Technically well done. I like that you have the seed head prominent and the younger flowers visible behind. That's great to show the various stages in one image. I would crop this image up from the bottom and a bit from the left. That will eliminate the distracting elements in the lower left corner that draw the eye down away from the main subject.

05 - Forster's Tern.jpg

I like this shot! I keep wanting to look at it. For me, the fact that the bird's head is covered up by the wings actually creates a sense of mystery. It's very cool that you can only see that bright orange bill pointing downward. The motion in the wings isn't objectionable in my opinion and adds a dynamic component.

06 - Friends.jpg

Beautiful light. I like the highlight on the Great Egret's bill and the reflections of both birds in the ripples on the water. Very pleasing. The egret looks very sharp, whereas the Canada Goose looks a little soft. Aesthetically, it's usually important to make sure the subject in the front of the frame is sharp, even if the subject in the back is slightly out of focus. Lastly, and I know it's nit-picky, they probably are not friends, just two birds sharing the same habitat. As mentioned in my statement on how I judge, for Nature Division competitions, it's usually better to not have "cutesy" titles. Go with a more descriptive title for the images you submit.

07 - Hummingbird feeding-calypte anna.jpg

Nice composition. It's hard to capture good shots of hummingbirds feeding in a natural setting. Most really good hummingbird shots you see are photographed at setups, where the flower being visited is hiding a hummingbird feeder tube behind it. Using a setup like that enables you to control lighting, background, composition, etc. You got your shot in a natural setting. Of course, the challenge is getting a sharp shot of a teensy bird that never stops moving! Subsequently, your hummingbird here is pretty blurry. It's OK for the wings to be blurry but not the head and eye. Try using a slightly higher ISO, which will allow you to use a faster shutter speed (try for 1/500 second if light permits) to stop the motion of the main parts of the bird. The wings will still be blurry but that's OK and helps convey that they are beating about 80 times per second!

08 - Juvenile Chestnut-backed Chickadee.jpg

A very endearing photo indeed! Super sharp and well exposed. Chickadees have always been one of my favorite birds for this very reason: they are so darned adorable! The catchlight in the eye pops right out and gives the bird life and personality. The detail on the feathers is amazing. Normally, I like to see a bit more space around the subject and see some habitat in the frame. However, I really like the tight composition on this because it draws the viewer right into that little fluffball. Great shot!

09 - Pelecanus occidentalis "Outta my Way".jpg

Very sharp, well exposed, and well composed shot. It's always nice to see interaction and some dynamic action in a nature/wildlife photo. The texture on the rocks and the sharpness of the waves coming in really add to the dynamic of the image. You identified the Brown Pelican. The gull is an immature Heerman's Gull.

10 - Pelecanus occidentalis (Brown Pelican) "Watch Out".jpg

This is a nice shot but it lacks the obvious interaction of the last photo where the Brown Pelican was obviously displacing the immature Heerman's Gull. This too has

good sharpness, color, contrast, texture, exposure and composition.

11 - Pelecanus occidentalis - Brown Pelican Landing.jpg

Wonderful photo! I love the composition with the one pelican coming in for a landing to join the other pelicans and the cormorants. The pelican in flight has the perfect pose and perfect placement in the image. It also shows that they are colonial birds. The dark sky adds considerable drama to the image as well.

12 - Pelican landing-pelecanus occidentalis.jpg

Nice light. You captured the bird in a good pose. It's neat to see the bands on the legs! I hope you don't mind but I took the liberty to submit the band information to learn the history of this juvenile Brown Pelican. When I hear back from them, I will forward the information to Silke and John so they can share it with the photographer and the club. Capturing photos like this of scientifically marked wildlife can make significant contributions to research efforts. Because you skillfully photographed this, it was sharp enough to read the band number!

13 - Pelican.jpg

I like the technical aspects to this image. It's very sharp and well exposed in a potentially tough exposure situation. The photo has great color. The wave breaking against the rock adds a dynamic component to the image too.

14 - Queen Alexandra's Birdwing (Ornithoptera alexandrae).jpg

A rare butterfly indeed! This is a male of this critically endangered species that's only found natively in New Guinea. I see the hind wings of another male in the background. It's the largest butterfly species in the world, with the females reaching a wingspan of nearly one foot across! Your photo is wonderful, being nice and sharp all the way through the butterfly's body. I like the out of focus highlights in the background too. I'm curious where you photographed this.

15 - Rose Chafer (Macrodactylus subspinosus) munching and mating on Cliffrose (Purshia mexicana) in Arizona desert.jpg

Nice macro work! These beetles are typically about the size of your fingernail or smaller. I've seen them look much more metallic as well. You've got good detail on the two main subjects. It appears you may have cropped the original image significantly to get the beetles that prominent in the frame. Keep in mind, the quality of your macro images will go up if you use a native macro lens that allows you to focus closer than a standard lens. You could also try extension tubes between your standard lens and the camera. Another closeup option are diopters that screw into the front of your lens. All of these suggestions refer to DSLR use. The overexposed areas in the background are a bit distracting. You may be able to tone them down a bit in Photoshop. Another option is to use flash, expose for the highlights in the frame, then fill in the shadows with the flash. There are all sorts of fun options to explore with macro photography!

16 - Swirls on Rocky Ridge.jpg

Your "swirls" are Western Clematis, AKA Virgin's Bower *Clematis leugusticifolia*. It

a very cool CA native plant that grows as a climbing vine. The small white flower, when fertilized form these beautiful, feathery seed heads. Your photo is superb, showing the incredible detail of the feathery seeds. Super sharp and perfectly exposed. My only suggestion here is to remember to use more descriptive titles for Nature Division competitions.

17 - Wildflowers Above the Fog on Rocky Ridge.jpg

Landscapes often don't do well in a Nature Division competition, because they typically don't have a real story-telling component to them. Your photo is a rare exception! It not only is a stunning image but also shows the incredible botanical diversity of the CA coast. You have a great balance in the image. Sometimes, people include way too much sky and neglect areas of greater visual interest. You emphasized the foreground, yet show the dynamic fog rolling over the hills, with just the right amount of sky above. Well done!

Winners:

1st Place: 08 - Juvenile Chestnut-backed Chickadee.jpg

2nd Place: 11 - *Pelecanus occidentalis* - Brown Pelican Landing.jpg

3rd Place: 17 - Wildflowers Above the Fog on Rocky Ridge.jpg