

# Human Hand in Nature - Group Red

Returns: May 17, 2023

Judge: Becky Jaffe

Note: The comments shown here have been transcribed from the video recording of our May 17th meeting. Every effort has been made to present the essence of our judge's thoughts about the images.

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*Backyard Hummingbird*

By Dick Light

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What's working is the selective focus; you have a combo of representationalism in the foreground which is pretty scientific compared with wonderful soft focus of the background. That pairing works really well. Has point and counterpoint, from clarity of the foreground and soft focus of background. All the beauty of realism and impressionism, and we are also interested in behavior. Humans have lured hummingbirds from their natural to human provided feeders; the next level might be to see two different species interact at the feeder. Very strong for selective focus.



*Best Western Greeter*

Karen Schofield

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The connection between the gull and the photographer is very forthright, which works really well. The viewer can then have a direct connection with the subject. It's hard to establish meaningful eye contact with a gull, and since their eyes are not forward facing it's harder to establish an emotional connection – but this photographer has achieved that. The only thing I would say is that if the camera were slightly lower than the level of the gull so we could see the gull more as the protagonist. Getting the camera lower gets us into its world.



*Bottled Squirrel*  
Karen Schofield

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Charming photo of an evolutionary leap forward, with the squirrel always able to outsmart us. Aesthetically what's working is that beautifully dappled bokeh in the background. You're also touching the subject with light, which is what all our photos should be – touched and even caressed with light, to show how we feel about the subject. In this photo I can tell there is an affection for the animal, as well as portrayal of the intelligence of the animal in this light. Beautifully done.

*Bradbury Dam at Lake Cachuma*  
David Edison

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Interesting to get the whole sweep of it and see how humans have engineered riverways. There is a leading curve here, which leads us in. What I'm hesitant about this photo is in the foreground, where there is a lot of foliage and it actually blocks me from entering the frame. I feel I have to hop over it to get into the leading curve. The foreground seems to be a bit of a barrier, keeping me out. BUT, you could say the foliage is containing the bowl of the reservoir – it may have been your only access point. I do like the ratio of land to sky – the rule of thirds. Also, the light on the dam is quite different from the light on the foreground, and perhaps those could be better integrated.

*Flower Bed*  
Duane Peterson

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Isn't that charming, the quaintness and pun of it and the overflowing abundance of life here. It is a place to dream, and this is quite full of imagination. It's not exactly in sharp focus – like "Flower Bed" is out of focus. And we have a very fussy medium, and I'm a little bit meticulous: if you follow the fence around, you'll come to some white dots at the edge of the frame – if you have white artifacts at the edge of the frame you're inviting the eye to leave the frame. Our eyes go to white and red, so get rid of the white points on the edge to not basically give the eye an invitation to leave the frame. But I think the image is quite charming, and I like that it's positioned on the diagonal, creating more energy.



*Going Against the Flow*

Carol Gan

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I had to revisit the rules of this photo, and see it fits the theme well, being an aquarium. The interesting thing here is that it seems there are distributed focal points, but in fact there is only one, which is the fish on the left moving in the opposite direction. And somehow there's something funny about that. A pattern and variation is a charming way to compose and this person has given us that.



*Hwy 1 in Big Sur*

David Eisen

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What's working so well is the cloud cover that is high drama. And the fact that it's high key and is a little overexposed is okay if it works to break the rule about overexposure. You can argue that a kind of landscape induced awe that this sort of high key gets at is appropriate. But this image is a little muddy and pixelated, so it's starting to break apart. Maybe the ISO or the sensor on this camera can't pick up enough pixels – you could run this through Topaz software and up the resolution, or to print on a really thick paper (330 gsm) and the muddying effect will be resolved. You can work with this image on the print level. Otherwise, I catch the feeling of ecstasy.



*On the Move*

Carol Gan

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I love this image! This was a standout from the start – it's so charming to me. I'm looking for a kind of opposition, a point and counterpoint, and here that comes from the stillness at the same time of the motion. This creates a wonderful tension and interest – I like that there's a lot of motion here, both impressionism and realism paired. That's lovely. And it does bring me into this protagonist world rather well.



*Osprey Eating Fish*

Fernando Ibanez

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Yeah. Boy, isn't that animal amazing. You can see really nice detail here, in the beak and in the eye where you get a sense of the animal's intelligence, and it's focus on hunting. The tag on the leg shows us this animal is being researched, and boy do you feel for that fish! The sublime and the grotesque of nature all in one and that pairing is wonderful. So there's the opposition. Well seen. OH, BUT it looks like there's a fishing lure in the leg, rather than a tag (the photographer feels the bleeding wound probably dooms the bird, as the hook will not come out).



*Our Small Cruise Ship in Enormity of Glacier Bay, Alaska*  
Don Eastman

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I like the way this is composed, with the partiality of the pattern of that curve there, and the scale is strong. You really get the sense that people are riveted and don't want to miss this. You can feel the reverence and collective amazement here. It's contagious. The glacier looks like a whale. I like how that line leads us straight in from the top and kind of stitches the image together; there's this horizontal line of the water and then the vertical line of the boat, bringing it all together rather nicely. Nicely done. The only thing I would work on is bring down a little of the over exposure on the top.



*Palmdale Sunrise Reflected in Irrigation Canal*

Don Eastman

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You don't see a lot of irrigation canals photographed, but this is well chosen for this particular theme. We're getting some solar flare here, but I like it, and I like the time of day, with the sun taking a bite out of the landscape; there's a real sense of contemplative calm from this time of day. I feel the invitation to contemplative calm that this offers up. Lovely.



*Red-shouldered Hawk*

Brooks Leffler

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This is a strong image! A hawk is always exciting to see, but the way it makes us feel high voltage – we're always excited to see a hawk. It's even more exciting to think about how it can perch there without causing danger to itself. The high voltage has a couple of meanings here – it's creating tension in the image which is a nice counterpoint with the calm pose of the bird, and it's also capturing how we feel about birding. It's a nice meta feeling and sort of commentary. I love the triangle at the lower left, sort of locking down the base with a wedge and there's a lot of geometry here in an image that is deceptively simple. And there's a catch light in the eye, and all of that is working. And great negative space. So, I think it's a question of creating a minimalist image that still has feeling – this image is doing that.

*Red-shouldered Hawk Takes a Bath*

Gerald Gifford

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This is a standout image for sure. I would be very pleased to take an image like this myself. If any of us experiences photo envy at any point, that is a good thing because we're thirsty for the next best image and we want to be a better artist than we are today. I have some envy here. I LOVE this image. It's fabulous. Look at the detail in the face, that expression is priceless. In a bird bath I'm expecting a little sparrow or something, and not a massive raptor that has a Swiss army knife face wanting to take over the bird bath. There's something incongruous about this big raptor and the birdbath, which is funny. The blur in the background, the motion of it gives us a sense of the power, the menace and the potential of this animal. And the detail on the feathers ..... it's just wonderful, I'm quite charmed by it, and I could look at this image for a long time, a good measure of success.

*Sea Lion Hammock, Moss Landing Harbor*

Christina Parsons

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Emotionally this is the opposite of the earlier image, the softness, vulnerability of the prey animal. It brings out the maternal affection for this animal – those big eyes, that big forehead, it dials into our evolutionary tendency where we want to protect small creatures with large eyes and foreheads. It's full of feeling for all of that. I love the way that it matches the color pallet of the wood of the pier, I love the shapes, the caressing gesture of the fin – it's a peaceful and charming image. I like that we're right at the level of the animal, so we can imagine its world. It's beautifully composed, and there's nothing accidental or careless in this image. It's tightly composed.

*Sierran Tree Frog Finds Comfort in Resting on a Rose*

Gerald Gifford

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This image keeps giving. I would have been satisfied enough with dichromatic coloring of that rose against the background. I also would have been satiated with the in-foldings of the flower and all the sensuality of that. But then to have the surprise of the frog sort of punches us in the face with all the beauty and wonder of nature. It's just wonderful. I love this and could look at it for a very long time. Kudos to this artist.



*Snowy Egret Fishing Beneath Trash*  
Christina Parsons

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I like that we get to see some of the behavior here, in the way that they shake their toes in the mud to stir it up and confuse the prey, and then boom go in with the beak. We get to see that behavior here. I love the reflection. The trash is heart-breaking and there's an emotional point and counterpoint here; the egret and all its poetry, and then the heartbreak of the trash in the way we lose habitat. This is a very sweet image, and mixed emotions are better than a single emotion because essentially that's like a melody with harmony. This one delivers on mixed emotions.



*Squirrel on Ocean View Blvd Curb*  
Dick Light

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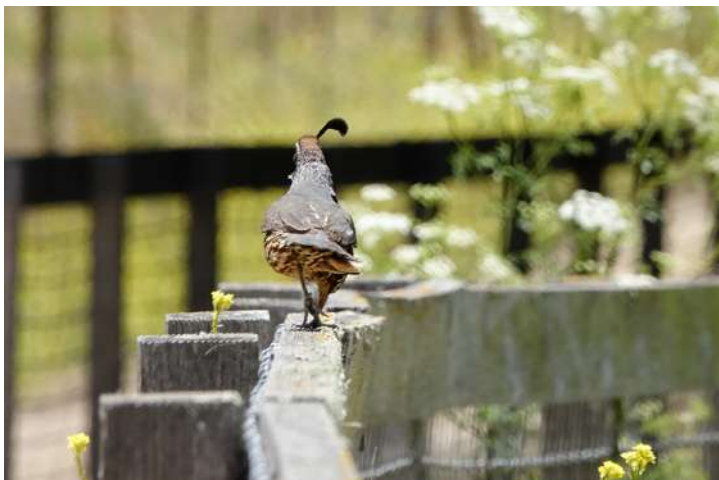
Chuckle. Excellent depth of field, and the gesture of the little paws are so funny. Those perky ears are a crackup. This animal is the protagonist, and the angle of the camera is spot on – we're right at its level having a meeting of the minds here. The selective focus is just right, we can even see the whiskers there. The catch light in the eye – all of that is coming together well.



*Tangled Buck Looking for Help*  
Brooks Leffler

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This image becomes a whole short story. We have a sympathetic protagonist, we have a conflict that needs to be resolved, we have a supporting character, we're in the middle of the moment where there's tension and anticipation created by the fact we don't know what will happen next. What's their communication, how will they solve this problem, what is the photographer's role? Raising all these questions does the work of a short story, which makes it a very compelling frame. Rather than giving us basic anatomy of the animal, we're given the animals behavior with this image.



*Quail on a Rail*

Alan Kemp

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A quail, this is so lovely, the way the feathers are curling over the railing there is just utterly charming. I might have objected to seeing the back side of the animal if it were not for that charming set of feathers, the curly q, because that's giving us a quickly identifiable animal and is the main feature we're interested in about a quail. But then to have those beautiful flowers in the back right gives us a setting and I like the position of the vertical and horizontal lines. If you have vertical/horizontal lines in an image you need the other one to create variety and break up the homogeneity of the image, and you can see this is not static and is quite dynamic. The lines are working so well you might not notice them and that helps you notice the main thing, which is the bird. The composition around the bird is working really well.

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## Winning Images Honorable Mentions



*Tangled Buck Looking for Help*

Brooks Leffler



*On the Move*

Carol Gan



*Osprey Eating Fish*

Fernando Ibanez

## Winning Images - Group Red



### 1st Place

*Red-shouldered Hawk Takes a Bath*  
Gerald Gifford



### 2nd Place

*Sierran Tree Frog Finds Comfort in Resting on a Rose*  
Gerald Gifford



### 3rd Place

*Sea Lion Hammock, Moss Landing Harbor*  
Christina Parsons