

Padre Trails Camera Club

Nature #2 “Backyard” Competition - August 21, 2019
Group A Comments



01 - Acorn Woodpecker taking off with provided nut.jpg Chris Johnson

This image is such a strong and striking image! Well done! There are so many wonderful elements in this image that make viewing it a joy. I love the diagonal angle you captured with this bird's flight position. The wingspread is lovely and your adept usage of light is noted too. The nut gives a nice pop of color also. On more technical note, your depth of field is impeccable. I love how the white in the bird's wings is picked up again in the bark of the wood in the foreground and then is subtly referenced in the brighter spots in the background. This is an overall very impressive photograph. ****



02 - Agave.jpg Jerry Heisel

This is an impressive grouping of plants you've photographed. I enjoy the textural elements of the fronds of the agave and the subtle color shifts of the individual plants. To properly emphasize the impressive quality of the plants you are featuring I think a slight change of perspective and a little more emphasis on composition would help take this image to the next level. I think if less of the background and foreground elements were in the photo, the plant would be emphasized more. Perhaps adjusting your depth of field to isolate the plants would also allow the plant to be more on center stage. Right now, it's fighting with all of the other elements in the picture and it's impressive enough to demand it's own stage. **



03 - Allen's Hummingbird (Selasphorus sasin) at the feeder. jpg John Drum

This is a lovely image—what an incredible moment you were able to capture. I'm sure you must have been very patient and have had lots of practice! I love the position of the bird you captured and the fact that you were able to create the stopped motion effect and capture such stillness in this hummingbird's head is incredible. The only bit of insight I could think of would be to perhaps think about separating the bird from the background a bit. In camera RAW, you can really play with shadows in a non-destructive way to pull the foreground from the darker shadow area. My eye goes to the bright yellow on the left corner of the image and I think if you were to pull out some of the dappled areas in the background and lighten them up, they would be a good visual foil that pulls the eye back to the right side of the photo. ***



04 - Avian Buffet.jpg

Ken Jones

I love the moment you captured and I especially like the little guy in the front of the image on the go—his movement adds a nice touch to the image. I think if the camera angle were lowered more to the ground, this image would have much more of the effect I think you are going for. With a lowered camera angle, the birds would become larger and emphasized more in the image. It would also showcase the birds against a little more of a simpler background of the sky—right now the birds are competing with the rest of the background elements—the pavement, the rock wall, the bench, the bin, etc. ***



05 - Bald Eagle(Haliaeetus leucocephalus) being rewarded.jpg

John Drum

This image has such a lovely and pleasing color palette. It's very easy for the viewer to approach this image. The depth of field you've used is very effective and allows the subject to be separated from the background. The one thing I would suggest considering is to perhaps crop a little more of the bottom of the image away—there is a lot of visual information in the glove that is competing with the prey the eagle is feasting on. While the textural elements in this image are lovely and alluring, I would also suggest pulling back a bit on your processing and sharpening. Because of the sharpening, there is a little bit of a halo effect on the subject's feathers and some of the background elements as well. ***



06 - Black Phoebe.jpg

Jeff Hobbs

I just loved seeing this image. It brightened my day as I scrolled through the images on my initial look. I kept going back to this image and I'm so glad you submitted it. I love the fact that this image is really more of a portrait in the way you've chosen to portray the bird. There is a dichotomy of softness and vulnerability with the bird contrasted with the barbed wire on which it's sitting. When you step back and think about it, this image says a lot about the way man lives with nature and the way nature has adapted to our confines we've put on it. Your composition is strong, usage of depth of field is superb and your white balance is spot on. Well done! ***



07 - Blowing The Storm Out.jpg

Jeff Hobbs

I loved seeing this image and want to congratulate you on your placement award! Well done! I loved the moment you captured and the mood this image set for me. The rolling green hills are anchored so effectively by the ominous dark sky. The balance the image receives from the windmill and the silo is a great touch as well. The lone set of two trees peeking from the background adds a hint of mystery of what's beyond the hills. I can hear the windmill turning and feel the storm rolling overhead. I love the bits of light that are highlighting the hilltops as well as bouncing off the the metal on the silo and windmill. This is an image that could be viewed large and still be very powerful...I'm not sure if you've thought about presentation yet, but I could see this as a large print. I'm not one to jump on every newfangled substrate, but I can see this printed on metal and it being very visually effective (I'm sure you've considered printing substrates, just my two cents!). Just a gorgeous image made at a lovely and engaging time of day! *****



08 - Can You See Me Hiding Behind this Petal.jpg

Judi H Clayton

What a beautiful image you were able to capture with this photograph. I enjoyed looking at it and really appreciate the detail you were able to capture with this image. I can see the tiny flecks of pollen on the bee and the fact that the bee's wings are in such sharp focus is impressive. Your usage of depth of field is lovely because the subject is able to come forward and separate from the background so strongly. When I first looked of this image I was wishing that that front petal of the flower was not out of focus and hiding the bee's head. I did see that your title addresses this and I like the "wink" to what's going on in the photograph with the connection of the title but I do find that the petal being out of focus is a bit distracting to the eye. I think because you have such strong focus throughout the bee's body and parts of the flower, the soft focused petal does interrupt with the visual symphony that happening in this image. Your composition is lovely, it's formally strong and your white balance is spot on. ***



09 - Cape Heather - Erica Verticillata.jpg

Brooks Leffler

Wow! Your complementary colors of magenta and green are so strong in this image and very visually compelling. The unification you are able to create by focusing on the foreground Blossom is quite nice. The insight that I would give you is that the foreground flower doesn't really come forward as much as I think you wanted it to. It does fade into the background because of the strong magenta and green colors that are behind it. I think with less depth of field, you would be able to pull out this central blossom that you are wanting to emphasize and have it become more of a central player in the composition. I do like the almost square cropping of this image. It makes it so that you could transition to social media with this image quite easily. ***



10 - Dining Alone.jpg

Lillie Grossman

One of my favorite animals is the rabbits and I was so glad I got to see this rabbit in the backyard major competition images. I kept coming back to it after taking my initial view of the images and I enjoy it a little more each time to come back to it. I like that the rabbit is set off from the coolness of the background. The harmonious colors of green and yellow worked really well to set off the brown of the rabbit. The formal elements you've used in the composition are quite nice also. Setting the rabbit off to the side of the image and utilizing the will of thirds in this image as a compositional tool is quite strong. I love that in light streams through the rabbit ears and we are able to see the lovely detail of the veining in the ears. The light also plays nicely around the edges of the rabbit emphasizing it's lovely shape. That's a very nice touch. Your strong usage of depth of field is quite lovely also. It allows the background to fade into more of something that looks like a painted background. This helps to emphasize the lovely rabbit that you were featuring. It's too bad he was dining alone! ***



11 - Driveway Volunteer - Lampransus roseus.jpg

Brooks Leffler

Great pop of color in this image and it really shows the battle between nature and man quite effectively. I'm assuming this little flower must have been in your driveway and if it was, a nice addition might be to soak the entire scene with water—it would add saturation to the entire image allowing the pavement, the flower and the sand to pop off of the page. You've placed the flower in a good compositional area by avoiding the middle of the image. ***



12 - Feeding Hummingbird.jpg

Richard Bucich

The lighting in this image is beautiful. I love the backlit quality of light and the silhouette effect you have given the subject. It's a great way to highlight shape, color and the frozen movement you have captured. The advice I'd give in this situation is to pull up your camera angle a bit to be a little more "head on" with the subject. I think you may have been able to get more of the beak of the bird. You may also want to consider cropping into the image substantially—taking a lot of the top of the feeder off to emphasize the lovely shape and movement of the bird in this image. ***



13 - Footsteps on Oceano Dunes.jpg

Jared Ikeda

This is a lovely, almost ominous image. I love the abstract quality of this image and the texture you have been able to achieve with the sand dunes. The blue tone of the sky is extremely compelling and allows me to be able to look at this image for quite a while and still be fascinated by it. I love that I can almost see footsteps in the sand dunes. I am imagining who has come before me and who will come after me when viewing this image or even allowing me to place myself within the image at the time this was taken. It allows me to think about the connection between man and nature and how each affects the other and how nature has conformed to the parameters that man has set on it. This could be my screen but this image does seem to be a little dark and could benefit from being lightened up just a little bit.

While the blue sky is extremely compelling and ominous and works so well with the golden of the dunes it might be interesting to see what this looks like converted to black-and-white. Just a suggestion that you may or may not want to take. ****



14 - Gnarly Guardian of Cachagua Road.jpg

Brooks Leffler

This is such an interesting tree! The contrast you've given to the unique shapes can be a good way to create interest in an image, but in this case the contrast creates more visual information than is needed. A different time of day may help this majestic tree become more of a central player in the image. The cropped top of the tree creates a bit of visual clausterphobia—I think if you stepped back a bit and let the tree claim more space in the image it would be very successful. **



15 - Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) on Fencepost.jpg

Karen Schofield

You've used a very strong compositional tool in setting up the shot. It's a beautiful way to use the rule of thirds and works really well within this image. I think your usage of depth of field is lovely and helps to set out apart from the background. The monochromatic color scheme is quite nice also but the owl is feeding a little bit into the background. You may want to work with your camera raw settings to pull away the owl and put more into the foreground separating it from the background. I think this is happening because you're background just happens to be a very similar tone to your subject and to the woods of the subject is sitting on. I love the pop of yellow from the owl's eyes and think that it is a really nice way to add some visual interest into this image. ***



16 - Hooded Crow in the snow, Tromso, Norway.jpg

Chris Johnson

This is a lovely image and really does give me as the viewer some insight into this bird's life. I love the position you were able to capture with the bird's pose—it's almost as if he knew he was being photographed! It does have an almost cinematic feel—as if this is a still from a movie. Your lovely usage of depth of field helps to really bring the little fella forward and make him (or her) the star of the show. I love the geometric bits of information I am getting from the background of the image—it lets me know that there is a play between both man and nature in this image. It's subtle, but I wonder if you could bring in a little more detail into the foreground snow...my eye goes to the brightest area of the image and it's in this lower left hand corner...giving it a little bit more info can help keep the eye in the interior of the image. ****



17 - Hot Jade Plant.jpg

Jim Lambert

This is a very interesting color palette. I think getting in a little closer to this plant would help to create some visually dynamic paths in the image. If this is a plant you can go back and revisit, I would urge you to get in as close as possible to the individual petals of the jade plant. Looking at still life paintings (I'm thinking Vincent Van Gogh, etc.) will help you with perspective also. I would consider a lower perspective where you are more "head on" with the plant and not looking down on it. **



18 - Iris.jpg

Jerry Heisel

I love the detail you were able to achieve in the individual water droplets you captured in this image. The detail on the petals of the iris are quite incredible, too. I love the shallow depth of field you used in the image and how the iris separates from the background. There is a lovely “grain” like texture in the background that has a film quality. The softness of the iris leaves in the background is lovely also. The comments I have on things you may want to consider revolve around composition and your depth of field. You may want to consider placing such a powerful subject like this iris a little further off of center when composing—it helps to create visual dynamic movement in the image. Since you have such clear focus on the petals of the iris, the middle petal that falls out of focus can be a little distracting, so adjusting where the fall off in focus lies could be a way to pull visual interest through the image. I see in the upper right petal that fall off a bit that the fall off in focus is quite lovely—if that same effect could be achieved with the left petals, that could be quite powerful. I do understand that you’re working with such limited depth of field, it can be hard to figure out where to put your strongest focus and can create an issue where not everything can be in focus. ***



19 - Jahari - RIP at SF Zoo.jpg

Jared Ikeda

Oh I was so sad to read the title of this image...it gives it some weight and some reverence when looking at this majestic creature. I really do love the composition you were able to achieve in this image—setting Jahari off to the side is a very powerful compositional tool. It also helps that he is such a beautiful golden color that is set off by the lush green surroundings. It really doesn’t look as if he is in captivity which adds another lovely element to the photograph. The fact that he is looking off to the side adds a conceptual element to the image as if he is contemplating life, afterlife, etc. The one adjustment that could have pulled this image into the stratosphere is if Jahari were on the left side of the frame. Since he’s on the right looking out of the frame, my eye wanders out of the picture. If he were on the left of the frame, the eye would be able to circle back around and create a visual journey that keeps cycling around. ***



20 - Juvenile Red Wing Hawk.jpg

Jim Lambert

Congratulations on your second place award! This image is a lovely image. What's nice about this image is the ability you have in not only capturing a lovely image of this wonderful bird of prey but you also were able to capture such an incredible expression on the bird! The lovely connection you have made with the bird's feathers and the background texture of the dappled tree branches is quite effective. I love the almost monochromatic color scheme with pops of color on the bird's beak that are also picked up with its talons. Your strong usage of foreground, middle ground and background territory adds a lot of visual interest to this image. I also like that the board in the foreground is on a slight diagonal which adds visual interest and keeps the image from being static. I usually like to provide some comments on things that might improve the image, but I am at a loss here... such an interesting picture that really is at the pinnacle of wildlife image making. I'm sure you're probably familiar with George Lepp and his Canon Explorer of Light work, but if not, I would check his work out—your image is on par! *****



21 - Landscape Artist.jpg

Lillie Grossman

I love the "cheeky" title of this image...I know this goat must be hard at work! Growing up on a farm, I have always loved goats and love photographing them! The background focus fall off is lovely and provides a strong textural background for this very industrious creature. The "V" shape of the bush is also a great element to set off the goat's face. This image is interesting as it borders on a portrait. I think what would have taken it to the next level is if the goat's head were turned a little more to create a profile. Goats have such interesting profiles and the profile would have allowed the goat to really be set off by the background. As it is now, it is dependent on the pops of color from the sides of its face, the collar and the berry to produce contrast, shape and form of the goat's head. ***

22 - Little girl's green darner.jpg

Frank Penner

Congratulations on your honorable mention placement! I loved this image! I loved that you preserved this intimate and lovely connection between a girl and an insect. The intimacy that you were able to capture in this image is just lovely. I'm sure you have put in a lot of practice and patience that allows you to be able to capture a moment like this. I love how the green darner is set off by the background of the hand. Your adept usage of depth of field is so very effective, it adds a wonderful addition to the depth and dimension of the image. I love how detailed the wings are represented with the delicate striations of its wings. Usually a frontal view of an insect doesn't show the majesty of the specimen because so much is lost in the shape, but that's not the case here—the symmetry of its placement adds a lot to the story of the image. Well done! ****



23 - Little Miss Piggy.jpg

Bill Shewchuk

I like the comedic “wink” you've created with this image and the play (struggle, perhaps) of nature and man. I also like the similar textures that the fence and the pig both have. I think the nose at the bottom of the frame creates a bit of a tangent and there needs to be a little more room for your subject to breathe in this image—backing up a little bit would allow this to happen. ***



24 - Loggerhead Shrike on a rainy day.jpg

Chris Johnson

Oh, I just loved seeing this image. How happy you had to have been to have captured this moment. I'm sure you put in a lot of practice and patience to achieve it. There are a lot of great formal elements working together to create a really lovely image. I love the essentially monochromatic color scheme that is going on in the image. The diagonal post the bird is perched on is a strong grounding element to the image as is the addition of his tailfeathers rhyming the position of the post. The wet feathers add a bit of implied movement to the image as if this little guy has just shaken off his feathers and hunkered down for a spell. The small details that are so sharp are not forgotten as well (the little drop of water on the post, the scratches on the post and the tiny details on the individual feathers) and add so much to the visual chemistry that makes up this image. ****





25 - Mother Duck with Brood.jpg

Jim Lambert

The formal compositional element of this image is quite nice. While the color palette is pleasing, there isn't very much color contrast in the image. This can be tweaked a bit with selective color (not pulling colors out of their natural realm, but enhancing a little or taking back a little to create some emphasis) to add a visual element. I do like the grouping of ducks with the mother duck being in profile. It adds a maternal aspect to the image with the little ducklings gathered around her. I like the sharpness of the mother duck and the detail I am able to see in her feathers.



26 - Ornamental Plum Tree Blossom.jpg

Bill Shewchuk

This bloom is lovely and I'm so glad that you chose to photograph it after a rain—the addition of the water drops adds a nice visual element to the image. The strong magenta color is powerful and stands out nicely as a foil to the background green complementary color. I think what you may want to consider is how to pull this blossom out from the rest of the blooms on the tree. The shallow depth of field helps but as it stands now, this bloom does fade into the background. I think if you were able to contrast the bloom with more of the beautiful green background it would be center stage and really become the focal point of the image. **



27 - Pacific Lamprey on Glass Window at Washington State Fish Ladder.jpg

Carol Fuessench

Wow—what an incredible sight to come across! I love the abstract quality of this image and the fact that the abstractness borders on ambiguity of it being flora or fauna (or even man made) and this mystery is evident until I read the title of the image. I think the detail you were able to capture in the image is quite lovely and adds an interesting visual element to the image. The fact that each individual lamprey is similar but different gives the viewer a lot to... ahem...sink their teeth into. Your usage of shallow depth of field is effective as well as the use of harmonious colors. I wondered what this image may look like turned 90 degrees counter clockwise and viewed as a vertical image instead of a horizontal image. ***



28 - Paradise In The Valley.jpg

Jeff Hobbs

This sure is a moment of paradise (and in paradise) you've captured! What a beautiful scene! I love the powerful element of the rainbow as an anchor in this image, but I especially love the more subtle elements you've captured. The glinting of beautiful light on the right hand side of the image where the hills roll together is something that I am going back to again and again. I also love the meandering road that winds through the foreground of the image and into the hills—it provides a lovely visual path for the viewer to take through the image. I also appreciate how the image is essentially divided into thirds—a foreground with fence and road, middle ground of hills and background of sky. The cool color scheme punctuated by the warmth of the rainbow is also an effective element. Excellent work. ****



29 - Patriotic swallow.jpg

Richard Bucich

Well done and congratulations on your honorable mention placement. I absolutely loved this image! I responded positively to your strong compositional elements in the image, especially the diagonal approach of the flag. Your usage of color is very strong in this image—the blue of the flag that is picked up again in the swallow's head is such a lovely color rhyme. I also love the rhyme of the grass tendrils in the swallow's beak picked up again in the unraveling red thread which is also picked up in the warm reddish tones of the swallow's gullet. Your adept usage of shallow depth of field is stunning. *****



30 - Pocket Gopher Needing Dental Care.jpg

Frank Penner

What an interesting scene you came across! I do like the diagonal element in the lower left of the image—it adds a nice visual element to the picture. I might suggest utilizing your camera RAW settings to create a little bit of contrast in the shadow areas to help pull the gopher from his surroundings. I think part of the intent here is that he fade away into the background, but that also becomes something that holds the image back. Maybe even pulling the teeth out a bit so that they are more evident would allow that aspect to pull forward. I think because your depth of field is constant throughout the image there is a bit of a fight between the green plants around the gopher and the gopher itself. ***



31 - Pole Sitting at the SF Zoo .jpg

Carol Fuessench

The composition of this image is quite strong. While I do enjoy the shallow depth of field you've used here, I think you could push that aspect even further and use much more shallow depth of field, allowing the background to be more textural which will allow the subject to separate even more from the background. It's hard to control light somewhere like the zoo, but a softer light or shooting into the shadow would also add another lovely visual element. ***



32 - Praying mantis on Pink Yarrow.jpg

Jared Ikeda

This image is just a joy to view...there is so much going on in this photograph to spend time with. I want to commend your first place award! The depth of field you used here is lovely—such a soft touch that allows the mantis' head to remain the real focal point of the image while focus fades away as the foreground recedes into the background. The colors are just lovely and your usage of texture to add depth and dimension is quite nice. Your composition is also extremely strong with the mantis as a diagonal angle. I usually like to give some comments on what can be improved in an image, but I am at a loss as to what I may suggest other than keep shooting! Well done!! *****



33 - Queen Anne's Lace.jpg

Bill Shewchuk

Your usage of depth of field in this image is very effective and the part of the image I think it is the most lovely is at the bottom of the picture—the spindly tendrils against the backdrop of the blurred background is a very visually compelling aspect of this image. I wish that it carried through the entire picture. I think the bulk of the flower becomes very busy and hard to visually navigate and my eye goes back down to the bottom of the picture and then up around the bulk of the flower. I think my eye is doing this because of the texture the shallow depth of field provides. The queen anne's lace itself is really a beautiful specimen, but it doesn't get to really shine in the way it's been portrayed. I think if you were able to get closer to it (or maybe experiment with close up filters or a macro lens)—to allow some of the features of the flower to pull forward and become more important than other elements, it would begin to come together visually **.



34 - Red-tailed hawk Tears Apart a Pigeon.jpg

Karen Schofield

What a moment you were able to capture! This scene is clearly a very powerful one with a very powerful subject enjoying the spoils of the hunt. It really does display quite effectively the circle of life. This image to me conveys the idea of “backyard nature” quite well—I can tell this is a residence of some sort and the collision of man (displayed by the railing and out of focus curtain and window in the background) and nature takes an almost conceptual turn in the image. I love how effectively you were able to use depth of field to give the hawk a majestic and spot-on focus. I also like that while this image is an “action” shot, it becomes much more than that. The intent look in the hawk’s eyes is compelling and the fact that its prey is also in tack sharp focus keeps the image visually interesting. ****



35 - Rock squirrel enjoying french fries.jpg

Margret Maria Cordts

I love the comedic quality of this image and the fact that the squirrel is definitely the star of this show. It almost looks as if the squirrel is playing the French fry like a musical instrument. I also like that you captured a profile of this creature—the shape and form of its face adds a nice visual element. You really had to exercise a lot of patience and practice to be able to get as close as you did to this squirrel. I love how I can see such detail in the squirrel’s fur and in the wooden picnic table it is perched upon. I also like your use of depth of field to give the squirrel center stage while giving the viewer enough info to get a sense of where it was taken. ***



36 - Scrub jays taking turns.jpg

Frank Penner

I really love this moment you were able to capture. I also like the title you have given the image—it adds a comical and human element to their interplay with each other. It also gives a lovely nod to the “backyard nature” theme of the challenge. The cool color scheme you have created with the blue of the birds and the lovely green background is quite compelling and visually interesting. I love the serendipitous aspect of the blue appearing again on the container. Your usage of shallow depth of field is extremely effective...it’s just enough to allow them to come forward and separate from the background, but yet also give enough clues to know where this was taken...a backyard residence of some sort. Just adds another layer to the image I suppose. The interplay you have captured between these two birds is quite lovely and such an intimate moment—it really seems as if they are communicating with each other. Well done! ****



37 - Sea Otter Checking Out Raft.jpg

Richard Bucich

This is such an interesting scene you've come across here. The pop of color from the raft is a strong visual element, but does feel overpowering in this image. I do love the reflection you've captured and the soft red dapples on the water. When taking images like this, it's so imperative to think about the time of day. Early morning or closer to sunset would have added a striking visual element to the image. The harshness of the light creates a lot of contrast in the image which would be lessened at a different time of day with softer light. **



38 - Sharp Shinned Hawk Visiting My Yard.jpg

Judi H Clayton

Wow! This is such a lovely and powerful portrait! I love the fact that you were able to capture this lovely and powerful bird of prey in such a regal and almost posed stance. It's as if it knew a photograph was being made. This does become a portrait of this powerful bird of prey and it has some lovely formal elements to it. The depth of field is such a powerful tool here that allows the hawk to take center stage and command the image. The contrappasto of its pose creates some visually compelling diagonals that allow the eye to move dynamically around the image. The harmonious colors of the green grass in the foreground and yellow legs work to move the eye upward into the picture where the lovely texture of the feathers plays quite nicely against the blurred background. Well done! ****



39 - Success.jpg

Carol Fuessenich

This is a successful moment and the ability you have in capturing motion is well executed! I like the pop of color of the object the dog is catching in his (or her?) mouth. I do think that the white balance is off a bit and it could be lightened up a little (could be my screen, but it seems to be a little dark). A lower camera angle would also aid in separating your subject from the background. The horizon line cuts the subject in half here which can be visually distracting. Moving your perspective will allow your subject to separate and be the star of the picture. *



40 - Succulents.jpg

Jerry Heisel

These beautiful succulents have such lovely texture, shape and form. In this image, the over processing takes away from that loveliness and the halos and artifacts that are created become overpowering. The shapes and textures of the succulents are so lovely, I think changing your angle to either get closer or shoot into the plants would also help to create some strong formal compositional elements. When placing the subject of an image in a photograph, it's always a strong move to shift the subject from the center of the image. Think of a tic-tac-toe board and place the subject where two of those lines intersect. *



41 - Sulphur-crested Cockatoo(Cacatua galerita) living the dream.jpg

John Drum

What a beautiful creature you had the opportunity to photograph. I'm left wondering if the person in this image is scared of the bird—their expression overpowers the (really interesting) expression of the bird. I'm not sure if this image is about the bird or about the person...I guess there is a bit of a visual fight that happens between the two. The addition of the hand with food also adds a confusing element to the image. I do love the usage of shallow depth of field and your white balance is spot on in this image. I think, if you are able to get a chance to photograph this Sulphur-crested cockatoo again, isolating it so that it is more emphasized would be a great way to go. *



42 - Sunrise walk along the coast.jpg

Margret Maria Cordts

This is such a lovely time of day to photograph nature and the landscape. The colors are lovely and powerful and place me in the moment. I think your usage of deep depth of field is very effective, too. The suggestion I have is that the branches on the left side of the image do become a little distracting—varying up your perspective and angle may allow you to capture this vista without the branches entering into the image. ***



43 - The Foot of Man in Nature.jpg

Ken Jones

This image has an uncanny three-dimensional effect to it—the footprints look almost as if they are coming out of the sand instead of going into the sand. I do, however, wish I could see more. My eye is begging to see where these footprints are leading, to have a little more context in the image. I like the tiny little drops or drips of water that add another element to the movement of this image. ***



44 - This Post is My Post-This Post is Your Post.jpg

Ken Jones

I love the almost comedic moment that this image captures of one bird placing his leg on the other bird. It puts an almost human element onto the birds...I guess we're all a little greedy when it comes to space. Your formal compositional elements are strong here, but I would suggest giving this more contrast. I think with some deeper shadows in the image, you would solidify the visual impact of this image and make it much, much more visually striking. ***



45 - Watchful Cooper Hawk.jpg

Lillie Grossman

You've got a lot of beautiful things going on in this picture...the formal compositional elements are very effective here. The diagonal the bird is placed on is very strong, the profile of the bird is lovely and the color scheme is solid. You've been able to separate the bird successfully from the background and it provides a calm visual space for the eye to move around in the image. The contrast of man and nature add another conceptual element to the image also. Very successful and lovely image! ****



46 - Western Osprey Family (*Pandion haliaetus*) Utilizing Man-made Tub atop Pole for Nesting.jpg

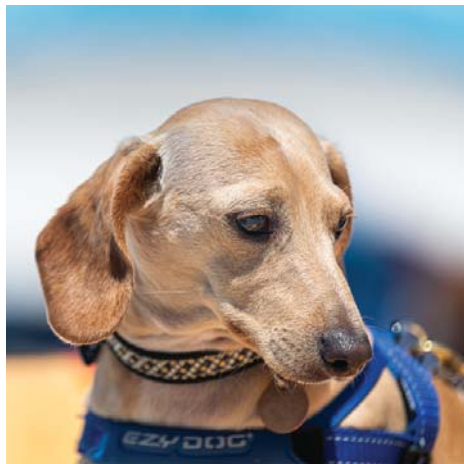
Karen Schofield

I appreciate the contrast of man and nature in this image and the unending quest nature will have to conform to man made confines. I do get a little lost in the visual elements in this image—there is a lot of detail in the image and the osprey family get a bit lost in the nest they are occupying. I've been thinking about how you could pull them forward a bit, and other than a higher angle, it really would be hard to accomplish this task. I think playing up the pops of yellow in the image could be a good visual foil to the blue of the image if it were emphasized a bit more. Also, waiting to get the ospreys when they have more of a profile might also allow them to separate from their nest a bit. **



47 - Yellow Woolly Caterpillar on Milkweed Plant.jpg
J H Clayton

Wow—I really loved the visual elements you have in this image. The diagonal path the caterpillar is on is effective. The lovely texture you are able to capture as well as the unique vantage point are both strong elements here. The shallow depth of field is effective in allowing the caterpillar to separate from the background. The color scheme is powerful, with the harmonious colors of yellow and green with the pops of white and black to accentuate. I feel as if I could reach out and touch this specimen! Very well done! ****



48 - Carmel Beach Party Portrait.jpg

BILL BROWN

I love that you got so close in to this lovely dog in this portrait. Your colors are strong and the image is well balanced. I think what would take this image to the next level is if you had a little bit of a lower angle and had allowed the dog to turn to more of a profile. A lower angle would have allowed the head to separate from the body a bit more. The quality of light is quite nice and the shallow depth of field is superb. ***



49 - Front Yard Acorn Woodpecker.jpg

BILL BROWN

Congratulations on your honorable mention placement! This image is just lovely. It really is a joy to view. It goes beyond a nature or wildlife image and enters into portrait territory. You've imbued the woodpecker with such majestic personality. Being able to engage with the bird's eye like I can adds such a powerful element to the image—I feel like I know it more as I look at it. I love the contrappasto you've created with the bird's pose—it's almost as if he knew he was being photographed and like any professional model, knew the best angle to give you. With your adept usage of strong focus and delicate depth of field, you were able to showcase the bird's lovely and exquisite features. The eye goes on a natural path up the photo and lands on the red of the top of his head only to circle back down and up around again—this photo keeps the eye moving and thus, keeps the eye in the interior of the photo! ****



50 - Laguna Grande Dragonfly.jpg

BILL BROWN

This is a beautiful dragonfly and the pops of blue in it are not only beautiful but effective visually. I like that you have captured motion in the body of the dragonfly but we see the motion clearly in the wings. I think the only suggestion I would have is adding a contextual element in the image (something the dragonfly is flying towards, away from, etc). I like the effective use of shallow depth of field and I'm amazed you were able to get so close to this creature! ***

Winning Images:

Honorable Mention

Patriotic Swallow

Richard Bucich



Honorable Mention

Front Yard Acorn Woodpecker
Bill Brown



Honorable Mention

Little Girl's Green Darner
Frank Penner



Third Place

Blowing the Storm Out
Jeff Hobbs





2nd Place

Juvenile Red Wing Hawk

Jim Lambert



First Place

Praying Mantis on Pink Yarrow

Jared Ikeda