



**01-Anemone (Anthopleura sola).jpg**

*Shelley Nemeth*

I love the colors in this image! The focus is super sharp. It's perhaps 1/2 -stop overexposed as some of the tiny white pebbles are a little too bright. I think it would be a slightly stronger composition if it was a little tighter on the anemone itself. That would crop out the lighter stuff in the upper left corner that I find a bit distracting. I really like the emphasis on the texture and the colors in this shot! \*\*\*



**02-Aspen History Pattern.jpg**

*Rick Verbanec*

This is a great concept, despite it being a bit cliché. Although there are a ton of aspen pattern photos like this, I personally love them and think EVERYBODY should create their own! The composition of the frame is really good. I like that the trees on the edge are closer to the viewer and then the trees lead the view to the center of the image as they go farther back into the photo. The one thing I would suggest doing differently is to try again with a better sky behind the trees. As it is now, you lose the contrast of the trees against that white sky. A darker sky would be much more dramatic and place more emphasis on the trees themselves. \*\*\*



**03-Barnacles on rock, Pt. Lobos\_.jpg**

*Kent Van Vuren*

Abstracts and patterns in nature like this are captivating! This image captures my imagination and I find myself staring at it trying to find different shapes within the patterns. I can look at it and ignore the scale and imagine it as an aerial image, with trees growing on a rocky landscape. The warm colors are inviting and it's well exposed and sharp. The title provides good information and helps tell the nature story. \*\*\*\*\*



**04-Bracken Fern in Winter.jpg'**

*Andrea Madsen*

Superb sharpness and detail on the fern frond and it's very well exposed. Although there are a lot of other stems and fronds in the frame, the fact that they're not within the plane of focus creates depth in the image and gives it a more 3-dimensional feel to it. I actually like the pattern of the three stems radiating down from the upper right of the image. \*\*\*\*



### **05-Branching tree patterns.jpg**

*Jared Ikeda*

I like that you presented this image as monochrome. B&W images naturally allow the viewer to focus on the patterns, textures, and detail of an image without being distracted by color. This is a very difficult scene from which to create a compelling photo. One of the keys to composing a successful image, in any circumstance, is to look at a scene and ask yourself, “What is it about this scene that turns me on?” Then isolate it and draw the viewer’s attention to it. In this image, there’s nothing that grabs my attention and gets my eye to focus on it. It’s hard to create order from chaos in a scene that has so much going on. Try to narrow your composition down to a component of a scene rather than trying to encompass too much. As you view other images in this competition, I think you’ll notice that the really compelling images have honed in on smaller areas of detail that focus the viewer’s eyes on something specific. \*\*



### **06-Castle Rock Sunset.jpg**

*Chyrl Light*

This looks like a fascinating geological formation. For nature competitions, especially when emphasizing patterns in nature, I think it helps to get a closer, more detailed view of the rocks and patterns. Since the sky is pretty bland and doesn’t contribute to the impact of the photo, I would suggest shooting at a longer focal length, isolating an area of interesting patterns in that formation, and including little or no sky in the image. Perhaps a vertical format would emphasize the columnar pattern, as well as the stratification of the formation as well. Zooming in on the rocks could emphasize the texture of the sandstone a bit more too.

\*\*



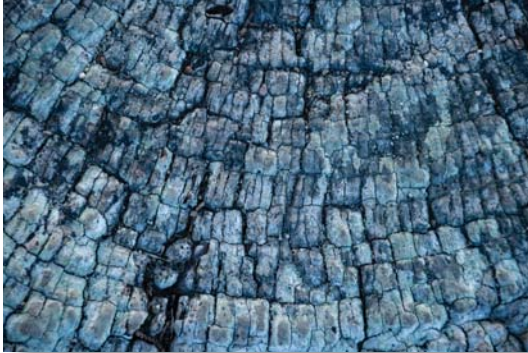
### **07-Creeping devil cactus (Stenocereus eruca).jpg**

*Janet Azevedo*

This is a super sharp image! (Pun intended) (I could needle you with cactus puns all night!) But seriously, it is a well-focused and well-exposed shot. I like the way the cactus enters the frame at a diagonal from the upper right. The most interesting spot of this image is the tip of the cactus. The background isn’t very interesting, yet there’s quite a bit of it. You might be able to achieve a stronger composition by switching to a vertical format, placing the tip of the cactus towards the bottom of the frame and looking down the length of the cactus. In fact, that would be a wonderful composition with which to try focus stacking. You could take several images of the cactus at successive focal planes, working your way from the tip of the cactus, down the

body of the cactus towards the back. Then you combine the multiple images in a software that takes the sharpest portions of each image and combines them into one image with ultimate depth of field, making everything appear sharp.

\*\*\*



### **08-Decaying Cypress Trunk Tree Rings.jpgg**

*Elke Ikeda*

I like the closeness and pattern of this image. However, it just doesn't grab me. I think there's a lack of contrast and it only appears sharp toward the center of the image. Perhaps a bit more light on the subject (a warmer light would be nice) or a slightly longer exposure would help. When photographing something relative flat such as this, it helps to shoot with your camera on a tripod and positioned so the camera is perpendicular to the plane of the subject. Then, even with a moderate aperture of f/8 or f/11, your subject should appear totally sharp from edge to edge. If that sort of positioning of the camera isn't possible, then shooting at a smaller aperture like f/16 or f/22 provides greater depth of field and a sharper image.

\*\*



### **09-Dramatic end to the day.jpgg**

*Frank Penner*

It's a beautiful sunset and I'm sure you had a memorable evening there. However, to create a strong image that distinguishes your shot from all the other pretty sunset photos out there, you need to remember something I mentioned in a prior comment. Look at a scene and ask yourself, "What is it about this scene that turns me on?" Then isolate it and draw the viewer's attention to it. Here, the main point of interest is the bottom portion, slightly to the left of center. That's where the sky is on fire with incredible golden light. The rest of the current composition only distracts from that spot. Using the "Rule of Thirds," I would suggest using a longer focal length lens and creating a horizontal composition with the tip of the land in the lower left thirds intersection and the sun in the upper right thirds intersection. If you don't have a long enough telephoto, then zoom in as much as possible to isolate the area of golden light and you'll have a stronger composition and more compelling image.

\*\*



### 10-Mature Blue Gum Eucalyptus.jpg

*Frank Penner*

Technically excellent with regards to sharpness and exposure. Since this is a competition focusing on patterns in nature, I suggest getting a little tighter on the patterns of the bark. I personally think a tighter shot that encompasses the smooth colored portion of the trunk, surrounded by some of the shaggy bark would be a more interesting composition. That's the area where I naturally find my eye resting anyway. The upper portions of the tree and the sides with the sky don't add anything else of interest and only detract from the main point of visual interest. Perhaps moving to your right and shooting more directly at the bare trunk spot would allow you to isolate it more. All that being said, it's great that you got the shot you did. It's just important to shoot a subject from many different angles and perspectives. If you have the time, try lots of different shots with your subject, especially when it's a static subject like a tree that won't run or fly away as you're shooting.

\*\*\*



### 11-Morning Lupines.jpg

*Andrea Madsen*

Spectacular image! Great focus all the way through the photo and the exposure is perfect. It provides information about the plant, is visually stunning, and beautifully executed technically. This is a great example of what I was referring to in prior comments about isolating an area of a scene that has strong visual interest.

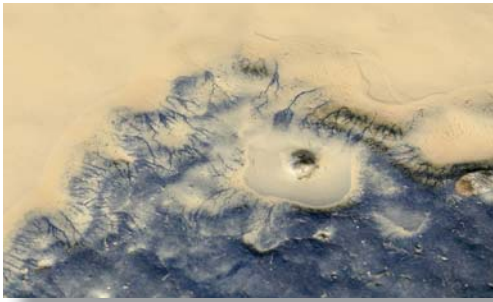
\*\*\*\*\*



### 12-Orange-gilled Dermocybes on the Forest Floor .jpg

*Carol Fuessenich*

You've selected a wonderful subject with which to show patterns in nature. The pattern of the fungal gills could be emphasized even more by getting a closer macro shot that virtually eliminates the background. I envision the frame filled with the underside of the cap, with the stipe extending down to the lower right corner of the frame, and the gills radiating out towards the edges of the frame. Of course, the drawback to this tighter composition is the photo will not serve as well as an ID photo for that species of mushroom. However, as I mentioned before, shoot a subject from many different angles and perspectives and you have more to select from for different purposes. \*\*\*



### 13-Patterns in Mud, Pt. Lobos\_.jpg

*Kent Van Vuren*

This is a fascinating photo! I love staring at it and thinking about how it could be an aerial image of the edge of an ice shelf, showing where the ice has been melting and flowing down river or stream systems into the partially frozen ocean. An image that can capture the viewer's attention and hold it like that is a strong image. The only reason I didn't score this with 5 stars is because the focus is a little soft in places. Crisper focus throughout would draw more attention to the texture in the image. Perhaps this could have been achieved by using a smaller aperture, such as f/16 or f/22. \*\*\*\*



### 14-Patterns on Patterns.jpg

*Rick Verbanec*

This is another image that keeps me staring at it, looking at the patterns and textures. It's hard to immediately tell what's going on in the image but it's very soothing to try. It looks like water running over rocks; however, it appears as though it might be multiple exposures of the scene. Regardless, it's well exposed and sharp, showing the texture on the rocks. It's a very interesting photo!

\*\*\*\*\*

### 15-Pincushion Sea Urchin Shell on Asilomar Beach .jpg

*Carol Fuessenich*

Very sharp with lots of detail and texture to it, in both the urchin remains and the surrounding sand. My guess is this was shot with a higher-quality macro lens and precisely composed from a tripod. I say that because there is incredibly sharp detail in the grains of sand and on the urchin exoskeleton. It's hard to get that amount of detail on a small subject when hand-holding your camera. The pattern on the urchin exoskeleton itself is amazing! This provides great information about the animal and is also very visually appealing. \*\*\*\*\*



### 16-Ribera Beach Rocks.jpg

*Jared Ikeda*

What a great example of patterns caused by erosive forces! The composition is really good. I like how the water flowing in is situated along the lower thirds line of the frame (Rule of Thirds) and the fault lines of the rocks are running perpendicular to that. It's sharp throughout the image. The one thing that I find really distracting in this shot is the glare

on the rocks. An easy solution to this is to use a polarizing filter on your lens. A polarizing filter has two elements in it. It screws on the front of your lens and you rotate the outer element until you see the polarization effect. This eliminates glare off non-metallic surfaces. It will eliminate the glare and thus richen the colors of the rocks. There are even polarizing filters available that incorporate a slight warming tone as well. This can be an inexpensive and invaluable addition to your camera bag! Try it out! You'll love it! The one drawback to polarizing filters is that you lose 1-2 stops of light from your exposure so you have to shoot at a slower shutter speed, wider aperture, or higher ISO. \*\*\*\*



### **17-Rocks battered by the ocean at Montagna de Oro.jpg**

*Nicole Asselborn*

Very dramatic photo! This is a great use of a fast shutter speed to freeze the motion in the crashing waves. The sharp, jagged rocks add to the drama. This is really well-exposed, given a potentially difficult exposure situation with the very bright waves crashing against the darker rocks in the foreground. My only suggestion for improvement would be to use a slightly smaller aperture so there would be more extensive depth of field to make the grayer rocks in the foreground sharper. Keep in mind that a smaller aperture will mean you'll have to shoot at a slower shutter speed or at a higher ISO to get the same exposure. The slower shutter speed could eliminate the sharpness of the crashing waves and record some motion. If you want to keep the "frozen motion" of the water, then opt for the slightly higher ISO rating. \*\*\*\*



### **18-Shells On The Beach.jpg**

*Chyrl Light*

Really nice composition! The arrangement and position of the shells creates a very nice pattern that leads the viewer's eye into the image. This is pretty sharp, however, I think it could be a little sharper. My guess is this was shot handheld. Composing and shooting a static subject like this from a tripod really improves the sharpness and allows you to shoot at smaller apertures and slower shutter speeds because your camera is held stable. In addition to shooting from a tripod, I suggest triggering your camera with a remote so you don't have to touch the shutter release button, creating vibrations in the camera. This is especially important when shooting at shutter speeds of 1/500 second or slower. The one tiny purple and white particle just to the left of the center shell is kind of distracting. When composing from a tripod, it gives you the opportunity to critically examine your composition and look for little distracting elements like this. \*\*\*



### **19-Spider lupine (Lupinus benthamii).jpg**

*Janet Azevedo*

This is a beautiful photo and makes me want to be there! It's sharp and well-exposed. My only suggestion would be regarding the composition itself. It's nice to show the big batch of lupines as you do in this image. However, I think a stronger composition would be to switch to a vertical format, shoot from a tripod and a lower angle to the flowers, have a flower or two prominent in the foreground and then have the mass of flowers out of focus in the background. The image would still convey that there are lots of flowers in the area but it would emphasize a few in the foreground and give the eye a main subject to rest on. The background would provide visually pleasing, repeating colors in the image. The lower angle and vertical format would draw more attention to the vertical nature of the lupines and make your photo different than most. Another possible composition would be to shoot at a low angle from a tripod with a wide angle lens in a horizontal format, again, emphasizing a few flowers in the foreground but then filling the background with the color from the others. Try a bunch of different angles, lenses, and perspectives when shooting your subjects. \*\*\*\*



### **20-Symmetry of the fetid adder's tongue flower.jpg**

*Nicole Asselborn*

These are amazing flowers but super challenging to get good macro shots of them! First of all, your exposure here is perfect! I love the diffused light on the flower. It's hard to retain the subtle details of the petals when you have harsh direct light on the flower. If the lighting is harsh, you can use a diffuser disk that pops open. The diffused light on this flower works perfectly. These are such complex flowers that it's really hard to get all of the flower parts in focus. This appears to have been shot at a wide aperture of  $f/2.8 - f/5.6$  because of the very shallow depth of field. A smaller aperture would help get more of the flower in focus; however, it would also cut the light coming into the sensor on your camera. You'd have to compensate by using a slower shutter speed or higher ISO rating. A slower shutter speed is problematic because these flowers grow tall on a spindly stem and blow around in the slightest of breezes. A slow shutter speed will result in a blurred image due to the flower moving. One solution is to use a device that clamps to your tripod, has an articulating arm that clamps onto the stem of the plant, without crunching the stem. I use a device called the Plamp (combo of plant + clamp). I place it on the stem right below the field of view and it holds the plant steady. The lighter beige areas of the background are a bit

distracting. It would just be nice to see more detail in the plant parts of the flower with greater depth of field. Another option would be to use a flash unit and a very small aperture. If you expose for the flower parts, the background will go dark, which can be a dramatic look in an image too. \*\*\*



### **21-Twigs with Ocean Sparkle.jpg**

*Elke Ikeda*

This photo has really nice depth to it. There are branches in the foreground that provide the main subject but the image goes back to the out of focus branches and the reflected spots of light from the water. The shot has an ethereal feel to it. It draws me into the image. It's simple but very soothing. The B&W works perfectly for this photo. Colors would distract from the patterns and the light playing in the background.

\*\*\*\*



### **22-Winter Layers.jpg**

*Shelley Nemeth*

The very first thing I noticed in this photo, before I read the title, was the layers in the image. That works very well to create depth to a shot, leading the view into the composition. It's sharp throughout the photo, from the texture of the snow in the foreground to the peaks in the ridges towards the top of the distance. It's a nice scenic to document the area; however, there's a little too much included in the scene. The sky is barren, uninteresting, and doesn't add anything to the photo. Again, look at the scene and decide what really turns you on about it. For me, it's the layers of the ridges in the background. This looks like it was shot with a fairly wide focal length, perhaps 24-50mm. I would suggest increasing the focal length to about 200mm and shoot a vertical format shot that includes the smaller tree and the dead snag to its right at the bottom of the frame. Then the frame would include the most interesting layers of the ridges in the background. It would include only a little bit of the sky for context.

\*\*\*



---

Winning Images:

Honorable Mentions:

**Patterns on Patterns**  
*Rick Verbanec*



**Twigs with Ocean Sparkle**  
*Elke Ikeda*



**Bracken Fern in Winter**  
*Andrea Madsen*



Third Place:

**Pincushion Sea Urchin Shell**  
**on Asilomar Beach**  
*Carol Fuessenich*



2nd Place:

**Barnacles on Rock, Pt Lobos**  
*Kent Van Vuren*



First Place:

**Morning Lupines**  
*Andrea Madsen*

