



**01 - A hike in Spring at the Pinnacles.jpeg**

*Nicole Asselborn*

This is a very strong image of the hills and oaks in the Pinnacles. The panoramic cropping works well, as does the vignetting to darken the corners and bring out the central subject. I wonder if the large rock had been more to the left and out of the center of the frame, if it would be even stronger. If it were to the left, then it would visually lead to the trees and the two subjects would play off against each other. On the other hand, there is something majestic about the way you composed it, with the rock easily drawing and holding the viewer's attention. I have found it challenging to get good images in the Pinnacles and this one is very successful.

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**02 - Abandoned in the Hills.jpg**

*Carol Silveira*

The rusted old cars make an interesting subject with soft lighting and strong composition. This looks like Bodie and the hills provide a strong background because there is so little brush and no distractions. Also, the diagonal line created by the two cars is repeated in the hills behind them. I also like the inclusion of the sky, because the clouds add additional interest. Overall a very strong image.

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**03 - Asilomar Boardwalk.jpg**

*Carol Silveira*

The diagonal leading line of the boardwalk works very well in this scene. The placement was thoughtful and carefully considered, and it takes my eye from the lower right into the background. I believe that the light exposure is intentional as it gives a light feeling to the scene. I would be tempted to darken they sky a little, but it may not be helpful. One small suggestion would be to lower the tripod a little to gain a perspective that is different from standing. I am not sure if this would be effective, but it's often a good idea to try it. When a photograph shows us a scene that is different from one we see while walking around, it is often more compelling.

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#### 04 - Bachelor and Three Graces - Mariposa Grove.jpg

*Rick Verbanec*

A strong image of the four large sequoia trees. This composition works is deliberate and thoughtful, and it's important that the trees remain vertical and parallel. The dappled light is soft enough that it is not too distracting, probably because the winter sun is low on the horizon and is more of a sidelight. A very well done photograph.

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#### 05 - Barn Swallow (Hirundo rustica) with 5 Hungry Chicks.jpg

*Karen Schofield*

A nice image of the bird flying away from the nest. Good composition and exposure. The two young birds in the nest are pretty sharp but the bird flying away is distracting because it is so large and soft. My guess would be that this was a hand-held shot with a long lens, which can be pretty challenging. Perhaps a narrower aperture of around f/8-9 would have helped, or some stability for the camera. Bird and wildlife shots are very challenging, even when shooting in manual mode with a fast shutter speed and high ISO. Be sure your focusing mode is set to continuous shooting and has several points of focus, so you are not locked into a single point of focus. I always have to remember to change the focusing mode when switching between landscapes and images with motion. A nice image of the bird flying away from the nest. Good composition and exposure. The two young birds in the nest are pretty sharp but the bird flying away is distracting because it is so large and soft. My guess would be that this was a hand-held shot with a long lens, which can be pretty challenging. Perhaps a narrower aperture of around f/8-9 would have helped, or some stability for the camera. Bird and wildlife shots are very challenging, even when shooting in manual mode with a fast shutter speed and high ISO. Be sure your focusing mode is set to continuous shooting and has several points of focus, so you are not locked into a single point of focus. I always have to remember to change the focusing mode when switching between landscapes and images with motion.

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### **06 - Bixby Creek and Bridge.jpg**

*Rick Verbanec*

This is a strong image of Bixby Bridge and it looks deceptively simple, but it's challenging to get the vertical members straight and parallel, which was done very well. The exposure is perfect and the cropping is well done. This is a good location to shoot a panoramic scene with a series of vertical images stitched together. The panoramic can include more of the ocean and background hills. Very well done.

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### **07 - Cedar Waxwings (Bombycilla cedrorum) Visit Fountain.jpg**

*Mary Ann Avera*

This is a very well done image of the waxwings gathering at the fountain. I particularly like the diagonal line created by the bird on top that is repeated by the tree behind it. The biggest concern is the distracting highlights in the background, these keep the viewer from being able to focus on the birds as much as one would like. Perhaps you could selectively darken these areas so the birds appear brighter and more dominant. Another option would be to crop a little off the top of the scene to remove some of the brightness up there.

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### **08 - Family Loves Pumpkin.jpg**

*Clarissa Conn*

This is a very fun shot of the ground squirrels in and around the pumpkin, it was a nice moment. Unfortunately the harsh and contrasty light keeps pulling my eye to the grid of the fence and away from the squirrels. I don't think there is much that can be done to improve this image due to the lighting contrast, perhaps some selective darkening would help a little. This would be an excellent image with better lighting conditions.

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**09 - Female Barn Spider (*Araneus cavaticus*) Resting On Patio Umbrella.jpg**

*Mary Ann Avera*

A very nice and unusual photograph of this spider. The muted colors help to hide or disguise it, which make the scene intriguing. The diagonal lines are a nice touch and work very well. My biggest concern is that it was shot from above, looking down on the spider. As with almost all wildlife shots, it's better to be down at their eye level or lower, photographing from that perspective instead of from above. I understand that this is not always easy or even a possibility, but try taking this shot first for insurance, then move lower and hope the spider cooperates.

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**10 - Giant Sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) Mutilated by the Hand of Man.jpg**

*John Avera*

This is a strong image of the giant sequoia and the arch going through it. The soft subdued light is very helpful and the composition and exposure are well done. Once you take a shot like this, you can consider what to do next. Perhaps a vertical shot looking up the tree with the opening at the bottom, or some other perspective than this straight forward way of seeing the scene. This is such an interesting subject that it would be worth "working" the scene a little more for more unusual and creative results.

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**11 - Great Blue Heron lands on sculpture - Palo Corona Park.jpg**

*Dennis Giuffre*

Very nice! I like the lighting, the moment of landing, the composition with the diagonals, the soft background and more. The fast shutter speed was perfect to stop the motion and the feathers are detailed and in focus, so there was enough aperture. Shoot more wildlife, you have all the right settings and have learned to be in the right place at the right time.

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### 12 - Hawks mating - Sierra Valley, CA..jpg

*Dennis Giuffre*

A very unusual scene and strong image. I appreciate the clarity, sharpness and the dynamic, dramatic scene with the outstretched wings of the hawk on top. Everything is well done. You might consider removing the connectors on either side of the scene and perhaps the wire going through the sky. There is already a bit of visual confusion with the three birds and simplifying the scene might be helpful. I am not sure how these connectors enhance the image. And you might want to level the board across the bottom. I think that the more the scene is simplified, the more compelling the hawks will be for the viewer.

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### 13 - Lewis's Woodpecker.jpg

*Jeff Hobbs*

A very well done photograph of this woodpecker. I like the composition with the vertical pole and the diagonal, leaning line of the bird. The solid greenish background works very well and enhances the red tones of the bird's feathers. The placement of the bird is well done also, with the head across the top 1/3 horizontal line. There is nothing in the image that is distracting--everything works to enhance it. Very well done.

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### 14 - Loggerhead Shrike.jpg

*Jeff Hobbs*

This is a very nice image of the shrike. It is well-composed and there are no distractions. The fence along the bottom is a nice element and works well with the bird's feet. I do feel that it is a little muted and could have more visual impact. Try this: open it in PS and at the top of the screen menu, go to Image>Auto Tone. See how you like that. Then you can go to Edit>Fade Auto Tone to use the opacity slider to make adjustments. I do this with almost every image and I think it helps this one. I also use Auto Contrast and Auto Color in the same manner.

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### 15 - Peacock on a roof in Carmel Valley.jpg

*Chris Johnson*

The bright colors, the bird posing, and soft light, all make this a strong image. I see this as more of a vertical shot and you might try cropping it that way to see if you like it better. If you crop it vertically and delete some of the yellows on the left, there is less distraction and more focus on the peacock. Also, the vertical format seems to make the bird more regal and imposing. It is a big generalization that is not always true, but usually when the subject is vertical, a vertical format works better.

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### 16 - Pelagic Cormorant resting on building, Wharf #2.jpg

*Kent VanVuren*

Dark animals are so difficult to photograph in bright light! But you did a very good job--none of the feathers are blown out and although there is a lot of contrast, there is also a lot of detail. The diagonal lines and diagonal pose of the bird are very helpful and make this an even stronger image. See how bright the blue background is? Try going into PS>Adjustments>Shadows/Highlights and reduce the highlights a little, this will darken the sky and some of the highlights on the bird. See how you like these changes, it is a subjective decision but I thought it made it better.

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### 17 - Red-shouldered Hawk On Post, Kirby Landing.jpg

*Kent Van Vuren*

Very well done. The exposure is perfect, the face and feathers are tack sharp and the background is soft, the composition is well done and the fence post and barbed wire work well. The bird turning to look back is a great pose. You used all the right settings and got an excellent image.

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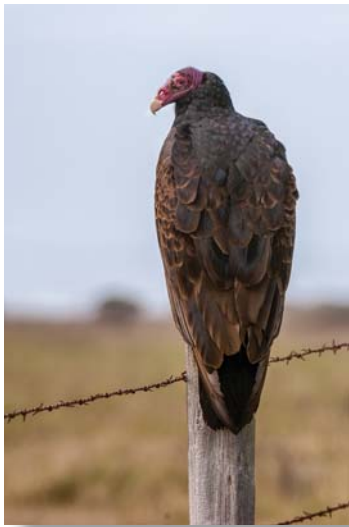


**18 - Tree Swallow Squabble (Tachycineta bicolor).jpg**

*Karen Schofield*

Very nice. I like the interaction between the birds, the sharp focus and soft background. The light is harsh, particularly on the bird box below, perhaps you could use a Brush Tool in LR or ACR to selectively darken it. If you could do this, the birds would become even more the subjects of the photograph, right now they are competing with the bright foreground.

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**19 - Turkey Vulture (Cathartes aura) on Fence Post.jpg**

*John Avera*

A very strong shot of the turkey vulture. The feathers are sharp, the pose is nice and the background is not distracting. I am going to make the same suggestion I made for an earlier image--open this in PS and at the top of the screen to go Image>Auto Tone. This small shift in tonality adds a lot of impact to the image without over-saturating any of the colors.

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**20 - Western Scrub-Jay (Aphelocoma californica) with reflection of house in eye .jpg**

*Chris Johnson*

This is a strong close-up of the jay with a great pose. The image is tack sharp, well exposed and no distracting elements. I think you mentioned the house to add the hand of man. The visual movement is also very nice--sort of a Nike swoop, which adds visual tension to the image. Very well done.

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### **21 - Window into the fire.jpg**

*Nicole Asselborn*

This is a very dramatic and unusual scene with the window in the foreground and fire raging over the hills. It reminds me of where we live, unfortunately. I think the juxtaposition of the window and fire is very compelling and wonder if the house were lightened just a touch to show a little more of it, if that would be helpful? To me, the window appears to be floating or isolated and a little confusing, whereas if there were just a little more context it might be helpful. You could do this selectively, without brightening the exposure of the entire scene.

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### **22 - Duckling hesitating to dive into water.jpg**

*Margret Cordts*

This is a very well done photograph of the young duck about to take a leap. The moment captured is fun and makes me smile. Also, the composition is well done, it's in focus and the background is soft. The warm tonality of all parts of the image are also a plus. One small issue for me is that the tail of the duck is missing. I know that because I come from a background of cropping in the camera I often get my shots too tight, but now with files that have lots of pixels, I am learning to allow more into the frame with the understanding that I can do the cropping in post-processing instead of at the moment of shooting. I am not sure what this would have looked like with more of the duck included, but it seems more accidental than intentional.

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### **23 - Red Jumping Spider on magenta.jpg**

*Margret Cordts*

A very strong close-up of this hairy spider. Are those 4 eyes or are the inner circles something else? I like the close up perspective and looking into the face of the spider, but I am a little confused about the background. I find the magenta color and the bright area on the upper right a little distracting. I think more of an even tonality would have made this image stronger and a subdued background would not compete for my attention as much as this bright one. I realize a lot of these observations are subjective and that I am expressing my feelings, and if you prefer the magenta...go for it. If this spider is hanging around, I think you could come up with a lot of interesting images!

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Winning Images:

Honorable Mentions:

**Asilomar Boardwalk**  
*Carol Silveira*



**Lewis's Woodpecker**  
*Jeff Hobbs*



**Loggerhead Shrike**  
*Jeff Hobbs*



Third Place:

**Western Scrub-Jay (*Aphelocoma californica*) with  
reflection of house in eye**  
*Chris Johnson*



2nd Place:

**Red-shouldered Hawk On Post, Kirby Landing**  
*Kent Van Vuren*



First Place:

**Great Blue Heron lands on sculpture -  
Palo Corona Park  
*Dennis Giuffre***

