



01 - A Treat for Billy-Goat.jpg

Joel Gambord

This is an interesting image of the goat being fed. The composition is well done, with the hand in the lower area and the diagonal line created by the goat's head and neck. I think this is more of a pictorial image than a nature one, but it probably could go either way. It appears as though a lot of work may have been done on this image in Photoshop--the contrast is very strong, which causes a loss of detail in the goat's hair and the man's hand. See how the hand goes from being wrinkled to losing all detail along the top. Be careful with PS, it is very easy to over-process. Another possibility is that this image is a selection or crop from a larger one, and does not have enough pixels remaining to enlarge it.



02 - Abbondanza!.jpg

Charlie Gibson

This looks like a wonderful image taken at a farmer's market--the colors are vibrant and the diagonal lines created by the perspective are very strong. The sun might be a little harsh or contrasty--see the bright, white spots on the tomatoes and peppers? I realize you have to take these when you see them, but a little softer light would be helpful. I think this image would also work in a pictorial competition.



03 - Brush Jay on Fence Post.jpg

Don Eastman

A nice image of the jay posing on a fence. Be careful with the focus with shots like this, it appears to me as though the feathers in the foreground are sharper than the head/face of the bird. I try to use spot focus and move the focal point exactly where I want it, usually on the eyes. If this were mine, I would crop from the upper right, removing some of the background and hopefully moving the bird out of the center of the frame. I have found that with wildlife, I often put the subject in the center and have to make a point to remind myself to rearrange the scene while shooting. The soft background is helpful. I would also vignette this image--darken the corners and maybe all the edges so the viewer's eye doesn't leave the frame so easily. And I would darken the exposure just a little, to saturate the rich colors a little more. Remember, half the photo is what you take, the other half is what you make it. ***



04 - Burrowing Owl on Fire Hydrant.jpg

Julie Chen

It's great to get a shot of an owl like this, they are shy and hard to find. But this looks more like a photograph of a fire hydrant with an owl on top. If the file is large enough, maybe you could crop in tighter on the owl and use the yellow as a secondary part of the image. Right now, the bright color and industrial shapes are so strong that they become the main themes of the image.

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05 - Coastal Challenge.jpg

Joni Zabala

What a great shot of the waves crashing into the rocks and spraying the house. The maintenance and upkeep must be overwhelming! The composition is very strong, with the house in the upper left and lots of room for the raging ocean. Be careful with the whites--they always draw the viewer's eye and take away from the vivid scene. You might try to knock them down a little in LR or PS and see how you like it. I would also darken the sky a little, so the viewer cannot escape the frame so easily.



06 - Dark-eyed Junco(Junco hyemalis).jpg

John Drum

This is a very well done image of the Junco. The head is in sharp focus and I like the expression. (What is he thinking?) It's interesting your aperture setting that the head is sharp and the tail feathers are softer. To me, this is not a distraction. The exposure is very well done and the dark background provides nice contrast with the lighter subject. Very well done.



07 - Daybreak on a Driftwood Teepee.jpg

Joni Zabala

Nice shot of the driftwood sculpture on the beach. The composition is well thought out with the horizon line about 1/3 up from the bottom and the sculpture off to the side. The early morning light is soft and enhances the scene. I like the setting moon. I appreciate that the corners have been darkened to contain the scene. Strong image.



08 - Great Egret (Ardea alba) in a Florida Restaurant.jpg

Bill Shewchuk

A nice photograph of the egret in the restaurant setting, it's interesting what can be done now with an iPhone! There is a lot of visual mayhem or confusion because the background is so dominant and in focus. There is a lot going on and I'm not sure it's helpful, but it is a nice "novelty" shot because we don't often see egrets in this type of setting.

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09 - Leucospermum from S. Africa.jpg

Andrea Madsen

A very nice shot of this spectacular flower. It is very sharp and well exposed. It would be stronger if you had been able to move the other flowers out of the scene and had the central flower surrounded only by leaves. Then you could vignette the corners or darken all of the edges. When you have a bright area along the edge of the frame, the viewer's eye can easily escape and the image becomes much less compelling. When you have a great subject like this, take your time and have a discussion with yourself about how to make it a stronger image. ***



10 - Malayan Tiger (Panthera tigris) at Norfolk Zoo.jpg

Bill Shewchuk

A nice image of the tiger, the lighting is soft and the face is very sharp. The background is busy and that makes it distracting, but you probably had few options. While the subject matter, the tiger, is unusual and dramatic, to me, the photograph is more of a "specimen" shot. It needs something additional to make it dynamic and interesting. **



12 - Owens River Flowing Through the Long Valley Caldera.jpg

Patricia McKean

This is a nice capture of the creek leading us to the background mountains and clouds. I wonder if you also took a vertical, which could include more of the sky. I find that when the horizon splits the image, there are often two pictures in one--the upper and lower. When you use a ratio of 1:3 or 1:4, then it is easier for the viewer to understand what you are trying to show them. Photographing a nice scene does not necessarily translate into a strong image, it's up to you to use your creativity to turn it into a compelling and dramatic image. **



13 - Padre's Shooting Star (Primula clevelandii) in Grassy Oak Woodland near Greenfield CA.jpg

Patricia McKean

I like the image of the old fence post and the shooting stars, I think you are on the right track. I also like the contrast between the flowers in focus and those that are not. I don't mind a little of the dappled light on the grasses, but the intensity in the upper left keeps this from being a strong image. If you know where this was taken and it's accessible, go back and take it again with softer light. When there is a bright area, the viewer goes to that and does not see the subject you that attracted you and that you are trying to share. Be thoughtful and deliberate, and remember that you are creating, not recording. **



14 - Reclining.jpg

Sean Crawford

I think this scene has had potential, but there are several very bright elements that take me away from the sleeping seal (sea lion?). I like the perspective--shooting downward, but the very bright wooden beams become the main subjects of the photograph, not the animal. I am not sure what else you could have done, but when you have a scene like this, try taking a lot of shots and see if they improve as you work it.

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15 - Red Tail Hawk on Sign Post_2-24-2022.jpg

Don Eastman

This is a nice photograph of the hawk and I appreciate that he is a little to the left of center, looking into the scene. He is in sharp focus and the background is fairly soft. If this were mine, I would try to use the ND filter in LR or Bridge to darken the sky and then I would darken the foreground also. The brightness of the ocean and sky pull my eye away from the bird and compete for my visual attention. If you were painting this scene instead of photographing it, think how you would change it to make it stronger and more visually effective, then do those things. When I see a bird like this, I will often wait a long time with my finger on the shutter, for it to take flight. The motion the wings opening and the bird launching always make for a strong photograph. If you have another opportunity like this, try shooting from a much lower angle so the sky becomes the background. The lower perspective also makes for a stronger and more unusual image.***



16 - Redwing Blackbird (Agelaius phoeniceus).jpg

John Drum

There are many things done well with this photograph. First, it looks like he is about to take off, so the open wings and energetic pose add a strong dimension, which captures and holds the viewer. The soft green background contrasts well with the red wings (complimentary colors!), and the fence post adds the touch of man very well. If you want to work on this a little more, I would suggest vignetting the corners or darkening all of the edges. You want to be subtle with this, but a little darkening will bring out the subject even more. Sometimes black has too much blue in it, so you might try removing some of the blue from this and see if the black tones get richer, but you want to be careful not to lose detail in the feathers. A very strong image. ****



17 - Road and Window.jpg

Sean Crawford

Very nice image of the road leading into the park. Whenever an image has a combination of sun and shade, it will be challenging! The combination of a very bright area and a darker area almost makes two images. I want to look at the road and foreground, but the bright upper left pulls my eye away and out of the frame. Perhaps a little split ND filter would help by darkening the top, you could try and see if it creates more of an even tonality. Another thought about photographing a road like this is to get very low, so you are photographing more along the road instead of over it. We always tend to set our tripods up at eye level, but images with a different perspective than we normally see are often much stronger.



18 - Road Art.jpg

Janet Azevedo

A very interesting photograph of the painted road. The curvilinear line and parallel fence are very helpful. Minimizing the sky was also a good idea, since it is not very interesting and adds little to the scene. Let me be a little picky--see the little bit of a tree in the upper right? It's a good idea to crop or clone these little distractions out. Even though the light in the scene light is harsh, it is the same throughout the image, which is not too much of a problem. Now that you know where this is, it would be interesting to go back at different times, such as when it's raining, cloudy or with nice clouds in the sky. Is this on the way to the Pinnacles? ****



19 - Roadside Tire Inspection.jpg

Julie Chen

A nice image of the spotted hyenas and the vehicle. It looks like a family group. Images like this are fun to help us remember moments in time, but I would like to see more going on, such as interaction between the animals, or between the animals and the people in the car. This is a nice documentary image, but not overly engaging. ***



20 - Roots Of Man And Nature.jpg

Lillie Grossman

I have always liked the old cypress roots near the Whaler's Cabin in Point Lobos, and you did a very nice job of capturing them. The soft light on the roots brings out detail, while the muted colors allow us to focus on the twisted, gnarled root formations. If you are back in Point Lobos on a foggy day, this is also a very good time to photograph in this location. There is some brightness in the background and it's a little distracting, but fortunately it is fairly minor. The cabin in the background adds the touch of man and the warm tones echo those of the tree. A very nice image. ***



21 - She's Flying the Jolly Roger.jpg

Janet Azevedo

This is a fun shot of the kite, but I am missing the nature portion. I wonder if this image would be stronger if the pirate ship was larger, or more of the scene. It's a nice photograph, but perhaps should be in pictorial competition.

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22 - Soaking Succulent (Echeveria).jpg

Charlie Gibson

I like this photograph of the succulent a lot--it is well-composed, sharp, interesting and the exposure is perfect. The leaves seem to radiate from the center area and this is an image where having the composition centered works very well. The water drops are a very effective addition, whether you made them or whether they are from the rain. I wonder if changing the aspect ratio a little would make it even stronger, you might try cropping it to a 5:7 ratio to see how you like it. Cropping would reduce the open space between the leaves at the bottom, which I think would improve it. Simple, direct images such as this are often very compelling visually and this one is very successful.



23 - The Other Side.jpg

Steve Perkins

This is a nice photograph of the road and tunnel, the cactus and ocotillo also add additional interest to the image. It looks like the main subject of the image is the road and tunnel and I'm not sure how these are part of a nature competition. I think this photograph might work well in a pictorial competition, but the nature is pretty secondary. Perhaps if you had focused on one of the plants and had the tunnel in the background as an additional subject, this would have worked better.

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24 - Treat Time on the Farm and the Gang is all Here.

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Joel Gambord

This is an interesting photograph of the goat eating out of the man's hand, it tells a story. But this is another image that does not seem to have nature as an over-riding theme. I like the shot where you moved closer and showed the goat eating out of the man's hand. When you have such interesting material, be sure to explore and experiment with a lot of different perspectives and ideas. I think it would have been interesting to have included the entire goat and just a little of the hand and I'm sure there are other perspectives that might have generated interesting images. The soft lighting and exposure are very good.

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Winning Images:

Honorable Mentions:

Redwing Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*)

John Drum



Leucospermum from S. Africa

Andrea Madsen



Roots of Man and Nature
Lillie Grossman



Third Place:

Coastal Challenge
Joni Zabala



2nd Place:

Soaking Succulent
Charlie Gibson



First Place:

Dark-eyed Junco(*Junco hyemalis*)
John Drum

