



**01 - Bee on New Zealand Tea Bush.jpg**

*Dennis Giuffre*

Really great choice of depth of field here. The bee is sharp and you can see all the hairs. Where this image falls a bit short for me is the overall composition. My eye keeps wandering up to the flower petal that is partially in the image above the bee. I would maybe crop that flower bud completely out and eliminate a bit of the space on the left, bringing the bee larger and more right-center of the frame.

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**02 - Bees (*Apis mellifera*) Nectaring on *Romneya Coulteri* Flower.jpg**

*Mary Ann Avera*

Love the detail in the flower and the bee on the right. I also like how you were able to capture three bees at once on the same flower, well-spaced from each other. However, it looks like maybe the focus plain was positioned in such a way that the two exterior bees are in focus with the flower, but the center bee seems to have a bit of a soft head and thorax before the abdomen comes in focus. This could be due to using an aperture of  $f/8$  or so and focusing on the flower rather than the insect itself. I would have maybe used a shallower depth of field and focused on the bee in the middle as that would have given it the most sharpness while allowing the others to support and a shallower DOF would have also taken the sharpness and focus off the bit of greenery poking through in the top right of the frame. \*\*



**03 - Female Vivid Dancer (*Argia vivida*) parasitized by water mites (*Arrenurus* spp.).jpg**

*John Avera*

This is a great documentary image that I could see supporting an article or text on this parasitizing behavior. However, it does look as though the image has been tightly cropped and a bit over sharpened making the wing lines look almost cartoonish. The eye closest to us is out of focus which can be a turnoff for most viewers since it is the eye we make contact and connection with first in an image. A great observation for sure though! \*\*



#### 04 - Fern unfurling2.JPG

*Margret Cordts*

What a beautiful find. I really like the detail in the areas closest to the camera and the delicate structures highlighted by the light falling on it. That being said, the image lost a star as there is quite a bit of noise, especially visible along the out of focus stem and I wish there had just been a bit more space left on the right side to either frame those wispy hairs or if the photographer maybe had smoothed them back towards the plant to clean up the image before taking the shot. Lovely overall though!

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#### 05 - Golden Silk Orb-weaver (Nephila clavipes).jpg

*Carol Silveira*

I really wanted to like this image as it is not everyday you come across someone willing to turn their lens on a spider. But the technical flaws made it hard. There seems to be some over sharpening/noise throughout various areas of the image, such as around the two lower legs to the left. The spider's body seems out of focus as does much of the moth's. This could be from missed focus or the spider's movements and not having a fast enough shutter speed. So for these reasons I had to score it as such. Good use of bokeh for background though!

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#### 06 - Lady Beetle (Coccinella magnifica) on flower.jpg

*Chris Johnson*

This is cute! I like the composition of the flower arching from the lower corner towards center. Classic. The ladybug has good sharpness in the face and the position of the leg forward gives the viewer a sense of movement from said bug. But there is a very blue color cast to the subject which can happen in open shade on sunny days. Often our cameras overcompensate for the blue in shadows and it either needs to be fixed in post or manually choose your white balance in the field to balance that out. There is also a bit of grain in the overall image. Great capture overall.

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**07 - Ladybug on Pink (Hippodamia convergens).jpg**

*Karen Schofield*

Beautiful! Nice subject, great depth of field and good focus on the eye and parts of the exoskeleton closest to us. If I were to make a suggestion for this image it would be to brighten it up. It looks just a bit on the dreary side with the slightest hint of blue where it should be a bit warmer. Increasing the exposure just a bit would also help mitigate the darker petal edge that is showing at the edge of the frame just behind the bug.

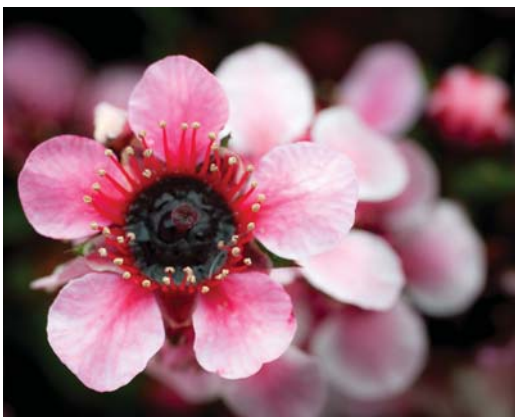
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**08 - Metallic Green Sweat Bee (Agapostemon) gathering nectar.jpg**

*Christine Johnson*

Wow, what a great find! These types of insects can often be hard to observe never mind photograph. The image is sharp throughout down to being able to see the texture in the petals and the hairs on the bee. Well exposed especially for what looks to be a bright light situation. Technically very well done! Where the image falls down for me is in the artistic category. The subject is mostly centered though slightly off making it seem less an intentional choice and more just how it happened. Because everything in the image is sharp it is given equal weight and my eye is drawn more to the yellow pistil and white petals after a cursory look at the subject. I would have like to see either a tighter crop or a shallower DOF, or a combination of both to really focus the viewer's eye on the bee rather than the various flower parts as the photographer needs to realize that in a situation like this where the subject is darker and the environment brighter it takes much more work to craft an image that highlights that subject. \*\*\*



**09 - New Zealand Tea Bush.jpg**

*Dennis Giuffre*

Beautiful capture with great DOF. Strong composition with sharp focus on the pieces of the flower coming up at the viewer and then drawing the viewer further with the repeating patters of petals into the distance. Well done!

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**10 - Peony dream.jpeg**

*Nicole Asselborn*

For this image I like where the photographer seems to have been going with the image but the execution suffered a bit. There seems to be focus on the dew drops along the petal edge but the haze that has been added detracts from that sharpness. The coloration and areas of softness have me thinking this image has been manipulated in post-production beyond what the contest would allow for (use of selective color). If trying to achieve a high key dreamy scene in camera consider exposing so that areas of the image are fully overexposed and your histogram sits all the way to the right. That type of exposure would have helped give a natural fringe of softness to the subject while leaving some details intact. It also may have gotten rid of the grey line areas along the bottom, especially the one in the bottom right. \*



**11 - Pine Cone Bonnet Mushrooms (Mycena seynii).jpg**

*John Avera*

Absolutely wonderful! Wonderfully seen and captured. Sharp in all the right areas with great DOF and background. I would be happy to have this in my portfolio for sure!

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**12 - Portrait of a Variegated Rose.jpg**

*Carol Silveira*

Beautiful floral image. Great DOF choice, good lighting to bring out all the details without blowing out the highlights there in the center. A note if you decide to print or show this in an area where a bit more post-production work can be used: consider removing the little black spots on the petals (I count 5) and the two blemish spots on the left yellow vertical petal. It would be perfection.

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**13 - the other pollinators.jpeg**

*Nicole Asselborn*

Kudos for focusing on something other than a bee when it comes to flower pollinators. I like the composition here but feel the image may have been heavily cropped as, while there is detail, the quality is not there suggesting a lack of pixels.

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**14 - Western Yellowjacket Peering from the Nest. (Vespula penylvanica).jpg**

*Karen Schofield*

Brave to target this insect for an image. I like the almost symmetrical framing and wish the bottom edge had not been cut off so we could have a complete circle. This is another image that I feel may have been over cropped as the quality of the details is suffering. There is also quite a bit of noise throughout the image. But great idea for the composition and I love the position of the insect in the nest.

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**15 - White rose with raindrops.jpg**

*Margret Cordts*

Wonderfully captured details and I like the framing of the subject. Where it lost a star for me is that it has a blue/purple color cast to the image, especially the shadowed areas in the petals that are closer to the edges of the frame. The warmth of those in the center clash with this coolness and the tone of the image as a whole doesn't quite work. I would just warm those shadows up a bit, maybe just a slight exposure increase would even help.

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**16 - Yellowfaced Bumble Bee (*Bombua vosnesenskii*)  
Nectaring on California Beach Poppy (*Eschscholzia californica maritima*).jpg**

*Mary Ann Avera*

It looks like the bee is levitating here! Good composition and I like the perspective where you are almost eye level with the subject and have the flower petals coming towards the viewer. This builds depth in the image. The DOF is good but missed a good portion of the bee's body meaning a large part of the abdomen close to the viewer is out of focus which is why only 4 not 5 stars. But the bee's eye is in focus and that was the saving point keeping this image at 4 stars. Well done overall!

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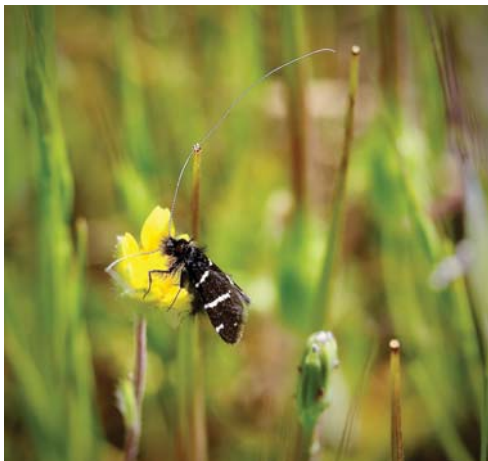


**17 - Salted Yellow Dorid - Carmel Point\_.jpg**

*Kent Van Vuren*

What an awesome find! Nudibranchs were always a favorite creature to look for when diving so I am super excited to see one represented in this contest. And represented so well. Great detail and sharpness. Interesting environment, looks like it was on an abalone shell? And the composition really lends interest to this subject with a bit of suggested movement in the angle off center. Bravo!

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**18 - Three Striped Longhorn Moth (5 mm), Pacheco State Park\_.jpg**

*Kent Van Vuren*

Another interesting subject! Good contrast between the subject and its environment but this is another image I feel has been overly cropped and/or subject sharpened due to the way the details are there but the quality is off.

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**Winning Images:**

**Honorable Mentions:**

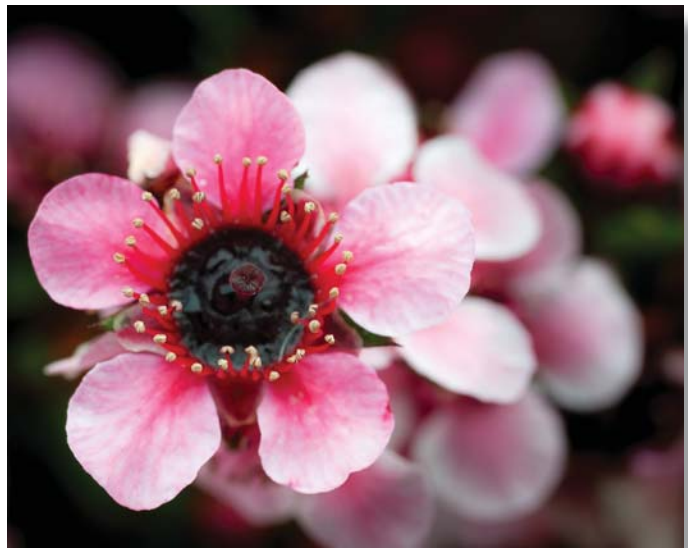
**Ladybug on Pink**  
**(*Hippodamia convergens*)**  
*Karen Schofield*



**Fern Unfurling**  
*Margret Cordts*



**New Zealand Tea Bush**  
*Dennis Giuffre*



Third Place:

**Portrait of a Variegated Rose**  
*Carol Silveira*



2nd Place:

**Salted Yellow Dorid -  
Carmel Point**  
*Kent Van Vuren*





First Place:

**Pine Cone Bonnet Mushrooms**  
**(*Mycena seynii*)**  
*John Avera*

