



01 - Annas Hummingbird.jpg

Dennis Giuffre

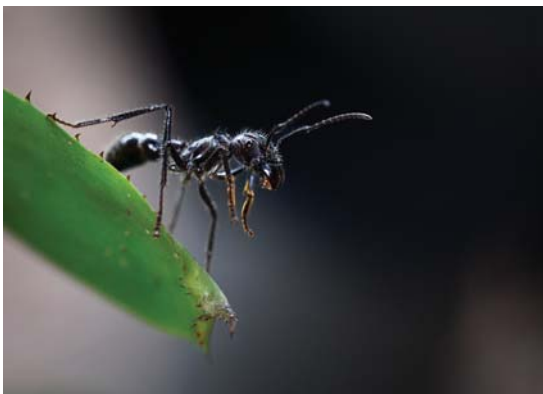
What a magnificent bird! The colors and textures are so well captured, heightened within a shallow depth of field, so the background only enhances rather than being distracting. The red accents in the background berries works well compositionally, except for the partial one below the wing (I wish it had a bit more space between it and the wing.) You have captured personality as well, as it looks as if the bird is making a connection with us. The only technical drawback is the lack of crisp focus. But, hey, we know it's hard to stop the motion of a hummingbird.



02 - Ant Bee 4.jpg

Alan Kemp

Am I dating myself with an Andy Griffith reference? If intentional, the title "Ant Bee" is pretty funny. Thank you for a smile. I love that this photo tells a story with its multiple characters ... that all can share the bounty of nature in harmony. Good eye to see so much activity in a single moment. The position of the stem ant is great. We can feel the implied motion of his/her climb. The position of the bee, a bit less so. We know it's a bee because of the tail markings, but we don't get to see the rest of the detail. He/she becomes a bit of a bee blob. The flower is a little hot (overexposed), but I like the diagonal position of the stem. The background is appropriately blurred, but the color, in my opinion, does not enhance the photo. Not the right complement to the vibrant yellow. **



03 - Bullet Ant (Paraponera clavata).jpg

Chris Johnson

Amazing moment in the insect world. I love that we can see such detail in the eye/head. And whiskers (?) Contrary to other comments I have made about depth of field and focus, I think this shallow DOF works fine ... because the eye (and the thorny edge of the leaf) are in focus. The in and out of focus accents the idea that he is crawling out of a timeless abyss .. and it implies motion. We also have no idea of size/scale, which heightens the mystery. Is he/she a huge monster ant ... or just another worker finding his/her way. The stark simplicity and the brooding background are a perfect way to add to the mystery. Well done. *****



04 - Carizzo Plains Beetle.jpg

Jeff Hobbs

Yet another great moment in the insect world. I was drawn to this image from the start because suddenly this beetle took on anthropomorphic qualities, as it embraced the flower. It seems such a loving/joyous pose ... or at least a moment where we can make up our own story. Technically well done, with good lighting, focus, and depth of field. Also very sensory, as we can feel the fluffiness of the flower and the slick body of the beetle and we can marvel at those little tiny hairs that I bet most people didn't know existed on beetles. Add to this my favorite diagonal ... allowing viewer movement through the photo ... and we have a winner. Well done. *****



05 - Dandelion seed ball.jpg

Joni Zabala

I applaud the choice of subject (always so intricate and interesting as a design), and I particularly applaud the cropping. Creative and unique to crop in so tight and crop part of what we know is a circle. (Although I would have left just a touch more space at the top so the edge spikes had some room to wave in the breeze.) The left side is a bit overexposed, so we lose important detail in a sea of white, and the focus is troubling. When sharp, it works very well (for example, the right side of the dandelion). But the center sent me searching for something in focus to hang on to. I didn't find it. More DOF would be helpful. (Although one could argue that the center blur indicates the movement of the wind.) ****



06 - Emerald Tree Boa (Corallus caninus).jpg

Bill Shewchuk

The simplicity of this image is stunning. Nothing more is needed. I particularly like that the bottom gray surface and the boa form a negative space triangle of sorts that makes the composition more interesting and mobile. The shape of his head and nose are so interesting that I really wanted to see them in focus (shallow DOF struggle with macro, I know). Such an interesting creature, with an implied slither that is beautiful and creepy at the same time. ****



07 - Female Fiery Skipper on Hydrangea(Hylephilia phyleus).jpg

Carol Silveira

A well-executed image, from choice of subject, complementary colored background, placement of main subject, and diffused lighting creating such a soft palette. I particularly like the green arch formed by the top frond. Everything works here, including a nice view of the skipper, so that we can see all the interesting details. The focus seems a little soft on the skipper body and wings. Other than that ... well done. *****



08 - Interior of a Rose.jpg

Carol Silveira

An uplifting, sunny, warm, image, with a nice balance of graceful curves in the leaves and in the staccato lines and forms in the flower center. The composition is creative, with the main attraction slightly off center, and the water droplets add another layer of interest. A good approach to what might have been a cliché image, since this particular subject has been done many times before.



09 - Jumping Spider on pink.jpg

Chris Johnson

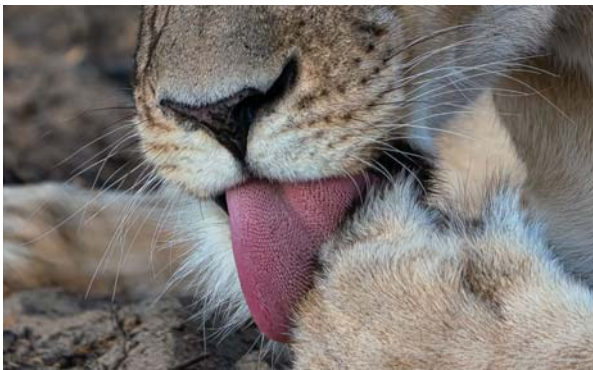
I love this spider, with all its weirdness. The personality comes through as he/she/it makes definitive contact with the viewer. Makes me wonder if he/she/it saw the photographer and wondered curiously what the heck was happening. The flower and background float seamlessly together to create a fantasyland home for this guy. Composition is exceptional, with perfect placement of the spider and graceful diagonals as a background set. Unique and beautiful. Well done.



10 - Largeflowered Fiddleneck (Amsinckia grandiflora) after the Rain.jpg

Bill Shewchuk

A precise document of an interesting plant. Great that we can see every detail in crisp focus, from the strongly sticky water droplets ... to the blooms in a variety of blooming stages ... to the spiky hairs. Its natural curve adds movement to the photo so that the image maintains viewer interest. I'm inclined to tighten the cropping just a bit, as the color and expanse of the background isn't much of an enhancement.



11 - lion's tongue.jpg

Julie Chen

There are many new and interesting creatures in this competition, but none quite so interesting to me as the texture of a lion's tongue. A revelation. The tight cropping brings us right into what the artist found most interesting and that, now, we viewers can experience. The diffused lighting and the sharp focus on the things that count also add to the experience of feeling the wet nose, the soft (maybe?) fur, and the rough tongue that seems capable of sucking up water during a drought and preparing the meat of a wildebeest for dinner. Very original and worthy of a long look. Well done.



12 - Mos Among the Rocks.jpg

Brian Spiegel

Our coast is full of interesting textures and subtle colors, and this image captures some of that magic. Such a broad view becomes a nice abstract that must be taken in as a whole. There is no defined path for the viewer, which is not necessarily a bad thing in this case, but, for me, causes a moment of confusion. I dart around, looking for the most interesting things. To maintain the abstraction, I would like to see everything in focus, so that depth is also abstracted (although the pool of water should remain blurred, to distinguish it from the land). You might explore smaller segments of this image to help the viewer "see." (There's a great little piece on the right hand side (moss at the top and the water and rocks at the bottom). ****



13 - Opalescent Nudibranch_.jpg

Kent Van Vuren

Great choice of subject. A beautiful creature, like a little fairy dancer, who lights up the image (a little pun intended). Composition is good, with the background nicely divided between sea plant and water. That division (creating the almighty diagonal) keeps the image moving. My only wish is for more of the tentacles (?) to be in focus. They are so interesting and unique.



14 - Pincushion Protea Bud (leucospermum).jpg

Dennis Giuffre

A well done documentation of this plant. I like that it is shrouded in darkness, making the pink stand out more and adding an air of exotic mystery (although I would suggest lightening the bud just a tad to make it pop even more). The textures and tiny forms are quite worthy of further study, right up to its cute little topknot.



15 - Pink Dahlia.jpg

Jeff Hobbs

This flower envelopes the viewer, because of its warm color (which advances) and because of the sharply focused petals reaching forward. It makes a bold statement. And, isn't it nice when nature provides the strength of complementary colors. The green background is the perfect complement to a magenta toned flower. To make good use of that contrast I would like to see just a bit more green at the top ... to enclose the image and to give more room to the top petals. As with other CU flowers, the idea is not new, so the artist must bring something unique to the party. Here, the color and the luminous qualities add the strength.



16 - Plumose Anemone.jpg

Kent Van Vuren

This image had a fairyland quality for me from the start. An underwater landscape. Rich colors, a feathery toadstool of an anemone, and a jeweled sea floor. The lean of the luminous anemone provides dynamic movement that keeps the viewer moving to the right. The background remains interesting as the tones subtly shift from turquoise to blue. My only comment would be to crop a little from the left. It is wasted space, since all the action is from the anemone to the right. (The image might even work as a square.) If there were any more image to the right, that would be helpful also in the event of recropping. *****



17 - Red pea blossom after a shower-5707.jpg

Margret Maria Cordts

Stunning image, with the rich green and red/pink tones and the dramatic black background. The curves of the flower and stem provide the movement needed to add interest to the photo, and the water droplets are an added bonus (I especially like the little ones at the edge of the flower). Well done ... and a tribute to the grace and beauty of nature. *****



18 - Salamander in Garland Park.jpg

Joni Zabala

Well, hello there ... this image seems to be saying. You have captured a moment of movement that's strong, and a bit humorous because of the creature's expression. Personality comes through. This guy has a purpose ... places to go and things to do. In some ways I like that he is crawling out of a lot of brush. In other ways, I think cropping a little tighter might be helpful (especially the dirty foreground). Good exposure. The resolution seems a little pixelated, but maybe that's just the way of the salamander.



19 - Thirsty Western Fence Lizard.jpg

Bill Brown

Nicely done. The interesting detail of the skin (and eye/eyelid) comes through clearly. As well as the proud nature of the beast. I like the neutral palette in this case, as it makes the few golden details even more visible. The lighting is also an enhancement, adding a bit of shine to the scales. And I don't mind the shallow depth of field, as the head and eye are sharp.



20 - Venomous snake close up-8334.jpg

Margret Maria Cordts

This image reads as a puzzle. At first glance, it is definitely an abstract. A mass of texture and shapes that are, indeed, interesting. If viewers take time to dig deeper, they will be rewarded by figuring out the puzzle ... discovering exactly what the subject is ... right down to the evil little slit of an eye. My hope is that viewers will not give up too quickly on the "puzzle."



21 - Western Honey Bee.jpg

Bill Brown

A revealing portrait of a honeybee. Everything here is working well from the rich color of the flowers to the pale background that helps to highlight the details of the bee. Nicely focused, especially to get the fuzzy feeling of the upper body, with a depth of field that works well for the subject (I do like the slightly blurry wing in the background. Adds depth to the photo.) Well done.



22 - Wild Mushrooms.jpg

Julie Chen

I'm expecting Alice in Wonderland at any moment. A unique look at a mushroom pairing, with a perfect blend of dark forest matter and warm-toned structures. I particularly like the dark leaves under the mushrooms, the lighting, and the detail. I can almost smell the damp decay of the forest. I only wish for a bit more focus on the larger mushroom. I don't mind the back edge falling outside the depth of field, but I would like to see the stem in focus.

Winning Images:

Honorable Mentions:

Carizzo Plains Beetle

Jeff Hobbs



Jumping spider on Pink

Chris Johnson

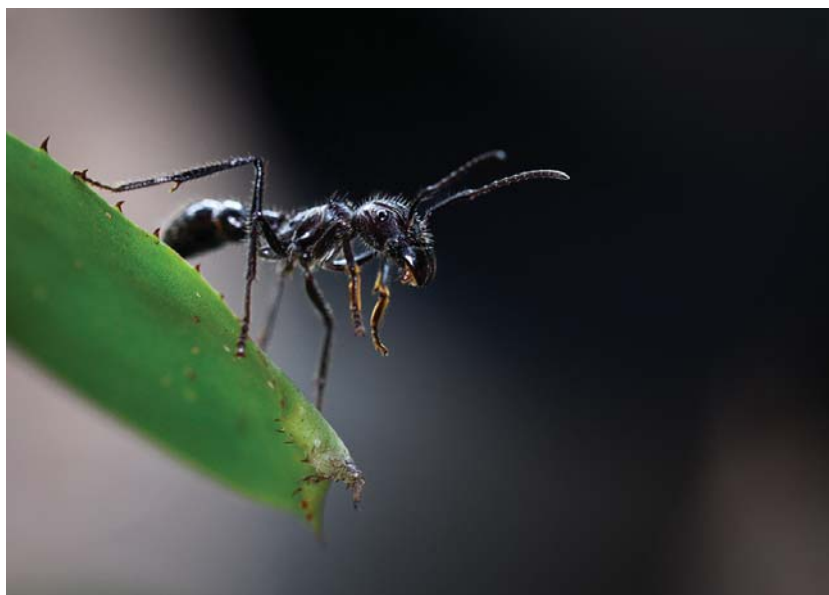


Third Place - tie

Plumose Anemone
Kent Van Vuren



**Bullet Ant (Paraponera
clavata)**
Chris Johnson



2nd Place:

**Red pea Blossom after a
shower**
Margret Maria Cordts



First Place:

Lion's Tongue
Julie Chen

