

# Padre Trails Camera Club

Nature Macro - 03/19/2025

Judged by: Mark Basse



Hello, I'm Mark Basse.

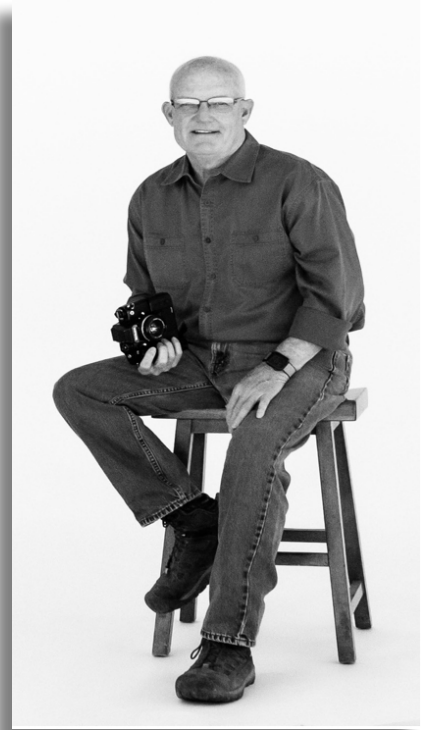
We live on a ranch in Carmel Valley, California with a dozen or so horses, four rescue dogs, a few rafters of turkeys, hawks, coyotes and the occasional mountain lion. I like to say that we're not off the grid, but we can see the end of it from the front porch.

I've been creating content in higher education for 30 years with side gigs for broadcasting (HGTV, Food Network, PGA Tour, E!).

Producing, writing, shooting, editing and a myriad of other tasks that it takes to get the message to the user. I see the job as assembling a puzzle; listen to what is being said, then using a mix of the right tools (video, audio, stills, motion grfx, testimonials, story, music) at the right place, to draw the viewers in and maximize engagement. Part art, part tech.

When working on e-learning, I like to joke that my job is helping explain the unexplainable to the hopelessly misinformed. And that's the fun of it: Getting up to speed on a subject I might know very little about (biology last week, intercultural communications this week) then crafting a lesson by continuously asking ourselves if there is a better way to say this, to show this? Striking a balance between form and function, budget and time. All with a fundamental understanding that quality production value increases engagement.

I'm also never too far from a camera of one kind or another, and never too far from a trail of one kind or another as well. I also volunteer my time and experience through Patagonia's Catchafire program. I also write a blog about travels with a camera around California called Basecamp California.



*Shown here are the images submitted for this competition from all three groups, Blue, Green, and Red followed by Ray's selection for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and Honorable Mentions in each group.*



01 - *Armadillidium vulgare*

Julie Chen

**STAR RATING & COMMENT:**

**5 Stars:** Outstanding use of contrast and composition. The separation of the almost colorless creature against the warm, dark tones of the wood surface it's walking on compels the viewer to pause, study and appreciate this common animal in a new way. The composition places the subject just left of center, leaving in somewhere to crawl to, which synthesizes motion in a still photograph.



02 - *Cornu aspersum* - Garden snail

Julie Chen

**STAR RATING & COMMENT:**

**5 Stars:** We've all seen snails before, but not with such intimacy. The lighting sends our eyes to study the body and shell, and also separates our model gastropod from its background. Composition has the animal moving from upper left to lower right in the picture in such a way as we almost need to get out of its way. Macro enough so we can appreciate the resemblance of the shell with that of another forest dweller, the land tortoise.



03 - *Frost Covered Fern*

Chris Johnson

**STAR RATING & COMMENT:**

**4 Stars:** A composition that uses the narrowing leaves as a kind of an arrowhead that points to the payoff of this image... the focused, frozen ice crystals in the lower third of the shot, white against the dark background. Monochrome photography is all about composition and form, and this image readily satisfies that criteria.



*04 - Goldenrod Crab Spider (Misumena vatia)*

Carol Silveira

**STAR RATING & COMMENT:**

**5 Stars:** Although the best place to look for a yellow *Misumena* is among the goldenrods, getting one to come to the edge of the flower, into the light, and stay still long enough for one to grab a few frames, is quite an accomplishment. The composition, running uphill from lower left to upper right, creates a sense of spontaneity, and the dark part of the flower overhead that opens up into the cool green bokeh frames the spider perfectly.



*05 - Grand Hound's Tongue (Cynoglossum grande)*

John Drum

**STAR RATING & COMMENT:**

**4 Stars:** A beautiful, technical study of the flower's symmetry; I wish I could see it from a few other angles that would still display the pentagonal design but in a little more relaxed and informal composition.



*06 - Green darner (Ajax junius)*

Sara Courteidge

**STAR RATING & COMMENT:**

**4 Stars:** An amazing capture; detail is superb but I would love to see this with a little more context; maybe resting on a plant or branch.



*07 - Honey Bee (Apis mellifera)*

John Drum

**STAR RATING & COMMENT:**

**4 Stars:** Wonderful capture, and while a soft bokeh background is what we all want, I would give up some of that for a little more depth of field by stopping stopping down a few stops, which might have given us a little better detail on the front of the bee. The composition opens up from the lower left in a pleasing way.



*08 - Iridescent Daffodil-Narcissus*

Ken Jones

**STAR RATING & COMMENT:**

**5 Stars:** A bold composition that seems to have the flower bursting open to the upper right, tempered by the silky-smooth lighting that is indeed iridescent.



*09 - Japanese Beetle (Popillia japonica)*

Carol Silveira

**STAR RATING & COMMENT:**

**4 Stars:** Photographer was at the right place at the right time: black beetle against red flower. Kudos to you for being ready and catching the detail of the beetle's shiny back and for choosing the right aperture for capturing just enough of the flower.



*10 - Tiny Snail Out After Rain*

Chris Johnson

**STAR RATING & COMMENT:**

**4 Stars:** There's a story here, captured at the right moment, where the animal is in a bit of a precarious situation and we can study the snail's head. Excellent detail just where it's needed. For my taste, I might have added a tiny bit of vignette to frame the subject.

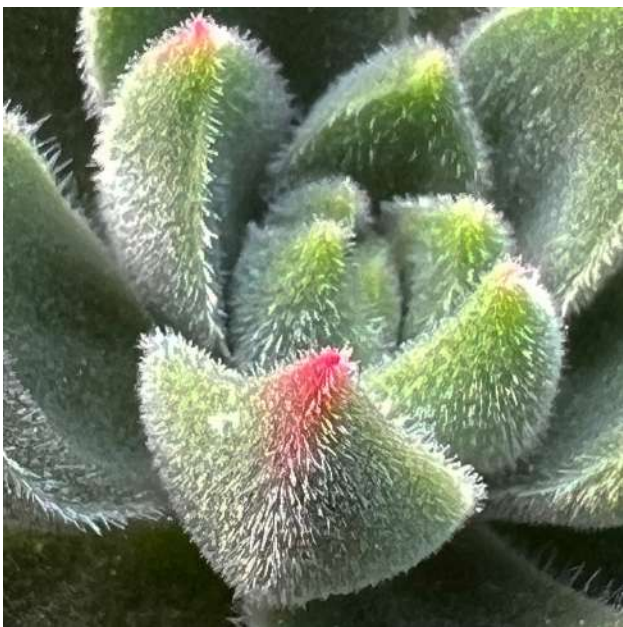


*11 - Western honey bee (Apis mellifera) on lavender*

Sara Courtneidge

**STAR RATING & COMMENT:**

**4 Stars:** A textbook study of the bee and the lavender with amazing detail. The curvature of the two forms complement each other to add a tasteful symmetry to the composition.



*12 - Young Chocolate Soldier-Kalanchoe tomentosa*

Ken Jones

**STAR RATING & COMMENT:**

**4 Stars:** A well composed, assertive study: the image is full of the plant's green leaves and translucent fibers almost reaching for the soft light source, with the contrasting red tip front and center, exactly where it should be.

Top Three Winners - Blue Group



**First Place - *Cornu aspersum* - Garden snail**  
*Julile Chen*



**Second Place - *Goldenrod Crab Spider***  
*Carol Silveira*



**Third Place - *Iridescent Daffodil-Narcissus***  
*Ken Jones*

Winning Images Group Blue  
Honorable Mentions



*Japanese Beetle*  
*Carol Silveira*



*Tiny Snail Out After Rain*  
*Chris Johnson*



*Young Chocolate Soldier*  
*Ken Jones*



*01-A Pink Roseile*

Carol Fuessenich

**STAR RATING: 5 Stars**

**COMMENT:** Transcends just another flower shot. By way of lighting (soft, almost glowing, especially around the white highlights) that separates the rose from the near background, and the upper left to lower right composition of the petals, practically forces the viewer to study this specimen closer. The texture of the overall image is so silky and smooth that you can feel the softness of the petals. And this texture holds up as you view the image full screen.



*02-Algae in a Mountain Stream*

Sandie McCafferty

**STAR RATING: 3**

**COMMENT:** A great composition that at first glance reminds one of a swirling nebula in a far galaxy. The image is practically in motion.



*03-Bee on Flower*

Jeff Hobbs

**STAR RATING: 4**

**COMMENT:** This is what macro photography is about: just enough depth of field to reveal the details of the bee's hair and the flower's stigma and stamen, which then falls off to a bokeh that softens the balance of the image.





*04-Bibio albipennis*

Sandie McCafferty

**STAR RATING: 4**

**COMMENT:** A great catch of the black wasp against the all-green background with the depth of field just where it needs to be. This image might have benefitted with a just slightly tighter cropping; the open space to the left is a good idea, but it may be a tiny bit too much, as it tends to minimize the importance of the primary subject.



*05-Christmas Cactus Blossom*

Joni Zabala

**STAR RATING: 5**

**COMMENT:** Excellent three-stage composition with the wide, almost cloud-like petals across the upper half of the image that are opening to present the long stigma, which then give way to reveal the iridescent stamen. The balanced depth of field is focused where it needs to be and falls off to soften the already silken petals.



*06-Clover Close Upwer*

Brian Spiegel

**STAR RATING: 5**

**COMMENT:** The photographer has taken a common display of sorels and with just the right balance of composition (notice the 2 or 3 sharp leaves right in the middle), lighting (fall-off on the upper left and lower right) and symmetry (repeating patterns) has created an engaging image of a cluster of plants that many of us would simply ignore on our way to seek out the more dramatic and colorful flora on the forest floor.



*07-Dandelion*

Bill Shewchuk

**STAR RATING: 3**

**COMMENT:** This is a nice, intimate composition that has fallen victim to a loss of detail somewhere in the process.



*08-Fern Leaf*

Brian Spiegel

**STAR RATING: 4**

**COMMENT:** As with the 'Clover Close Up' image in this set, the photographer has found a picture-worthy composition that might have been overlooked by others. Using just enough depth of field to engage the viewer with the tiny black spores resting on a few leaves that are at the top of an arch created by the downward sink of the other leaves is a compositional delight. The darker tones capture the fern's place in the dark forest floor where it's found.



*09-Green Tree Frog*

Carol Fuessenich

**STAR RATING: 4**

**COMMENT:** I love this guy. All this greenness, and then there's that eye, staring you down. There's a story here. There's engagement too. But technically, there's a lot of texture here too. Naturally, there's the texture of the animal's skin. But the entire image has a lot of noise and I'm not sure whether it's intentional or not.



*10-Heart Navelwort Blossom*

Charlie Gibson

**STAR RATING: 4**

**COMMENT:** This situation is irresistible to both photographers and bees. I might have been inclined to let the composition 'breathe' a bit by backing off and giving the flower some shared space with its surroundings, as the petals and stamen are just naturally blasting forth anyway.



*11-Ice Crystals*

Bill Shewchuk

**STAR RATING: 4**

**COMMENT:** Good composition that has lost some detail along the way, and I think that good detail would be an essential component of a monochrome image of frost crystals.



*12-Macro Abstract*

Jeff Hobbs

**STAR RATING: 3**

**COMMENT:** As the theme of this judging is 'Nature Macro' and this submission is entitled 'Macro Abstract', it might be a little too abstract to place it in anywhere in nature.



*13-Olive Ridley Sea Turtle Hatchling  
(Lepidochelys olivacea)*

Karen Schofield

**STAR RATING: 5**

**COMMENT:** This has to simply be the best way to get a picture of a sea turtle hatchling; a noise-free composition of the creature that captures its size, and therefore its vulnerability, which in turn creates immediate engagement with the viewer. Composition places the hatchling just exactly where it needs to be.



*14-Orange Wolf Spider on Sugar Snap Pea Plant*

Joni Zabala

**STAR RATING: 4**

**COMMENT:** This is a great capture; this intimidating, orange and prickly critter against the green background. I'd be inclined to back off a tiny bit on the composition and give the viewer a little more context of the spider's surroundings. The subject is intimidating enough without having to really force to look closely. There's also a loss of some detail, which in the case of that hairy face, would be nice to have.



*15-Siberian Bugloss*

Charlie Gibson

**STAR RATING: 5**

**COMMENT:** Simply put, a beautiful monochrome composition. This is a case where color would be a distraction to an appreciation of the natural form; the offset symmetry, the spirals, the layers of leaves wanting to be in the picture. This is one of those images that just begs to be a poster-sized print.



*16-Thumbnail sized Red-eyed Tree Frog  
(Agalychnis callidryas)*

Karen Schofield

**STAR RATING: 4**

**COMMENT:** Kudos for capturing this tiny green guy on the green leaves. I've gotten in the habit of always taking a standalone flash with me (like a Nikon Speedlight), wrapped in diffusion with a remote cable so I can hopefully get the light source off to the side, usually at arms length if I come across this situation. If there's time. Which there never is.

Top Three Winners - Green Group



**First Place - *Olive Ridley Sea Turtle Hatchling***  
*Karen Schofield*



**Second Place - *Siberian Bugloss***  
*Charlie Gibson*



**Third Place - *Christmas Cactus Blossom***  
*Joni Zabala*

Honorable Mention - Green Group



*Green Tree Frog*  
*Carol Fuesennich*

*Clover Close Up*  
*Brian Spiegel*



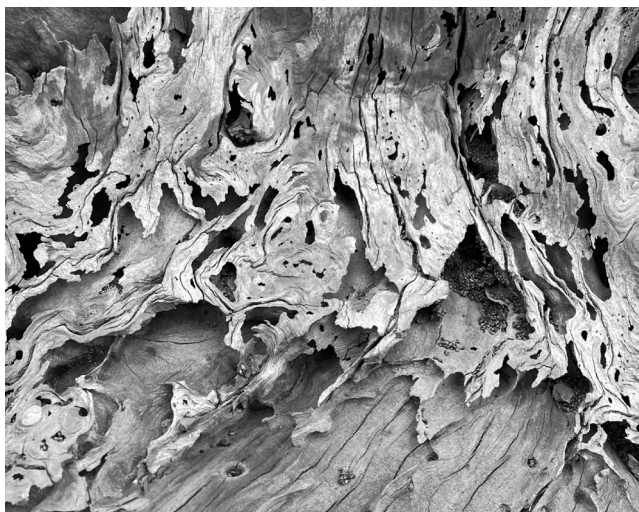


*01-Bee One*

Jerry Loomis

**STAR RATING: 4**

**COMMENT:** Solid composition and color. I'd be inclined to ease up on the composition a bit, so it's not quite in our face; capturing this moment would still work if the image was a little bit more relaxed.



*02-Decaying Tree Trunk - Up Close*

Andrea Madsen

**STAR RATING: 4**

**COMMENT:** Monochrome images are all about composition, and this works very well. The textures in the wood, all seeming to flow downhill, almost melting. It looks like some detail has been lost along the way, however, so this image, which is small-poster worthy, might not hold up in the enlarged print.



*03-Dewdrops*

David Eisen

**STAR RATING: 5**

**COMMENT:** This is textbook macro photography. The photo captures just enough of the fine detail of the frost crystals, then lets the rest of the image fall off into a pleasant bokeh. You're giving the viewer a chance to study something they might never even notice.





*04-flowers on a rocky ledge*

Rick Thau

**STAR RATING: 4**

**COMMENT:** A great composition with all of the plant life moving into the sun from right to left. The image is so vivid that the entire composition just blasts the viewer with color. Guaranteed to brighten up any room, anywhere!



*05-Honeybee in Lavender (Apis in Lavandula)*

Brooks Leffler

**STAR RATING: 5**

**COMMENT:** There's two really great things going on here. The contrast of the colors, with the warm tones of the bee against the cool purple lavender, and the form of the lavender rising through the vertical image and the bee coming 90 degrees from the side.. And there's just enough depth of field to keep the bee and the plant in focus, while the rest of the image falls off nicely.



*06-Hover Flylatrans*

Jerry Loomis

**STAR RATING: 4**

**COMMENT:** We've got a nice capture of the fly with yellow bands on the yellow daisy. But I think we could use a little breathing room on this composition so it's not so in the viewer's face. I'd also try and back off on the vivid colors for basically the same reason; they're so bright that it's distracting. Let the image relax a bit; it's a great shot in it's own right so we don't need to 'oversell' it.



*07-Mushroom*

David Eisen

**STAR RATING: 3**

**COMMENT:** The composition is right, with the mushroom offset to the left a bit away from the wood at the top of the image which gives us some context. But this nice image is compromised by a loss of detail.

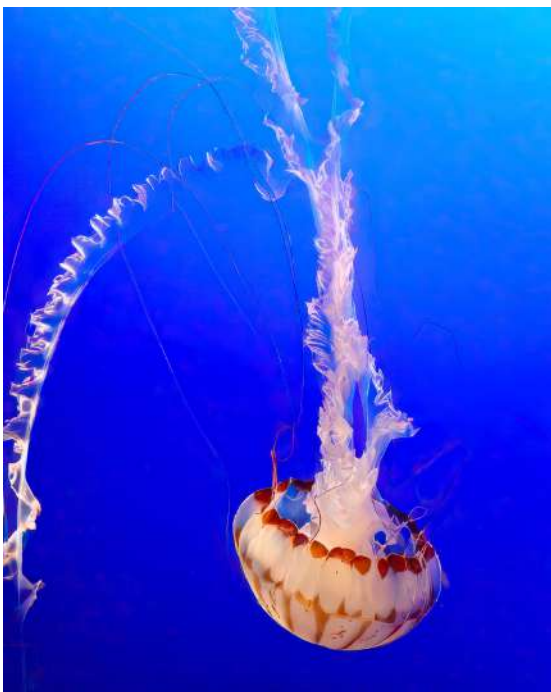


*08-New Growth on Monterey Cypress (Cupressus)*

Brooks Leffler

**STAR RATING: 4**

**COMMENT:** This is a fun shot with the vertical composition containing the downhill flow of the new growth. I might be inclined to back it off just a tiny bit to add some context for the viewer, as even with the title nearby, we might be sure what we're looking at. I also think you might want to tone down the contrast to soften the look a little bit. If I had this in Lightroom. I'd be dialing down the highlights, bringing up the shadows just a bit, and back the composition off so it's not quite so tight (if the original has been cropped.)



*09-Pacific sea nettle Jellyfish (Chrysaora fuscescens)*

Rick Thau

**STAR RATING: 4**

**COMMENT:** Excellent detail sustained throughout the image, which is good when you have a subject with such fine, delicate, features, especially against the extremely even, blue background. The composition is just close enough to encourage a viewer to study and appreciate the translucent, yet complex features of the animal.



*10-Tidestrom's Lupine*

Andrea Madsen

**STAR RATING:3**

**COMMENT:** This is a good opportunity for a nice photograph that suffers from a loss of detail, which is important to macro photography. This is also a situation where reducing the contrast by lowering the highlights a little bit might take the starkness of the white petals down a bit and let the lavender colors come more into play.



Top Three Winners - Red Group



*First Place - Dewdrops  
David Eisen*



*Second Place - Honey Bee in Lavender  
Brooks Leffler*



*Third Place - Flowers on a Rocky Ledge  
Rick Thau*

Honorable Mention - Red Group



*New Growth on Monterey Cypress*  
*Brooks Leffler*

*Pacific sea nettle*  
*Rick Thau*

