

Padre Trails Camera Club

Pictorial #4 competition - Reflections - 06/19/2024
Judged by: Cara Weston



Presented here are all the images submitted to this competition along with our judge's comments and star rating for each. Place awards are presented beginning on page 19.



Meet our judge Chris Cassell

Biography:

Chris has been photographing since the late 70's and, in the earlier years, had a home darkroom and experimented with medium-format and 4x5 as well as 35mm film-formats. He's since gone all-digital. His photographic interests have focused on landscape, abstract compositions, Photoshop montages, and photojournalism. He has a special fascination with the juxtaposition of human elements with those of nature. Chris was president and had other roles for the Light and Shadow Camera Club of San Jose, before that club disbanded in 2021 due to low membership. He is currently Judge Chair for the Los Gatos-Saratoga Camera Club, and has been judging for camera clubs since 2011. In 2017 he became a photographer for Pro-Bono Photo (www.probonophoto.org) through which he's provided free photo services to social justice and environmental organizations in the Bay area since the first San Jose Women's March. Professionally, Chris is a Ph.D. aerospace engineer (possibly retired) and aspiring asteroid miner.

Philosophy:

Good composition is essential in a strong image, whether it's an end in itself (pictorial, monochrome, creative) or a means to help convey a story the maker is telling (journalism, nature, travel). I will look for how well the elements in an image work together regardless of whether (or not) they follow the standard "rules" of composition. I have found that many images of value don't grab your attention right away but, rather, grow on you after some time. This, of course, works against them in competition where many images must be viewed in a limited period. Despite time constraints, I will attempt to be alert for these "quieter" images.

Padre Trails Camera Club

Nature #3 competition - Human Hand in Nature - 05/15/2024
Group Blue Comments - Judged by: Chris Cassell



*01 - African Lion (*Panthera leo*) Ambles by Jeep in Botswana.jpg*

Karen Schofield

STAR RATING: 3

The wary attention between the lion and the humans in the jeep provides the human hand in nature here, though the lion appears to be more aware of the humans than vice-versa. You captured the moment, but it would have been better if the back of the jeep were not cut off, so that it could be fully contained within the landscape as is the lion.



02 - Argyle Road.jpg

Patricia McKeen

STAR RATING: 3

A lovely landscape with the early morning or late afternoon lighting providing a pastoral, peaceful feeling. But the connection to the human hand in nature category isn't clear. If the multi-hued flowers in the foreground are a hybrid species or is non-native to its current location, then the image fits the category. "Argyle" here may refer to the multi-hued pattern of the flowers (as in argyle socks); I'm not seeing online reference to a plant named argyle. "Argyle Road" may then refer to the way the flowers are winding back and forth through the meadow, which is nice. I'm not seeing other human hand in the image, aside from a possible roadway near the top of the peak, but that's too small to play the needed role here.



03 - Baby fox in pipe.jpg

Julie Chen

STAR RATING: 5

Cute picture of the fox; sharp in the eyes, great detail in the fur, and I like the way it's looking toward the camera. Fits the category well since it's taking refuge in the human-made pipe.



04 - Band-tailed Pigeon(*Patagioenas fasciata*).jpg

John Drum

STAR RATING: 4

The pigeon is nicely sharp with good detail in the feathers. Its perch on the human-made ironwork fits the category.



05 - birds line up for breakfast on a rainy day.jpg

Joni Zabala

STAR RATING: 3

The birds do appear to be lined up for their turn at the feeder, which is the human hand needed to fit the category. The rain provides an added element of drama.



06 - Brown pelican in Moss Landing Harbor.jpg

Julie Chen

STAR RATING: 5

A wonderful portrait of the pelican, with catchlight in the eye, sharp detail in the feathers, and nice late-day lighting. All else in the photo is out of focus which helps separate the pelican, but makes it somewhat hard to see the human hand needed for this category, which would be the harbor at top. But I can infer a boat prow in the upper right corner, so it fits the category.



07 - Brown Pelicans Posing on Pipe.jpg

Chris Johnson

STAR RATING: 4

Nice portrait of the pelicans stretching and yawning. Good detail in the feathers. The pipe they are standing on provides the human hand needed in this category.



08 - GBH with a friend.jpg

Jerry Loomis

STAR RATING: 2

Good capture of predator/prey activity, though I doubt the prey considers itself a “friend”. The road running across the frame is a “human hand” here, but the road plays no role in the natural activity of the animals, so the connection to the category is not strong.



09 - Hazel.jpg

John Drum

STAR RATING: 2

A very soulful portrait of the dog, but I wish it were sharper, especially in the eyes. The monochrome treatment works well on the dog, but you've lost separation of the dog from its background. Since dogs are domesticated animals this fits the human hand needed in the category.



10 - Highway 25 San Benito County.jpg

Patricia McKeen

STAR RATING: 4

A wonderful landscape, well composed and with a strong hazy quality in the mid-ground to sky. The human hand needed for the category is mainly provided by the fence running across the lower (less hazy) portion. It would be good to get better separation of the fence from the stalks in the field, but that would be difficult. There is also human hand in a small building and a couple telephone poles in the mid-ground, but those are less dominant.



11 - Lava Heron.jpg

Jerry Loomis

STAR RATING: 3

Good portrait of the heron and well placed in the frame and against the rope. Sharp with good texture in the bird, and the rope near the bird. Fits the category well.



12 - Mom Bobcat And Two Kittens On Walking Path.jpg

Jeff Hobbs

STAR RATING: 2

Nice family portrait of the bobcats. You captured the moment well though I wish the bobcats were sharper. The human hand is the walking path and, since the bobcats are actually using it, it ties in well with the category.



13 - Oak titmice building nest in birdhouse.jpg

Joni Zabala

STAR RATING: 3

Good capture of the moment with one titmouse in flight with nesting material and the other entering the birdhouse. The birds are adequately sharp, and the birdhouse, which is the human hand needed for this category, is nicely sharp. Aperture selected throws the background out of focus which is good, though we see it well enough to get a sense of their environment.

14 - Osprey with Catch.jpg

Chris Johnson

STAR RATING: 5

Very good capture of the osprey manipulating its prey. Nicely sharp in the bird, fish, and post, with aperture selected to throw the background out of focus but without losing a sense of the environment. Good placement of the subject within the frame. The human hand is particularly strong here since the osprey is using the narrow flat top of the post as a “tabletop” to manipulate its prey, and not just as an outlook. I’m guessing here, but perhaps the post top allows it to manipulate its catch without having to fend off other birds, which it might have to do on flat ground.



15 - Red Fox, Golf Course.jpg

Jeff Hobbs

STAR RATING: 3

Nice portrait of the foxes; sharp and with good texture in the fur and catch light in their eyes. Good that they are looking toward the camera; they appear apprehensive (though I anthropomorphize). To bad the feet and tail of the fox at front is cut off. The human hand here is the golf course, which isn't obviously what the background is though I can believe that's where they are. Perhaps the foxes are looking apprehensive because they are out of their normal environment being on the golf course. If so that strengthens the connection between the natural element and the human hand needed for this category, which you could play up in the title.



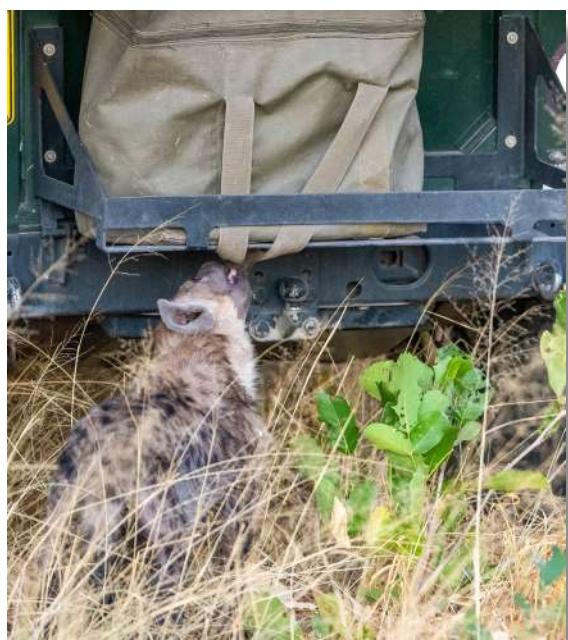
*16 - Scavenging Spotted Hyena (*Crocuta crocuta*)*

Trying to Break into Food Cooler.jpg

Karen Schofield

STAR RATING: 3

Good capture of the attempted theft. The connection of a human hand to nature is quite apparent. You've given us just enough of the cooler, vehicle, hyena, and environment to make the story clear. Could be sharper around the hyena's face, but that's the only technical issue.





17 - Sunset at the Beach.jpg

Carol Silveira

STAR RATING: 5

Lovely confluence of the human hand (fence) with nature (ocean and sky). The fence has a mild break in angle at a post, right of center, which points us to a corresponding break in angle within the opening in the clouds above. Everything lines up just right along that vertical line (1/3 from the right hand side) to fully connect the human hand with the natural. Beyond that, you've given us great lighting in the clouds, including the corpuscular rays.



18 - Tarantula Crossing the Road.jpg

Carol Silveira

STAR RATING: 2

Nicely sharp in the most important portions of the tarantula, though the rest of the image falls off significantly in sharpness. It is crawling over a rock, which may (or may not) be gravel in the road it's crossing. The road mentioned in the title is the human hand needed to fit this category, but its presence isn't strongly a part of the image.



19 - three cows.jpg

Carol Gan

STAR RATING: 2

The cows, being domestic animals, fit the human hand needed in this category, as does the fence. The placement of the cows within the frame, and held back by the fence, is good pictorially, but I wish the image were sharper.

Padre Trails Camera Club

Nature #3 competition - Human Hand in Nature - 05/15/2024
Group Green Comments - Judged by: Chris Cassell



01-Baby Rat Snake.jpg
Bill Shewchuk

STAR RATING: 3

COMMENT: The snake appears cornered in this human-made setting. I like the way the curvy nature of the snake contrasts with the angular form of the brickwork. Yet the snake isn't placed randomly on the brickwork; it curves around and through it in a way that breaks the symmetry of the brickwork nicely. Seeing the snake's shadow also adds a good 3-dimensional element.



02-Bull Mallow at the Perc Pond.jpg
Charlie Gibson

STAR RATING: 4

COMMENT: Good presentation of this flower with the pond as background. Presuming that Bull Mallow is a hybrid species or is non-native to its current location, then the image fits the category. There is a building at the other side of the pond, but by itself it doesn't add enough of a human hand as called for in this category.



03-Daisys Downtown.jpg
Charlie Gibson

STAR RATING: 4

COMMENT: A nice juxtaposition of the daisies with the movie marquee as background. That background is certainly dominant enough to provide the human hand needed in this category. However, the marquee message seems unconnected to the flowers. This image would probably be a bit stronger if there were a connection between the two elements beyond that suggested in the title; that these are daisies downtown (where we might not expect them).



04-Deep Sea Giant Crab.jpg
Dick Light

STAR RATING: 2

COMMENT: Here the human hand in nature is, presumably, the bones in the background. It seems likely they are fake bones (plastic or concrete?) and may be intended to represent human bones inside an aquarium. I like the way the angular legs of the crab interact with the similarly angular (rib?) bones behind them, separated partly by difference in color. There is an implied threat; that the crab caused the demise of the (human?) creature, and that also fits the category theme.



05-Don't You Use My Feeder.jpg
Fernando Ibanez

STAR RATING: 2

COMMENT: A very cute capture of the hummingbird; I'm glad the focus is on the bird and that it is looking toward the camera. The human hand, the feeder, is focused just enough to see what it is, and it's also good to see a bit of the environment in the background.



06-Easing the Way.jpg
Ken Jones

STAR RATING: 4

COMMENT: A good entry to this category, with the angular and geometric stairs cutting across the less structured ground cover. Yet I don't get a sense of clashing between these two elements since the stairs are embedded in and slowly becoming one with the ground cover. Not too much of the image is in focus, but that's okay since the angular points of the two right-most stairs are in good focus.



*07-Fence.jpg
Sandie McCafferty*

STAR RATING: 3

COMMENT: Though the vertically ambling fence is nearly centered in the frame, the symmetry is broken nicely by its shadow being cast to the left. Would have been nice to catch it at another time of day when the shadow was longer. Fits the category nicely. Since color plays little role here, consider conversion to monochrome where increased contrast, and bringing out more texture in the fence slats and sand, might bring even more drama to the image.



*08-Fences.jpg
Janet Azevedo*

STAR RATING: 5

COMMENT: A wonderfully dramatic sky, and I'm glad you've filled about 2/3 of the frame with it. In the remaining third the human hand, the fence, clearly dominates and, since it's so dominant there, the function of the fence appears to be for holding back the sky rather than any creature wandering through. Love that. Good choice as monochrome. I'm trying to think how to further separate the fence from the grassland. Okay for the fence to be totally black since its role here is in its form, not its texture. Could lighten the grass and ground a bit for more separation from the fence, but not too much lest it compete for attention with the sky.



*09-Giant Panda.jpg
Dick Light*

STAR RATING: 3

COMMENT: A cute capture of the panda in its human-made enclosure (so it fits the category). It would be good to bring down the highlights in the fur on the panda's belly and chin to get more texture there.



10-Hawk on a Post.jpg

Fernando Ibanez

STAR RATING: 2

COMMENT: The hawk looks very wary on its human-made post perch. Fits the category, but would even more strongly if we saw a bit more of that post, and thereby could have some sense of its height above the ground.



11-Lone Fisherperson.jpg

Janet Azevedo

STAR RATING: 4

COMMENT: Wonderful mood here, and fits the category splendidly. The waning light makes the colors and shapes in the waves subtle yet dramatic. The branch of whitened wave reaching toward and around the fisherman fully integrates him into the natural scene.



12-Merlin (*Falco columbarius*).jpg

Bill Shewchuk

STAR RATING: 4

COMMENT: Here the human hand in nature is literally a human hand. The bird appears ready for action, yet perched comfortably on the gloved hand. It is tack-sharp with good texture and color in the feathers. A great portrait.



13-Osprey at the Ready.jpg
Christina Parsons

STAR RATING: 2

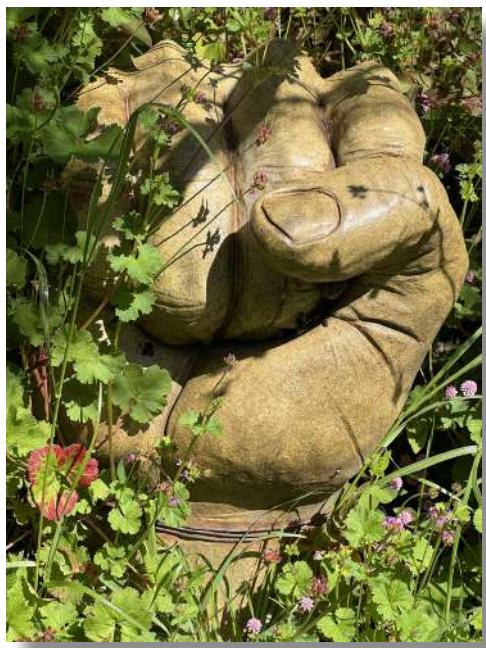
COMMENT: The osprey perched on this human-made object certainly fits the category theme. Although the background is blank, I like that you've provided space on the right side that the bird is gazing into. The bird's feathers appear to be posterized or have little detail; perhaps an artifact of the post-processing since the image overall seems to be well focused.



14-Poppies on Corral.jpg
Lillie Grossman

STAR RATING: 2

COMMENT: Presuming that poppies are hybrid or is non-native to its current location, then the image fits the category. My googling suggests it is native to Eurasia and North Africa, so if this is in the US then that requirement is met. The only other human hand element is the fence at the back of the poppy field, but that is so small that it doesn't contribute much to the image (title notwithstanding). This is a lovely landscape, but the connection to the category seems a bit stretched.



15-Power to the Plants.jpg
Ken Jones

STAR RATING: 3

COMMENT: I like the way this (once) all-powerful fist is now being swallowed up by the plant life. Definitely a message there about humanity's relation to nature.



16-Road Through Buffalo Territory.jpg

Carol Fuessenich

STAR RATING: 2

COMMENT: The road provides the human element needed for this category, and yet doesn't play a significant role in the image since the buffalos have no interaction with it. The road could be cropped off and we'd be left with a very nice landscape depicting the buffalos in their environment. But then, it wouldn't meet the requirement of this category. Overall, the image could be sharper and appears a bit posterized in a way that doesn't help.



17-Wharf.jpg

Sandie McCafferty

STAR RATING: 4

COMMENT: The title helps explain that this is a human-made object reflected in the water (nature), and thus it fits the category. Upon examination we can see letters of the alphabet (and possibly infer some words), which makes this a very interesting juxtaposition of the human hand upon nature.



18-Yellowstone Thermal Pool.jpg

Carol Fuessenich

STAR RATING: 5

COMMENT: The human hand here is the walkway which divides the image nicely. The way it is partially obscured by the mist coming from the thermal pool gives a message about the relation of humanity to nature. Very nice lighting in the landscape, which is well composed.

Padre Trails Camera Club

Nature #3 competition - Human Hand in Nature - 05/15/2024
Group Red Comments - Judged by: Chris Cassell



01-Bridge at Patricia Lake, Jasper National Park.JPG
Don Eastman

STAR RATING: 3

COMMENT: Nicely composed, with the modest amount of land area dividing sky and water. There is a human hand present, the bridge structure on the left, but it doesn't play enough of a role in the image to fit the spirit of this category. A small, distracting branch in the lower right corner could be cloned out.



02-Cross the bridge.jpg
Brian Spiegel

STAR RATING: 3

COMMENT: I like the way this pathway interrupts the otherwise tranquil wooded scene. Good lighting conveys a sense of damp coolness in the gully below the bridge. It certainly fits the category well. Perhaps showing a little bit more of the path at the bottom would further enhance the sense of the woods being divided by the pathway.



03-Durango Silverton-1.jpg
David Eisen

STAR RATING: 4

COMMENT: A lovely landscape, and the train passing through puts this image solidly in the category. The interconnectedness of human-scape and landscape is enhanced by the window reflection at the left. Some pictorial improvements could be made by reducing brightness of the cloud highlights, bringing in some texture, which might also give them more of a three-dimensional quality.



04-Fly fishing from the dock.jpg
Sara A Courtneidge

STAR RATING: 3

COMMENT: Nicely composed, and fits the category. The symmetry of the centered anchor point is broken by the off-center perch of the bird, and by the asymmetric draping of the line around the anchor. Could bring up a little more detail into the bird's face.



05-Generations.jpg
Rick Verbanec

STAR RATING: 4

COMMENT: A pleasing wooded landscape, well-composed. The placement of the small girl against the large tree fits the category well, and (I believe) the title compels us to consider that the girl is much younger than the tree. The path and small bridge at the bottom also fit the human hand theme of the category, but don't contribute as much to the spirit of it as does the presence of the girl.



06-Glacier at Tracy Arm & Cell Phone in Hand.JPG
Don Eastman

STAR RATING: 2

COMMENT: Nice depiction of the glacier and its environment. If those were the only elements then you could crop about half of the water at the bottom, as well as try to bring more texture into the mist at the top. The intrusion of the hands with cellphone seems likely to have been an accidental photo-bombing, but you have used it to tie in to today's category, perhaps making a statement about the relation of humans with nature.



07-golf course-1.JPG
David Eisen

STAR RATING: 4

COMMENT: I like the way you've depicted an outdoor scene that is mostly, but not quite 100%, human controlled. The golfcart path meandering through divides the space nicely into a busier space in the upper right, and the closely-manicured lawn devoid of features in the lower left. Usually we might crop the bottom third of the image off for a tighter composition. But here, the nearly featureless lawn enhances the message of a human-dominated landscape. The tree at left, nicely framed by clouds, also helps separate the space.



08-Leucadendron Up Close.jpg
Brooks Leffler

STAR RATING: 2

COMMENT: Good composition and interplay of colors. Presuming that Leucadendron is a hybrid or non-native species, then it also fits the category. There are digital artifacts, as if due to low resolution, although the resolution of the image appears adequate.



09-Lonoak Road, King City.jpg
Sara A Courtneidge

STAR RATING: 3

COMMEND: This is a grand landscape, with minimal human presence in the scene; i.e., the long line of fencing corralling a couple of human-owned cows. Yet I feel it successfully meets the spirit of the category, if the intention is to convey a sense of the minimal impact of humans within the wider scope of Nature.



10-Main River, Germany.jpg
Andrea Madsen

STAR RATING: 3

COMMENT: A well-presented landscape with dramatic clouds. The human presence is subtle, since the line of houses at the ridgeline nearly blend in to the surrounding wooded area. But if that blending of human effects with nature is the point here, then this fits the category well.



11-Sand Art.jpg
Rick Verbanec

STAR RATING: 4

COMMENT: Well-composed framing of the shoreline with the sand art. The presence of people at the bottom give reality to an otherwise fairly abstract depiction. The human hand in Nature is far from subtle here, suggestive of the strong effects humans have on Nature.



12-Skunk Enjoys Kibbles.jpg
Clarissa Conn

STAR RATING: 2

COMMENT: A good capture of this moment when nature enters the human-controlled world, so it fits the category well. Not particularly strong pictorially or technically, but the important point was capturing the moment.



13-the forest hides the blinds.jpg
Brian Spiegel

STAR RATING: 4

COMMENT: The elements of nature blend well with the human hand; this definitely fits the category. I like the way the stairs lead us down to the window in the blinds, and there's definitely a feeling that the trees are hiding the blinds, as said in the title.



14-The Humble Carpobrotus.jpg
Andrea Madsen

STAR RATING: 3

COMMENT: Very nice light coming through the leaves, bringing out their texture and color; they almost seem to glow. Presuming that Carpobrotus is a hybrid species or is non-native to its current location, then the image fits the category.



15-Unusually Pretty Pelargonium.jpg
Brooks Leffler

STAR RATING: 5

COMMENT: Very strong pictorially, with the flowers forming a diagonal across the image with their distinctive white edges, texture, and strong red coloration. It contrasts nicely with the green leaves in the upper right and lower left. Presuming that Pelargonium is a hybrid species or is non-native to its current location, then the image fits the category.

Winning Images Follow

Padre Trails Camera Club

Nature #3 - Human Hand in Nature - 5/15/24

Winning Images Blue Group



Honorable Mentions

Baby Fox in Pipe
Julie Chen



Highway 25 San Benito County
Patricia McKean

Brown Pelicans Posing on Pipe
Chris Johnson



Third Place Blue Group

**Brown Pelican in Moss
Landing Harbor**
Julie Chen



Second Place
Sunset at the Beach
Carol Silveira

First Place
Osprey with Catch
Chris Johnson



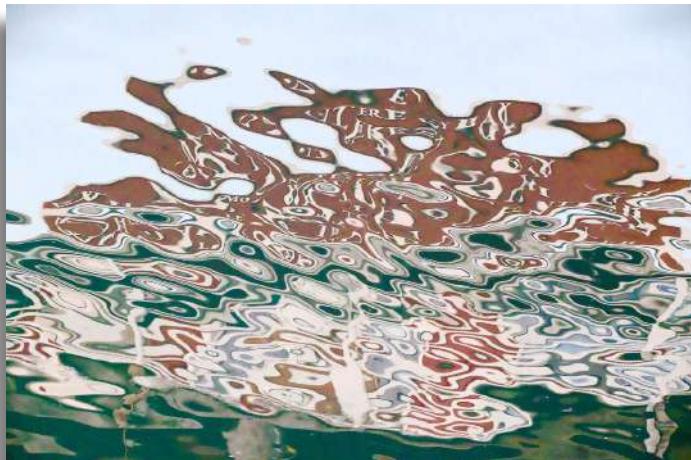
Padre Trails Camera Club

Nature #3 - Human Hand in Nature - 5/15/24

Winning Images Green Group



Honorable Mentions



Wharf
Sandie McCafferty



Merlin (Falco columbarius)
Bill Shewchuk



Daisys Downtown
Charlie Gibson

Third Place Green Group
Loan Fisherperson
Janet Azevedo



Second Place
Fences
Janet Azevedo

First Place
Yellowstone Thermal Pool
Carol Fuessenich



Padre Trails Camera Club Nature #3 - Human Hand in Nature - 5/15/24 Winning Images Red Group



Honorable Mentions



Golf Course
David Eisen



Generations
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Durango Silverton-1
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Third Place Red Group
The Forest Hides the Blinds
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Second Place
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First Place
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