Approximately 2,400 images were submitted to the Showcase competition from almost 275 NANPA members. This year’s judges were Charlie Borland, Danita Delimont and Tom Carlisle. The Top Ten (Tier 1) received prize money in the amount of $250 each. Six Judge’s Choice winners received $150 each. In addition to appearing in Expressions, all 250 images will be on the NANPA website for a year. Images from Tiers 1 and 2 are featured as the Image of the Day on NANPA’s website Home page.

THREE LEGS OF A TRIPOD

NANPA’s mission is to provide education, foster professionalism and ethical conduct, gather and disseminate information, and develop standards for all persons interested in the field of nature photography. NANPA further seeks to promote nature photography as an art form and a medium of communication for the sciences, nature appreciation and environmental protection.

When NANPA’s founding board members met in April 1994 in Wheat Ridge, Colorado, they established NANPA’s organization and much of what the association would represent. One of the founders likened the mission of the organization to the three legs of a tripod. One leg stands for Education; another, Ethics; and a third, the Environment. NANPA continues to concentrate on those three areas today, and they are the focus of the articles in this year’s Expressions.

Professional photographer Charlie Borland has contributed the article on Education. Professional natural history photographer Clay Bolt has written the article on the Environment. And picture agency owner Danita Delimont has written the article on Ethics. All of these writers have written for NANPA’s Currents in the past, and they have all carefully tailored their pieces for you, the NANPA member.

Also in this annual is an insightful article by Sharon Cohen-Powers on the Showcase competition trends. Enjoy!

—Niki Barrie, Editor and Sharon Cohen-Powers, Creative Director
Many amateur photographers dream of making their passion for photography pay enough to become working professionals. The allure of traveling, exploring and photographing far-off travel destinations drives many amateurs to take what had been a part-time passion and turn it into a full-time business.

Pros and amateurs have the same desire to be out in nature exploring, experiencing, discovering and documenting with a camera. The ideal is to be paid to do what you love and all the while even more photographic opportunities present themselves, including travel to exotic places. Those opportunities, in turn, earn enough money to fuel the same cycle over and over again.

That reality is really more of an illusion. Going pro brings a whole new set of challenges and hurdles.

Dreams are free; reality has costs.

Amateurs have freedom

The amateur photographer often has a job or other means of funding his or her photography. Many have the latest and best gear and the means to travel on their time off to a variety of locations to satisfy their passion for photography.

Amateurs can pick and choose where and what to photograph based on places they wish to visit, often the same places they go on vacation.

Amateurs can explore and experiment and make mistakes, and no one cares except them. Basically, they are in it for the fun of it and they have nothing to prove to anyone else.

Amateurs can leave photography for other interests and return anytime they wish. They can pick up where they left off and be comfortable no matter what their skill level.

Amateurs never have to consider how to monetize their efforts or determine what to shoot for today’s markets. Since they are shooting for the joy alone, there is not really a cost or an expense that needs to be justified.

Amateurs usually do not need costly business insurance. If they have jobs, they probably do not have to pay the (sometimes outrageous) costs for health insurance, office space, business licenses and clerical help.

The amateur does not have to be a people person or master the skills of salesmanship or marketing or even negotiating.

Pros are experts in shooting and selling

Working professional photographers spend a great deal of time and money to master their medium. In fairness, amateurs often invest equal amounts of time and money. What the amateurs don’t have to do, however, is constantly work on their skills to stay competitive and creative and meet client needs.

Pros own a lot of gear. Their gear is usually well-used and some of it needs updating about every 18-24 months.

Pros spend a huge chunk of time on business needs, like seeking new clients and business opportunities. They must continually evaluate what to shoot that has the best chance of financial return. That includes shooting less interesting subjects that the markets demand.

Pros need always to watch the bottom line. Often, they must determine whether they can afford new gear; an assistant to lighten the load or some other business need. Even worse, they might have to choose between shooting a destination that appeals to them or a less attractive destination that will meet current demands in the marketplace.

Pros have to earn enough from their photography to make the house and car payments, pay business expenses and health insurance, put food on the table, provide for the children’s needs and save for those quarterly estimated tax payments. All the while, they try to bank some cash for the slow times.

Pros need to master self-promotion, marketing and image pricing for today’s markets and develop the skills to negotiate fiercely.

On assignment, pros shoot what the client wants, the way the client wants it shot while interpreting the scene in an individual, often artistic, way. The professional can bring beauty to the image where the amateur probably cannot...unless he or she gets lucky.
Pros need to prove themselves every day to someone who they hope to do business with. To prove themselves worthy of a call back, they must stand out through a resume of notable achievements and superlative work.

Pros need to spend years building a library of high-quality stock images that can beat the competition.

Pros need to prove they can handle an assignment, and nothing proves that better than having lots of other assignments under their belts.

Pros need to push relentlessly at everything they do and often be available seven days a week for potential business.

Pros wear a lot of hats. They need to create great images, process and archive those images, research new markets, promote their business, make sales calls, negotiate sales, deliver the product every time, and so much more.

Who has more fun: the pro or the amateur?

When a photographer turns pro, his or her product must meet the needs of a specific client base for the business to succeed.

Pros compete against anybody and everybody no matter their background. Today there is little difference between a pro and an amateur for the photo buyer who is judging the work.

Most pros in today’s markets struggle to find enough time and/or money to shoot as much as they wish. The business demands first and foremost that they put their efforts into marketing their products.

Photography, like any business, needs capital investment in the form of equipment and marketing tools as well as financial resources to build an inventory of great images before much income is generated.

The business of nature photography has little to do with photographing wildlife and landscapes these days! No, today it is all about nurturing a business that creates and sells photography. For some professional photographers, the challenges are worth the tradeoff. There are even those who enjoy the business aspect.

If you are considering going pro, take time to evaluate why. Your choice may come down to running a business vs. photographing for the love of it.

Charlie Borland has been a widely published professional nature photographer for 30 years. He is vice president and cofounder of http://www.fogstock.com and publisher of www.pronaturephotographer.com.

Resources for Pros

Are you an amateur looking to make the switch to professional nature photographer? Here are resources to make your professional life run a little smoother.

- What Buyers Want 2013 survey results and analysis from Photoshelter and Agencyaccess. Go to their site to sign up for and download your free guide. If you are interested in Photoshelter’s other guides, click on “View all free reports” at the top of the page.
- ASMP offers a library of free valuable information on its website. Go to http://www.asmp.org and click on Business Resources/Tutorials and Guides in the listing on the left side of the Home page to learn about contracts and other business forms, copyright, model and property releases, video issues and practices, social media, licensing, and terms and conditions. There’s plenty more to learn from this website. Take some time to look around.
- Something NANPA has in common with PLUS (Picture Licensing Universal System) is that both were co-founded by Jane Kinne. Go to www.useplus.org to find out more about PLUS. To sign up with the PLUS registry go to www.PLUSregistry.org. If you’d like to participate in the Beta test of the new PLUS Registry image recognition and search functions, click the red “Join” button at www.aspp.com/whats-plus-care.
- http://theagentlist.com/ takes you to a site where you can research agents worldwide.
- Subscribe to Photo District News, the award-winning magazine for the professional photography industry. PDN’s website: http://www.pdnonline.com.
- http://www.chasejarvis.com While on his website, be sure to click on his blog. Chase is a successful photographer who has lots to share.
- Black Star Rising is a site with advice and opinion on the art and business of photography written by and for professional photographers and photo buyers. Go to http://rising.blackstar.com
- http://www.nanpa.org is a terrific resource, and as a member you have access to the entire site. Our suggestion: log on as a member. Under Member Benefits, go to Expressions or Currents and read back issues. They are filled with some great information to help you in your business. The Member Menu has information on workshops, member benefits, NANPA events, community groups and more.
While diving at about 110 feet in the Maldives, Indian Ocean, in October 2010, Tony Frank saw manta rays (*Manta birostris*) near a rock outcrop that looked to him like a cleaning station. “I waited in the sand for things to settle down,” says Tony. “After five minutes, the silversides went back up into the water column and, sure enough, a curious giant manta ray began passing by me.” (Manta rays can reach 29 feet and more than two tons.) When the manta came within shooting range, Tony caught this black-and-white image of it parting the silversides.

Tony is a retired consumer electronics trainer. In the 1970s, he worked as a scuba instructor and became a consultant on an underwater film. That led to a career in underwater photography, which has taken him to some of the most exotic locations in the world. His photography also includes land, nature and wildlife. Tony’s philosophy about shooting underwater is, “Take only photos. Leave only bubbles.”

Tony used a Nikon D300, a Tokina 10-17mm lens set for 10mm at f/13, ISO 400, subal housing and two high-powered strobes set at near minimum power, plus diffusers.
The Owl and the Squirrel © ELIZABETH BOEHM

“I was photographing a great horned owl (Bubo virginianus) roosting on a dead branch in our town park of Pinedale, Wyoming, while a red squirrel (Tamiasciurus hudsonicus) was chattering its discontent,” says Elizabeth Boehm. Elizabeth thought the squirrel was a distance away when, “Suddenly, the scolding squirrel surprised me and entered my viewfinder.” He repeatedly approached the owl, allowing Elizabeth time to capture this image.

Elizabeth is a physical therapist assistant who recently went part-time so she could pursue her passion for birds and bird photography. This is the third year in a row that her work will appear in Expressions. Elizabeth is self-taught and specializes in nature, particularly images from western Wyoming.

Elizabeth used a Canon 7D camera on a tripod, 500mm 4L lens, ISO 400, f/4.5 at 1/180 sec. Her website is http://www.elizabethboehm.com.
Carol Grenier took this image from a Zodiac as a group of eight cruised among icebergs off the Antarctic Peninsula in December 2009. “I was interested in the beautiful shapes and colors of the icebergs,” says Carol, “so once everyone who wanted to went ashore, there was an opportunity for the rest to cruise slowly around the bay and photograph iceberg details. Carol says the icebergs are ephemeral and visually stunning. Moreover, she says, “...no one will be able to recreate any iceberg photos you take, since the weather and the icebergs themselves are always changing.” Carol has traveled to this area three times for the compelling photo opportunities.

Carol’s first job was seasonal as a surveyor for the National Park Service in Yellowstone. Not only was she able to work outdoors in beautiful settings, but “I had abundant opportunities for recreation and nature photography,” she says.

Carol used a Canon 5D camera, handheld, EF70-200mm f/4L IS USM lens with 1.4x extender, ISO 400, f11 to capture this image.
While walking along the bank of the Myakka River in the dry season (July) in Sarasota, Florida, Larry Lynch came upon a group of alligators (*Alligator mississippiensis*) gorging on the fish left behind as the water receded from the river. “One big alligator had clearly eaten its fill and wasn’t going anywhere,” says Larry, who set up his tripod about 20 feet from the gator and created this image about a half-hour after sunset.

A Florida native, Larry got involved in nature photography 12 years ago. Recently, he has received a Highly Honored mention in the 2011 and 2012 *Nature’s Best Photography* competition and First Place in the Animal Portrait category of the 2012 Veolia Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition. “Alligator Eyeshine” will be on display at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History until the end of the year, and it appears in National Geographic’s *Dawn to Dark Photographs, the Magic of Light*, released October 2013.

Larry used a Nikon D2X camera on a Gitzo 3125 tripod and Manfrotto 468RC2 ballhead, Nikon 80-400mm 5.6 VR lens, Nikon SB800 flash, ISO 200, f/8 at 8 sec. Larry’s website is [http://www.lynchphotos.com](http://www.lynchphotos.com).
Freezing cold rain and climbing over rocks and car-sized chunks of ice were some of the challenges faced by Greg Duncan when he photographed this ice cave and the mountain guide, Ólafur Rúnar Sigurðsson, who had been scouting for dangerous ice formations. “The image was taken in winter under the Fall-sjökull glacier on the flanks of Mt. Öræfajökull volcano in Iceland,” says Greg.

In contrast to this shoot location, Southern California—where Greg and his wife, Mary, live—is warm and sunny year-round. The Duncans own a commercial landscape company. “I’m always chasing the light,” says Gregory whose “passion for photography started at a young age and has grown into an obsession.”

Gregory used a Canon 5D Mark II on a Gitzo carbon fiber tripod with the Really Right Stuff BH-44 ballhead and cable release, 16-35mm L series lens at 16mm, ISO 100, f/18 at 3 sec. His websites are http://www.grdphotos.com and http://www.ultimateiceland.com.
This collage of corals was taken underwater at night with blue light photography by Barry Brown of Rapid City, South Dakota. The corals include: *Montastraea faveolata*, *Tubastraea coccinea*, *Favia fragum*, *Eusmilia fastigata*, *Scolymia sp.*, *Montastraea cavernosa*, *Dicchocenia stockesi* and *Meandrina meandrites*, and they were photographed in January 2013 on the House Reef/Shipwreck Point at the Curacao Sea Aquarium in the Caribbean. “Blue light photography is the hands-down most difficult form of photography I have ever done,” says Barry. “It takes hours of camera set-up and preparation topside, and once underwater, the challenge of shooting anything with dark blue lights over the strobes is difficult.”

Although Barry and his wife, Aimee, are U.S. residents, they spend a lot of time in Curacao, where she works with dolphins and he works at Substation Curacao with a new $2-million manned submersible that is capable of exploring depths down to 1,000 feet. Barry has photographed species of sea creatures never before seen by man.

Barry used a Nikon D800 camera and 105mm f/2.8 lens, three Ikelite DS-160 substrobes, Ikelite housing, f/18 at 1/250 sec. and Night Sea blue filters, blue search light, yellow filters and yellow glasses. Barry’s website is [http://www.wildhorizons.com](http://www.wildhorizons.com).
“There were dozens of cars along the road, parked bumper-to-bumper in a classic ‘lion jam,’” says Karen J. Hunt about her February 2011 trip to the Serengeti National Park in Tanzania. “Five lionesses slept in the grass to our right. A herd of zebras grazed in the field to our left. The only action was cars rolling out of the queue to find excitement elsewhere.” She continues, “In an instant, all but one lioness vanished. She stepped with slow deliberation until she came to an opening along the line of cars. With a sudden burst, she leapt between the vehicles into the field of zebras, singling out the closest one. She drove him toward the other lionesses, which were waiting like outlaws in a spaghetti western. The zebra didn’t stand a chance.” The entire hunt lasted less than a minute.

Karen is an oncologist in rural Montana, and the Showcase competition was the first professional contest she has ever entered. She says she is indebted to Todd Gustafson for his advice and the exceptional opportunities his tours provide.

Shooting from the top of her safari vehicle, Karen used a Canon 1D Mark IV on a panning ground pod balanced on a BLUBB beanbag, 500mm f/4L IS lens; ISO 200, evaluative metering at +1/3 stop, f/4 at 1/800 sec. Her website is http://www.kjhunt.smugmug.com.
The great grey owl (*Strix nebulosa*) is a bird of prey. It flies silently, has prominent eyes that see at night and a distinct, extra-large facial disk that significantly enhances its hearing. “These formidable powers give the owls an edge in locating prey,” says Carl Zanoni. “During a severe snow storm in the winter of 2013, this great grey owl emerged from a dark, snow-covered forest evoking a sense of mystery, secrecy and myth.” Carl captured the image in Green Creek, Ottawa River Pathway in Ontario.

Carl is a retired physicist who enjoys the challenges of wildlife and landscape photography, experiencing and respecting the wildlife and venues, and meeting and learning from others with similar interests. Carl’s first Top Ten image was in NANPA’s 2011 Showcase. He credits Chris Dodds for excellent mentoring at the workshop during which this image was captured.

“I was hunkered down, resting on my elbows in the wet mud, waiting for my subject to come close and face the camera,” says Andy Nguyen about his image of a reddish egret (*Egretta rufescens*) feeding in the shallows. “As if on cue, the clouds opened up and let a ray of sunlight shine through, right on the area behind the bird, creating a surreal look.” Andy made the image in Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, Florida, in February 2012.

This is Andy’s first year as a NANPA member and his first time entering (and taking a Top Ten in) the Showcase competition. He has earned additional prestigious photography honors in the Veolia Wildlife Photographer of the Year and the *Nature’s Best Photography* Windland Smith Rice competitions.

Andy carefully—so as not to get mud and sand on his handheld camera and lens—used a Nikon D300, Nikkor 70-200mm f/2.8 lens, 1.4x teleconverter, ISO 500, f/4.8. andy’s website is [http://www.wildwingsphotography.com](http://www.wildwingsphotography.com).
Two months after Geoffrey Schmid of Seattle took this image of wildflowers in the historic Colockum Pass in central Washington State, it was devastated by the Colockum-Tarpiscan wildfire of 2013. “While no human lives were lost, the effect upon the wildlife has yet to be determined,” says Geoffrey. “This particular scene is not to be captured like this for some time. I’m planning return trips to document the effects of nature’s housecleaning and renewal over the years to come.” The flowers shown here include arrowleaf balsamroot and white lupine.

Geoffrey’s passion for nature photography grows out of his love for the great outdoors through hiking, backpacking and climbing combined with an artistic bent and need for personal expression. He started selling fine art prints at festivals and art shows and on his website in 2006. Geoffrey prints all of his own fine art work. He took a Judge’s Choice award in 2009, the first Showcase competition he entered.

Geoffrey used a Canon 5DMkIII on a tripod, 17-40mm f/4 L lens, 3-stop hard graduated ND filter, polarizer, ISO 100, f/20 at about a second. His website is http://www.geoffreyschmidphotography.com.
There is an ancient slab of rock not very far from where I am tonight in South Carolina that has become the stuff of local legend. To be clear, it isn’t the rock itself that has been the topic of much discussion, but rather what’s on it that seems to stir the imagination of everyone who learns that it is there. Though time and weather have done their best to dissolve the past, if one squints a little in the right light, a faint impression of figures—possibly of young boys standing with arms wide in the midst of a vast forest—begins to materialize. No one knows exactly how old these petroglyphs are or who it was who made them. Some believe that they may even predate the Cherokee people whose great nation once thrived across these azure mountains. I like to think that they were made by two boys, much like my own, who came across the stone while playing in the once pristine forest one sun-soaked afternoon.

As I sit and think about these simple caricatures of humanity I’m struck by two things. First, the power of art to communicate and reach across the ages; and secondly, mankind’s ability to alter landscapes in ways that will echo well into a future that lies beyond the reach of our brief time on this planet. Though Stone-Age people weren’t as technically advanced as we are today, at our core we’re still much the same. We continue to need food, clean air, clean water and shelter to live well. There also remains an unyielding desire to share our stories with the world and dwell within a community that will validate our beliefs. And, of course, who doesn’t secretly want to prove our bravery and sense of adventure to our chosen tribe?

Photographers, specifically those of the nature variety, hold tight to that ancient kinship in a way that many fellow travelers have forgotten. Like the cave dwellers who rendered great scenes of ungulates and bovine stampeding across sienna-stained walls, we are the new scribes; the ones who share our stories for those who will come next, when things might be…different. Just as it is difficult to really know what life must have been like for the clan people living within the caverns of Lascaux, it is sometimes equally as mystifying to conjure thoughts of how life might feel in a future without wild lions or tree frogs or bees. Some of our greatest treasures are winking out of existence each day. As nature photographers, we are in a unique position to become visual advocates for our wild neighbors who don’t have the ability to present a case for why they “deserve” to simply be here. Humans are visual creatures, and we’ve all experienced how a powerful image can move us to feel emotion for a situation that we haven’t witnessed first-hand. The question is, how many of us will actually take the time and expend the energy required to do this?

Photographing the natural world isn’t the same as documenting a sports car or a delicious cake. Our chosen subject matter is living, breathing and non-participatory in our process. Wild animals may often be aware of our presence, but they don’t grant us permission to make their portrait, they only grace us with their tolerance. They are more than just objects awaiting our compositions; they also have lives of their own. They need time to find food, prepare or find shelter and survive predation just as we do. We should do our best to be cognizant of this each time we make an image. I went through my own process of realization early in my career. There was a defining moment when it suddenly occurred to me that up until that point, I was little more than a collector who did nothing to promote a healthy future for my subjects. I knew that I had to do something to give back but had no real idea of where to begin.

You may have found yourself in this same situation. Something is tugging on your heartstrings that says you can do more, but you don’t have a clue where to start. Perhaps you don’t feel as if your work is good enough. You may think your portfolio doesn’t include images that strike the right chord for conservation. It’s certainly easy enough to look through publications and feel overwhelmed by what you see. Just remember: you don’t have to photograph glaciers or endangered wildlife to make a difference. Conservation begins with education, and I can tell you from first-hand experience that I wouldn’t be doing what I’m doing today if my own grandfather had not shared his love of nature with me. You never know who you can impact and how they’ll carry it throughout their lives.
How do you choose to photograph the natural world? It’s easy to talk yourself out of taking action by believing that your photos aren’t powerful enough to be used for environmental advocacy. It has been my experience that while nature photographers come in many flavors—each with his or her own merits—it generally appears that there are two driving forces that keep us looking through the lens.

The first is often derived from a life-long love of nature. These photographers, first and foremost, have a thirst for learning more about species and the ecosystems in which they live. This desire to dig deeper into the inner workings of the natural world offers them all of the steam that they need to keep clicking away for a lifetime. Anyone who falls into this category will proudly call themselves a naturalist in the same breath that they proclaim their fascination with image-making.

The second driving force is more emotional. These image-makers pursue nature with a desire to produce beautiful images that create wonder and amazement in the eyes of their viewers. Along the way they also hope to learn more about themselves. The component that sets these photographers apart is that their subject matter simply represents a beautiful or inspirational form. These forms materialize in the shape of a rock arch or the silhouette of a bird in flight. The subject’s identity doesn’t necessarily matter as much as the emotion that it portrays. Each form represents beauty, and that’s more than enough reason to spend the time photographing and ultimately sharing it with the world. These photographers might not be able to tell you the difference between a dragonfly and a damselfly, but they aren’t bothered by this in the least. They are artists first and foremost, whose muse just happens to be Mother Nature.

The former is based in science; the latter in art. Most of us start down our path leaning more to one side or the other. Some of us might even find ourselves flitting from artistic images to scientific captures and back again. In my experience, when it comes to nature photography, the images that effectively capture the public’s imagination best seem to be those that walk the razor’s edge between art and science. These images are breathtakingly beautiful and yet contain useful information about the subject: where it lives, what it eats, when it is active.

My friend and colleague, Scottish wildlife photographer Niall Benvie, has been sharing the “edge concept” for several years now. Niall writes,

> Why do some pictures cause a spark in our limbic systems while others provoke no emotional response at all? What is it, for example, that makes Jim Brandenburg’s picture of an arctic wolf jumping between ice floes such an iconic image—one whose appeal extends well beyond the ranks of nature photographers? Over the years I have tried to rationalize my response to other people’s photographs, as well as my own, trying to identify a formula for great pictures. It has, of course, been a futile analysis, but one which has turned up the closest thing to a unifying theory for provocative imagery that we are likely to get.

The edge, defined, is a zone of transition in time or space or being. Put more simply, it is where change occurs and contrasts arise. Our visual system is set up to respond to these stimuli; present it with a static scene and it will switch off after a while. If “zones of transition” sounds a bit nebulous to you, consider the topics that most nature photographers work over and over again; dawn and dusk (the edges of the day); autumn and spring (the transition between seasons); seascapes and silhouettes (the edge between land and sea and between land and sky); baby mammals and the old males (representing the edges of life); animals such as penguins and marine iguanas living in extreme environments (places where the gap between life and death seems narrow). These are all images from the edge, away from the usual, familiar or mundane. They are pictures about “the most,” and most of us find them irresistible.

I’ve shared this concept with you because I believe that no matter where one may fall within the spectrum of photographers, none of us is ever too far away from the type of image that can move people to caring more about nature. If your work has a more artistic slant, look for ways to include a bit more scientific information. If your work is more scientific, look for compelling, personal ways of showing your subject in its environment. Play with light and depth-of-field to reach the hearts of viewers as well as their minds. If you are set on your shooting style, then include captions...
that draw in the missing elements. You need not feel that you don’t have what it takes within the range of your photographic skills to promote the protection and well-being of your favorite subjects, whether they be living creatures or beautiful landscapes. Every voice counts! The question is: do you have the courage to speak up in favor of the natural world?

Once you’ve made the decision to use your images for environmental advocacy, the next step of finding out exactly where to begin can be challenging. If you’ve never worked with a conservation organization before, the idea of cold-calling can be rather frightening. Take a deep breath. I’m here to tell you that very few successful conservation and environmentally focused photographers who I know of were born with connections. Each of us had to take that leap of faith and so can you!

I would recommend that you first find a local organization whose cause you believe in. There’s no point in following this path if your heart isn’t in it. Smaller non-profits are almost always in need of good photography whether they realize it or not. A powerful image can make a conservation campaign come to life. Remember, humans are visual creatures. This is why Google ranks videos and images higher than words when it comes to search criteria. Find an organization that is lacking your speciality as a photographer and arrange to meet with their marketing director (if they have one) or outreach coordinator. If you specialize in wildlife, or a particular group of species, meeting with staff scientists can be helpful. We can’t all be great at everything, and some of the most brilliant scientists in the world aren’t very good at photography. They need your images to tell their stories!

Another possibility is to develop your own project. Is there a place near your home that is special to you that needs to be better taken care of? Photograph both the good things and the bad things about the area and share your images with your neighborhood committee. Is there a species that needs more backyard habitat? Perhaps you could give a talk to a local native plant society or garden club and encourage members to install certain plants that will offer food and protection to this species. Start a blog that includes your photos and journal entries. Discuss why nature matters or why it is important to spend time outdoors. You don’t have to save thousands of acres of land to qualify as a conservation photographer. You simply need to put action behind your photos. Don’t just leave them sitting on your hard drives. Use them to make life better for the plants, animals and places that you love!

Although NANPA members come from a multitude of different backgrounds, we are all bound together by our fascination with the natural world. If each one of us spent just a little time each week using our photos to give back, imagine the good work that could be done to protect our precious muse. She is not only the source of inspiration but of our lives as well. What will you do to ensure that this tradition continues for the next generation?

Clay Bolt is a widely published, award-winning natural history photographer and an associate fellow of the International League of Conservation Photographers. He is a cofounder of Meet Your Neighbours (http://www.meetyourneighbours.net), an internationally focused environmental photography project developed to encourage an appreciation of the wildlife within our own communities. Learn more about his work at http://www.claybolt.com.
The moon adds a dramatic touch to these Northern Lights in Alaska.
© Al Perry

Aurora Borealis is named after the Roman goddess of dawn and the Greek name for the north wind, near Reykjavik, Iceland.
© Wendy McIntosh
The Bass Harbor Lighthouse in Acadia National Park is reflected in a small pool of water.

© Andrew Lerman

In Tennessee, a sunset warms the Smokies.

© Eric Bowles
A least tern tends to a newly hatched chick while continuing to incubate another egg in St. Petersburg, Florida.
© Lawrence Lynch

Polar bears wrestle in Kaktovic, Alaska.
© Michael Cohen
Huckleberries are a staple of the black bear’s diet in late summer and fall. Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming.
© Don Grall

An American pika collects food for winter at Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado.
© Fi Rust
A female green hermit hummingbird sips nectar from a heliconia in Costa Rica.
© Carl Zanoni

A lotus plant flower stands tall next to a seed pod at the Florida Botanical Gardens, Largo, Florida.
© Cheryl Arena Molennor
Roseate spoonbills joust for control of a territory in High Island, Texas. © Michael Rosenbaum

Wildflowers make a meal for this hoary marmot at Mount Rainier National Park, Washington. © Sean Crane
A cicada emerges from its nymphal skin in a Wisconsin garden.
© Keith Kennedy

The short-eared owl prefers open country, as shown here at Farmington Bay Wildlife Management Area, Utah.
© John Blumenkamp
A baboon mother carries her baby under her belly, but as the baby gets older, it rides on her back, Tanzania.

© Michael Cohen

A brown bear travels along the Shelikoff Strait in Alaska, with her three cubs.

© John Ippolito
Fog makes the autumn colors pop along the Blue Ridge Parkway, North Carolina.
© Donna Eaton

Elephants dust to protect their skin from parasites and biting insects, Tarangire National Park, Tanzania.
© David DesRochers
Tangs clean up a green sea turtle at Kona, Big Island, Hawaii.  
© Steve Gould

This pod of dusky dolphins was found off of Kaikoura, New Zealand.  
© James White
A tree frog rests on the inside of a curled-up leaf, New Port Richey, Florida.
© Cheryl Arena Molennor

Bubble coral originates from the reefs of the Indo-Pacific, Anilao, Philippines.
© Matthew Meier
With attitude, a weaver skillfully builds its intricate nest in Tanzania. © Michael Cohen

The Painted Desert encompasses 93,500 acres. Shown here among stratified rock layers are sandstone potholes, Arizona. © Shane McDermott
The secretary bird hunts its prey on foot. This one in Kruger National Park, South Africa, displays distinct black feathers behind its head.

© John Ippolito

It’s a rumpled feather day for this heron at Fort Desoto Park, Tierra Verde, Florida.

© Robert Bailey
A brown bear sheds water while fishing at the Katmai National Park and Preserve, Alaska.
© Robert Amoruso

A wet baboon shakes water from its fur in Laikipia Plains, Kenya.
© Sean Crane
While on the wing, a least tern feeds its hungry chick in southwest Florida.
© Lorraine Thomas

An African elephant comes ashore after crossing a river at Chobe National Park, Botswana.
© Carol Grenier
The grace of a running red fox is captured in a pan blur shot at Katmai National Park, Alaska.
© Jaymi Heimbuch

A red fox kit runs with its prey at Farmington Bay Wildlife Management Area, Utah.
© John Blumenkamp
A cheetah cub looks a little ruffled after feeding at the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park in southern Africa.
© John Ippolito

A wolf peers through the summer grass of Shelikoff Strait, Alaska.
© John Ippolito
Like a contortionist, this egret in Everglades National Park, Florida, goes fishing while in flight.

© Wayne Sanderson

This long-tailed weasel in Los Osos, California, has all four feet off the ground during a run.

© Tin-Man Lee
A western lowland gorilla holds its newborn close at the Zoo Atlanta in Georgia. (CAPT)  
© Eric Bowles

Hippo moms teach their babies to swim, Tanzania.  
© Michael Cohen
Adult and juvenile African elephants wade in the water at Tarangire National Park, Tanzania.

© David DesRochers

Mother and baby mountain gorilla take a rest at Volcanoes National Park, Rwanda.

© Dee Ann Pederson
Despite a rain shower, a frequent occurrence in Washington State, a bald eagle attempts to dry off.

© Ken Archer

Bighorn sheep get tangled up in horns during the rut at Bighorn Canyon, Montana.

© Sandra Zelasko
A northern saw-whet owl closes its eyes in Brunswick Canyon, Nevada.
© Diane McAllister

Gorillas are highly intelligent, and a few captive ones have been taught sign language, Volcanoes National Park, Rwanda.
© Doug Steakley
A pair of red foxes spar at Denali National Park, Alaska.
© Dee Ann Pederson

Head to head, both male and female musk oxen have long, curved horns. Alaska.
© Tin-Man Lee
African elephants are highly intelligent. They learn, grieve, use tools, feel compassion and more, Serengeti National Park, Tanzania.
© Dee Ann Pederson

A bald eagle has a meal in the Chilkat Valley, Chilkat Eagle Preserve, Alaska.
© Matthew Studebaker
A mother walrus calms a young pup in stormy seas, Spitsbergen Island, Svalbard, Norway.  
© James Heupel

Canada Geese take flight over Lake San Antonio, California.  
© Donald Quintana
Red fox kits seem to enjoy being with Papa Fox in Lansing, New York.
© Melissa Groo

In a snowstorm at Antelope Island State Park, Utah, a coyote stalks pronghorn antelope.
© Amy Marques
The graceful cheetah in Botswana can run as fast as 75mph, but agility enables it to catch prey. (PHIL) © Sheila Haddad

A leopard in Kruger National Park, South Africa, stops for a drink. © Shirley Kleppe
American avocets briefly cross bills after mating at Bowdoin Lake, Montana. © Melissa Groo

Zebras come through a dust storm, Amboseli, Kenya. © Piper Mackay
“Three Amigos,” wild turkeys, travel down the road at the Kissimmee Prairie Preserve, Florida.
© Christina Evans

Spotted hyenas fight for a zebra morsel in Tanzania.
© Michael Cohen
A common loon adult presents a fish to its young, West Newfield, Maine.
© Andy Nguyen

The common tern sometimes nests on a sandy beach. Here is an adult with a hatched chick, Long Island, New York.
© Joe Senzatimore
The tongue of the lesser long-nosed bat stretches to lap nectar of an agave bloom in Arizona.
© Kathy Adams Clark

A vervet monkey, which is mostly vegetarian, forages in the trees in the Serengeti, Tanzania.
© Jeff Nadler
The distinctive black face of a foraging vervet monkey stands out when photographed from above, Serengeti, Tanzania.
© Jeff Nadler

A black bear takes a nap in a tree, Anan Creek, Alaska.
© Betty Sederquist
Gentoo penguins are the fastest underwater swimming penguins, reaching speeds of 22mph, Falkland Islands.

© Michael Milicia

Charging through the water, a brown bear fishes at the Katmai National Park and Preserve, Alaska.

© Robert Amoruso
There are 24 waterfalls in Ricketts Glen State Park, Pennsylvania.

© John Sharpless

A moving sea at Jekyll Island, Georgia, surrounds a tree.

© Eric Bowles
A starry sky brightens the Bisti Wilderness, New Mexico.
© Keith Bauer

A male wood duck stretches its wings at the North Chagrin Reservation Nature Center in Ohio.
© Phyllis Burchett
California sea lions near La Jolla, California, come to shore to molt.
© Matthew Studebaker

A Japanese macaque appears deep in thought at the Jigokudani Monkey Park in Japan.
© George Grubb
Wildflowers catch the eye as a storm rolls into the Colockum Wildlife Area in Central Washington.

© Geoffrey Schmid

Great egrets feed their chicks at the Alligator Farm Rookery in St. Augustine, Florida.

© Rona Schwarz
A great blue heron takes building materials to its nest at Lake Murray, San Diego, California.

© Michael Qualls

Is the smaller bill of the coronet any challenge to the sword-billed hummingbird in Guango Lodge, Ecuador?

© Nate Chappell
Week-old American oystercatcher chicks learn from mom at Nickerson Beach, Lido Beach, New York.
© Christopher Ciccone

This black skimmer family cuddles in its saucer-shaped scrape at Indian Rocks Beach, Florida.
© Barbara Bowen
An adult American oystercatcher rests in the sand at St. Petersburg, Florida.
© Cheryl Arena Molennor

Common loons are agile divers who can catch a fish without so much as a splash, West Newfield, Maine.
© Andy Nguyen
A jaguar preys on a caiman in Pantanal, Brazil.
© Daniel J. Cox

An osprey holds onto its meal of Gulf flounder while in flight at Fort Desoto, Tierra Verde, Florida.
© Wayne Sanderson
Bison fight in the snow at Blacktail Lakes, Yellowstone National Park.
© Becca Wood

Denali National Park and Preserve in Alaska is habitat for these two young Dall sheep rams.
© John Ippolito
A pied kingfisher in Chobe National Park, Botswana, successfully catches a fish.

© Patrick Pevey

A Kara woman poses along the Omo River, Omo Valley, Ethiopia.

© Piper Mackay
Spring comes to Yakso Falls in the Umpqua National Forest in Oregon.
© Monte Trumbull

Visitors can use the rock outcropping to walk behind the Seljalandsfoss Waterfall in Iceland.
© Phyllis Burchett
A great egret rests on the back of a feeding sambar fawn at Ranthambore National Park, India.
© Carl Zanoni

A female American kestrel perches on mullein in Adams County, Colorado.
© Fi Rust
It was such a pleasure to serve as one of the judges for NANPA's Showcase competition this year. I'm always astounded at the amazing quality and diversity of the images that find their way to NANPA, and I congratulate all who participated for the commitment you've made to capture our natural beauty in all its many faces. While viewing so many of these images, I was struck by the deep level of skill that so many of you showed. It's not so easy in this day and age to make your way to undisturbed areas that still harbor our indigenous species in their natural habitat. Getting to remote destinations is costly, and with ever-increasing baggage restrictions, deciding which pieces of equipment to take is difficult. I travel quite a bit and I hear countless tales from many of the nature and travel photographers at my agency, DanitaDelimont.com, so I know the frustrations of whittling down the weight.

Ethical Field Practices

For this reason, we often find ourselves shooting closer to home. National parks and forests have always been a wonderful outlet for our photographic creativity, and with more and more preserves and wildlife habitats being designated, it's great to find our subjects in those areas as well. However, it's important to remember the critical nature of working in these natural habitats. As a park ranger early in my career, I was exposed to many sensitive issues. A life-long friend of mine served as an environmental specialist education ranger in both Yosemite and Grand Canyon for many years. He now trains park rangers on the sensitivity of the environment to human disturbances and how to deal with visitors to the parks. The reason is to put as little stress on the habitat as possible.

Nature photographers instinctively want to be off the beaten track, away from the constant traffic of regular visitors, so we face a big ethical dilemma. We want to capture those vistas and find the wildlife doing what they do naturally. The usual throng of visitors to wild areas often scares the wildlife away. They go deeper into more protected and private areas. Do we follow them? It's a tough call, because you feel in your heart you can get a different, maybe even a great, shot by just going over the hill or around the bend, forging your own path. Certainly, if it is prohibited, you cannot do it legally. But when you have special permission or there are fewer or no restrictions, you still have an obligation to respect the plants and terrain and try to trample them as little as possible. Respect the wildlife as well. There's a reason they move to more remote areas—they need to forage, nest and raise their young where they will be undisturbed, ensuring them a better opportunity for survival.

Truth in Captioning

Above all, no matter where you go, please be accurate and honest with your captioning and keywords. In addition to naming the general location, include names of nearby trails or landmarks. Many clients look for shots taken from specific areas within a location, often by trail name or nearest highway. Some of the magazines that do this include Backpacker and Sierra and the AAA publications.

Many photographers have made the decision to shoot at game farms, and this is an important distinction for many clients. For whatever the reason you may have gone this route, keep in mind that there are dedicated wildlife photographers who have spent years in the field documenting these animals in their natural habitats, usually behind blinds or being as unobtrusive as possible so as not to disturb them in any way. These are the images that natural history publications and textbook publishers demand. It's
inaccurate and unethical to show animals “in the wild” when they are actually set up for photographic opportunities. Game farm animals are “captive.”

There are certainly clients who are looking for a great shot of an animal and feel no need to use a wild shot as opposed to a captive one. Calendars and greeting cards clients are good examples, as is an advertising campaign for financial services. It’s ethically important, however, to distinguish your images as “captive” or “game farm” shots, both in the captions and in the keywords. I know many photographers shy away from this, thinking they can get their images included if they just don’t mention it in the captions. The truth is, agents in the know can recognize game farm images easily. We see these set-up shots and individual animals over time from various contributors so we recognize certain bears, cougars, raccoons, and more. We even know some of their names! Some buyers recognize them too, and those looking for wild shots will avoid them. We know that many serious amateurs take the game farm route, and there’s no question that some of the photos are wonderful. Don’t hurt your reputation by avoiding the use of “captive” and/or “game farm” in your keywords and captions. The distinction needs to be made, in the end, the client can make an informed decision.

When an agency makes a submission to a client, we often have to avoid a specific type of image because we know it’s inappropriate. Captive vs. wild is just one example. Another example is a photo illustration (PHIL), which indicates assembly of an image from two or more images or parts, or removal of significant parts, by computer, darkroom or other means. Some clients demand verification of an image in question before going to print. If we have the correct and complete information in the caption, then we know.

Modifications that are acceptable include removing scratches and dust or repairing damage to images and even making slight alterations previously (pre-digital) made in the darkroom.

**NANPA’s Positions**

NANPA has position papers on Ethical Field Practices and Truth in Captioning. nanpa.org/positions_overview.php, is where you will also find a paper on Public Land Access and an Environmental Statement.

Although NANPA does not have a position paper on game farms, the board of directors, in its February 2010 meeting, decided that NANPA would no longer accept advertising for game farms nor would it rent the NANPA list of members to game farms.

A rule in the Showcase submissions states, “Photographs of animals in the wild are favored over those in controlled conditions. Images of game farm animals are not accepted.” The rule goes on to say that entries must indicate wild or captive and photo illustration if the image warrants.

**Ethics in Agency Representation**

When seeking an agency for representation, be sure to know what is expected before you make any decisions. Over the years, I’ve found that photographers are always excited to be represented but often the glory wears off after they see how much work is involved in submitting digital images. I’ve seen seasoned pros drop out of the business because they didn’t want to deal with all the image processing, color correcting, cleaning, captioning and keywording.

Few amateurs realize the importance of these processes. When an agency receives a submission that shows poorly captioned and keyworded images, coupled with dust spots everywhere, we wonder if it’s going to be worth it to train the photographer. Once you’ve made an agreement with an agency, it’s your duty to be committed to cleaning your images appropriately and spending whatever time it takes to caption and keyword them accurately. Get some help if you need it and please read the submission guidelines. Keep in mind that your images will never be found if they aren’t keyworded appropriately. Also, if you’re getting up there in age, hire someone with younger eyes to blow up your images and remove
any and all dust spots. Clean your sensors regularly too.

Above all, when an agent makes a commitment to you, you have an obligation to submit fresh images on an ongoing basis. Decide before you sign the contract that you are willing to go that extra mile to do it right. Otherwise, you’re wasting everyone’s time and energy, and none of us want that kind of relationship. If you need an assistant, hire one who will ask the right questions and do it right. You will need to work closely with the assistant, because you are the only one who can offer up accurate captions. You are the only one who really knows the buzzwords that go along with a destination, wildlife species or natural area, because you were there. Always include the Latin names with any species and always include the other common names associated with an area or species.

Don’t Give It Away

Many of our NANPA members are serious hobbyists who love getting away from their daily work and/or are retired. Many of you have the time and means to travel the world, buy the equipment and take photo workshops from seasoned pros. These experiences are no doubt fulfilling and teach you techniques and skills in the field that you could never learn on your own. Just remember, these pros are sharing their innermost secrets with you. They are offering up these photo tours not only as a way to share their knowledge but also as another income stream so they can continue in a business that they love. With the ever-increasing glut of photography today, it’s important not to give your images away. You decrease the value that our pros bring to the table if you offer up your photos for free just to get published. Surely, we all love being published, but make it worth something.

To make a living as a professional photographer is tougher than ever, and when the pro is competing with someone who took his/her photo tour and offers up similar images for free, it’s disheartening to say the least. What are the ethics of that? I’d say, enjoy your photo enthusiasm. Share it with your friends and family, as well as your industry colleagues. But please don’t offer your images to the world on the internet for free. Just because you can doesn’t mean you should.

It’s been an honor to be associated with NANPA all these years and I look forward to seeing many more exceptional images from our members in years to come. We have so many colleagues who continue to be involved on many levels, for which we can all be grateful. Enjoy Expressions. Congratulations to all the winners.

Danita Delimont is CEO of Danita Delimont Stock Photography, http://www.danitadelimont.com, which represents more than 300 globally based travel and nature photographers. She’s known to travel anywhere, anytime she’s not working on a deadline.
Tier Three
A warm African sunset silhouettes two elephants in Chobe National Park, Botswana.
© Patrick Pevey

The rising sun begins to burn off the fog at Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming.
© Lewis Kemper

Lightning over the Milky Way creates drama in the sky above Yankeetown, Florida.
© Maureen Allen
A side-striped chameleon rests on a flower at the Ngorongoro Crater in Tanzania.
© Ralph Bendjebar

A muted sunrise backlights a dragonfly at Everglades National Park, Florida.
© Kevin Barry

A female green hermit hummingbird sips nectar from a flower in Costa Rica.
© Carl Zanoni
Mallards minimize heat loss by standing on one leg, Aurora, Colorado.
© Angela McCain

A crocodile enters a river in the Serengeti, Tanzania.
© Doug Steakley

A paradise shelduck chick swims the calm waters in Twizel, an alpine village in New Zealand.
© William Pohley
A sunflower blossom unfolds in Connecticut.
(PHIL)
 © Marion Faria

Moeraki boulders are large spherical boulders found along the Otaga Coast, New Zealand.
 © Wendy McIntosh

Sunset at Rincon del Socorro, Ibera Marshes, Argentina, lights up the profile of a pampas fox.
 © Nate Chappell
Red fox kits joyfully greet Papa Fox in Lansing, New York. © Melissa Groo

While adult black-crowned night herons are light gray, immatures are brown with large white spots on the wings, Heislerville Wildlife Management Area, New Jersey. © Geoff Coe

A muskox family feeds on grasses, lichens, mosses and more, Nome, Alaska. © Grace Scalzo
A mandarin duck appears mesmerized by its reflection in Wheat Ridge, Colorado. © Richard Seeley

A Mexican ground squirrel in McCook, Texas, stops for a drink. © Nancy Elwood

A coastal brown bear is reflected in Lake Clark National Park, Alaska. © Jim Brown
Burrfish are found in Bunaken, Indonesia.
© Kelly Walkotten

The elegant snowy egret develops long, wispy feathers on its back, neck and head during breeding season. Saint Augustine, Florida.
© Adams Serra

Portrait of a bison in winter at Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming.
© Sandra Zelasko
A fungi grows among the grass in Pitt County, North Carolina.

© Anne Grimes

Looking up from Slot Canyon in Arizona is a touch of blue. (PHIL)

© John Chaney

Iceland’s Rhyolite Mountains, Landmannalaugar, were formed by centuries of volcanic activity.

© Dee Ann Pederson
A brown bear waits for dinner at Brooks Falls, Katmai, Alaska.  
© Andrew Lerman

A crocodile moves through rough waters in the Serengeti, Tanzania.  
© Jeff Nadler

Shay’s Run plunges through autumn colors at Blackwater Falls State Park, West Virginia. (PHIL)  
© David Johnston
The colorful spine-cheeked anemonefish can't hide its bright red color in the bubble-tipped anemone, Indonesia.

© Steve Gould

The soulful eyes of the Galapagos sea lion stand out in this underwater motion blur shot near Isabella Island.

© Sean Crane

The ethereal *Chromodoris kuniei* nudibranch underwater at Komodo National Marine Park, Indonesia.

© Steve Gould
Portrait of an Alaskan brown bear at the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary, Alaska.
© Sandra Zelasko

A black skimmer and its mini-me take a siesta on Madeira Beach, Florida.
© Marina Scarr

While it takes a drink, a curious baboon stares at the camera at Mt. Meru, Tanzania.
© Jeff Nadler
The “Road Less Traveled,” in Marin Headlands, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, California. (PHIL) © Harold Davis

Spire Cove, located within the Kenai Fjords National Park, Alaska, is known for its spires and abundant birds. © John Chaney

A great blue heron couple create a nest in the Viera Wetlands, Viera, Florida. © Debbie Tubridy
Meerkats are social and live in colonies of 20 or more siblings or offspring of the alpha pair, Makgadikgadi Pan, Botswana.
© Sean Crane

Sandhill cranes stretch their wings, bow, pump their heads, leap and dance as part of their courtship. Central Florida.
© Kevin Sunderland

A burrowing owl feeds on a caterpillar, Plantation, Florida.
© Michael Cohen
This great blue heron is about to enjoy its catch at Fort Desoto Park, Tierra Verde, Florida.  
© Robert Bailey

At the Katmai National Park and Preserve, Alaska, a brown bear catches a salmon.  
© Robert Amoruso

A malachite kingfisher poses with its catch at the Chobe National Park, Botswana.  
© Carol Grenier
In a blur, a spotted hyena dashes through a flooded field in Linyanti Concession, Botswana.

© Sean Crane

Snowy egrets take flight at dawn at Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, Florida.

© Kevin Barry

A duck’s eye view of Porters Creek, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Tennessee

© Lance Warley
Wood chips fly as a red-bellied woodpecker builds a nest on Long Island, New York.
© Thomas Pfeifer

Winter Storm Draco hit the Great Lakes in 2013. Here, waves slam the St. Joseph Lighthouse on Lake Michigan.
© Stacy Niedzwiecki

A female waterbuck makes a big splash as it crosses a river at Chobe National Park, Botswana.
© Carol Grenier
The long-eared owl roosts in trees during the day. At night, it hunts in open areas. Amhurst Island, Canada.
© Matthew Studebaker

A black bear cub watches its mom scratching her back, Yellowstone National Park.
© Ken Archer

Lionesses prey on a young impala in Maasai, Mara National Reserve, Kenya.
© Piper Mackay
Roseate spoonbills flirt during courtship in High Island, Texas.
© Judith Malloch

Greater prairie-chickens fight in Wray, Colorado.
© Fi Rust

Great egrets have an airborne conflict in Titusville, Florida.
© Michael Cohen
One swallow-tailed kite hands off a frog to another in St. Petersburg, Florida. © Marina Scarr

Do a doubletake and it still looks like a two-headed red-headed woodpecker in Dade City, Florida. © Marina Scarr

A pair of swallow-tailed kites exchange a lizard in St. Petersburg, Florida. © Cheryl Arena Moleonnor
A pair of giraffes neck at Lowry Park Zoo, Tampa, Florida.  
(CAPT)  
© Cheryl Arena Molennor

A confusion of California newts vie for a mate in Cambria,  
California.  
© Donald Quintana

Burrowing owls forage during the day (for insects) and  
night (for mammals). Cape Coral, Florida.  
© Adams Serra
We’re eye-level with a lioness in Samburu, Kenya. © Susan McConnell

Polar bear cubs are usually weaned after a couple of years, Seal River, Hudson Bay, Canada. © Carl Zanoni

Wolves seek refuge after a conflict in Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming. © Sandra Zelasko
One of the largest monkeys, this young chacma baboon could grow to a length of 45 inches plus a 33-inch-long tail, Chobe National Park, Botswana.

© Patrick Pevey

Leopards can’t change their spots, but they have color variations. This one in Tanzania has the typical black and gold spots.

© Michael Cohen

A curious rockhopper penguin in the Falkland Islands strays away from the colony.

© Michael Milicia
Brown bears express emotions through grunts, moans and growls, Lake Clark National Park, Alaska. © Lewis Kemper

A Hanuman langur with baby holding on tight maneuvers the trees at India’s Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve. © Dee Ann Pederson

A mother gorilla holds her baby in Rwanda. © Piper Mackay
As though dancing, a female painted bunting bathes in McCook, Texas.
© Nancy Elwood

A roseate spoonbill splashes enthusiastically at Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge in Florida.
© Geoff Coe

An elegant tern does the twist as it shakes off water in Southern California.
© Andy Nguyen
A long, hooked bill holds the prey of a double-crested cormorant in breeding plumage at Morro Bay, California. © Alice Cahill

Weasels feed mostly on mouselike rodents. This one with prey is in Yellowstone National Park. © John Blumenkamp

A spider claims its feast in Troy, Michigan. © Erika Atherton
Wildebeests retreat from the Mara River, Maasai Mara National Reserve, Kenya.  
© Annie Katz

Cup flowers bring color to Mexican feather grass in the San Antonio, Texas, Botanical Garden. (CAPT)  
© Camille Lamoureux

This red-tailed hawk in Texas has its work cut out for it since Mexican free-tailed bats can fly up to 60 mph.  
© Al Perry
Lilac-breasted rollers at Tarangire National Park in Tanzania often rest on the treetops where they can spot prey.

© Ralph Bendjebar

Wings stretched, a lilac-breasted roller takes off, Africa Farm Ondekarema, Namibia.

© Nate Chappell

The plumage of the lilac-breasted roller is attention-grabbing as the bird takes flight in Kruger National Park, South Africa.

© George Cathcart
A parrot snake glides along a red ginger flower at The Lodge, Pico Bonito, Honduras.

© Fi Rust

Graceful ferns at home in Los Amigos Conservation Concession, Peru.

© Gabby Salazar

Due to illegal collecting, the spiral aloe is threatened, San Francisco Botanical Garden, California. (CAPT)

© Richard Perkins
A bald eagle snatches its breakfast from the Mississippi River, Iowa border.
© Mark Theriot

A black skimmer returns to its nest with a needlefish at Nickerson Beach, Lido Beach, New York.
© Joe Senzatimore

Greater roadrunners eat snakes and scorpions; this bouquet may have gotten in the way, Refugio County, Texas.
© Stephen Fisher
Adult and nymph milkweed bugs feed on milkweed plant juices and seeds, Pitt County, North Carolina.

© Anne Grimes

A West Virginia bog hosts this spagnum moss at Blackwater Falls State Park.

© Tom Haxby

Colors abound at the Sunken Garden, Butchart Gardens, Victoria, British Columbia.

© Charles Needle
The catch of the day turns out to be a mouthful for a black skimmer chick at Indian Shores, Florida.
© David Pugsley

This little brown bear cub feeds on a great big salmon at Anan Creek, Alaska.
© Betty Sederquist

A coastal brown bear mom nurses her cub at Lake Clark National Park, Alaska.
© Lewis Kemper
The great horned owl, this one in Edinburg, Texas, has a deadly grip that can sever the spines of large prey.
© Angela McCain

Cicada killer wasps are active in July and August when they attack, sting and paralyze cicadas to feed their larvae. Chanhassen, Minnesota.
© Bill Johnson

A baby sloth hangs in the canopy in Costa Rica.
© Cheryl Arena Molennor
A northern ficker tends to its young at Logan Lake, British Columbia.
© William Pohley

A roseate spoonbill watches over its nestlings at the St. Augustine Alligator Farm, Florida.
© Deanne Cunningham

An American kestrel feeds a grasshopper to its chicks, Sublette County, Wyoming.
© Elizabeth Boehm
Wings blur as a northern hawk owl in Duluth, Minnesota, takes flight. 
© Andy Nguyen

The orange-finned anemonefish inhabits reef passages and slopes. Great Barrier Reef, Australia.
© Kelly Walkotten

Day breaks at North Clear Creek Falls, Lake City, Colorado. 
© Monte Trumbull
A common tern chick begs for food on Long Island, New York.

© Joe Senzatimore

Looking like an angel, a baby least tern spreads its wings at Treasure Island, Florida.

© Troy Lim

A least tern offers food to a hungry chick in southwest Florida.

© Lorraine Thomas
Sandhill cranes warm up before taking flight at Cosumnes River Preserve, Delta region, California.
© Gail Parris

Parakeets gather at clay licks to feed off the minerals in the clay, Yasuni National Park, Ecuador.
© Matthew Scott

Young and adult elephants make up this herd in Amboseli National Park, Kenya.
© Piper Mackay
A male snowy owl comes in for a landing in Long Island, New York.
© Thomas Pfeifer

Fishing acrobatics are performed by a Caspian tern in the Viera Wetlands, Florida.
© Ursula Dubrick

Ring-billed gulls, like this one in Conneaut, Ohio, are strong and graceful flyers which can race at 40mph and even snatch food from the air.
© Melissa Groo
Aurora shines bright at Abisko Canyon Bridge in Abisko, Sweden.

© Lance Warley

A female green honeycreeper perches on a branch in La Virgen, Costa Rica.

© John Eppler

The green lynx spider, shown here on a hibiscus in Pitt County, North Carolina, reaches almost an inch in length.

© Anne Grimes
Black skimmer parents feed their chick, west coast of Florida.
© Kevin Sunderland

A bald eagle drops its catch onto its nest, Tierra Verde, Florida.
© Amy Marques

An Arctic tern feeds an insect to its young in Anchorage Wetlands, Alaska.
© Jim Brown
A hippo wears a hat of vegetation as it comes to the surface of a marsh at Maasai Mara National Reserve, Kenya.

© Piper Mackay

A red fox kit in Farmington Bay Wildlife Management Area, Utah, surveys its surroundings.

© John Blumenkamp

Gorillas’ knuckles are thick and strong to support their weight as they walk on their knuckles, Volcanoes National Park, Rwanda.

© Doug Steakley
Tree frogs spend most of their lives in trees, Rio Napo, Ecuador.
© Matthew Scott

Red-necked grebes are vocal during breeding season, Nome, Alaska.
© Grace Scalzo

Booted rackettails spar at Sachatamia Lodge, Mindo, Ecuador.
© Nate Chappell
White pelicans are reflected in the waters of Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, Florida. © Andy Nguyen

Attention of these polar bears is in one direction—all eyes look right, Chukchi Sea, Arctic Ocean. © Louis Newman

Love is in the air at Fort Desoto Park, Tierra Verde, Florida. © Robert Bailey
Moose are solitary, yet mother and calf form strong bonds, Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado.
© Fi Rust

A mother gorilla holds her baby at Volcanoes National Park, Rwanda.
© Doug Steakley

Lion cubs nuzzle with a lioness in Loisaba, Kenya.
© Susan McConnell
A northern harrier flies low while hunting in Farmington Bay Wildlife Management Area, Utah.  
© John Blumenkamp

Polar bears play in the snow in Kaktovic, Alaska.  
© Michael Cohen

The ghostly pale barn owl glides over Farmington Bay Wildlife Management Area, Utah.  
© John Blumenkamp
A pair of sibling great horned owlets are ready to fledge at Pawnee National Grassland, Colorado.
© Sandra Zelasko

Something ruffled the feathers of this upland sandpiper at the Jordan River Valley near Alba, Michigan.
© Stacy Niedzwiecki

Cattle egrets hunker down in the rain, Kissimmee, Florida.
© Andy Nguyen
A wood duck perches on a turtle in Marion County, Illinois.  
© Richard Day

Canada goslings stay close to their mom in Silverthorne, Colorado.  
© Richard Seeley

Babysitting may not be all fun and games for this lioness in Tanzania.  
© Michael Cohen
A moss-covered tree is found among the ferns at Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park, California. © Mike Walker

Peregrine falcons sit on high perches ready to swoop down on prey, northern Colorado. (CAPT) © Angela McCain

A black and yellow garden spider shares a meal in Huntley Meadows Park, Fairfax County, Virginia. (PHIL) © Dan Jenkins
A great horned owlet takes a rest after its first day of flight, Englewood, Florida. © Marina Scarr

A blue heron hunts on a spring morning on the Chassahowitzka River, Homosassa Spring, Florida. © Tom Dwyer

A coastal brown bear cub at Lake Clark National Park, Alaska, finds a better view. © Lewis Kemper
Reddish egrets are active foragers, running, jumping and spinning for their prey, San Antonio Bay Rookery, Texas. © Angela McCain

Wildflowers grace Rowena Crest at sunset, Oregon. © Michel Hersen

Thingvellir National Park, Iceland, is part of a fissure zone as it is situated on tectonic plates. © Phyllis Burchett
Snow monkey young, like this one in Jigokudani, Japan, are carried by their moms for up to a year after birth.
© Diane McAllister

Snow pillows surround a coyote in Yellowstone National Park in winter.
© Cindy Goeddel

Vasternorrlands is a county in Sweden where this gothic winter scene was photographed.
© Alexander Vershinin
Showcase 2014: What the Images Reveal
by Sharon Cohen-Powers

The Showcase competition has become somewhat of an annual reflection of the current state of nature photography. It not only displays the capabilities of digital capture, but it also shows where NANPA photographers go to photograph their subjects and what they find of interest.

In last year’s Showcase 2013, bears and whales were dominant. They appeared in various poses, most noticeably caught in mid-action. Perhaps that was the bellwether of what occurred this year—entries in Showcase 2014 contained stop-action photography, with a twist. Many of the images showed scenes that would be otherwise invisible to the naked eye...such precise and, often, surprising moments that the resulting image might even have surprised its maker. Photography has now reached the point that it can pinpoint a nanosecond that a human eye cannot possibly see and might not even know is occurring!

As nature photography enthusiasts, we cannot predict if an image was meant to be. Was it luck or amazing planning? Was it the result of a photographer keeping his or her finger on the button for several seconds and then choosing one of dozens, or even hundreds, of frames that resulted?

Today’s photograph is clearly in transition between video and still. Will we eventually forego all still photography and just choose a frame from a video for display? With each new advance in digital photography, we get closer to that moment. Will there come a day when we set up a camera, program it to take a video for the next few hours, and then carefully select the best of the resulting photos? (Hey, aren’t we there already?) Will photo editing become more important than the actual photography? (Think of what is done in the digital darkroom.) Has not having to pay for film freed the photographer from even having to be there to take the shot? Will the new national pastime transition from armchair traveler to armchair photographer?

We were not there when these incredible Showcase images were taken. We do not know nor is it our job to surmise if it was accidental to catch the butterfly approaching the hummingbird or to see that moment the squirrel almost woke up a sleeping owl. How about that time when the lion ran aside the zebra it was intent on killing? The camera caught that moment when the lioness was all but assured of her success. It was astounding that the two enemies seemed to be running as one—their outstretched bodies and tails almost perfectly parallel to one another (and taken by a photographer whose name appropriately is Karen Hunt).

Speaking of the hunt, there was another theme that was prevalent in the subject matter of the images entered for competition—mating and kill shots, two sides of the same coin. Are photographers more attracted to the down and dirty and
moving away from the singsong of nature photography? This year they definitely were, or, at least, those were the images they thought worthy of an award.

The competition was not without its elegant shots. Witness the beautiful heron image by Andy Nguyen or the underwater radiance of the corals by Barry Brown. There were scenes taken in wintry locations that must have wreaked havoc on both the photographer and the equipment. There were many instances of magic light, tender moments, sweeping vistas and drama that translated from a photographer’s vision into pixels.

This year, we asked the photographers to provide keywords for their images. This gave a great snapshot of what the photographers were shooting. Of the almost 2,500 images submitted, 33 percent were categorized as birds, 29 percent scenic, and 22 percent mammals, which does not account for some overlap. Some images may have been keyworded as both mammal and scenic, but this still does give a fair indication of the images submitted. Interestingly, however; the top 250 images did not reflect this same percentage: 40 percent were birds, 34 percent were mammals, and only 14 percent were scenics. Does this mean that the landscapes were of a lower quality, or did the judges react more favorably to action than the stillness of a scenic? It’s hard to say since two images that appeared in the top ten were landscapes. Will entry and judging categories in future competitions level the playing field for those less likely to be recognized?

Where did our winners photograph? This was revealing as well. Not much has changed over the last few years. About 33 percent of the winning images were taken in either Florida or Africa. There were multiple locations in Africa, but Botswana and Tanzania seemed to be the more popular countries. Alaska was represented in about 10 percent of the winners, while California, Colorado, New York and Texas each had about 5 percent. Aside from Africa, the top locations out of the United States were Iceland, Ecuador, Costa Rica and Canada with about 2 percent each.

Based solely on this year’s competition, if you want to take a winning image, you should photograph in one of the most popular locations, Florida, Africa or Alaska, and produce an image that no one else has seen before. A fascinating paradox.

Sharon Cohen-Powers is a past-president of NANPA. She currently serves as co-editor of NANPA’s eNews, web editor of the Photographic Society of America (www.psa-photo.org) and webmaster of Hidden Treasure Tours, Inc. (www.hiddentreasuretours.com) and several other websites.
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