expressions

2016

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“Thanks for an awesome and amazing week and for sharing your terrific knowledge and experience with us. Your expert photography knowledge helped me to grow and be a better photographer. Your birding and nature skills have inspired me! Your passion for your work is contagious!” — Audrey F., NY

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NANPA
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Expressions, NANPA Showcase 2016
Editor: Nicoletta Barrie
Creative Director: Sharon Cohen-Powers

Showcase Team:
Wendy Shattil (Director), Nicoletta Barrie, Sharon Cohen-Powers, John Lock

Special thanks to: Susan Day, Margaret Gaines, Bill Jaynes, John Nuhn


We’re always trying to change things up in the Showcase competition. Last year, we initiated categories for the first time, and this year we combined two categories into one (Macro, Micro and All Other Wildlife) and added a new category (Altered Reality). Check out the artistic creations our members submitted in Altered Reality. These images represent refreshing points of view that are fun to look at but not as crazy as we thought they might be. The new category brought some of our NANPA artists out of the woodwork and we were glad to see them!

To keep costs down, we added advertising to this year’s Expressions. Please check out the ads on the inside covers and in the back of the book. In all but the print versions, these ads are interactive. Click them and you will be taken to the advertisers’ websites. Please support them as they have supported NANPA with their advertising.

Just as impressive as the images in Expressions 2016 is the excellent writing. We are fortunate to have contributions by environmental writer Ted Williams, esteemed landscape photographer William Neill and long-time picture editor John Nuhn as well as Expressions creative director Sharon Cohen-Powers. Williams writes on conservation by photography; Neill on taking your photographic work to the next level; Nuhn on setting up a searchable image collection from your image files; and creative director Sharon Cohen-Powers uses her insightful skills to once again summarize the competition entries in “You Gotta Laugh.”

—Niki Barrie, editor and Sharon Cohen-Powers, creative director

INSIDE EXPRESSIONS
Approximately 2,600 images were submitted to the Showcase competition from some 275 NANPA members, and 250 images were selected for this book. This year’s judges were William Neill, John Nuhn, and Joe and Mary Ann McDonald. There were two top prizes in each of five categories (Best of Show and First Runner-Up) and five Judge’s Choice awards.

In addition to appearing in Expressions, all 250 of the selected images will be on the NANPA website for a year. Top-scoring images are featured as the Image of the Day on NANPA’s website Home page.

Expressions is divided into five categories from the competition: Mammals, Birds, Scapes, Altered Reality, and Macro, Micro and All Other Wildlife. Within each of these sections, we begin with the Best of Show followed by First Runner-Up and Judge’s Choice.

Author Bios

Ted Williams is a freelance environmental writer who is regularly featured in publications such as The Nature Conservancy’s Cool Green Science, Yale Environment 360 and Fly Rod & Reel.

Sharon Cohen-Powers has been a photo professional for more than 30 years. She is the past owner of The Wildlife Collection stock photo agency and was the director of operations for AGPix for six years. She currently serves as webmaster of the NANPA Foundation’s board of trustees and is chair of NANPA’s History Committee. A charter affiliate member of the International League of Conservation Photographers and past chapter president of the American Society of Picture Professionals, Sharon Cohen-Powers has been the co-editor of eNews as well as the creative director of NANPA’s e-publication, eCurrents and Ripples since their inception. Sharon Cohen-Powers uses her insightful skills to once again summarize the competition entries in “You Gotta Laugh.”

John Nuhn is the former long-time photo director of National Wildlife magazine and photo editor of its now-closed sister publication, International Wildlife. A self-taught photographer, he is a member of NANPA’s founding board of directors and a past president. He currently serves on the NANPA Foundation’s board of trustees and is chair of NANPA’s History Committee. A charter affiliate member of the International League of Conservation Photographers and past chapter president of the American Society of Picture Professionals.

William Neill, a resident of the Yosemite National Park area since 1977, is a landscape photographer concerned with conveying the deep, spiritual beauty he sees and feels in nature. For info on his books, posters and workshops, and to sign up for his newsletter updates, visit www.WilliamNeill.com. Check out Neill’s new ebook, Antarctic Dreams, at http://www.william-Neill.com/store/ebooks/Antarctic-dreams/index.html.

INSIDE EXPRESSIONS

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Cover Photos: © James Heupel (front cover), © Ken Archer (back cover)

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Mammals
**Walrus Huddle**

"The sky had a thin layer of low-hanging clouds that provided a perfect tone of light in the late arctic summer afternoon," said Andrew Lerman. He was in a Zodiac with a guide and a handful of other photographers in the southeast fjords near Svalbard, Norway, this past June. Their driver patiently maneuvered the Zodiac so they would not disturb the walrus. Lerman wanted to tell a story with his images, and he asked the guide to get as close as possible without stressing the animals. He hung over the edge of the Zodiac, held his camera just above the water to accentuate the sweeping nature of the ice shelf and sky. Then the driver shut the engines down, and they drifted until finally, they were at the right place. "The walrus cooperated," said Lerman, "and I took three pictures in succession. It was exactly as I had hoped for."

Lerman used a Canon 1DX with Canon EF16-35mm L lens attached. The picture was shot at approximately 25mm, f/6.3, 1/3200 sec.

Andrew Lerman is a freelance nature, landscape and wildlife photographer who resides in Pleasantville, New York. He offers private one-on-one photography classes as well as small group workshops in various locations. His website is www.LermanPhoto.com.

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**Peter Pan’s Shadow**

A red fox performs a spectacular mousing jump in Cindy Goeddel’s photograph captured in Yellowstone National Park’s Hayden Valley in February 2015. "Red foxes use not only their acute sense of hearing to pinpoint the exact location of their prey under the snow," said Goeddel, "but they also employ the Earth’s magnetic field as a rangefinder to help plot their trajectory. This fox perfected its aim by using its plumy tail as a rudder." Goeddel’s camera was a Canon 1DX on a tripod with a Wimberley head. She used a Canon 500mm f/4 IS lens plus 1.4x TC III, 1/2000 sec., f/8, ISO 400.

Cindy Goeddel is a professional photographer and naturalist. She has a passion for creating images that convey the story and spirit of wildlife, while inspiring others to celebrate and protect the land we share. In 2005 Goeddel’s interest in photography began as a way of recording her love of wildlife. In 2009 she launched her professional career and started guiding and teaching photography in Yellowstone National Park. Her website is www.goeddelphotography.com.

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**First Runner-Up**

"Peter Pan’s Shadow" by Cindy Goeddel

© Andrew Lerman

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**Best in Show**

"Walrus Huddle" by Andrew Lerman

© Andrew Lerman

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© 2014 John Thornton

© Andrew Lerman
Arctic Fox
© Mark Hayward

This photograph is an excellent combination of capturing the behavior and character of the fox with a highly artistic contrast of monochrome and color. The textures of the fox’s fur are white and delicate while the colorful eyes and mouth rivet the viewer’s attention.—William Neill

I love this image. The eye is immediately caught by the fox’s tongue, its color contrasting with the whites and in a perfect position. Composition and sharpness are just right. It reminds me of something that wildlife artist Robert Bateman could have painted.—John Nuhn

We love images that are white on white or black on black, and this arctic fox captured against a white background is stunning. The subtlety of the animal, with the stark colors and edges of the eye, nose and tongue, make this a wonderful image and a great example of a Challenge Puzzle for all of you puzzle aficionados.—Joe and Mary Ann McDonald
SPIDER MONKEY DOES ACROBATICS FOR FRUIT, Osa Peninsula, Costa Rica. © Christine Crosby

VERREAUX’S DANCING SIFAKA, Berenty Reserve, Madagascar. © Diana Rebman

FOX AT THE TAIL END, Yellowstone National Park. © Cindy Goeddel

DALL PORPOISE, off the coast of southeastern Alaska. © Martin Pompfrey

BROWN BEAR SPRINTS TOWARD CAMERA, Katmai National Park, Alaska. © William Pohley

PORPOISE FEEDS ON MULLET, Flamingo, South Florida. © Michael Stern
FIGHTING WHITE HORSES OF THE CAMARGUE, Camargue region of France. © Jeff Vanuga

BACKLIT SPARRING BEARS, Churchill, Manitoba, Canada. © Diana Rebman

KODIAK BEARS, Uganik River, Kodiak, Alaska. © Diane McAllister

RED FOX, Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming. © Dawn Wilson

POLAR BEAR RIM LIGHT PORTRAIT, Svalbard, Norway. © John Trone

BABY ELEPHANT SILHOUETTE, Etosha National Park, Namibia. © Wendy Kaveney
Juvenile and Adult Grizzly Prints, Lake Clark National Park, Alaska. © Brenda Tharp

African Elephant Trunk, Chobe National Park, Botswana. © Carol Grenier

A Pygmy Sloth in a Mangrove Tree, Isla Escudo de Veraguas, Panama. © Kirsten Hines

A Pygmy Sloth in a Mangrove Tree, Isla Escudo de Veraguas, Panama. © Kirsten Hines

Arctic Fox Warms Its Nose, Nunavut Territory, Canada. © Mark Hayward

Thousands of Bats Gather Inside Cave, Sinaloa, Mexico. © Ernesto Sanchez-Proal

Brown Bear Feeds on Chum Salmon, McNeil River State Game Sanctuary, Alaska. © Sandra Zelasko

Running Long-Tailed Weasel, San Luis Obispo County, California. © Rick Derevan

Bear Claws, Katmai Coast, Alaska. © Steve Freno
MOTHER POLAR BEAR WITH CUB, Wapusk National Park, Canada. © Steven Barger

POLAR BEAR YOGA STRETCH, Kaktovik, Alaska. © Michael Cohen

DOMINANCE DISPLAY BETWEEN TWO POLAR BEARS, Kaktovik, Alaska. © Sue Petterson

Polar Play, Kaktovik, Alaska. © Shayne McGuire

A MALE POLAR BEAR MUTILATES A CUB, Baffin Region, Nunavut, Canada. © Greg Cook

RED FOXES SPARRING, Eastern Oklahoma. © Ron Day

MOUNTAIN GOATS ABOVE THE CLOUDS, Mount Evans, Colorado. © Sean Crane

SAN JOAQUIN KIT FOX MOTHER AND KIT, Kern County, California. © Rick Derevan

MASAI GIRAFFE AT SUNRISE, Masai Mara National Reserve, Kenya. © Don Getty

WARTHOGS SKIRMISH, Namibia. © Carol Grenier
**YOuNG eLePHANT**, David Sheldrick Trust, Kenya. (Capt) © Karen Schuenemann


**OXPECKER LANDING ON AFRICAN BUFFALO**, Masai Mara National Reserve, Kenya. © Phyllis Peterson

**IMPALA FACeS AN OXPECKER**, Serengeti, Tanzania. © Karen Hunt

**OxPeCKER DRESSING UP AFRICAN BuFFALO**, Masai Mara National Reserve, Kenya. © Phyllis Peterson

**BABY GORILLA WITH MOM**, Volcanoes National Park, Rwanda. © David Bates

**KISSING SNOW MONKEYS**, Jigokudani, Japan. © Steve Freno

**MOTHER AND BABY CHEETAH PLAY TAG**, Masai Mara National Reserve, Kenya. © Peter Balunek

**LION CuBS PLAYING**, Serengeti, Tanzania. © Karen Hunt

**RED FOX VIXEN DISPLAYING PASSIVE SUBMISSION**, Eastern Oklahoma. © Ron Day

**A SQUIRREL WITH A CURVED TWIG**, near Salton Sea, California. © Alice Cahill

**IMPALA FACeS AN OXPECKER**, Serengeti, Tanzania. © Karen Hunt

**A SQUIRREL WITH A CURVED TWIG** © Karen Schuenemann
MOTHER JAGUAR WITH CUBS, Pantanal, Brazil. © Diana Rebman

WILD HORSES WALK ALONG THE SHORE, Outer Banks, North Carolina. © Mark Buckler

WILDEBEEST CROSS THE MARA RIVER, Serengeti National Park, Tanzania. © James Heupel

A POLAR BEAR WATCHES A HERD OF WALRUS, Svalbard, Norway. © Christopher Gray

WALRUS AND PENGUINS ON THE BEACH, St. Andrews Bay, South Georgia. © Andrew Lerman

A LONG-TAILED WEASEL AND ITS PREY, Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado. © David Bates

JUMPING DOLPHIN, Sanibel Island, Florida. © Deanne Cunningham

CARIBOU, Denali National Park, Alaska. © Dee Ann Pederson
The task: Scan, provide metadata and organize for posterity tens of thousands of prints, negatives and transparencies. About half of the images are mine from school days to around 1998. The other half—images made by many family members—dates back to the late nineteenth century. Together, these images make up my family archive.

The challenge: Complete this project in a timely way while also working on other projects.

The reality: I’ve scanned and inserted metadata to a few hundred images thus far and found it time-consuming.

Every photographer has a system of storing images. For digital image files, it might be simply a folder of consecutive image numbers or perhaps dozens of folders listed by date, topic or location. For film, it may range from a closetful of disorganized slide boxes to a collection of sleeved images carefully filed by roll number, topic or location. When I started taking pictures, I filed them in sleeves by roll number. Regrettably, I didn’t keep the system going, and the dreaded boxes soon started accumulating.

If you have ever undertaken scanning your older images but gave up because of lack of time, have hope. Read on.

Scanners

The first thing I learned from the photographers and photo agents I interviewed for this article is that scanning is a continuing process as you go deeper into your files. Unfortunately, manufacturers of scanners have scaled back their slide models, and good pre-owned scanners are getting expensive. For example, Nikon Coolscans were popular in the 1990s but are no longer being made. Nancy Carrizales, owner of Animals Animals photo agency, bought a Nikon Coolscan 2000 for about $2,500 when it was new. “It recently needed repair,” she said, “but the worst part was that the dust and scratch removal built into the scanner didn’t work on Kodachrome.”

Don’t Scan Everything

Another lesson I learned was not to include every image in your collection. Back in the late 1990s, photographer Marie Read scanned about 1,000 of her best images using a Nikon Coolscan. She made the edit based on demand by her clients—images that sold well made the cut.

Similarly, before 2008, Art Wolfe’s staffers scanned only those images that were planned for books or other projects. Wolfe’s longtime staffer Deirdre Skillman added, “We are still doing this for any film images selected for projects.”

For photo agencies, the number of images needing to be digitized is huge. Carrizales started scanning her photographers’ film in 1998. She scanned the most requested images first and then continued to scan additional images to fulfill clients’ requests. She still does that today and, so far, she has nearly 500,000 images digitized.

Even after editing, a lot of images can remain. Should you outsource? Photographer Jerry Monkman did. Once he realized how much time he was spending scanning 5,000 of his best images, he hired friends and college students to do it. Kathy Adams Clark of KAC Productions hired a local retired photographer to digitize the best of her agency’s images. Starting in 2008, Art Wolfe’s staff has used an outside firm to scan images that were not planned for projects but could be marketed to clients.

Outsourcing can be expensive. Questions to ask yourself are how valuable is your time and do you trust someone else to handle your images carefully and scan them properly?
Specs, Optimization & Storage

Everyone I contacted saved the scanned files as tiffs, using Adobe RGB (1998) color profiles in RGB mode. Some used 8 bits per channel; others used 16 bits. File sizes could reach nearly 200 megabytes if the image was expected to be used large or was likely to be cropped.

Once film is scanned, everyone does some corrections and dust removal. This is time-consuming, but important. Joseph explained, “One of our major challenges was to get the optimal dynamic range—the difference between the lightest lights and the darkest darks—for a particular image.

Joel tended to slightly underexpose his slide film and the darkest darks—for a particular image. ‘I found I knew my subject matter better than the keywording companies,’ he said.

Skillman told me that she and her colleagues use Lightroom to keyword both the scans and the digital originals. However, a plug-in for Lightroom that was recommended for keywording did not initially work very well for their purposes. The plug-in included search words that automatically were added to the metadata when descriptions were typed, and often these search words were inaccurate. For instance, adding ‘perch’ to describe a bird’s behavior would trigger many words relating to the fish. When they discovered what was happening, staffers had to delete these incorrect keywords from the metadata of thousands of images. They ended up modifying the keyword list that the plug-in imported and continued to use it.

‘Agencies have their own standards for keywording, so part of the challenge was learning those and factoring that into our workflow,’ said Joseph about Joel Sartore’s images. Larry Minden, owner of Minden Pictures, agreed. ‘Having keywords that work for the many different agencies that we partner with is demanding.’

If you don’t plan to market your work extensively or if your intention is to keep it only for your archives, you won’t need a lot of keywords. Just add those that will help you find images later on.

Besides keywording, it helps to keep the image files organized. Marie Read organizes her files by topic and subtopic, usually species and location. Many use Lightroom to locate images within the database; Clark uses Media Pro.

Adding camera-made digital files to a collection is somewhat easier than adding scanned files. However, each image still needs a little optimizing and, more important, keywording. As with selecting film images for scanning, digital files must be edited.

Putting Your Collection Online

For putting your searchable collection online for marketing, many of the photographers I contacted spoke highly of Photoshelter. Skillman said Photoshelter’s templates are easy to use. Monkman has used Photoshelter to host his images for several years. “Their integration with Lightroom makes it very easy to get my images online. I also use their smartphone app to manage my online collection and send images to clients while I’m not in my studio,” he said.

Using Photoshelter, Alamy, AGPix or similar host sites are good ways to concentrate on preparing your images without the added issue of dealing with web problems. Clark moved her agency’s images to Photoshelter when Digital Railroad ceased business. She explained, “It leaves the design and maintenance of the backend to the professionals who know that side of the computer. My attention can be focused on getting the images ready for the database, which is more my expertise.”

If you intend to market your images and don’t have an agency, perhaps your own website can offer your background, philosophy, simple galleries, publication credits and anything else you wish to feature—but link to your collection on hosting sites. Carrizales advises, “A website is a great way to showcase your collection, but building it alone does not guarantee traffic. There are multiple options for broader distribution of your collection and linking to your own site, but always read the fine print.”

The Showcase Database

Since all of the images uploaded to NAPPA’s Showcase are stored in a database, I thought NAPA’s webmaster John Lock might have some comments on searchable collections. “The main problem with setting up a searchable image database is that you cannot predict what people will want to search for,” he told me. “Fixed categories can be inflexible, while free-form text is open for keyword stuffing to make images come up as often as possible.”

His solution for Showcase was a hybrid approach. Showcase entrants can select from a fixed number of categories to assign keywords to their images, but they also have some free-form text fields so they can provide more detail. These fields are limited to 50 characters, so entrants need to think about what they enter.

Lock also faces technical problems with uploaded images. A prime example is entrants who look at the pixel dimensions of images in their photo software instead of the file sizes of the compressed jpegs that are saved and entered. Entrants reduce the pixel sizes to meet the guidelines, which makes the images too small to be viewed online. The jpegs show the real file sizes.

Two other technical problems Lock encounters are images submitted in CMYK instead of RGB and images submitted using Adobe RGB color space instead of sRGB. While image collections should be stored in Adobe RGB, they need to be converted for proper online viewing.

“Storage remains a major hurdle as file sizes of camera-made originals get larger and more images are added to a collection.”

Takeaways

The major takeaway I have from these professionals confirms my original thoughts that there are no shortcuts and this project will take time. However, hearing their experiences and advice made me realize that the task is not impossible. The image collection will be extremely valuable to my family, present and future, and to my school’s archives. Another takeaway is that keywording is better done in-house. If I have to describe to someone else what is in an image, it’s easier just to add it to the metadata myself.

I also found it notable that none of these photographers store their collections exclusively on someone else’s hard drive, known popularly as the cloud. Cloud systems can be hacked, companies can close and internet services can go down. If you want to use a cloud system for convenience, don’t make it your only place for storage.

Finally, Joseph reminds us not to toss the original films. “Unlike Joel’s slides, hard drives can and do fail. Absent a catastrophe, we can be reasonably sure that a given image will be available if we need to rescans.” Sound advice. ☺
Macro, Micro and All Other Wildlife
Green Lynx on Lantana

© Hector Astorga

“We had one of the wettest springs on record here in South Texas, so the Santa Clara Ranch was full of blooming wild plants,” said Hector Astorga, who isolated the green lynx spider and positioned the Texas lantana to achieve a clean background. Unfortunately, the spider leaped from one flower to the next, and the wind made it difficult to freeze the motion. Astorga raised the ISO setting to obtain a fast enough shutter speed. “When the spider finally landed on a perfect bloom that I could isolate I was able to fire some shots.”

Astorga used a Nikon D810 with Nikon AF Micro-Nikkor 200mm f/4D IF-ED lens, 1/250 sec., f/40, ISO 3200.

A freelance nature photographer based in South Texas, Astorga’s love of nature and the outdoors began as a child in his native Honduras. His goal is to capture the beauty of the natural world. He is a professional guide for visiting photographers at the Santa Clara Ranch where he also serves as the ranch manager. He conducts photography workshops there and at other locations around the country. Astorga’s website is www.hectorastorga.com

Night Stalker

© Larry Lynch

Lying in the black mud along a dark river full of alligators and bloodthirsty mosquitoes did not deter Larry Lynch from getting this photo at Myakka River State Park near Sarasota, Florida, in December, 2014. His inspiration for photographing alligators at night came from Frans Lanting’s night images of Yacaré caiman crocodiles in Pantanal, Brazil, which he saw in National Geographic.

Lynch used a Nikon D7100 camera on a Gitzo tripod with a Wimberly head, Nikon 500mm f/4 VR lens, Nikon SB-800 flash set on rear curtain sync to illuminate the eyes, 1.6 sec, f/4, EV .67, ISO 400.

A Florida native, Lynch was born and raised in the Tampa Bay area. He became serious about photography about ten years ago after winning a few competitions and having some images published. He’s always had a love for nature and the great outdoors. His website is www.lynchphotos.com
Hoverfly on Chicory

© Bob Oswald

This photograph combines a clear, sharp view of the insect and of the flower it is visiting. The image makes use of the strong graphics and colors of the subjects concisely by filling the frame without distracting elements.—William Neill

All the right elements come together on this image—great composition, nice depth of field, wonderful contrasting colors. Usually one’s eye is drawn to the center of the bloom, but the hoverfly begs attention. This is art.—John Nuhn

To capture any moving macro subject, patience is a necessary virtue. The depth of field, as well as the colors, helps to make this striking image unique.—Joe and Mary Ann McDonald
SWEAT BEE, Minneapolis, Minnesota. © Bill Johnson

DAHLIA CLOSE-UP, Canby, Oregon. (Capt) © Charles Needle

HIMALAYAN BLUE POPPY, Longwood Gardens, Kennett Square, Pennsylvania. (Capt) © Mary Louise Ravese

PINK POPPIES, Weatherford, Texas. (Capt) © Denise Remfert

PHOLCID SPIDER HOLDING EGGS IN HER JAWS, La Selva Beach, California. (Capt) © William Tyler

LEATHERBACK TURTLE COVERS HER EGGS, Grande Riviere, Trinidad. © Sean Crane
AUTUMN LEAVES GATHER IN DEPRESSION IN SANDSTONE, Zion National Park, Utah. © Brenda Tharp

CRACKED MUD, Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, Utah. © G. Dan Mitchell

ICE ON SIX MILE CREEK IN SNOWSTORM, Ithaca, New York. © Hobit Lafaye

PORTRAIT OF A CLOWNFISH, Dumaguete, Philippines. © Stan Bysshe

COTTONMOUTH, Dare County Mainland, North Carolina. © George Wood

STARGAZER FISH, Lembeh, Indonesia. © Tony Frank

AN EASTERN COACHWHIP SNAKE SWIMS, Santa Clara Ranch, South Texas. © Hector Astorga

CAIMAN EATING PAUI FISH, Pantanal, Brazil. © Lillian Roberts

GOLDENEYE JAW FISH, Lembeh, Indonesia. © Tony Frank
A DRAGONFLY ALIGHTS, Catfish Creek Preserve State Park, Florida. © Kevin Barry

A MADAGASCAR REED FROG IS CAMOUFLAGED IN A PACHYPODIUM FLOWER, Madagascar. © Sean Crane

ANEMONE FLOWER, Longwood Gardens, Kennett Square, Pennsylvania. (Capt) © Mary Louise Ravese

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NYMPHS AND EGG CASES OF THE HELMETED SQUASH BUG, Milton, Wisconsin. (Phil) © Gary Shackelford

RED-TAILED BAMBOO PITVIPER RATTLES ITS TAIL, Lawachara National Park, Bangladesh. © Scott Trageser

A FERN IN SPRING, Cincinnati, Ohio. © Tom Croce

A SNAIL CLIMBS SALVIA, Pitt County, North Carolina. © Mildred Anne Grimes

A HORNET MEETS A YELLOW JACKET, Charlotte, North Carolina. © Rick Beldegreen

ELEPHANT EAR LEAVES, Pitt County, North Carolina. © Mildred Anne Grimes

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Conservation by Camera
by Ted Williams

The main thing I’ve learned from writing full-time about wildlife for 45 years is that there are fewer harder ways to make a living. But one of them is photographing wildlife; and it’s getting harder all the time.

I’ve been lucky enough to have worked with some of the world’s best photographers. I don’t understand how they do it; but I do understand them, their frustrations, their challenges and their vital role in saving and restoring the creatures who share this planet with us.

Joel Sartore’s Photo Ark

I’d written for Audubon magazine for 33 years without a photo of me being selected for the cover, but that changed in March 2013. After ludicrous cropping, only my hand remained in the photo. I’m holding a Florida grasshopper sparrow, the most endangered bird in the continental United States. It had just been captured on the Kinisimew Prairie Preserve State Park in south-central Florida by Paul Miller of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. He’d lured it into a mist net by playing its song on his iPhone.

The bird didn’t display a hint of stress when photographer Joel Sartore placed it in a wire-framed box lined with black velvet. It preened as four strobe lights powered by a gasoline generator flashed in radio-controlled synchrony with the camera shutter.

There is an excellent chance that this will be the only decent recreation of the Florida grasshopper sparrow looks like. Sartore’s main mission wasn’t me it’s more about what you do with a photo. Who

The wolves at a Montana game farm I visited raced enthusiastically around a natural-looking enclosure. This was their only chance to exit their dark, cement prison and play. When they leapt over logs and pretended to snap at a liver treat, then they rolled on their backs for belly rubs.

Photos of rearing, slavering, seemingly vicious game-farm wolves, coyotes, bears and other large predators wind up on covers and spreads of the worst hook-and-bullet rags where they feed hatred, prejudice and superstition.

Melissa Groo, a rising young star in wildlife photography who serves on NANPA’s Ethics Committee, shares my concern about the bad rap game-farm images can give animals that kill what humans like to kill. “I get really concerned about the irrational hatred of predators,” she told me. “I’m partnering with a local journalist to change perceptions about these animals, particularly bobcats, coyotes and foxes. We have these predator-killing contests in upstate New York, and they’re driving me bonkers. I like to show family relationships to make people see that there are bonds and tender moments within bobcat families, that fox kits play like puppies. A couple years after I got into photography I tired of simply creating pretty pictures. For me it’s more about what you do with a photo. Who

doing this photo mean something to, and who do it’s about what you do with a photo. Who

does this photo mean something to, and who do it’s about what you do with a photo. Who

Social Media

Social media is huge outlet for wildlife photos. National Geographic, for instance, has almost 30 million followers on Instagram. “Social media is the way we reach the next generation,” says Sartore. “I’ve always been more a believer in the message than the medium. So whatever it takes to get the message out is fine by me.”

Strain out the food, pet videos, selfies and other junk, and Facebook becomes an important tool for inspiring and educating the public about wildlife. The wildlife photographers I know have huge followings on Facebook. If I start my day in a funk, there’s always a photo and detailed copy to get me into the proper writing mood. Examples that come to mind are Michael Furtman’s “Hooded Merganser Duckling’s Leap of Faith” and “Meet the Dabbling Ducks” (both of which won awards from the Outdoor Writers Association of America in 2015) and Groo’s shots of a great egret (grand prize winner in National Audubon Society’s 2015 photo contest) and a bobcat kitten nuzzling its mother.

Facebook helps photographers sell images, too. Groo’s hobcats got noticed by National Wildlife
Michael Furtman says: “Without people knowledgeable about wildlife doing the photography, you’re probably not getting the whole story.” Furtman’s “Hooded Merganser Duckling’s Leap of Faith,” shown here, won an Award from the Outdoor Writers Association of America in 2015. © Michael Furtman

magazine which is planning to feature them in a two-page spread. Mangelsen, who has 60,000 friends on his professional Facebook page, got 16,000 likes and comments in two days with a YouTube trailer about a spectacular new book, Grizzlies of Pilgrim Creek, featuring his photos and environmental journalist Todd Wilkinson’s text.

Market Saturation

But social media can also hurt professional wildlife photographers (and thereby conservation) by saturating the market with images made by hobbyists who don’t have a lot of skill but get by because of cameras that automatically adjust focus and shutter speed and fire off thousands of digital shots at no cost. What’s more, they literally or figuratively give their work away. A woman Mangelsen met on one of the wildlife photo safaris he leads recently sold 10,000 photos to a stock agency for a dollar apiece. Meanwhile, publications that buy images are shrinking or dying. “Not a single person makes a living off stock today,” says Mangelsen. “They’re disrupting feeding, nesting and migration. I try to chronicle the natural behavior of an animal, but frequently someone gets too close and drives the animal off. Birds are posted [on social media] the minute they’re seen; and they’re targeted [by photographers] within hours.”

Groo knows two photographers who wanted to get photos of wood duck chicks leaping from a high cavity nest. So they gathered some chicks from a waist-high nest box, tied monofilament to their legs, inserted them into a high cavity, and then yanked them out one by one. Groo keeps seeing the photos on greeting cards and in books. “You get the best pictures when you spend time with your subjects and don’t disturb them,” she says. “That’s when you see natural behavior. When the animal accepts you into its space, glorious things unfold.”

Furtman makes the point that the saturated market also works against wildlife conservation by giving the public the false impression that vanishing species abound. “Without people knowledgeable about wildlife doing the photography, you’re probably not getting the whole story,” he says. “It’s comparable to journalism. There are good environmental reporters like you [and I blushed behind my clipboard] who know the issues and the questions to ask; and there are citizen journalists—bloggers.” The latter, who frequently confuse facts with opinions, distract and misinform.

Baiting and Pushing

When it comes to wildlife conservation some photographers do more harm than good. It’s frustrating to encounter so many new people in the field who see wildlife only as a subject,” says Furtman. “It’s crazy how they push these animals and don’t let them do their thing. I see it constantly. They’re disrupting feeding, nesting and migration. I try to chronicle the natural behavior of an animal, but frequently someone gets too close and drives it off. Birds are posted [on social media] the minute they’re seen; and they’re targeted [by photographers] within hours.”

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THE FUTURE

I caught up with Stanford professor Dr. Susan McConnell just after she’d returned from teaching a three-week course in conservation photography in Costa Rica. She offered this: “I see many fewer problems than challenges and opportunities to use photography as a way to motivate change. We need to reach people’s hearts and minds and give them a pathway for action. For me photography is about storytelling. We need to connect with people’s emotions and provide them with a pathway for solutions. It’s a fallacy to say if you just take pictures, you solve the problem. You need words, too.” (I’ll be quoting her last two sentences to editors.)

When I asked McConnell what advice she had for young (and beginning) wildlife photographers she said: “Stay committed to the future of the planet. Think about how to tell stories in compelling ways. Find whoever will listen. Show and tell where you’ve been, what you’ve seen, what you know.”

Another thing I’ve learned is that in the business of encouraging the conservation and recovery of wildlife there’s little difference between someone who uses a keyboard and someone who uses a camera. Both benefit from improved tools (like computers, internet, digital film and advanced photographic equipment) and both are beset by the same frustrations (like shrinking markets and an explosion of mediocre and distracting product).

To survive in either field and to genuinely help wildlife, you need McConnell’s brand of optimism. That’s easier for people who have been around as long as I have. I started writing before recovery of species like alligators, brown pelicans, peregrine falcons, bald eagles, wolves, grizzlies, wild turkeys, fishers and black-footed ferrets, before the banning of DDT and PCBs, before the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act and the Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Old problems faced and fixed seemed as daunting then as most problems we face today. Chronicle them with your cameras; but don’t forget words.
Suwannee Valley Streaks

Suwannee Valley Streaks
© Paul Marcellini

At sunset one fall day, Paul Marcellini was photographing in a favorite area of North Florida. “In a backwater cypress swamp in the Suwannee Valley, the trees are largely buttressed due to floodwater fluctuations,” said Marcellini. “A gentle current streaked fallen leaves toward the camera and a long exposure was used to enhance the lines.”

The image is a stitch of three horizontal frames stacked vertically done with a tilt shift lens. “A full shift up, a middle image and full shift down allows for a perfect overlay,” Marcellini said. He used a Sony a7r, Canon 24mm tilt shift lens with polarizer, 4 sec., f/13, ISO 50.

A Miami-based landscape photographer, Marcellini focuses on wild and unspoiled Florida. He specializes in large fine-art prints and exhibits at art festivals throughout the state. Marcellini has been involved in the arts since he picked up a camera in college to document adventures. Now, he cannot imagine being anything other than a photographer. His website is www.paulmarcellini.com.

Grooves

Grooves
© Marco Crupi

Typically, Watkins Glen State Park in the Finger Lakes region of New York is bustling with visitors. Yet, on a day in October 2014, no one was around, and Marco Crupi was able to capture this image. “Perfect weather conditions and having the park to myself allowed me to scale down one of the wet and slippery canyon walls to capture this perspective from below,” he said.

Crupi used a Canon 5d Mark III on a tripod and a Singh-Ray Thin Vari-ND to help extend his daylight exposure, 17-40mm at 17mm, 30 sec., f/13, ISO 100.

Crupi has been producing art for more than 20 years, beginning with graphic design and subsequently motion design for several Fortune 100 companies. He founded Nada Mas Photography LLC in 2012 and creates fine-art images which often stem from natural scenery. “I feel that all artists, no matter the craft, should join specialized groups like NANPA to expand their knowledge and grow artistically,” he said. “Degrees and awards … give us a continuous push to produce high-quality work while being surrounded by others who share our passion.” Crupi’s website is www.marcocrupi.com.
Northern Lights Glow Green
© James Heupel

This image catches the eye immediately with the dramatic color of the northern lights. The sweeping lines of clouds moving upward give the composition dynamic motion. The low placement of the horizon emphasizes the vastness of the sky and otherworldly quality of the scene. The point of light at the bottom center adds impact to the nighttime landscape.—William Neill

The aurora is a green river in the sky, leading the viewer’s eye to the moon and its reflection. The rising moon is rarely photographed in the sky with an aurora, making this an unusual image. And the stars, complete with the familiar Orion constellation, add the final touch.—John Nuhn

Witnessing the ever-changing Aurora Borealis is both a magical and a spiritual experience. In this image the ethereal nature of the northern lights is captured in a dramatic and awe-inspiring display. —Joe and Mary Ann McDonald

MILKY WAY AT DEADVLEI, Namibia. © Christopher Gray

ICE CAVE RIVER, Iceland. © Tony Frank

MILKY WAY CROSSING OVER JORDAN POND, Acadia State Park, Maine. © David Francis
MISTY FOG SURROUNDS A LATE SEASON SWEET GUM, Johnson County, Illinois. © David Hammond

AUTUMN ARRIVES AT GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK, Tennessee. © Mark Lagrange

FLY FISHING THE SALMON RIVER, Idaho. © Steve Bly

EARLY MORNING LIGHT AT BORAX HOT SPRINGS, Alvord Desert, Oregon. © Scott Smorra

CRYSTAL CATHEDRAL, Grand Island ice caves on Lake Superior. © Todd Reed

ICE FLOWERS ON THE MERCEDES RIVER, Yosemite National Park, California. © Caroline Bloss
INTERGALACTIC LENS ZOOM OF THE MILKY WAY, Acadia State Park, Maine. © David Francis

MANGROVE AND MILKY WAY, Florida Keys. © Paul Marcellini

MILKY WAY OVER THE MOULTON BARN, Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming. © Jeff Vanuga

ICE FORMS ALONG CREEK AS WINTER COMES, Turnagain Arm, Gulf of Alaska. © Jim Brown

SKAGSANDEN BEACH AURORA, 9:47 P.M., Lofoten Islands, Norway. © Lance Warley

MAMMATUS CLOUDS OVER THE PRAIRIE, El Paso County, Colorado. © Stephen Weaver
OLD SETTLEMENT HOME, Great Basin National Park, Nevada. © Mark Lagrange

COLUMBINE GRANDEUR, Uncompahgre National Forest, Colorado. © Peter Hartlove

ENDANGERED HALEAKALA SILVERSWORD, Haleakala National Park, Maui, Hawaii. © Scott Reither

ELAKALA FALLS #2 ON SHAYS RUN, Blackwater Falls State Park, West Virginia. (Phil) © David Johnston

WATERFALL IN HEAVY RAIN, Davis, West Virginia. © John Norvell

STORMY SKIES AND MOUNTAIN CREEK, Dusy Basin, Eastern Sierras, California. © Ian Frazier
DOGWOOD ON THE MERCED RIVER, Yosemite National Park, California. © Nancy Hoyt Belcher

STARRY NIGHT IN TREES, Shenandoah National Park, Virginia. © Joyce Harman

SUNSET REFLECTED AMONG REEDS, Everglades National Park, Florida. © Paul Marcellini

A ROCKY MOUNTAIN SUNRISE, Colorado. © Eric Bowles

MORNING AT REFLECTION LAKE, Mount Rainier National Park, Washington. © Mike Walker

PINE ROCKLANDS AT SUNSET, Everglades National Park, Florida. © Paul Marcellini
FROM ETERNAL SEAS, Olympic National Park, Washington. © Geoffrey Schmid

CHINCOTEAGUE SUNRISE, Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, Virginia. © Curtis Gibbens

STAR TRAILS, Wisconsin. © Matthew Moses

MORTON OVERLOOK SUNSET, Great Smoky Mountains National Park. © Kyle Zeringue

LIGHTNING AND MANGROVE, Florida Keys. © Paul Marcellini

CLOUDS AND FOG OVER MOUNTAIN LAKE, Maroon Bells, Colorado. © Thomas Wood

FOREST FIRE SMOKE, CROSSING THE SIERRA NEVADA, Owens Valley, California. © Matthew Scott
SKAGSANDEN BEACH AURORAS, THREE-SHOT BLEND, Lofoten Islands, Norway. (Phil), © Lance Warley

SUNRISE AT CANARY SPRING, Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming. © William Lewis

RED MANGROVE TREE, Biscayne Bay, near Miami, Florida. © Constance Mier

AURORA BOREALIS, Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada. © Susan Dykstra

CHERRY TREE BLOSSOMS, Monet’s Garden, Giverny, France. (Capt) © Charles Needle

EL YUNQUE NATIONAL FOREST WILDERNESS, Puerto Rico. © Jerry Bauer

FOREST AND FLORA, Brussels, Belgium. (Phil) © Peter Lik

AURORA BOREALIS, Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada. © Susan Dykstra

FALL COLORS IN A CYPRRESS SWAMP AT SUNRISE, Suwannee Valley, Florida. © Paul Marcellini

NINE-HUNDRED-YEAR-OLD PETRIFIED CAMEL THORN TREE, Deadvlei, Namibia. © Andy Lerner

FOREST AND FLORA, Brussels, Belgium. (Phil) © Peter Lik
MILKY WAY AND METEOR OVER MOUNT RAINIER, Washington. (Phil) © Jennifer Dominguez

ICE BUBBLES IN ABRAHAM LAKE, Alberta, Canada. © David DesRochers

CAPE KIWANDA SUNSET, Pacific City, Oregon. © David DesRochers

AURORA, ICE AND FOG, Lake Manitoba, Canada. © Christopher Gray

MILKY WAY OVER FOG-DRAPE D MT. RAINIER NATIONAL PARK, Washington. © Andrew Lerman
SKAGSANDE BEACH AURORA, 10 P.M., Lofoten Islands, Norway. © Lance Warley

EVENING LIGHT ON THE PALISADES, Kings Canyon National Park, California. © Russ Bishop

SPLIT SPHERIC MOERAKI BOULDER (CALLED MARBLES), Moeraki, New Zealand. (Phil) © Wendy McIntosh

THUNDERSTORM ON THE NORTH RIM, Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona. (Phil) © William Lewis

SUNRISE AT MONO LAKE, California. © Mike Walker

ICE CAVE, Oregon. © Mark Lagrange

KELP TENTACLES SWAY IN THE TIDE, Partington Cove, California. (Phil) © David Johnston

EBEN ICE CAVES, Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. © Todd Reed

YELLOWSTONE HOT POT, Yellowstone National Park. © Jeffrey Botkin
I am always looking for the next step for my photography, asking where do I go from here? The question for all of us is: How can we take our own technique and creative vision to a higher level?

One way is to focus more on adding new work to your areas of interest. The first step is to clearly see where you stand on a specific theme. This is an important way to analyze its strengths and weaknesses. When you have thought through some directions for a body of work, you can photograph with the needs of that theme in mind, filling in gaps and adding photographs that give the theme more depth.

For example, I have an ongoing theme of Patterns in Nature. Within that group, I have a series of macro images of Autumn Leaves. Every autumn, I keep an eye out for interesting leaves to photograph. The two photographs shown here are part of that series. The red maple leaves image (see next page) was photographed many years ago in Acadia National Park. The second image is of a leaf (above) I found outside my studio. Several years ago I planted a cottonwood tree, and I’ve been watching it grow from the window over my desk. One autumn, as the leaves changed color, I noticed that some developed an interesting combination of green and yellow. When the leaves started falling off the tree, I found this one. I photographed it with my 50mm macro lens and a nifty device called a McClamp (http://www.fmphotography.us) to hold the leaf in a fixed position. The late-afternoon light was shining on the backside of the leaf.

The two images are shown here as an illustration of the evaluation process for adding new work to a portfolio. The red maple leaves image is an established image in my Patterns in Nature portfolio and was included in a book I illustrated entitled By Nature’s Design (http://http://www.williamneill.com/store/books/by-natures-design.html). By comparing the
two images, I can judge whether my new image is worthy of adding to my Autumn Leaves portfolio. Is the quality consistent? Does the new image add depth to the portfolio or is it repetitious?

Although I’ve used only two sample images here, you would place a new image next to all the images in that group to make the comparison. This can be done with ease using software such as Adobe Lightroom. The Collections module is an excellent tool for organizing and monitoring theme ideas. With practice your editing skills will develop, and you’ll be able to refine your themes and improve the group’s overall quality.

To summarize, here is a list of steps to help you reach the next level for your photography:

• Explore what themes you have in your files, especially those you are most inspired and passionate about;
• Practice organizing images based on a theme;
• Establish a consistent standard of quality;
• Research other photography that has the same themes that interest you, and improve your visual literacy in your field;
• Examine the possible contexts in which you might use your images; thinking about how you might use a certain group of images may help guide you in your editing.

I suggest that you don’t force new images into a portfolio. It is better to add one or two than dilute the “prime” group with weaker images. Adding no new images is OK, too. Also, give yourself time to consider your choices. Ansel Adams talked about making a test print and then placing it out where he would see it often. We have all had images we thought were great only to have them fall from grace with time. For those who continue to hold your interest, find a way to group them with the “golden oldies,” be it work prints tacked on the wall or on your computer monitor.

I think that it is important for us to recognize that, given the time constraints of everyday life, creating new photographs that qualify for your favorite portfolios is difficult. Creative inspiration tends to ebb and flow, as I am sure you have experienced. With practice and persistence, however, you will make the next step.
In February, 2010, Douglas James was taking photographs at Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge in Sanibel, Florida. He found the snowy egret pictured here flying over a pool, picking out small fish. When he reviewed the day’s shoot, he nearly deleted this image, because the head wasn’t as sharp as he wanted. “I had just begun experimenting with Fractalius and its seemingly infinite combinations of effects,” he said, “and I noticed that using it to blur a portion of an image could make the unaffected portion appear sharper.” When he applied this notion, he was happy with the results. Fractalius is a Windows plug-in for Photoshop, and James used it to accentuate the blur of the wings and create the ethereal feel of the image.

James used a Canon EOS 40D, Canon EF100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS USM lens, 1/400 sec., f/7.1, ISO 640.
Atlantic Puffins
© Bonnie Block

Bonnie Block photographed these Atlantic puffins on tiny Grimsey Island, Iceland, this past July, while participating in a photography workshop. “The cliffs where the puffins have their burrows are unstable,” she said, “and it is not safe to get too far out.” Unable to capture the exact image she envisioned, Block blended two images to create this one. She first processed it in Lightroom and then finished in Photoshop CC. Block used a Canon 7D Mark II, 500mm f/4L lens on a tripod, 1/1000 sec., f/4, ISO 400.

Block is a self-taught wildlife photographer with a lifelong love of animals and the outdoors. While she loves to travel, she also enjoys photographing the local wildlife in the Pacific Northwest where she lives. Block’s work has appeared in many issues of Expressions, including a Judge’s Choice award in 2008. Her website is www.fieldandfarmphoto.com.

Waterfall in Sierra Nevadas
© Alice Cahill

Through the photographer’s technique, this waterfall has been transformed into a lively painting of web-like textures. Yet peacefulness still comes through, as does the intimate quality of this small waterfall. The motion of the waterfall is accentuated by the lines weaving throughout the rock and water.—William Neill

This image reminds us of a stained glass window backlit by soft light. A creative mind, and attention to color, helped make this image absolutely beautiful.—Joe and Mary Ann McDonald
MOOSEBIRDS, Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming, and Port Mayaca, Florida. (Phil) © Amy Marques

CAPTIVE FLAMINGO, California (Capt, Phil) © Betty Sederquist

FOX MOUSING SEQUENCE, Yellowstone National Park. (Phil) © Cindy Goeddel

BOBCAT LEAPING, A POUNCE THAT CAN SPAN 10 FEET, Yellowstone National Park. (Phil) © Cindy Goeddel

FALL FOLIAGE AT THE NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN, New York. (Capt, Phil), © F. M. Kearney

GREAT WHITE EGRET, Sacramento Delta, California. (Phil) © Gail Parris
ROCK FORMATION, Garden of the Gods, Colorado Springs, Colorado. (Phil) © Bruce Haley

WINTER WOODED LANE, Eastern Oklahoma. (Phil) © Ron Day

FEEDING TIME, St. Augustine Alligator Farm, Florida. (Capt) © Joanne Wells

TREE IN CANAAN VALLEY COMBINED WITH TREE BARK, West Virginia. (Phil) © Bruce Haley

BARK KALEIDOSCOPE, Cascade Creek Trail, South Lake Tahoe. (Phil) © Judy Kramer

ELECTRIC AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN, Eastern Oklahoma. (Phil) © Ron Day

SPIDER LILY, Fennessey Ranch, Refugio, Texas. (Phil) © Hector Astorga

WHOOPING CRANE, International Crane Foundation, Baraboo, Wisconsin. (Capt) © Stacey Meanwell

NEON BUTTERFLY, Oklahoma. (Phil) © Ron Day
FROSTY FALL MORNING, West Virginia. (Phil)
© Bruce Haley

GOLDENROD, McClellan, Alabama. (Phil)
© Richard Curtin

TWO SUNFLOWERS, McKee-Beshers Wildlife Management Area, Maryland. (Phil) © Stan Collyer

COMBINATION OF IMAGES OF FOREST, OCEAN AND ANIMALS, mostly California. (Phil)
© Alice Cahill

MILKWEED SEED ABSTRACT, Greenville, North Carolina. (Phil) © Jamie Davidson

EDITH’S CHECKERSPOT, Skyline Ridge Open Space, Santa Clara County, California. (Phil)
© Judy Kramer

Bald Eagles, Viera, Florida, and Allapattah Flats, Florida. (Phil) © Amy Marques

PEACOCK, Riverbend Park in Jupiter, Florida. (Phil) © Kevin Barry

EGRET ON THE BLUE BAYOU, Crystal River, Florida. © Bob Oswald

MOODY SKY OVER MONO LAKE, California. (Phil) © Alice Cahill
The showcase entries each year give a great overview of the state of nature photography, or, at least, the state of images submitted to nature contests. With each competition, some overarching theme or technique seems to rise to the fore. This occurs even with the changes we’ve imposed over the years, such as adding categories to the mix or encouraging new types of entries.

This year’s competition did not reveal any particularly new photographic technique or predict the next frontier for innovation. The technology, as far as digital capture, has not entered into a new dimension—yet. Photographers, for the most part, seem better able to handle RAW conversions and are not jumping for the bells and whistles that add special effects, such as rainbows and bursts of light. (How last century!) The differences, at least for the last several years, now show in the subjects of the images, the tougher access in some cases, and more of a consciousness about the photographic impact on the subject.

Not surprisingly, there were exceptions to all of the above. Some photographers still oversharpen, oversaturate and overcrop. It seems there’s no great image that too much processing can’t destroy. And yes, in some (gratefully rare) cases, we saw some of the strains of trying to take an image of a subject doing something never before seen just a little too far. We don’t like the idea that our competition would contribute to anything that might harm an animal or any living thing, and we try not to imagine how that owl just happened to be flying in just that path or found that very healthy mouse at just the right second. We know this isn’t you, dear reader, but nevertheless, we encourage you not to sacrifice one animal to capture the image of another.

We also get very concerned when we see images of chicks or baby mammals that should not be seen—we worry that a photographer was stressing out the animals. We do our best not to reward those photographers for those kinds of images. We are not infallible, however, and some images could get by the judges.

It is not our job to guess, but we would be remiss in our ethical duties if we didn’t mention it a thousand times until everyone “gets it.” Yes, we want great images of nature and wildlife. No, we don’t want you crossing ethical boundaries to get them.

But I go off the point of this year’s theme. Believe it or not, with this very preachy start, the overarching theme of this year’s competition was laughter. Sometimes the joke was on us, but more often than not, the image induced laughter or just brought a smile to our faces. Maybe it’s because we’re in the midst of a political season that is only going to get more bizarre as it progresses, but this year’s photographers seemed to be in the mood to see the funnier parts of life. So many of the best images had animals caught in the most outrageous circumstances—upside down, with weird expressions, with arms, hands, paws, wings, beaks, proboscis, etc., on each other, or even half buried in a swath of snow. Could this be a sign that the cameras allow us to see things we couldn’t see before, or is this some weird disrespect for the creatures we have come to admire? There were times when my thoughts were, “Can you please give the poor animals some privacy?” How would we feel if every slip-up we had, every tender moment we encountered, every death in our family was caught on film. Oh, right, we do live in that world where nothing is sacred and every tragedy, injustice, happy moment, sad event, speeding car, etc., is caught on surveillance cameras or cell phones at the very least.

Nothing seemed to be spared in this year’s mix. Some animals seemed to be more prevalent than others: crocodiles/alligators and cheetahs. In the case of cheetahs, an endangered cat that was not easily located in recent years, we hope this signals that there are more of them around and not that they were the subjects of undue harassment from photographers when they did appear I suspect it may be a little bit of both.

Once again, we got a healthy dose of the usual bears, bald eagles, herons and egrets. They were still represented in full force, and although some may have been picked in the top 250, they did not represent the best of the lot. In fact, unlike most years when the birds category reigned supreme, it was probably the weakest category this year. Oddly, it had the most entries.

Our great social experiment—changing the competition to draw more entries—did not turn out as we had hoped. In the attempt to bring in more participants, we offered one free image per NANPA member. This succeeded in bringing in less than 75 new participants, but it also seemed to change, for some entrants, the quality and type of images entered. There was a huge difference between the seasoned contest entrant and the newbie. At times, it looked as if the newbie had forgotten about some of the basics of photography: focus, great light and proper development. We received way more entries than usual, but way more unacceptable entries, not as many finalist and semifinalist images this year as last, out of the almost 2,600 entries.

“"No matter the circumstances, NANPA members always come up with incredible images."
Taking the Plunge
© Bill Klipp

As Bill Klipp relaxed on the beach in Varadero, Cuba, a squadron of brown pelicans worked their way up and down the shoreline. He watched them to get a sense of their feeding pattern. Then, he added a fast telephoto lens to his camera and waded out in waist-deep water to patiently wait for the birds to get closer. “I shot dozens of images,” said Klipp. “Finally, I was able to get a shot of one of them just as it entered the water after a high plunge-dive. Normally, pelicans tuck their heads closer to their bodies when they hit the water, but this guy seemed to extend his neck like a missile.”

Klipp used a Nikon D700, Nikkor 70-200mm f/2.8 lens at 200mm, 1/2000 sec., f/6.3, EV-.3, ISO 500, hand-held.

After retiring in 1999, Bill Klipp traded his lifelong career in the financial services industry to pursue his passion for photography and exotic travel. He has a particular interest in portraying animals and people doing what comes naturally. Bill is known for his exotic wildlife and travel images from around the world. His website is www.WKimages.net.

Returning
© Robert Strickland

“I was using my truck as a blind when I saw the great horned owl sitting on her nest,” said Robert Strickland. It was January 2015 in Florida. When the owl flew off to a nearby perch, Stickland eased out of the cab, mounted his camera on a tripod and sat down on the bed of his truck to wait for her to return. “In a few minutes, I noticed some movement,” he said. When the owl landed just above the nest, Strickland looked through the lens, held the shutter down halfway to focus the camera, and waited for the few seconds it took the owl to launch off her perch. He created a series of photos. This was the second shot.

Strickland used a Canon EOS 7D Mark II camera, Tamron SP 150-600mm f/5-6.3 Di VC USD A011 lens at 213mm, 1/400 sec., f/6.3, ISO 1000, MeFOTO GlobeTrotter tripod.

A self-taught photographer, Strickland has been in the nature photography business for more than 30 years. It is important to him that his images are a factual representation of the subjects. His website is www.robertstricklandphotography.com and more of his photos can be seen on his Flickr site at https://www.flickr.com/photos/rstrickland.
Bald Eagle Chasing Great Blue Heron

© Ken Archer

There are so many comments to be made about this image: faultless execution with shutter speed and depth of field; great action shot in capturing the behavior; and, a creative composition with the dynamic lines of the two sets of wings. Incredible image; fantastic job!—Joe and Mary Ann McDonald

HOVERING SNOWY OWL AT SUNSET, El Paso County, Colorado. © Barbara Fleming

A YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD FLIES AMONG REEDS, Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming. © Sandra Zelasko
ROSEATE SPOONBILLS, High Island Audubon Sanctuary, Texas. © Matthew Hyner

SPARRING BALD EAGLES, Adams County, Colorado. © Peter Ismert

THREE HUMMINGBIRDS FEED ON SINGLE FLOWER, Pichincha Province, Ecuador. © James Heupel

THE BROWN-HOODED PARROT, found in the rain forest of Costa Rica. © Judylynn Malloch

VIRGINIA RAIL PLUCKS SOME PRIMARY FEATHERS, Sublette County, Wyoming. © Elizabeth Boehm

GREAT BLUE WITH SNAKE, Green Cay, Palm Beach County, Florida. © Michael Cohen
A SEA GULL LIFTS OFF, in a fiord in Norway. © Annie Katz

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD SQUABBLE WITH A MOCKINGBIRD, Hidalgo County, Texas. © E. Darrell Crisp

A FLYING SNAIL KITE SWITCHES ITS CATCH FROM ONE FOOT TO THE OTHER, Central Florida. © Ronald Bielefeld

COMMON TERN SWALLOWS FISH, Long Island, New York. © Grace Scalzo

SYMMETRICAL VIOLETEARS HOVER FOR NECTAR, Costa Rica. © Michael Cohen

A PAIR OF MALLARDS TAKE FLIGHT, Outer Banks, North Carolina. © Mark Buckler
CEDAR WAXWING EATING CRABAPPLE, Ithaca, New York. © Marie Read

GREATER ROADRUNNER RUNS WITH ITS PREY, Santa Clara Ranch, South Texas. © Hector Astorga

THE SUN SETS ON A BABY KING PENGUIN, Volunteer Point, Falkland Islands. © Sean Crane

SHORT-EARED OWL IN FLIGHT, over Nome, Alaska. © Donald Quintana

BLACK SKIMMER LIFTS OFF FROM BATH, Estero, Florida. © Lynn Long

COMMON NIGHTHAWK, Pawnee Grasslands, Northern Colorado. © Angela McCain

A BLACK-BELLED WHISTLING DUCK IN (AKWARD) FLIGHT, Hill Country, Texas. © Myer Bornstein

A FLOCK OF BLACK SKIMMERS TAKE OFF AT DUSK, Fort De Soto Park, Florida. © Rona Schwarz
BROWN PELICAN TAKING FLIGHT, Alligator Creek, Punta Gorda, Florida. © Teri Franzen

CARDINAL IN SNOW, Copper Canyon, Texas. © Denise Remfert

A BLACK SKIMMER SOMERSAULTS TO CATCH A FISH, Outer Banks, North Carolina. © Mark Buckler

A SEA GULL LANDS WITH A SPLASH, Flatanger, Norway. © Annie Katz

BELTED KINGFISHER SHAKES IT OFF, Wellfleet, Massachusetts. © Christopher Ciccone

CARDINAL WITH SNOWBURST, Five Rivers Education Center, Albany, New York. © Scott Stoner

A CEDAR WAXWING DINES ON BERRIES, Boise, Idaho. © Steve Bly

A RABBIT IS SERVED BY A GREAT HORNED OWL TO ITS FLEDGLING, Englewood, Florida. © Cheryl Arena

THE LITTLE BEE EATER EATS FLYING INSECTS, Ruckomechi Camp, Zimbabwe. © Bill Klipp

MACARONI PENGUINS, Cooper Bay, Antarctica. © Jacqueline Deely
GREAT BLUE HERON MOM WITH ADOLESCENTS, Magnolia Plantation, South Carolina. © Gary Paige

SANDHILL CRANE MOM CARES FOR HER TWO-DAY-OLD CHICKS, Englewood, Florida. © Jo Ann Crebbin

CANADA GOOSE HUDDLES WITH GOSLINGS, Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado. © Michael Cohen

FEMALE RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD AND HER YOUNG, Wakodahatchee Wetlands, Florida. © Kenneth Lassman

SANDHILL CRANES TAKE FLIGHT, frozen Seven Springs Lake, Elizabeth, Indiana. © Vickie Raney-DeWitt

SNAIL KITE IN FLIGHT WITH SNAIL, Central Florida. © Ronald Bielefeld

NORTHERN HARRIER HUNTS IN A SNOWSTORM, Salisbury, Massachusetts. © Christopher Ciccone

AN OWL DELIVERS A GECKO, Bradenton, Florida. © Troy Lim

A YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD TAKES FLIGHT, Eastern Sierra Nevada, California. © Don Henderson
BLACK SKIMMER SKIRMISH, Marco Island, Florida. © Michael Cohen

ROSEATE SPOONBILLS AT SUNSET, Green Cay Wetlands, Boynton Beach, Florida. © Bill Gozansky

A GENTOO PENQUIN SHOOTS OUT OF THE SURF, Bleaker Island in the Falklands. © Keith Kennedy

Bald Eagles Fight over a Salmon, Haines, Alaska. © Jim Brown

Northern Flicker Leaving Nest, Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada. © James Urbach

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