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Maasai Mara, Kenya

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Editor’s Note

It is a story of yin and yang. Photographers are being tested by many challenges, both natural and man-made, economic and environmental. As you’ll see in these pages, they’re responding with resilience and creativity.

During the past year, we saw stories about dramatic declines in the numbers of birds and insects and the health of coral reefs. Yet the pages of Expressions are full of wonderful images of the beauty that can still be found in nature.

We’ve heard about hordes of Instagrammers trampling delicate ecosystems, agitating wildlife and encouraging bad behaviors. Yet the work of conservation photographers and organizations like NANPA is beginning to change behaviors for the better.

We’ve watched as big economic trends transform the business landscape, causing continued shrinkage in our traditional money-making opportunities, like magazine assignments and sales of stock images. Here, too, photographers are adapting with new business models, gig economy work, and the creation of high-value-added products.

As the earth shifts beneath our feet, we not only keep our balance, we continue to forge ahead. As artificial intelligence, rapidly improving smart phone cameras and processing advances make it seem like everyone can be a great photographer, the truly great photographers seek out new subjects, techniques and markets for their unique visions.

Despite all the challenges ahead, the adaptability, skill, flair, resilience and creative vision that radiate from these pages make me optimistic about the future of nature photography. I hope you’ll be as encouraged, enlightened and inspired as I’ve been by the work you see here.

— Frank Gallagher

Meet the Judges

Conservation Category Judges

KARINE AIGNER is a freelance environmental photojournalist and photo editor with more than nine years on staff at National Geographic. Karine’s photography focuses on the intersections of people and wildlife, and the conservation issues that surround them. Her work has been featured in Nature Conservancy magazine, National Geographic, Audubon, World Wildlife magazine, National Wildlife magazine and various other publications. Her work is represented by Nature Picture Library, Tandem Stills and Motion, and National Geographic Creative.

A former nuclear physicist, BOYD NORTON is known worldwide for his wilderness photography and environmental activism. His 17 books range in topic from African elephants and mountain gorillas to Siberia’s Lake Baikal, Alaskan and Rocky Mountain conservation. He’s lobbied for environmental protection in Russia’s Kamchat and testified before many US Congressional hearings. His awards include the Sierra Club’s Ansel Adams Award for Conservation Photography. For 50+ years of conservation activism, Great Britain’s Outdoor

Showcase Judges

DAISY GILARDINI is a conservation photographer who specializes in the polar regions, with a particular emphasis on Antarctic wildlife and North American bears. Gilardini’s images have been published internationally in leading magazines such as National Geographic, BBC Wildlife, Canadian Geographic, Nature’s Best and Outdoor Photography. Her images have also been used by high-profile NGOs such as Greenpeace and the World Wildlife Fund, among others. Since 2018, she has been a photographer in residence with Canadian Geographic. Her work has been recognized by some of the world’s most prestigious photography awards, including BBC Wildlife Photographer of the Year, and Nature’s Best Windland Smith Rice International Awards.

TOM and PAT LEESON, one of the earliest husband and wife wildlife photography teams in the USA, are master visual storytellers for wildlife. Their passion is capturing intimate and in-depth wildlife behavior, recording key behaviors in every season and compiling a complete story package on each species. These story packages appear regularly in wildlife publications and books around the world. They worked in partnership with National Geographic Society, National Wildlife Federation, World Wildlife Fund, BBC, CEO magazines (German, USA, and Korea) as well as with numerous corporate clients including Nikon, Nike, American Airlines and Boeing. In their 45 years in the field they created over 30 children’s books and numerous photo books. Their highly-awarded, limited edition book, The American Eagle, became a Presidential Gift of State when it was presented to Queen Elizabeth by President George H. Bush at the White House. Tom and Pat received a NANPA Fellow Award in 2004 and were named Photographer of the Year in 2016 by the National Wildlife Federation’s Ranger Rick magazine.

One of North America’s best-known contemporary outdoor and published photographers and a leader in the field of digital imaging, GEORGE LEPP is the author of many books and hundreds of nationally and internationally published articles about the creative, ethical, and technical aspects of nature photography. He is field editor of Outdoor Photographer magazine. His photography is extensively published and exhibited, and represented by Getty Images, Corbis, AgStock, and Photo Researchers. Lepp is one of the first members of Canon USA’s Explorers of Light program. He has presented hundreds of lectures and workshops all over the world, and often serves as a judge of international photography competitions. A founder and fellow of the North America Nature Photography Association (NANPA), Lepp has won many awards for his work, including Photo Media’s Photography Person of the Year, the Photographic Society of America’s prestigious Progress Award, and the NANPA Lifetime Achievement Award.
Often the solo adventuress, Alyce Bender roams the globe, exploring Earth’s natural beauty. Published by leading names such as Tamron and Outdoor Photographer, her images have been featured in galleries from New York to Las Vegas, while her work as an international artist has been recognized from Japan to the U.K.

Bender is happiest in the field and passionate about sharing unique animals and environments from around the world in hopes of connecting people to the planet through imagery. She believes that connection is key to promoting environmental awareness and protecting vulnerable species and their habitats.

When she isn’t leading tours or teaching classes, she publishes location guides and writes articles about her adventures for her website.

DAVE HUTH is a teacher, storyteller, picture maker, and whistle of jaunty tunes. He works as a professor of visual communication and media arts at Houghton College in western New York state. Dave is obsessed with finding new and effective ways to draw people into deep thinking and even deeper feeling about ecology and human life. He lives way out in the country where he rarely mows his lawn or rakes his leaves – which keeps opinionated humans at a distance and draws all other animals close. This is just the way he likes it.

KAREN R. SCHUENEMANN is a nature and wildlife photographer exploring the parks and wetlands of Southern California. Her work focuses on nearby “urban wilderness” areas, such as restoring wetlands of the Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve and protecting the elusive bobcats in San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary. She puts special effort into introducing the next generations to our parks and preserves and to the legacy and responsibility that comes with them.

Schuenemann’s work has won numerous awards and appeared in a variety of publications. She founded Wilderness at Heart Photography in 2015, teaching and leading workshops to places ranging from Bosque del Apache, to Grand Teton, to Africa, and is a permittee of the National Park Service.

Karen celebrates life with her husband and two dogs in San Pedro, California.

JENNIFER LEIGH WARNER is a fine art, conservation and wildlife photographer living in California who specializes in creating meaningful images that convey a message of hope for the natural world. She feels strongly that, by sharing these images of beautiful animals in their natural environment, she can inspire those around her to preserve the world that we share with all living creatures.

Jennifer started studying photography at an early age with an interest in capturing the natural places and creatures that inhabit this world. After graduating from the Edward R. Murrow College of Communications at Washington State University in 2005, she set off on her mission to preserve the world around her.

As the chair of the Ethics Committee of the North American Nature Photography Association, she promotes ethical practices in wildlife photography. Jennifer works closely with conservation organizations to help support their missions protecting wildlife and the world around us. She believes that photography is a powerful tool to share stories, educate photo viewers on important topics and inspire change.
We were coming back to camp in Kruger National Park with friends from Johannesburg. It was getting late when this female leopard stepped onto the road and stared at us briefly before crossing into bushes on the other side. Surprisingly, she sat down calmly before disappearing. I had little time to think for this shot so I quickly supported my Nikon D4 and 200-400mm lens on the window ledge and began to shoot. At that moment, I whispered to myself, as I so often do with wildlife: “Turn your head, turn your head!” And she did. The moment was spellbinding.

I am fortunate to live in Southern Manitoba, not too far from the best place in the world to photograph polar bears: Churchill on Hudson Bay. Having a career in public school education allowed me to spend summers chasing wildlife. Retirement permitted me to switch from enthusiastic hobbyist to part-time professional photographer. I became quite serious about photography in the 1980s when I started to lead photography workshops for the Churchill Northern Studies Centre. Not long after, I became a guide for Churchill Wild in polar bear country and the bears have become my favorite animal ever since.

Wanting to tell the ‘story of takeoff,’ I had been trying for two years to make a sequence of the sandhill crane shedding its earthly bounds, in focus and tack sharp. It took many attempts, as the birds do not always travel parallel to the camera. In addition, trees, bushes or other birds can get between the camera and the target during the sequence. Many, many files landed on the cutting room floor with either the wrong shutter speed or slight focus issue. Approximately 40 hours were put into the creation and processing of this image, which can be printed over fourteen feet.

I call Sedona, Arizona home. As a full-time professional photographer and Lens Based Artist I always had an affinity for photographing wildlife, with large waterfowl, snowy and great egrets, great blue herons and sandhill cranes, being my favorites. National wildlife preserves and refuges are wonderful, target-rich environments, but I’ve found any place with water and birds works for me, including the wetlands at the Sedona Wastewater Treatment Facility’s Nature Preserve.
Judges’ Choice

“Photography and art are being melded together, with the photographic detail on the heron and the abstract colors repeated in the canvas. Something that could hang on a wall and be enjoyed for a long time.”

—George Lepp

“A fun and joyful interpretation of a common species. It’s full of energy and pleasing colors.”

—Tom & Pat Leeson

Splash of Color, Great Blue Heron
© Lisa Jansen
Florence, Wisconsin

Two Brown Bears Engage in Mock Fighting
© Betty Soderquist
Sitka, Alaska

“The added elements in the illustration heighten the action and loop viewer’s attention on the bears. The splashing water adds an element of interest. The result is an engaging wildlife photo illustration.”

—George Lepp

“Captures both a feeling and a scene in one’s imagination of what grizzlies in the wild should look like. This photo expresses the essence of being wild and free.”

—Tom & Pat Leeson
Photo Collage of Solar and Lunar Eclipses
© Joyce Harman
Tennessee and Virginia

Patterns in a Dried Mud Flat
© Ian Frazier
Death Valley National Park, California

Gull Emerging From Fog at Dawn
© Leonard James
Morro Bay, California

Painterly View of an Avocet in Winter Plumage
© Betty Sederquist
Monterey Bay Aquarium, California

Horned Puffins Posing
© Mollie Isaacs
Bird Island, Cook Inlet, Alaska
An Abstract Image of a Red Fox Calling in the Wilderness
© Ron Day
Sedona, Arizona

Long Exposure Composite of Lightning Over Bell Rock and Courthouse Butte
© Bob Coates
Sedona, Arizona

An Impressionistic Image of a Sandhill Crane Coming in for Landing
© Ron Day
Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, New Mexico

Painterly View of Immature Bald Eagle Coming in for a Landing
© Betty Sederquist
Sitka, Alaska

Night Flight
© Dave Hattori
Saint Augustine, Florida

Sculpted Silt at Low Tide
© Ray Bulson
Turnagain Arm, Alaska

Early Sunrise Fantasy Forest Scene
© Alice Cahill
Fairbanks, Alaska

Crowned Crane Calling
© Cheryl Medow
Masai Mara, Kenya, and a Louisiana Bayou
**Swan Rising From Potter Marsh During Fall Migration South From Alaska**
© Jackie Kramer
Potter Marsh, Alaska

**Palm Tree Grove**
© Melissa Fraser
Molokai, Hawaii

**Nature Mosaic**
© Lisa Jansen
Green Bay, Wisconsin

**Backlit Macro Image of Dahlia Petals**
© Jamie Konarski Davidson
Greenville, North Carolina

**Dwarf Dogwood Box**
© Judy Kramer
Mount Roberts, Juneau, Alaska

**Stained Class: A Leaf Skeleton Along a Scenic Stream, Reflecting Wildflowers and Autumn Colors**
© Pamela Lambros
Kent, Connecticut

**Pufferfish Swimming Through Gorgonians**
© James Squires
Little Cayman Island

**Magical Monarch**
© Dave Hattori
Walnut Creek Park, Austin, Texas

**Showcase Top 250**

**Altered Reality**
Deep learning, neural networks, semantic rendering: artificial intelligence (AI) is already impacting many areas of life, from your smart thermostat to Siri, Alexa and Google’s digital assistants. And it’s poised to have some potentially disruptive effects on photography. What aspects of AI should we welcome? Is there anything we should fear?

There is a saying: “While there is no Wi-Fi in the woods, you find a better connection there.” Much as we love being in the great outdoors and soaking up nature, it’s getting harder to get away from the digital tools and connectivity that define the modern world. That is both good and bad, as the tools that make it easier and safer to explore and capture great photos can also have their downsides. One increasingly prominent type of technology is AI, which is finding its way into more and more cameras and post-processing applications.

Modern cameras and post processing apps have grown to include features such as automatic red-eye removal and facial recognition, and apps that make you look thinner or your skin smoother. Each of these is powered by AI. Features like these are now considered standard and we, as photographers, just take them for granted. While these tools make our craft a bit easier, what do the expanding capabilities of AI mean to the future of photography, specifically nature photography, and the photographers within the profession?

Some quick definitions that will help in understanding the following information:

- **AI systems** are based on deep-learning neural networks.
- **Neural networks** are sets of algorithms, modeled loosely after those networks found in human and animal brains, that are designed to recognize patterns. They are designed to interpret through identification, labeling, and clustering of raw data, generally without being programmed with task-specific rules.
- **Deep learning** is a term that specifies that the neural network has multiple layers through which data must pass in a multistep process of pattern recognition before the final output.

There are three major ways in which AI is impacting nature photography: efficient post-processing, personalized field assistants, and the ability to create images of environments never actually seen in nature. All three will affect our ability to make a living within our craft.

**Less Desk Time: AI makes post-processing easier**

Much of the work currently being done in photography with AI has to do with programs that make it easier for us to get the “perfect” picture with minimal editing time on the back end. As Simon Fitzpatrick, senior director, product management at FotoNation, which provides much of the computational technology to camera brands, put it, “Professional photographers make money when they are out taking photos, not when they are processing images. AI helps photographers maximize their ability to make a living.”

In this case he was talking about Perfectly Clear, an AI-based plug-in for Adobe Lightroom by Athan Tech, a partner of FotoNation. Perfectly Clear is designed to reduce the amount of time photographers sit in front of their computers by automatically making batch corrections that mimic what the human eye does when interpreting images. Other applications, such as Topaz Labs’ Gigapixel, have been “taught,” based on millions of photos, what human features and landscapes are supposed to look like, allowing for soft or pixelated images to be rendered useably sharp with the click of a button. Adobe’s Sensei AI technology has been in use since the 2017 version of Lightroom and Photoshop. It powers, among other things, the Auto button in the Basic panel of Lightroom’s Develop Module and Photoshop’s selection tools, along with Content Aware Fill.

Desktop apps, such as PhotoLemur, allow users to just drag and drop image files into the program. It then goes to work, quickly making...

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© David Akoubian   Focal Length: 400mm Exposure: F/8 1/250th sec ISO 720

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**When Nature and Al Meet**

Story and Photos by Alyce Bender

What does artificial intelligence mean to the future of nature photography?
When Nature and AI Meet

Lightroom’s Basic panel provides AI assistance during post-processing through the Auto button. Automatic edits, from exposure, color, and noise adjustments, to identifying skis, before giving the photographer a fully edited image in just a few moments. Cataloging images is another aspect where AI can be utilized in the office to minimize the time spent on mundane tasks. There are several programs and plugins that work using AI technology to automatically tag images with keywords pertaining to the subject, location, and style. Having this information added to the metadata of images makes it much easier and faster to search for specific images but is very time consuming to do by yourself. Programs like EyemVision will even add captions and can filter your photo library, rating images as to how well they match your self-described style.

A similar plugin for Lightroom is Excire, which uses AI to help you search your catalog using keywords and even narrow searches based on gender and age for portrait photographers. It also has the deep-learning capability to search based on a selected image for any other images in your collection that are similar.

No more misses: AI helps get ‘perfect’ captures in the field

While those tools help in the office, AI has also started taking over some of the field work calculations photographers typically hem and haw over. Arsenal is an AI field assistant device aimed at landscape and travel photographers. Through advanced neural networks, Arsenal suggests settings for the optimal image based on lighting, gear, and subject. The hardware is a small disk-like object that slides into your camera’s hot shoe plate and connects into the camera body via micro-USB. From there, an app on your smartphone allows you to control all the settings, allowing for the photographer to have the final say.

This on-camera “assistant” can detect vibrations, recommending a high enough shutter speed to avoid sharpness issues due to camera movement. It can also detect movement within the scene and is programed to deal with it in a variety of ways. Subjects like birds will have it suggesting settings capable of freezing movement while elements such as waves will have it suggesting a multiple-image blending method to create long exposure results without the need for additional gear, like neutral density filters. Multiple-image blending is a go-to method for this device: it will use this method to create focus-stacked images to ensure detail sharpness throughout as well as to effortlessly capture high dynamic range scenes.

Cell Phones and the Future of In-Field Assistance

By looking at some of the most recent cell phone camera AI advances, we can visualize what might be coming to DSLRs as producers race to keep traditional photographers from setting aside the camera body for what we already have in our pockets. Already there is a trend of weddings and other events, where a typical photographer is hired, to either have the event recorded through phones or even going so far as to hire a photographer who specializes in iPhone photography to record it.

With human subjects, Apple’s iPhone 11 camera can also apply semantic rendering—a machine’s ability to differentiate between different elements of a scene, such as hair, skin or eyes, and treat them differently. Where, for instance, a camera’s Portrait mode or a tool like HDR makes global adjustments to highlights and shadows, semantic rendering will apply different adjustments to different parts of the face and hair, in camera, automatically. Some of Google’s Pixel phones have similar capabilities.

Making Stuff Up: AI creates scenes that don’t exist

A company called reenact used 29,000 photos taken of 69 different models, along with machine-learning algorithms, to generate 100,000 realistic faces of people who do not exist, which it released for non-commercial use.

Canny AI used technology to create a video dialog replacement tool that does exactly what it says. It replaces dialog from a real video clip in a hyper-realistic way. Sometimes called “deep fake” videos, one of the most famous examples was of Facebook’s Mark Zuckerberg “saying” sinister things about his own company. Canny AI used a couple of short clips of Zuckerberg speaking and, over the course of 24 hours, trained their AI algorithms to reproduce his facial expressions and mannerisms into which they inserted a fake voice.

Then there are up-and-coming programs such as NVIDIA’s CaGAN – generative adversarial network named after the post-impressionist painter Paul Gaugson – that allow users to create photorealistic image from basic digital doodles. In CaGAN, a creator can use simple drawings where colors have been designated to represent certain elements like the sky, water, or road, and the program will translate it into a lifelike image, using the AI neural network to fill in the details, textures, appropriate lighting with reflections and shadows, based on what the program has learned from the billions of real images in its database.

Another AI-enabled camera feature Apple is rolling out is called Deep Fusion. As you’re pressing the shutter button on your phone, the camera will take 9 shots of the subject at a lower exposure value for detail (like going with a low ISO to avoid noise). The shots are run through a neural engine that goes through the images, pixel by pixel, optimizing the image.

Google is also working on a similar project that utilizes Street View imagery from Google Maps and transforms them into professional-looking photographs using automated photo processing. By training their neural network to identify what are considered the strongest photographic elements, the system is able to scan images, choose the parts that are most aesthetically pleasing, and then edit them to create an image that professional photography judges rate at a semi-pro to professional level image 40 percent of the time.

When Nature and AI Meet

So where does all this leave photographers?

In the office, using AI to efficiently automate routine or mundane tasks within the photography workflow is a boon for photographers who enjoy being in the field or using their time to do more intricate, creative editing.

Automatic tagging can help us keep our photo catalogs organized and save photographers more time by finding our images through metadata tags and search engine optimization (SEO). Automated captions can be done with little to no effort by an AI assistant plug-in and can help those with visual impairments enjoy our work through words even if they can’t see the actual image. For those who have built a reputation based on a certain style of image, AI can help ensure our brands stay true to that style by rating our work and using similar processes through batch editing.

Field work behind the camera can be streamlined with the use of AI tools that allow us to carry fewer items (with accessories such as neutral density filters no longer needed). When we let the automated precision of AI handle the finicky detail work, like focus stacking, photographers are able to create more images of different compositions in a shorter period of time. This can also help photographers, who may find themselves not as sure- or steady-handed as they used to be, still capture the images they want to create.

Yet these positives are also counterbalanced by a few potential negatives.

No longer will there be an entry-level photographer. With AI helping to choose camera settings and assisting with post-processing, anyone can start as a semi-professional, right out of the gate. They’ll get decent, pleasing-well-exposed shots. Not great, but not bad either.

As professional photographers have seen in recent years, the photography market has been flooded with photographer wannabes. The old barriers to entry have become all but non-existent. Some of the skills that many photographers still spend years developing could now be readily available through AI tools.

There’s already a debate about where nature photography falls on a spectrum between documenting what’s there in a photographic manner to taking advantage of the full range of artistic possibilities. How will we handle images when we can’t tell if the scene ever actually existed?

In the end, the growing use of deep-learning AI applications and tools within the photography industry is simply part of the natural, albeit disruptive, growth pattern. Those advances will make some things easier for many photographers by facilitating more efficient work flows both in and out of the field. AI improvements will also make it easier for newcomers to establish themselves as photographers through assisted technical proficiency.
Various industries that traditionally hired photographers or bought our stock images will potentially have the tools with which they can create the necessary images in-house, without consulting a photographer. They'll also have access to massive databases of real and made-up imagery to pull from, including the ability to have custom images created on spec, pulling elements from various images in said database to create their own unique image.

However, good photographers still have value. We do things no machine can. Storytelling, for instance, is a human skill, not easily translated into machine learning. AI algorithms may produce thousands of pleasing pictures, but they won’t have the drama and emotion that the best photographers have in their work. Algorithms don’t have intimate knowledge of the behavior of wildlife or when the aspens change color in Colorado to allow them to capture unique or once-in-a-lifetime moments. In an age when an average image can be created by man or machine, photographers with the vision and unique style to create extraordinary images will still have a place.

Advances enabled by AI will push us, as artists and explorers, to find new places, creative compositions, and unusual conditions. It means having to put in more than the average effort, as average no longer stands out among the millions of images created each day.

So just remember, while AI will help streamline your workflow and save time in the field, make sure you use that additional time to do some extraordinary field work. Sit in that blind for an extra hour. Hike that mountain pre-dawn. Travel to fresh or far-off locations rarely documented. Go the extra mile for your craft! The average photographer and their AI counterpart won’t do the same.
Sandhill Cranes at Sunset in Central New Mexico

© Keith Bauer
Ladd S. Gordon Waterfowl Management Area, New Mexico

This image was captured in the late afternoon in early December 2018. As the sun was setting I saw the light happening through the trees. I set up for this composition, shot several frames to adjust for the exposure and told myself that the ideal photo would be to capture a couple of cranes flying between the trees. The cranes were foraging through the grasses and would occasionally fly. These two provided just what I had pre-visualized and I captured the frame I wanted.

I retired from a rewarding career at a national laboratory in 2017 and have been able to devote more time towards being a part-time professional nature photographer, living in Albuquerque and teaching at Bosque del Apache and in Chile. I've been an avid nature photographer since the early 1990s, but have been involved with photography since back in the 1970s. My favorite subjects are varied, but include wildlife, landscapes, macro, and night photography. In North America, I’d have to say that Yellowstone is my favorite photographic destination.

Dance of the Great Blue Herons

© Melissa Roswell
Wakodahatchee Wetlands, Delray Beach, Florida

I arrived at Wakodahatchee Wetlands later than I had planned and knew I wouldn’t have long because of an impending storm. I grabbed my short, light Nikon 200-500mm lens, and walked slowly around the boardwalk hoping to find a quiet area where I could spend some time. Suddenly, I spotted two Great Blue Herons interacting atop a tree. The male was attempting to entice a female with his elaborate stretch display, and she was playing hard to get. Fascinated, I stopped to watch them just as serious bill duels erupted between the pair. Thunder began rumbling in the distance, and their long, flowing plumes were accentuated as the wind picked up. I was thrilled to witness this dramatic behavior, which continued for a few brief moments, signaling what I hoped would be the beginning of a strong bond leading to a successful breeding season.
Male Red Winged Blackbird Singing
© Stan Bysshe
Alexandria, Virginia

"A routine situation of a calling blackbird is made into a winning image because the photographer was in the right position to capture the birds breath with the morning back-light. When was the last time you saw a birds breath?"
—George Lepp

"An unusual bird capture reflecting the essence of sunrise on frosty morning."
—Tom & Pat Leeson

White-tailed Kite Food Transfer
© Sha Lu
Shoreline Lake Park, Mountain View, California

"I have done extensive photography of this species of kitea and have never been this close to see what happens in an exchange of food. Add in the defiant attitude of the rodent and you have shown the viewer something seldom seen, especially in this much detail."
—George Lepp

"This photo shows dramatic action which also captures the strong feelings of each creature. In addition, it has great depth of field."
—Tom & Pat Leeson
Showcase • Top 100

Moonlit Jabiru Stork Nest
© Craig L. Cook
Pantanal, Brazil

Snowy Egret Tossing Crab
© Kevin Lohman
Natural Bridges State Beach, Santa Cruz, California

Western Grebe Female Offers Her Chick a Feather to Eat
© Diane McAllister
Pyramid Lake, Nevada

Black Oystercatcher Foraging
© Jacqueline Deely
Carmel, California

Female Anhinga Emerges From the Swamp
© Kelley Luikey
Charleston, South Carolina

Clark’s Grebes Doing the ‘Weed Dance’
© Brian E. Small
Southern California

Showcase • Top 100

© NANPA Expressions

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Atlantic Puffin Working in the Rain
© Sunil Gopalan
Scotland

Burrowing Owl Catching a Figeater Beetle
© Sha Lu
Ontario, California

Sparring Red and Green Macaws
© Judy Lynn Malloch
Pantanal, Brazil

Atlantic Puffin Working in the Rain
© Sunil Gopalan
Scotland

Burrowing Owl Catching a Figeater Beetle
© Sha Lu
Ontario, California

Resplendent Quetzal
© Will Pohley
Parasuco Quetzal, Costa Rica

American White Pelicans Preening
© Dennis Fast Photography
Viera Wetlands, Florida

Peregrine Falcon Warning Brown Pelican
© KS Nature Photography
La Jolla, California

American White Pelicans Preening
© Dennis Fast Photography
Viera Wetlands, Florida

Peregrine Falcon Warning Brown Pelican
© KS Nature Photography
La Jolla, California

Black Skimmer Makes a Dramatic Landing
© Peter Brannon
Sarasota, Florida

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Showcase  Top 100
The Rush Is On! Clark’s Grebes Walking on Water to Find a Mate
© David Hekel
Lake Hodges, California

Emperor Penguins Tobogganing to Increase Travel Efficiency and Save Energy
© Dee Ann Pederson
Snow Hill Island, Antarctica

Sandhill Cranes Wading
© Mark Hayward
New Mexico

An Ambitious and Lucky Osprey Double-Dips
© Peter Brannon
Lakeland, Florida

Contortionist
© Dee Langovin
Frederick Sound, Alaska

A Cape Weaver Preparing the Foundation for the Next Generation
© Charles Gangas
South Africa

A Great Egret Strikes for Prey
© George Sanker
Myakka River State Park, Florida
Roseate Spoonbills Mating
© Lynn Long
Saint Augustine, Florida

Great Egret With Nesting Material After the Rain
© Cynthia Lockwood
Smith Oaks Rookery, High Island, Texas

Atlantic Puffin With Feather in a Field of Sea Pinks
© Cathy Ilg
Noss National Nature Reserve, Isle of Noss, Scotland

Brown-hooded Parrot Take Off
© William Pohley
Boca Tapada, Costa Rica

Booted Racket-tail Hummingbird on Ginger Flower With Tiny Wasp
© Larry Moskovitz
Tandayapa, Ecuador

White-necked Jacobin Sipping Nectar From Immortal Blooms
© Ken Archer
Trinidad & Tobago

Black-bellied Whistling Ducks Landing on a Snag
© Michael J. Cohen
Boynton Beach, Florida

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© Sandia Zelasko
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**Male Bronzed Cowbird Displaying for Female**
© Hector D. Astorga
Santa Clara Ranch, Texas

**Acorn Woodpeckers Spitting Wood Chips**
© Rick Derevan
Atascadero, California

**Early Morning Dance: Clark’s Grebes Walking on Water**
© KS Nature Photography
Escondido, California
For many years I’d thought about being a photographer, but simply thinking about it doesn’t get you there. Four years ago I made the leap from a secure job to starting up my own company, Wilderness At Heart Photography. My previous retail management experience certainly helped pave the road to following my dream. Before I made the jump, I needed to define my goals, create a business plan and prepare myself both financially and mentally. These are some of the things I’ve learned that may assist you in starting and managing your own business.

#1: Why?

The first question to ask yourself when you are thinking about starting a photography business is WHY? It’s not a bad question to ask every year or two as your business grows. This question needs to be carefully considered. If you love photography, enjoy being outdoors, perhaps love to print images, enjoy taking trips to new destinations, and think that you want to become your own boss, think again.

I met a photographer who asked me to sit down with her and discuss whether she should lead a tour that a travel company owner had offered her. I asked her what she thought that she’d enjoy about doing this. She realized that the motivation to return to this special place did not include guiding others and ensuring they had a wonderful experience. It did not include being unable to take pictures when she wanted to do so. And she didn’t want to follow up on the paperwork or sell the trip to others. As I spoke to her, it clarified her “WHY.”

All of these reasons may help you be successful, but do you like the nuts and bolts of running a business? Do you like building and updating your website, constant contact with customers, building customer relationships, planning your finances, daily posting in social media, business analytics, responding efficiently and thoroughly to customer inquiries, recording your expenses and yes, even self-promotion? Running a business requires a lot of time NOT doing photography.

#2: What Are My Skills?

Next ask yourself WHAT ARE MY SKILLS? WHAT DO I ENJOY? You need to be honest with yourself. If you have a difficult time answering these questions, look at what you do at work now. What do you accomplish easily, and what do you put on the back burner because you simply don’t want to do or enjoy doing?
financial support, and I didn’t want to get into debt. That was a big consideration for me. I’d planned my photographic purchases well in advance so that I didn’t NEED to go out and buy a bunch of new gear as I started my company.

Besides the gear, you must also determine what also you need, which varies depending on the type of business you’re starting. Establishing not just your financial goals, but also your realistic financial needs, should guide you in both the short term and long term. Your business plan needs to be a realistic reflection of how much you need per month, week or day to survive.

Talk to your financial advisor/accountant to be clear on what you may need to do to plan for this decision. Put a certain amount of your earnings aside each month. A savings cushion will help you get over unexpected hurdles, down times or when you need to buy new gear.

Scary stuff, but you MUST take the time to figure out, budget and plan in order to get a business going. These are real considerations that I implore you to consider BEFORE you give your notice at your current job.

#5: Licenses, Permits And Insurance

Obtaining licensing, permits and insurance are all part of running a company. Take the time to research and make the right decisions. Not only might you need federal and state permits, but you may also need city or county permits to run your business, and the requirements change from year to year. As a business owner, you need to set up all of this before you open your business. This requires time, application and license fees, responsibility and careful adherence to rules. You don’t want to be fined or taxed because you didn’t take the time to do it right. There are too many people that take shortcuts and don’t follow the regulations, and that eventually leads to trouble. For example, I offer trips to Grand Teton National Park and am an authorized permittee of the National Park Service, but not everyone running workshops. As your business grows, does your social media feed reflect where you are now and where you’re headed?

Newsletters and blogs are also viable ways to tell people what you are doing. If you are CONSISTENT, you will develop a following that looks forward to reading what you are up to. These must be professional so, if you’re not a designer or writer, find someone to set up your blog, write newsletters and so forth.

In addition, when I do classes for local photo stores and schools, I’ve used Instagram to share and cultivate future events. Conversely, I always have postcards to hand out with a photo and description of upcoming events to my classes and workshops. These can be inexpensively produced through Costco and really help keep you in a customer’s mind.

#7: Diversify Your Business

Diversification is critical to many businesses. Every six months, spend some time thinking about how to make your business fresh and exciting. Write your ideas down. What is viable? What do you need to put those ideas in place? Then DO IT! Yes, it is more work, but if you don’t do it, someone else will. What new ideas can be readily incorporated into your business?

Do you still know and understand your competition or has it changed? How are you able to distinguish yourself from them? Are there add-on business lines, products or services that will set you apart, create new customers and expand your offerings?

This year I am partnering with a fellow photographer and a local guide to lead an intimate, boutique workshop to the beautiful country of Costa Rica. This workshop came about because I was diversifying and setting new goals for myself. I wanted a reputable guide and a seasoned bird photographer as a partner for what I expect to be an extraordinary workshop!

Many photographers have diversified by creating podcasts, webinars or training videos. These are additional ways to reach a broad group of individuals who share your interests. By sharing your passion, expertise and knowledge, you can generate new fans and customers and create some lasting relationships. Is this easy? No, it takes time, knowledge, commitment, and expenses. You probably will need to purchase some specialized equipment, but with passion, dedication and personality, you may find this a rewarding venture. And, as your audience grows, you may be able to generate additional income through vendor partnerships, sponsorships or ads.

A well-known photographer I know created his own photography training program. He has a year-long program that offers mentorship and suggestions, online classes and books. His financial results have been stellar, but I must add that he had already developed the qualifications and the connections before launching.

As they develop following, some photographers are getting additional income from places like Patreon, where followers make small monthly donations to creative artists and the artists often provide exclusive content. The possible ways of generating income in the digital world are endless, and more pop up every day!

#8: Continue Your Education

Have you taken classes or workshops for yourself? I do not know all the answers, that is for sure! By taking local classes and signing up for workshops such as at the Palm Springs Photo Festival or

*New Mexico*
Photography At The Summit in Jackson Wyoming, I have met amazing faculty and participants. By being open to learning and criticism, I think that I have walked away a better photographer. At NANPA's Nature Photography Summit and Trade Show, I met people who are extremely business savvy and who motivated and inspired me. Last year, I met a talented young photographer who I later invited to assist me on my Teton workshop. She brought enthusiasm, knowledge and a different perspective that were invaluable to my clients—and myself.

Take a workshop in a genre in which you are not comfortable. I took an incredible workshop with Gerd Ludwig, a Nat Geo documentary photographer. He taught a journalism-oriented photography class at the Salton Sea. When I shared my bird and wildlife portfolio, he stopped me and asked if I knew what kind of photography that he was going to be teaching. Yes, I did know this was out of my comfort zone. That's why I was there! His question pushed me further and harder than any other feedback that I've received. No, I didn't become a photojournalist, but I did learn the importance of telling a story, and several creative, out-of-the-box ideas that can do just that. These ideas influence my wildlife photography every day and are tips I can demonstrate with clients.

The vast body of knowledge on the Internet makes it easy to learn new things. I try to read something new every day to incorporate into my skill set. Some of my favorite photographers regularly share their photographic techniques. I check out camera companies and even photographic paper companies that share valuable insights, ideas to try and recommendations. Some library systems have subscriptions to lynda.com or other wide-ranging training resources. Learning is a pillar to being successful, so don’t ever stop!

#9: Give Back, Get Involved

Volunteering is good for many reasons. I volunteer with NANPA’s High School Scholarship Program and became the faculty coordinator for the Palm Springs Photo Festival through which I’ve met some extraordinary faculty and some wonderful NANPA members. In addition, I am an active member of the Palos Verdes Art Center Photographic and Digital Artists (PADA) Group. Becoming president of both the Palos Verdes Art Center Artists’ Groups and PADA this past year allowed me to nurture my own leadership skills and become acquainted with even more incredible photographers and digital artists. I have been able to ask them questions and obtain their assistance on a variety of photographic and business issues! Several of their members became customers and joined me on my workshops.

Got an issue you’re passionate about? Consider proposing a webinar for NANPA. This is a great way to share your expertise and for more people to get to know you. Volunteer committee work with organizations like NANPA is another way to extend your contact, increase your visibility, and learn valuable skills.

If there is a charity that is running an event and looking for donations, what better way to contribute and market yourself than by donating one of your images? You get free publicity and you may get to attend the event as well. You may also qualify for tax write-offs. Be sure that you have a qualified accountant who really can help you navigate the IRS rules. As you already know, tax law changes every year and keeping abreast of those changes can save you money.

#10: Use The Available Resources

There are a lot of courses available through the Better Business Bureau and local schools to help you write your business plan, learn accounting skills, and acquire the necessary information to run a business. NANPA has many resources to explore and your local library may have free access to online learning courses. Don’t be afraid to say that you don’t know something. Simply ask. I am so grateful for friends and clients who have helped me along the way.

Starting Wilderness At Heart Photography, my business, felt overwhelming at first. By keeping my focus, having a plan, and following these 10 steps, I’ve been able to get where I wanted to go. I am achieving my dreams. Leaving the security of my previous job was the best decision that I’ve ever made. Some days, my work life is under the 75 business/25 passion rule; and other days I feel that I discovered the inverse: a 75 passion/25 business rule. As Albert Schweitzer once said, “Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success. If you love what you are doing, you will be successful.”

“Dominance.” As I approached the banks of a stream at El Dorado Park in Long Beach, California these egrets decided to perform a display of dominance. Even in an urban area like this, our local parks offer many opportunities to learn about wildlife and birds, and to photograph their behaviors!

“Togetherness.” Grebes are building their nest at San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary in Irvine, California. From more than 46,000 images submitted, this one received a Highly Commended award in the 2018 Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition.
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Conservation
Desperate Deals

© Scott Trageser/NatureStills
Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh

The area within the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh where our conservation programs are focused and this shot was taken, is a restricted area. I was required to apply for a permit, stay in a designated area for only a very limited timeframe, and be accompanied by four policemen at all times. We were guided by our indigenous parabiologists to this small, remote Mro village and, luckily, were able to convince them to pose with these hornbills, which were being reared by the family. This photo was taken to demonstrate the challenges for both wildlife and the local people.

I live an itinerant lifestyle, chasing jobs and opportunities as a professional photographer and conservationist, so I am never based anywhere long. Reptiles and amphibians are my favorite subjects both for photography and research, but my photography is always aimed at promoting conservation in a variety of ways. Bangladesh tends to offer the most exciting photographic experiences, as the country is impossible to predict, colorful in every sense of the word, and new species are begging to be discovered. For remote, expedition-style discovery and photography though, nothing beats Ecuador in my humble opinion.

Beautiful Scavengers

© Carla Rhodes
Boragaon Landfill, India

During my first trip to India, I saw a striking five-foot-tall bird standing by the roadside. I was told it was a Greater Adjutant stork. The next day, I was taken to the last place I expected to see a mass population of endangered birds: the sprawling Boragaon landfill. With no prior knowledge of my subjects and limited time, I had to think fast while shooting from a stationary vehicle. I’ll never forget the smell, which clung to my gear for days. The scene was heartbreaking, yet beautiful. At that moment, I knew I had to pursue wildlife conservation photography.

I live in the Catskill Mountains near Woodstock, New York. I’m an emerging, full-time wildlife conservation photographer. I got my first DSLR almost 5 years ago and have followed my bliss ever since. Nothing in my life has ever made me happier. I love shooting anything wild! My favorite subjects? I gravitate towards underappreciated, overlooked subjects. From ‘common’ species in my own backyard to overlooked ‘exotic’ species like endangered Greater Adjutants. If my photographs educate the viewer on my subject, tell a story, arise emotions and/or evoke change, I know I’ve done my job well.
Prairie Dogs Threatened by Development

© Emma Balunek
Fort Collins, Colorado

“The photographer did an excellent job of juxtaposing the prairie dog with the destructive development going on. It conveys to the viewer that, for many species, the greatest threat is loss of habitat.”
—Boyd Norton

“The clear juxtaposition between the homes of prairie dogs and humans illustrates the ongoing crisis of habitat destruction for wildlife.”
—Amy Gulick

Grizzly 399 Attempts to Cross the Road

© Jennifer Leigh Warner
Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming

“This image begs the question, “Are we loving nature to death?” To see this collared bear crowded by excited onlookers as it attempts to cross a man-made road raises a host of issues: What is wild? How best to respect wildlife? What limits are necessary for wildlife viewing?”
—Amy Gulick

“This grizzly bear photo speaks volumes about how crowded our national parks have become. As you look at this photo, you can well imagine how stressed that bear is, being surrounded by people and vehicles.”
—Boyd Norton

“The photographer did an excellent job of juxtaposing the prairie dog with the destructive development going on. It conveys to the viewer that, for many species, the greatest threat is loss of habitat.”
—Amy Gulick

“The clear juxtaposition between the homes of prairie dogs and humans illustrates the ongoing crisis of habitat destruction for wildlife.”
—Amy Gulick
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Western Burrowing Owlets by Artificial Burrow
© Melissa Usrey
Sonny Bono Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge, California

Development Encroaches on Sandhill Crane Nesting Grounds
© Claudia Daniels
Venice, Florida

Blue-green Algae Bloom Surrounds a Yellow-crowned Night Heron
© Elizabeth Acevedo
Lake Pontchartrain, Mandeville, Louisiana

Wind Turbines Reduce Fossil Fuel Use in Kodiak
© Jennifer Smith
Kodiak, Alaska

A Wide Black Tendril of Spilled Coal Flows From Barges
© Alison M. Jones
Mississippi River Delta, Louisiana

Unfortunate Barn Owl Tangled in Barbed Wire
© Sandy Richards-Brown
Idaho
Cattle Egret in the Boragaon Landfill
© Carla Rhodos
Guwahati, India

Maasai Herder on Dried-up Lake Bed
© Alison M. Jones
Greater Amboseli Region, Kenya

Toxic Sediment From Old Mines Creates the “Yellow Waters of the Uncompahgre River”
© Harvey Stearn
Ouray County, Colorado

There Were Hundreds of Dead Sea Stars Along the Beach This Evening
© Jerry D. Greer
Cape Point, Cape Hatteras National Seashore, North Carolina

A Fish’s Perspective From the Point of View of a Threatened, Native Greenback Cutthroat Trout
© William Hughes, II
Northern Colorado

Soda Bottles are Not for Piping Plovers
© Stewart Ting Chong
Duxbury Beach, Massachusetts

The Beach is Our Treasure, not Your Trash Can
© Stewart Ting Chong
Duxbury Beach, Massachusetts
This Karo Two-day-old Baby and Its Mother Must Leave Their Village Because of Drought, Big Agriculture and Upstream Dams
© Alison M. Jones
Lower Omo River Village of Duss, Ethiopia

Deforestation Threatens the Livelihoods of Millions
© Alison M. Jones
Mau Forest Headwaters, Kenya

A Pair of Baboons Play Innocently With a Deadly and Inhumane Wire Snare
© Barbara Flomng
Chobe National Park, Botswana

A Red-shouldered Hawk, Victim of a Collision With a Passing Car
© Kevin Barry
Everglades National Park, Florida

Thesaurus on Top of a Bullet-riddled Television Used for Target Practice Ironically Opened to the Words Protection, Conservation, and Guardianship
© Wendy Jensen
Cold Creek, Nevada

Necropsy of a Juvenile Humpback Whale, Likely a Ship Strike Victim
© Jodi Frediani
Half Moon Bay, California

A Long-tailed Crackle Flying Out with the Trash
© Charles Cangas
Potrero Bay, Guanacaste, Costa Rica

Black Softshell Turtles
© Scott Trageser
Chittagong, Bangladesh
Conservation is complicated

Facing the 21st century’s relentless ecological crises, it’s hard for many conservationists to face this scary fact: an argument from knowledge and reason alone won’t save us. Most of us presume on principle that education should change behavior, facts should inform decisions, scientific consensus should be trusted. But in the supposed “real world,” things aren’t quite so straightforward.

Cognitive bias. Motivated reasoning. Group identity. These forces make persuasion harder than most of us expect it to be. Each week brings new investigations into why people do (or don’t do) what they do (or don’t).

The complexities of how to persuade people to conserve nature are worth investigating. Collective human action is responsible for threatened biodiversity, ruined habitats, altered climate, and collapsing ecosystems. Therefore, collective human action is needed to address these problems. Conservation goals can be achieved only by persuading lots of people to change something they’re doing (or not doing).

Persuasion requires more than facts

Researchers at Yale Law School’s Cultural Cognition Project investigate the confounding questions around why and how groups of people might change. The term “cultural cognition” was coined in response to their conclusions: people tend to conform their beliefs about the world to the values that define their cultural identities.

So the question of how large, pluralistic, technological societies might be induced to restrain destructive instincts becomes central to conserving the natural world. In recent years, we’ve assembled a more complete toolkit to address this question – and not a moment too soon!

Many conservationists now understand that nature education and communicating scientific evidence are necessary conservation tasks, but not sufficient. “Necessary but not sufficient” is a familiar condition in science, where looking under the hood often reveals unexpected complexity. What most people require to change their behavior is not data alone, but also an accompanying story that gives data meaning.
Making meaning isn’t easy

“Meaning” emerges from a complex slurry of values, group identities, culture, experiences, feelings, and—perhaps most importantly—storytelling. Human beings hold tightly to our sense of meaning. Shared meanings connect us to each other, making our social lives possible. We culturally inherit much of it in childhood, and it’s tied intimately to how we see and how we define ourselves.

Therefore, efforts to persuade people toward new values and a new story about their place in the world are going to need many people employing diverse methods. We need scientists, engineers, politicians, educators, and an army of skilled cultural communicators.

Who are the persuasive voices shaping cultural values? Anyone who can skillfully and compellingly craft a story about the value of the natural world will have a role to play. Photographers occupy a special category of importance in these efforts. Conservation photographers think they might help change the world by making certain kinds of pictures—and they’re almost certainly right.

Photography can communicate value

Conservation photography supports the communication of necessary facts and knowledge about the natural world by presenting a context of meaning for those facts. In this way, conservation photography is a kind of values-infused storytelling about what’s important, and, perhaps more crucially, why it’s important.

If you listen carefully when conservation photographers speak about their work, you’ll hear them use the language of values and meaning. They talk about “beauty” and “harsh realities.” They reflect on their passion for their subjects, their attempt to provoke emotional connections and new perspectives. The simple fact of pointing a camera at nature already presumes the value of nature.

By engaging in the effort, expense, and careful attention necessary to capture the movement of a bird’s wing—or a foggy landscape, or the face of a cricket, or a coral polyp—a photographer is presenting a judgment about the value of that wing, landscape, face, or polyp. Nobody goes to the trouble of doing this work unless there’s something about it that is of value. And that’s just the start.

Stories shape society

A growing body of social science highlights conservation’s need for skilled conveyors of narratives that focus on the natural world by presenting pictures—and they’re almost certainly right. Conservation photographers can help their communities envision alternatives to environmentally damaging practices. “To discredit a corrupt story...is not sufficient,” writes Korten. “It must be replaced by a more credible and compelling story.”

Replacing harmful stories

One story presents spiders as creepy, soulless, dangerous, and out of place in human dwellings. Another story is that spiders nurture their young, rid homes of pests, and carry an eerie beauty.

One story is that an endangered bird is economically useless, obstructing progress, and irrelevant. Another story addresses its key role in ecosystem health, its impressive perseverance under harsh conditions, and its inherent value in the web of life.

One story is that coyotes are at war with humans, morally evil, dirty, and can’t experience pain. Another story is that coyotes can be beneficial, intelligent, playful, and unsurprising.

One story is that trees are inert objects, all the same, and a material resource to support human industry. Another story is that trees are mysterious, communicative, diverse, and evocative.

Patterns of behavior and social systems are informed and supported by one story or another. These stories are built by combining words and pictures in culturally meaningful ways.

Revaluing nature’s stories: Move your lens to the level of your subject’s perspective. Don’t just show an animal on display for human observation. Show them moving in and out of the hidden spaces of their environments, suggesting goals and purposes that make sense in their world.

More than facts: The world can be engaged through an aesthetic perspective. Creative framing, angles, and crops can highlight the natural world’s surprising combinations of form, shape, lines, and color—as any artist might explore the formal properties of a beautiful abstract composition.

Conservation photography is one important practice for persuading and influencing how communities think through their relationships and priorities related to the natural world.

Metaphors influence emotions

A typical conservation photograph might give an emotional impression (often explicitly named in the caption) of the “curiosity” of an exploring bear cub, the “determination” of a desert flowering plant, or the “smile” on a salamander’s face.

Science tells us that the shape of a salamander’s mouth is not a mirror of the smile on a human face. But a skilled conservation photographer is framing a salamander’s smile as a metaphor to draw a viewer into a new way of thinking about a salamander’s value. The image isn’t intended to scientifically convey a salamander’s jolly state of mind. Instead, the image serves to remind us what’s possible to feel about a salamander, thereby encouraging acceptance of a story about how we might behave toward salamanders.

Human emotional responses to visual beauty operate in similar ways. Looking beautiful is far down the list of utilitarian reasons to protect a wetland. But when people respond to a beautiful photograph of a wetland, they’re better prepared to consider the conservation science that enables a wetland’s protection.

The care with which metaphors are chosen, argues cognitive historian Jeremy Lent in his book The Patterning Instinct, is central to telling powerful stories. Whether a salamander actually smiles or not is a separate question from whether a picture can stand as a visual metaphor for what a smile represents to us.

“Metaphors matter,” Lent writes. “…(T)he root metaphors cultures use to make sense of the cosmos encourage patterns of thought that permeate daily life.”

This social force of metaphors is crucial to the future of life on Earth. Lent addresses this with characteristic directness: “Our metaphors of nature have never mattered more than now. The way in which our global society views the natural world frames our collective behavior toward it.”

He goes on to quote linguist George Lakoff: “Metaphor plays a very significant role in determining what is real for us…New metaphors have the power to create a new reality.”

Conservation photography is always a collaboration

A common objection to these ideas is that reality is defined empirically, not “metaphorically.” But what’s being encouraged here is about human social behavior, which can’t be separated from the goals and ingredients of conservation. Society is powerfully influenced by narrative visual expression, just as it’s influenced by precise empirical description. This truth demands cooperation between people who are trained in each.

Are animals in our environment objects to be manipulated (or eliminated) for profit as other objects are? Or are animals living beings of intrinsic value that share commonalities with our own lives? The scientific side of conservation can answer these questions only partially. Cultural storytelling carries us the rest of the way toward informed and motivated action.

Photography can be one of the most powerful ways to deliver those stories in ways that move people to change, conviction, and action.
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Coastal Brown Bear Tracks
© Carol Lehrman
Lake Clark National Park, Alaska

A group of us were watching and photographing an Alaskan brown bear and her two cubs, sparring and digging for clams in Lake Clark, Alaska. Having a soft spot for still-life and close-up photography, I shifted to compose some deep tracks in the sand, which I found most compelling when the tracks filled with water.

I’m an enthusiastic photography hobbyist loving all things nature. I’ve been shooting consistently for about two years and enjoy shooting wildlife and landscapes, as well as still-life, with a special focus on flowers. Some of my favorite places to shoot have been Alaska, Rwanda, Kenya, and the Tetons and I hope to return to each of them!

Lemon Shark Sunset Split
© Matthew Meier
Tiger Beach, Grand Bahama Island, Bahamas

This photo was created while on a dive trip to Tiger Beach, located northwest of Grand Bahama Island. While anchored over the dive site, dozens of lemon sharks circled the boat near the surface. To get this shot, I was laying face down on the swim step with my camera housing in the water, trying to balance the exposure for the fleeting sunset with the power of my strobes to illuminate the sharks under the surface.

I am an award-winning professional underwater, nature and travel photographer living in San Diego, California. I also shoot commercially, specializing in architectural and product photography. My images have been displayed in art galleries, museums and private collections, as well as published in books, magazines, and ad campaigns. For the past ten years I have also served as a contributing editor, photographer and travel writer for X-Ray International Dive Magazine.
"We see a lot of macro images of insects, but seldom are they this animated and interesting. This image captures both aspects."
—George Lepp

"A rather bizarre creature captured with good detail, action and lighting."
—Tom & Pat Leeson

"Underwater photography is a whole different world to most photographers and an image with this much color and information is a delight to behold. The old adage of using photography to show us something we would never otherwise have seen is clearly on display here. To do it well is another level of communication."
—George Lepp

"A difficult underwater capture with great color, detail and behavior."
—Tom & Pat Leeson
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Newly-emerged Stream Bluet Damselfly
© Dennis Fast Photography
Varal Ranch, Zapata, Texas

Western Diamondback
© Cissy Beasley
San Patricio County, Texas

Polistes dorsalis Wasp
© Lee Hoy Photography
Davis Mountains, Fort Davis, Texas

Green Lynx Spider
© Duane Angles
Lake Draper, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Grasshopper Nymph
© Lee Hoy Photography
Davis Mountains, Fort Davis, Texas
Spider Wasp With Spider
© Tom Myers
Madagascar

The Magnificent Tail of a Violet-tailed Sylph
© Scott Trageser/NatureStills LLC
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Green and Black Poison Dart Frog
© Hector Astorga
Sarapiqui, Costa Rica

Timber Rattlesnake
© Nick Kanakis
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© Michael Shane
La Mesa, California

Palmetto Branch
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Molokai, Hawaii

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Showcase Top 100

Beauty and the Beast: Green Lynx Spider on Echinacea Flower
© Jeff Parker
Red Belly Ranch, Smithville, Texas

Lady Bug Resting on Foxglove Stalk
© Harvey Stearn
Sedona, Arizona

Parts of a Whole: Two Nautilus Halves
© Janet MacCausland
Massachusetts

Cactus Bloom
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Chicago Botanic Garden, Glencoe, Illinois

Monarchs by the Hundreds, no Thousands!
© Kathryn Cubert
Honey Park, Cleveland, Ohio

Sandstone Landscape
© Charles Needle
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Showcase Top 100

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Macro/Micro/All Other Wildlife • 73
Mating Wasp Moths in the Cloud Forest of the Colombian Choco
© Nick Kanakis
Tatama National Park, Colombia

Sweetlips Emerging From the Abyss
© Cameron Azad
Raja Ampat, Indonesia

Blue-ringed Octopuses Mating
© Cameron Azad
Puerto Galera, Philippines

Dew Drops on Fallen Oak Leaf
© Elijah Goodwin - Whimbrel Nature
Croton Point Park, Croton-on-Hudson, New York

Night-blooming Cactus
© Wayne Woltersberger
Frederick, Maryland

Dracula Orchid
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Dragonfly in Love
© Barbara White
Laguna Beach, California

Polyphemus Moth Newly Emerged From Its Cocoon
© Dennis Fast
Photography
Kleefeld, Manitoba

A Cicada Sheds its Exoskeleton
© Emma Balunek
Cloud Forest, Ecuador

Sego Lily Closeup
© Jim Ramakka
Aztec, New Mexico
The Oustalet’s Chameleon is Among the Larger Species of Chameleon in Madagascar © Myrna Paige Near Ankarana National Park, Madagascar

Blunt-headed Tree Snake Eating an Anole Lizard © Yamil Saenz Boca Tapada de San Carlos, Alajuela, Costa Rica

Swallowtail Butterfly in the Garden © Barbara Adams Ottawa, Ontario

The Rediscovered Mindo Cochran Frog © Scott Trageser/NatureStills LLC Rio Manduriacu Reserve, Ecuador

Large, Female Great Hammerhead Shark Casts a Shadow © Matthew Meier Grand Bahama Island, Bahamas

Romantic Encounter: Beetles Copulating Inside a Hedgehog Cactus Bloom © Harvey Stearn Sedona, Arizona

Water Lily Garden © Kathleen Snead Naples, Florida

Clematis © Charles Needle Giverny, France

The Trunk of a Maple Tree, Surrounded by Its Bright Red Fallen Leaves, on a Rainy Autumn Afternoon © Camille Nims Lamoureux Kirkland, Washington

Swallowtail Butterfly in the Garden © Barbara Adams Ottawa, Ontario

Dragonfly on Catchfly Prairie Gentian © Michael Shane Square Lake, Colorado River, California

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Most of us presume on principle that education should change behavior, facts should inform decisions, scientific consensus should be trusted. But in the supposed “real world,” things aren’t quite so straightforward.

There has never been a better time to be a photographer. With the invention of the digital camera we are able to make thousands of images while satisfying our ever-growing need for instant gratification by viewing our images on the back of our cameras just seconds after making them. There is no longer a need to spend hundreds of dollars on film and processing every single negative or transparency in hopes that one of our frames turns out the way we had imagined.

With the advent of social media, photographers are now able to share their images with millions of viewers worldwide with just the press of a button, while obtaining instant feedback.

Unfortunately, along with the ease of creating images and sharing these stories with a grand audience comes competition to be the next big “instant success.” We live in a society that is, in part, driven by the urge to become rich and famous at almost any cost. And in our pursuit of creating the next, best, Instagram-worthy image, we can lose sight of why we are creating the images to begin with.

Ever since the invention of the camera, photographers have been drawn to nature to document the natural world. Photographers such as Ansel Adams used images of the great American landscape to help establish the National Park System. Other photographers pointed their lenses at wild animals to help scientists gain a greater understanding of the species with whom we share this world. Photographs have been used to document how our landscapes change over time and to influence change. They are used to tell stories of newly discovered places, to show us the vastness of space and the fine details of a butterfly’s wing.

What is a nature photographer’s obligation to nature?

As nature photographers we become biographers for these wild places and species. We are tasked with the responsibility of accurately portraying our subjects in a manner that best tells their story. With any great privilege comes an equally great responsibility. Even as we show their beauty and tell their stories, we owe it to our subjects to protect their wellbeing. Otherwise we are just exploiting them.

When a photographer tramples his way through a bed of wildflowers to get the best angle for the “perfect landscape,” he is doing a disservice to all photographers who might come after him, to anyone else who might want to pause and admire the wildflowers, and to all the plants, animals and humans who might rely on the land.
And when a photographer takes a store-bought mouse and throws it to a wild owl to create images of owls flying towards the camera, he is creating an illusion that the owl’s behavior is natural and the photo is achievable through ethical means. What is really happening is the photographer is sacrificing the life of the mouse and maybe the owl as well in one full swoop by drawing the owl to the side of the road where it might be struck by the next passing car.

Nature photographers have an obligation to their subjects to be ambassadors, to produce their images in a manner that is not doing harm or promoting harm to the subject. Whether the intended purpose of the image is to evoke emotion and encourage change or to educate the photo viewer about the subject, it is not enough to take images for the sake of gaining fame or followers while letting the repercussions of your actions fall mainly on our subjects.

“Social Media Influencers” set the tone for what type of photography is considered popular or not and what is appropriate or not, not just for the photography community but also for society at large. When a photographer shares a wide-angle image of a snow leopard, emerging from the water, and with the animal’s natural habitat in the background, it can imply that creating images of hard-to-find animals in natural settings is easily achievable under the right conditions. This is where truth in captioning comes in. NANPA has created a guideline for Truth in Captioning that can be found on its website (https://www.nanpa.org/wp-content/uploads/Truth-in-Captioning-Statement-Revised-3-2018.pdf).

It is the ethical responsibility of the photographer to share the relevant conditions under which the image was created. In the example of the snow leopard, revealing to the audience that the image was made with a remote DSLR camera trap will have a major impact on how the photo viewer understands the creation of the image. This would discourage other photographers from attempting to create similar images without the knowledge, thought and careful planning required to successfully and ethically create such an image.

This can have the same effect when photographers are sharing images of animals photographed in captivity without the proper identification. When a photo viewer sees a picture of a mountain lion posing on top of a rock in Antelope Canyon in Arizona, the uneducated photo viewer gets excited by this image and shares it with the world, perpetuating the notion that this type of image is created naturally. The photographer is then praised for the incredible finding and receives the “likes” and “follows” that he is trying to obtain. However, what the photo viewer fails to realize is that this scene did not occur naturally. It would be virtually impossible to create this image with a wild animal. Instead, this type of image is made by a game farm company transporting a captive cat to a location for photographers to create “wild-like” images. Photographs such as these serve up no educational, science or conservation messages. They only serve to deceive the photo viewer.

Social media is not the only place where photographers influence behavior. How a photographer behaves in the field has a direct impact on how the other photographers watching will behave. If the photographer approaches a harbor seal too closely and flushes it into the water, the next photographer may feel that this behavior is OK and will do the same. Accumulative damages are among the greatest dangers to any animal or ecosystem. With the popularity of nature photography on the rise, photographers need to consider how their behavior may influence the many other photographers who may attempt to copy that behavior. In the spring of 2019, California experienced what is known as a Super Bloom. An unusual and well-timed amount of rain created hills carpeted with California poppies. With the flowers came the Instagrammers. Both “influencers” and photographers alike began trampling their way through the wildflowers leaving flattened flowers and trails of destruction in their wake. Visitors were even seen picking the poppies to take home as souvenirs. Damaging the wildflowers can prevent them from reseeding, cutting off a cycle of blossoming and rebirth that has been going on for years.

Giving away sensitive location data, such as wildlife nesting or denning sites can also have a major impact on species and ecosystems. Photographers now have the ability to strip out GPS locations from an image’s metadata to protect endangered subjects. Safeguarding species locations, such as for rhinos in Africa, can help prevent this information getting into the hands of poachers looking to kill the animals. Not sharing specific locations can also help deter the masses from descending upon fragile locations. In some areas, such as around Jackson Hole and Grand Teton National Park, there are even organizations encouraging people to withhold specific location information from social media posts and use the hashtag #tagstrengthenly.

Ethical education

I often find myself observing other photographers while I’m out in the field—seeing how they react in certain situations and asking myself how I would respond in the same circumstances. Does the photographer taking a picture of a shorebird on the beach pick up the discarded plastic food wrapper left by the last beachgoer or leave it to potentially injure an animal? When a photographer’s wild subject flops into the woods does that photographer back away, realizing that the animal is stressed and frightened, or does he chase the animal deeper into the woods? And how are new photographers influenced by observing these behaviors?

Educating the next generation of photographers about ethical field practices is the best way to ensure the safety of our subjects so that the beautiful creatures and landscapes that we love photography will be there far into the future. We can help make this happen by ensuring that each photographic workshop and photo tour is conducted in an ethical manner, that we are being thoughtful with our social media posts, and that we are including ethical considerations in our webinars, presentations, blogs and articles. It is vital to the future of nature photography that all photographers are consistently taking these ethical guidelines into consideration. One great place to start is NANPA’s Principles of Ethical Field Practices created by NANPA’s Ethics Committee. (https://www.nanpa.org/wp-content/uploads/Ethical-Field-Practices-Revised-3-2018.pdf).

Print a copy to help enlighten others on your next workshop, camera club meeting or photo outing and, most importantly, take its message to heart.

Famous grizzly 399 crosses the road in Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming in front of a crowd of people eager to get a closer look.

Rainbow over the mountains in Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming.
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Photo credits: Top Row: Suzanne Mathias; Second Row: Emily Schwoerke, Suzanne Mathias; Third Row: Larry Saunders, Lawrence Parent, Susan Snyder; Fourth Row: Vella Torvik, Henry Holdsworth, Suzanne Mathias.

Mammals
After many annual winter visits to Yellowstone, this rare opportunity to photograph wolves near the road occurred. The large Wapiti Lake wolf pack had been taking down bison in the general area. Late one afternoon we saw an injured bison along the Madison River. Overnight the bison was taken by the wolves and early the next morning we saw the mostly eaten carcass near the road with wolves nearby. I stood on the road for hours and had the chance to photograph and observe the wolves’ behavior and hear them howling, a thrilling experience.

I am an enthusiastic hobbyist and have been photographing nature and wildlife for 15 years. My favorite place for wildlife would have to be Africa, where there are just so many locations with opportunities to observe and photograph animal behavior. All of my trips to Africa have included photographing on the Chobe River, Botswana, which is a very productive location.

While traveling in Costa Rica, I had the opportunity to photograph Nectar Bats in the rain forest at night. I set up my camera and lens with multiple flashes to provide the light necessary to produce this exposure. I sat in a chair a few feet away and watched them swarm the blossom. A couple of them even bumped into me!

I live in Arroyo Grande, California and enjoy nature photography as a very enthusiastic hobbyist. I have been photographing nature for about five years, and my preferred subjects are often things with wings—usually birds. One of my favorite locations to photograph is in the Rio Grande Valley of deep South Texas.
Puma Targeting a Large Guanaco

© David Bates
Pantanal, Chile

"I’ve seen quite a few images of the cougars in the Pantanal of Patagonia, but this is the first one with the cougar in action, taking down a guanaco. It’s just a great action shot with everything right at the exact right moment."

—George Lepp

"Dramatic behavior, shown at the peak of action, of an uncommon species (cougar), with good light and composition."

—Tom & Pat Leeson

Big Horn Rams Huddle

© Wiebe Gortmaker
Jackson Hole, Wyoming

"The four rams are doing a dominance behavior and the composition just adds to the drama."

—George Lepp

"Strong composition and behavior. Having photographed sheep many times, we know how difficult it is to get that many heads together with adequate depth-of-field."

—Tom & Pat Leeson
**Showcase Top 100**

**Female Jaguar Having a Walk With Her Cubs**
© Pablo Cersosimo
Mato Grosso, Pantanal, Brazil

**Orcas Hunting by Stranding**
© Jorge Cazenave
Chubut, Patagonia, Argentina

**Galapagos Sea Lion Blowing Bubbles**
© Susan McConnell
Floreana Island, Galapagos Islands, Ecuador

**Short-beaked Common Dolphin**
© Michael Shane
San Diego, California

**Female Lion and Cub Reflected in a Small Waterhole**
© Frieda Fast
Maasai Mara National Reserve, Kenya

**Leaping Lechwes**
© Carol Grenier
Chobe National Park, Botswana

**Mammals**

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Bison Running and Playing in the Snow
© Keith Bauer
Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming

Red Fox Kit Running off With a Rabbit
© Michael J. Cohen
San Juan Island, Washington

Cape Buffalo in Morning Light
© Barbara Fleming
Chobe National Park, Botswana

Coastal Brown Bears Bickering
© James Picardi
Lake Clark National Park, Alaska

Mountain Lion Riding out a Snowstorm
© Jim Burns
Uinta National Forest, Utah

Tiny but Mighty Cheetah Cub
© Anita Ross
Maasai Mara National Reserve, Kenya
Showcase • Top 100

A Baby Vervet Monkey’s Fast Food Drive-Thru
© Karen Blackwood/Eagle Eye Safaris
Kruger National Park, South Africa

Standoff at the Water Hole
© Charles Gangas
Umgvoli Hole at Zimanga, South Africa

African Elephants Surround a Youngster at a Water Hole
© Kevin Dooley
South Africa

Fluke of a Mother Humpback Whale
© Matthew Meier
Sea of Cortez, Cabo San Lucas, Mexico

One Look Says It All
© Jeffrey Goudy
Grand Lake, Colorado

First Kiss: One-hour-old Fawn Finds Mom for the First Time
© Zita Quentin
Colorado Springs, Colorado

Giraffe With Young
© Hector Astorga
Maasai Mara, Kenya

Tender Moments: Momma Leopard With Cubs
© Vicki Santello
Mashatu Game Reserve, Botswana

A Baby Vervet Monkey’s Fast Food Drive-Thru
© Karen Blackwood/Eagle Eye Safaris
Kruger National Park, South Africa

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Standoff at the Water Hole
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African Elephants Surround a Youngster at a Water Hole
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A Baby Vervet Monkey’s Fast Food Drive-Thru
© Karen Blackwood/Eagle Eye Safaris
Kruger National Park, South Africa

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Mammals • 93
Two Bull Elephants Take a Break From Feeding to Exchange a Gesture of Friendship
© David Glatz
Chobe National Park, Botswana

Orca Hunting a Southern Sea Lion Pup
© Pablo Cersosimo
Valdés Peninsula, Patagonia, Argentina

Dolphins in Sunbeams
© Tony Fratik
Triton Bay, Indonesia

A Superpod of Orcas in Resurrection Bay
© Carla DeDominica
Steward, Alaska

A Spectacular Evening Sunset in Botswana
© Sue Dougherty
Chobe River, Botswana

Sea Lion Playing With a Sea Star
© Rick Beldegreen
Sea of Cortez, Mexico

A Week-old Bighorn Sheep Lamb Reunites With Its Mother
© Sandra Zelasko
Badlands National Park, South Dakota

Orca Hunting a Southern Sea Lion Pup
© Pablo Cersosimo
Valdés Peninsula, Patagonia, Argentina

Bubble-net Feeding Humpbacks
© Dee Langoven
Frederick Sound, Alaska

Two Bull Elephants Take a Break From Feeding to Exchange a Gesture of Friendship
© David Glatz
Chobe National Park, Botswana

An Elephant Family Starts the Day With a Dust Bath
© Braam Oberholster
Amboseli National Park, Kenya

Male Lion Walking Before Sunrise
© Joanne Hartman
Maasa Mara, Kenya

A Spectacular Evening Sunset in Botswana
© Sue Dougherty
Chobe River, Botswana

A Week-old Bighorn Sheep Lamb Reunites With Its Mother
© Sandra Zelasko
Badlands National Park, South Dakota

Sea Lion Playing With a Sea Star
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Sea of Cortez, Mexico

Orca Hunting a Southern Sea Lion Pup
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A Week-old Bighorn Sheep Lamb Reunites With Its Mother
© Sandra Zelasko
Badlands National Park, South Dakota
Two Red Fox Vixen, One a Black Morph, Fighting Over Dominance
© Michael J. Cohen
San Juan Island, Washington

This Enormous Tusk Belongs to a 40-year-old Elephant Named Tim
© Scott Dore
Amboseli National Park, Kenya

Male Steenbok Kneeling to Drink
© Alice Cahill
Botswana

A Group of Grevy’s Zebras Lined up to Drink From the River
© John Herrel
Samburu, Kenya

Mom, You Have Lots of BIG Teeth!
© Janet Ogren
Maasai Mara National Reserve, Kenya

Southern Sea Otter
© Kathy West
Monterey Bay, California

Coastal Brown Bear Mom Heading Towards Shore With a Salmon to Feed Her Two Hungry Cubs
© Anita Ross
Lake Clark National Reserve, Alaska

Taking a Break and Having a Snack
© Lance Carter
India

Thirsty: A Herd of Impalas Drinks From a Waterhole
© Don Henderson
Northern Tuli Game Reserve, Botswana
Bleeding-heart Monkeys on the Edge of the Cliff in the Ethiopian Highlands
© Kevin Doolky
Ethiopia

A Quiet Moment: Seems Even Langur Monkeys Need Time to Reflect
© Ann Kramer
Bandhavgarh National Park, Tala, India

Proboscis Monkey Portrait
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Playful Elephants
© Chokchai Laungsuksun
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White-faced Capuchin
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Arctic Fox Courtship Play
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Coastal Hudson Bay, Manitoba

Bobcat Playing
© Deborah Roy
Savannah National Wildlife Refuge, South Carolina/Georgia

Young Red Fox Having a Good Time
© Michael J. Cohen
San Juan Island, Washington

Cape Buffalo Gathering in the Last Light of Day
© Christopher Gray
Zambezi National Park, Zambia
Black-faced Impala in Mid-stride
Leaping From a Perceived Threat
© Barbara Fleming
Etosha National Park, Namibia

Cheetah and Close Call for Marabou Stork
© Patrick Povey
Serengeti National Park, Tanzania

Female Elephant
Seal Protecting Pup by Throwing Sand
© Cathy DesRochers
San Simeon, California

Explosive Humpback Breaching
© Dee Langovin
Frederick Sound, Alaska

A Young Pine Marten Leaps From Tree to Tree
© Patricia Bauchman
Silver Gate, Montana

Scapes

100 • NANPA Expressions
Icy Cosmos
© Peter Nestler
Juneau, Alaska

I found this moulin while exploring under a glacier. Checking the Photopills app showed that the moving stars would match the sweep of the moulin perfectly so I came back on a clear night for the shot. After getting my exposure set for the stars I locked my shutter release open so it would shoot one image after another until the battery died. I sat outside the cave for safety (in case it collapsed during the 2.5 hour shoot) and to make sure I didn’t accidentally shine my headlamp and ruin the image.

My wife and I live on the road, full-time, in a truck camper. I’m originally from Alaska and spend as much time up there as possible as it will always be my favorite location to photograph. Over the years, I have broken 12 Guinness World Records for rope skipping and have traveled the world performing at various venues. This has allowed a lot of unique opportunities to photograph locations I was visiting for performances (many of which I only got out to see because I brought my camera with me). I love the diversity of landscapes.

Aerial of Cook Inlet
© Dawn Wilson
Cook Inlet, Alaska

I always remind my group to keep their cameras out during our flight to or from Lake Clark National Park — you never know what you might see. On my last trip, as I sat in the back of the plane, I noticed the windows were especially clean. I pulled out my camera and started looking for interesting patterns in the deltas where braided rivers ran down from glaciers into Cook Inlet in southwest Alaska. I loved the browns and blues in this scene high above a river’s outflow.
Aerial View of Glacial Melt Waters
© Greg Duncan
Iceland

“Patterns and design are two of my favorite elements and this is other worldly! When an image can show something we can’t usually see, it takes on another dimension and importance.”
—George Lepp

“Icebergs on Diamond Beach
© Don Larkin
Jokulsarlon Ice Beach, Iceland

“The warm colors coming from the sky contrast with the cold blue of the water and ice. Interesting shapes and colors.”
—George Lepp

“Beautiful light combines with the right shutter speed for a feeling of motion in the waves yet with clarity in both the ice and the foreground.”
—Tom & Pat Leeson

“Great composition, design and feeling of motion. It’s an interesting abstract—nature captured as work of art.”
—Tom & Pat Leeson

“Beautiful light combines with the right shutter speed for a feeling of motion in the waves yet with clarity in both the ice and the foreground.”
—Tom & Pat Leeson
Motion Blur of Trees and Bushes
© Frieda Fast
Grand Marais, Minnesota

Rivers of Paint From the Iceland’s Glaciers
© Greg Duncan
Iceland

Evening Drama
© Dennis Fast Photography
Katmai National Park, Alaska

Glacial Melt as Seen From Above
© Greg Duncan
Iceland

Star Trails Over Mono Lake
© Alice Cahill
Mono Lake, California

Lightning in the Badlands
© Jeff Parker
Badlands National Park, South Dakota
Spherical Moeraki Boulders are Otherworldly in the Early Light  
© Ian Frazier  
Koekohe Beach, South Island, New Zealand

Kamokuna Lava Ocean Entry  
© Naona Wallin  
Hawaii

Rainbow Over the Grand Canyon of the Pacific, Waipio Falls in the Distance  
© Geoffrey Schmid  
Waimea Canyon State Park, Kauai, Hawaii

Flamboyant  
© Vandana Bajikar  
Kirkjufell Mountain, Iceland

Mysterious Spring Dreams  
© Vandana Bajikar  
Ricketts Glen State Park, Pennsylvania

Rialto Beach Sunset  
© Don Larkin  
Olympic Peninsula, Washington
A Rogue Wave Comes in as the Sun Sets on Carrapata Beach
© Bob Watson
Carrapata State Park, California

Towerin Cliff Walls, Cascades, and Magnificent Turquoise Water Offer an Endless Visual Feast at Havasu Canyon
© Jeff Maltzman
Havasu Canyon, Arizona

Grand Teton National Park on a Snow-covered Morning
© Jennifer Leigh Warner
Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming

A Winter Scene at the East Branch of the Swift River
© Norman Eggett
Peterborough, Massachusetts

Upper Antelope Canyon
© Susan Marley
Near Page, Arizona

Sunrise lights the Clouds at Jekyll Island
© Thomas Yackley
Driftwood Beach, Jekyll Island, Georgia

Sunrise Over Mesquite Flat Sand Dunes
© Michael Shain
Death Valley National Park, California

Lenticular Clouds Provide a Dazzling Display at Sunset
© Jacqueline Deely
Fortuna Bay, South Georgia Island

Morning Sunrise in the Mist
© Kim Meisinger
Lake Dauterive, Louisiana

Last Rays of Sunlight in the Valley
© Michael Shain
Yosemite National Park, California
Clouds Reflect in a Vernal Pool During the 2019 California Super Bloom
© Donald Quintana
Carrizo Plains National Monument and California Valley, California

High Tide at Thor’s Well
© Leslie Gertie
Cape Perpetua, Oregon

Vestrahorn at the Edge of Night
© Margaret Larkin
Vestrahorn, Iceland

Eddy Currents in the Creek Mimic the Patterns of the Neighboring Rock
© Jeff Maltzman
Sabino Canyon, Tucson, Arizona

Aurora Borealis Over Paxson Lake
© Ray Bulson
Interior Alaska

Diamond Beach
© James Picardi
Jokulsarlon, Iceland

Circular View of a Hillside Covered With California Poppies and Yellow Mustard Flowers
© Matthew Meier
Escondido, California

A Bit of Symmetry
© Terry Shapiro
Mount Evans Road, Colorado

Sunset Over the Lake
© Nancy Elwood
Lake Blue Cypress, Florida
Showcase • Top 250

Sunsets on the Oregon Coast Are Simply Breathtaking
© Trixi Huish
Brookings, Oregon

Nature’s Crown Jewel: At the Top of Fairy Falls
Trailhead
© Mark Rivera
Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming

Above the Weather and Below the Sky
© Terry Shapiro
Highway 103, West of Denver, Colorado

Eye in the Sky
© Jennifer Smith
Kodiak, Alaska

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