

PTCC-2019 – NATURE #1

GROUP A

55 images from 19 members

01 - 1-2 wk. old Western Gull chicks (L. occidentalis), Pt Lobos CA.jpg

Nice capture. I can't help but wonder if it could have been an even stronger picture if you had gotten down on the ground – at eye-level with the chicks. I know that isn't easy!

02 - Adult Osprey and chick in nest.jpg

Great shot. A perfect moment, perfect composition. Could use a bit more contrast.

03 - African elephant (Loxodonta) matriarch guides youth from watering hole.jpg

OMG. I LOVE the three elephants – they could hardly be more perfect. But as so often happens in these shots, the out-of-focus branches in the foreground detract, and there's precious little you can do about it...

04 - Baboon (Papio ursinus) family eats afternoon meal.jpg

I LOVE the foreground mother and her baby. Unfortunately they're not in perfect focus, and the even-more out-of-focus branches distract. It's so frustrating in these situations when you KNOW what would make the picture better but you simply can't position yourself at the right place at the right time for the shot you really want...

05 - Bison (B. bison) cow at Yellowstone NP.jpg

Really, really nice portrait. I've been around those bison; they're not warm and cuddly and easy to photograph, I know!

06 - Black Bear (Ursus americanus) eating Barnacles.jpg

Really nice close-up – I think it would have been even stronger with a wider field of view – bear in environment. I'd like to see a shot that makes it more obvious what the bear was doing. As it is, it's hard to see if he/she is eating or sleeping just lying there or dead.

07 - Black-crowned Night-Heron (Nycticorax nycticorax) and chick.jpg

It's hard to miss with a shot of a mother feeding her chicks – although maybe this isn't that since the chick isn't open-mouthed and the parent doesn't seem to have any food to give. Could the shot be improved? I'd crop a bit off the bottom, but other than that, no. Other than wait until she came back with some food for her ever-hungry offspring.

08 - Black-tailed Deer (Odocoileus hemionus).jpg

This is a GORGEOUS capture, perfect in every way – endearing, flawless composition... BUT: technical quality - BOO! If you're going to take pictures that good, you simply MUST learn to bring out the best in them. LEARN PHOTOSHOP! I'm attaching a screen

grab that took three minutes to tweak, sloppily. If you master Photoshop, it shouldn't take you more than five minutes to do, perfectly.

09 - Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*) with underbite.jpg

Really nice portrait. The perfect profile works beautifully with the out-of-focus background. Do you have any more with more of the bird's body showing?

10 - Drone Fly (*Eristalis tenax*) nectoring.jpg

I've seen a million super-closeups of bees and bugs on flowers and this is one of the best. I really like it.

11 - Egret Preening.jpg

This is an extraordinary picture, even more so because it almost looks like the egret's head is detached from its body. I know they have flexible necks, but really! – lol... Did you make a hundred exposures? I hope so, in which case there might be one where it looks a little more believable. I really appreciate the limited color palette, too.

12 - EGRET WITH MATING DRAGONFLYS.jpg

This is an AMAZING picture – there's a whole story in it. A once-in-a-lifetime capture.

13 - EGRET WITH NEST MATERIAL.jpg

This is a picture I would kill to have taken myself. It has a Japanese simplicity and subtlety to it – perfect composition, beautifully restrained color palette. This is where photo-journalism crosses over into fine art. Did you cheat on the perfectly smooth, monotone background? I can smell Photoshop trickery a mile away, but I can't detect any here.

14 - Elephant Seal (*Mirounga angustirostris*) flipping sand.jpg

Great! A funny and informative bit of wildlife photography. When I see a crop as extreme as this, I can't help but think that there were some extraneous elements cropped out – you're much better served to take a picture that doesn't need extreme cropping, unless it's a panoramic.

15 - Elk (*Cervus canadensis*) cow at Yellowstone NP.jpg

A perfectly-composed portrait, nicely lit – it might have been even stronger if you had managed to make a more environmental statement by including more of the background.

16 - Feeding Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) Distracted By Noise Behind It.jpg

Wow. You don't have to do much with a bird as photogenic as this! But that's also a criticism: the heron did all the work in this picture; all you did was click the shutter. If you had managed to create a compelling composition by including more of the background, you'd get more of the credit.

17 - First Light, Lesser Sandhill Cranes (Grus Canadensis)_.jpg

OMG. I don't know where to begin. The subjects, the timing, the light, the composition, the tonalities, the color – normally, it'd take an act of Congress to make me get up that early, but if I thought I might get a picture as wonderful as this one, I would. I'm guessing that there's a substantial amount of post-processing in this one, but as far as I can tell, it's all legal...

18 - Golden-crowned sparrow (Zonotrichia atricapilla).jpg

Great idea, and great sparrow portrait. To really work, though, a picture like this has to have a meaningful, story-telling relationship between foreground and background. There has to be a compelling reason why you're devoting 90% of the real estate of the image to an out-of-focus, bare tree. Sparrows are notoriously well-adapted to living in human environments. Are you saying something about the inadequacy of their natural environment? It's not clear...

19 - Great blue heron (Ardea herodias) - Elkhorn Slough.jpg

Wonderful capture and beautiful composition. From what I can see on this small JPEG, however, it seems like the heron's legs are not in perfect focus. Long-lens photography is such an unforgiving format...

20 - Great Egret (Ardea alba) with mouse.jpg

Really good capture of an elusive subject – with lunch in his beak, no less. Background is less than thrilling, however...

21 - Greater Yellow Legs (Tringa Melanoleuca).jpg

For what this is, I don't see how it could be improved. It's an excellent, straight-ahead, full-sun capture. If the background were more out of focus it might have a more artistic feel to it, but those things are hard to control when you're shooting from the hip...

22 - GreenLynxSpider (Peucetia viridans) feeds on PricklyPear Cactus flower (Opuntia ficus-indica).jpg

Impressive capture, but the composition is a bit uninteresting. Next time, tell the spider to position himself more prominently (spiders are very cooperative if you ask them nicely). Or, failing that, you might want to zoom in even closer.

23 - Hoary bat (L. cinereus) asleep in a cypress tree, Pt Lobos CA.jpg

This would be so much more rewarding if I could actually make out the bat. In this contest, I've continually suggested backing away from the subject to reveal more of the surroundings. In this case, however, I'd suggest the opposite: zoom in on the bat. The green pine(?) needles on the right are distracting – they're irrelevant to the picture and yet they're almost the most noticeable element in the image....

24 - Honey bee (Apis) among the chrysanthemums.jpg

Nice! Capture, but sadly, not perfectly sharp. Keep doing these – you have to shoot a

hundred such close-ups to get one perfect one. I'd suggest cropping off the bottom 15% of the image.

25 - House Fly Tasting A Fig.jpg

Wow. A technically very impressive shot. I don't see much aesthetic brilliance to this image, but then, I wonder if I'd ever see any aesthetic brilliance in a picture of a housefly...

26 - Housefly (Musca domestica) staying dry under an iris during a rain shower.JPG

I must be blind; I can't see a housefly. What I CAN see, though, is a very beautiful flower that deserves bit of tweaking in Photoshop (I'm attaching a suggestion...)

27 - Indian Walking Stick (Carausius morosus) on Bush Lupin (Lupinus arboreus).jpg

Wonderful capture, perfect composition – the only thing lacking is that the walking stick is hard to make out (that probably makes the walking stick quite happy with its camouflage, but it doesn't make for truly arresting photography. This is a tricky one and difficult to do a dodge and burn on so small a file, but I'm attaching a re-do, more as a suggestion than as a better version...

28 - Julia Heliconian Butterflies (Dryas julia) mating.jpg

If this one was sharp, it'd be one of my favorites. But when you're shooting macro, half the impact is in how sharp the image is, and unfortunately, this one isn't...

29 - Lazy Elephant Seals (Mirounga angustirostris).jpg

Hard not to fall in love with elephant seals (albeit from a distance!) This is really a fortunate snapshot. Needs a bit more detail in the shadows.

30 - Mature Seeds in Common Milkweed Pod (Asclepias syriaca).JPG

Very well done. The background is a bit distracting; someday as an experiment you might want to try wrapping the milkweed in black cloth so that it stands out against a solid black background.

31 - Mineral Colors of Orange Spring Mound at Mammoth Hot Springs.jpg

Beautiful colors. It's hard to tell what it is at this close range, however. You might want to try darkening the image – see attached.

32 - Monarch butterfly (Danaus plexippus) life cycle, Soledad, CA.jpg

I love this. Journalistic (as opposed to fine art) story-telling nature photography at its best.

33 - Morepork Owl (Ninox novaeseelandiae).jpg

Wow. Strong portrait, technically flawless, as far as I can tell from this small JPEG. Might be even more powerful with a slightly different crop and a darker background – see attached.

34 - Northern elephant seal (*Mirounga angustirostris*) yawning.jpg

This looks like a close relative of #29 – same photographer, same elephant seals, a couple of minutes apart? Nice snapshot, needs a bit more shadow detail. I do prefer the color tint of #29.

35 - NorthernElephantSeal (*Mirounga angustirostris*) teaches pup battle techniques.jpg

Nice capture. Watch your focus – pictures like this gain a lot from being tack sharp.

36 - Nurse Shark (*Ginglymostoma cirratum*) Asleep at 80' depth on an Ocean Ledge.jpg

Wow. You're not going to see ME getting this close to a shark anytime soon! In fact, it seems almost TOO close – more environment and more shark would make it an even stronger picture.

37 - Orange Cup Coral (*Balanophyllia elegans*).jpg

Fascinating subject, perfectly exposed, but unfortunately somewhat out of focus...

38 - Orb weaver (*Araneus*) repairing web.jpg

Great capture, but the web is almost invisible. It's in the picture – I'm attaching an awful-looking edit just to demonstrate that it IS in fact there – If you're shooting with flash, you might want to experiment with off-camera flash to figure out how to illuminate both the spider and the web at the same time. The best results I've seen are with backlight (sometimes just daylight) and flash for fill.

39 - OSPREY BRINGING FISH TO NEST.jpg

Fantastic capture! I'd crop it even closer if I were you – I'm attaching an extreme alternative, but there are several other options.

40 - Osprey family in nest.jpg

It's a good picture, but not a GREAT picture, because there doesn't seem to be much going on in it. Usually a picture like this would be of a parent feeding the chick, or there would be some story-telling element in it. This picture is dazzlingly perfect technically, but what's lacking is some kind of story.

41 - Owl family peers at photographer from their nest.jpg

How can you not love owls? Even though two are usually better than one, in this case I'd crop out the second one – see attached.

42 - Peeling Paper Birch (*Betula papyrifera*).JPG

A very worthy subject. I'd suggest revisiting it to see if you can discover a more compelling composition; this one is interesting but a bit bland.

43 - Poplar (*Populus*) leaves making a fall color splash.jpg

Strong composition, but could it be improved by adding a bit of contrast, darkening it a

bit, saturating the colors a bit more? I think you need to play around some more with this one. It's not quite finished.

44 - Portrait of a Female Mallard (Anas platyrhynchos) - Watsonville Slough.jpg

Well, in a way it's perfect: flawlessly sharp, perfect composition, beautifully out of focus background. The weak spot is that it doesn't say much; it's clinically perfect but... Have you tried cropping it and darkening the background? That seems to help a bit – see attached.

45 - Red wasp (Polistes carolina) on white topped pitcher plant (Sarracenia leucophylla) .JPG

Ahh, we know the gruesome fate that awaits that wasp! Beautiful shot – maybe a SLIGHTLY tighter crop and lightening the wasp's body a bit would be an improvement, but it's pretty wonderful the way it is.

46 - Serenity at the Lundy Canyon Beaver Pond.jpg

This is gorgeous. I would have liked to have seen a little more real estate on the top – maybe enough to put the horizon line right in the middle of the image, and maybe a little lightening of the foreground. Obviously I can't invent what wasn't there so my attached edit is pretty crude, but you get the idea. It's a beautiful shot no matter how you choose to finish it.

47 - Snow Geese in Flight Formation.jpg

Classic shot, nice composition. Now, if only there had been a really dramatic sky...

48 - Snow goose (Anser caerulescens) landing on a windy day.JPG

Great capture. The background is sort of boring – doesn't give a sense of place – but the bird is just about perfect.

49 - The Dance Of love, Lesser Sandhill Cranes(Grus Canadensis).jpg

Wonderful. I can't think of anything that would improve it, because it doesn't need any improving.

50 - Troschel's Parrotfish (Chlorurus troschelii) Inside his Nightly Mucous Cocoon.jpg

This is the kind of shot that almost begs for manipulation, because the surrounding coral is fighting with the (parrot?) fish for attention. I'm sure that makes the fish happy, but aesthetically, it doesn't work so well. I think my version is a bit over-the-top, but it does put more emphasis on that gorgeous fish...

51 - Tule Elk (Cervus canadensis nannodes) surveys territory at Pt.jpg

YES! You could leave it the way it is, or darken the foreground and crop it square (see attached). Either way, a powerful, stark portrait. Normally a bald sky doesn't do much for a picture, but in this case it works.

52 - Turkey Tail Bracket Fungus (Trametes versicolor).jpg

Beautiful. The composition and the light on the fungus are perfect. I only wish the background were a little more out of focus.

53 - Western Gulls (Larus Occidentalis) .jpg

Great capture – the composition is a bit bland, but I’m not sure you could have done much to improve it (excuse me, ma’am, would you mind moving a bit farther to the right?)

54 - White Spotted Pufferfish (Arothron hispidus) inside Giant Barrel Sponge (Xestospongia muta).jpg

Wow. The water is so clear it doesn’t even appear to be underwater! The formation in the upper right is distracting; I’d be tempted to crop out most of it and burn in the edges of the picture to minimize it more – see attached.

55 - White-headed capuchin (Cebus capucinus).jpg

Wonderful It wouldn’t hurt to crop in a bit and lighten the monkey’s face (see attached)but either way, it’s a winner.

Winning Images

Honorable Mention.- **12 - EGRET WITH MATING DRAGONFLYS.jpg**

Honorable Mention.- **46 - Serenity at the Lundy Canyon Beaver Pond.jpg**

Honorable Mention. - **55 - White-headed capuchin (Cebus capucinus).jpg**

3rd Place - **10 - Drone Fly (Eristalis tenax) nectoring.jpg**

2nd Place.- **13 - EGRET WITH NEST MATERIAL.jpg**

1st Place: - **17 - First Light, Lesser Sandhill Cranes (Grus Canadensis)_.jpg**