

# Padre Trails Camera Club

Human Hand in Nature - 5/21/25

Judged by: Ivonne Saed

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Graphic designer, writer, translator, and photographer, *Ivonne Saed* has extensively explored the crossroads between the visual and the textual, both in her creative work and in teaching.

She is the author of the novel *Triple crónica de un nombre* (Lectorum, 2003) and the non-fiction *Sobre Paul Auster: Autoría, distopía y textualidad* (Lectorum, 2009). She co-authored *Literatura: imaginación, identidad y poder*, *Vampiros transmundanos y tan urbanos*, and *¡Madres! Cuentos (y precauciones) de maternidad*. Saed has published book reviews, short fiction and photos in periodicals like *Reforma* and *Crónica* (Mexico), *Literal Magazine* (US), and *Arquivo Maaravi* (Brazil). Her documentary *Naïve* premiered in 2011 as part of *Object Stories*, a Portland Art Museum project, and she produced *Vida Sefaradí: A Century of Sephardic Life in Portland*.



Saed has taught at Marylhurst University, Oregon State University and Universidad Iberoamericana (Mexico), and she's been a Delve Seminar guide for Literary Arts, in Portland, Oregon, since 2011. Her work has been discussed by academics in a number of publications and it has been staged by Jewish Theatre Collaborative (Portland) and Jewish Women's Theatre (Los Angeles).

## About this competition:

The *Human Hand in Nature* category avoids the strict rules for the regular Nature category established by the Photographic Society of America, PSA, which the Club follows. Rather than prohibiting man-made objects, this category includes the requirement for capturing evidence of human interaction with the natural world. Images submitted may depict human adaptation to the demands of nature, or evidence of how nature adapts to human intrusion.

*Shown here are the images submitted for this competition from all three groups, Blue, Green, and Red followed by Ivonne's selection for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and Honorable Mentions in each group.*



*01 - Backyard Fountain Bath Time*

Ken Jones

STAR RATING: 5

**COMMENT:** The time really stopped in this shot. The clarity and sharpness of the bird's bill with its drop, as well as the bubbles in the same plane capture the viewer's eye, and establish a good tension with the moving wings and the water in motion. The image is all in a monochrome range, but the good use of available light and selective focus help maintain the definition between the different parts.



*02 - Bewick's Wren*

John Drum

STAR RATING: 5

**COMMENT:** Nice composition, nice way of capturing a moment in time, and good use of the light and selective focus.



*03 - Constructed Osprey Nesting Platform*

Ken Jones

STAR RATING: 3

**COMMENT:** Good composition and commentary on human pollution. It seems to me that this is taken with a virtual telephoto, and not with an optic one. A similar image with an optic lens and playing with a selective focus would be interesting.



*04 - Guardrails for Safety*

Lillie Grossman

STAR RATING: 2

**COMMENT:** This is a POV that allows for a lot of experimentation: the photographer could experiment more with shooting from one side or another, or lowering the camera in order to make a point about the stairs, the tree or the rope. The way the tree is cropped at the top of the photograph feels interrupted.



*05 - Hazel Among the Lupins*

John Drum

STAR RATING: 3

**COMMENT:** This is a well composed shot. The color quality of the background makes me think it might be too digitally sharpened.



*06 - Hungry Brown Pelicans*

Chris Johnson

STAR RATING: 3

**COMMENT:** I like the sense of humor of this image, but in terms of composition, it still needs a better arrangement of the pelicans to create some visual tension. Particularly when the light is not helping to visually separate the different planes.





*07 - Lunch is Served*  
Carol Silveira

STAR RATING: 4

**COMMENT:** In this image it is remarkable that, even with a very flat light, the hair texture is very sharp and we can perceive the volume. There is a brown curve on the blurred background that repeats the shape of the squirrel's tail. That is the kind of element that takes an image to a higher level, even when the effect may not be consciously perceivable by the viewer. As for the composition, I would move the camera slightly to the left.



*08 - Red-winged Blackbird on Fence Post*  
Julie Chen

STAR RATING: 5

**COMMENT:** Nice composition and balance overall. Good use of the selective focus and the available light. Sometimes, little details can make a big difference: the tail of the blackbird is "touching" the branch behind. If the POV is moved very slightly to the right, we would have the branch following the shape of the bird's back, and the latter would be positioned even better in the composition between that branch and the one on the left.



*09 - Scrub Jay Having a Snack*  
Carol Silveira

STAR RATING: 5

**COMMENT:** Nice moment. I like that the focus is so selective that we don't know for sure if the wings are moving or if they are just blurred by the short DOF. The green background complements the blue of the bird without losing definition between the two, even though they are close within the color range.



*10 - Sea Lion Takeover*

Christine Johnson

STAR RATING: 3

**COMMENT:** This is one of the best compositions among all the photos presented. The curve of the sea lion visually projects the tree branches around it, and one and the others are in a visual dance. Unfortunately, the light source did not help: too much glare on the left that flattened the overall result.



*11 - Tern Stealing the Bait*

Julie Chen

STAR RATING: 5

**COMMENT:** Great composition between the tern and the fisherman's line. It's a difficult moment to capture and yet, everything fell in place neatly. We perceive the movement and the stillness of the instant at the same time.



*12 - Touchdown! Osprey with catch*

Sara Courtneidge

STAR RATING: 4

**COMMENT:** The decisive moment was well achieved here with a sharp focus and clarity on the main subject. The fish, though visible, got visually tangled with the post, but otherwise it's a very good depiction of a moment in time.



*13 - Whaler's Cove, Point Lobos*  
Sara Courtneidge

**STAR RATING: 3**

**COMMENT:** The composition here is a classic one, well performed. The available light is a difficult one, and the photographer needed to look for a way to make the elements in the foreground more volumetric so that the fog in the background becomes even more dramatic by contrast.



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## Top Three Winners - Blue Group



**First Place - Tern Stealing the Bait**

*Julie Chen*



**Second Place - Backyard Fountain**

**Bath Time**

*Ken Jones*



**Third Place - Scrub-Jay**

**Having a Snack**

*Carol Silveira*

## Winning Images Group Blue Honorable Mentions



*Lunch is Served*  
*Carol Silveira*



*Bewick's Wren*  
*John Drum*



*Red-winged Blackbird*  
*on Fence Post*  
*Julie Chen*



# Padre Trails Camera Club

Human Hand in Nature - 5/21/25 - Green Group Submissions

Judged by: Ivonne Saed



*01-American Kestrel*

Bill Shewchuk

STAR RATING: 4

**COMMENT:** Very good composition, exposure, and technical skill. It would be interesting trying a more selective focus to exclude the background more, or even to play with a macro focus in order to bring the attention to a specific part of the bird. This suggestion is mostly to explore a design that goes beyond documentation.

*02-Backyard Borage*

Charlie Gibson

STAR RATING: 3

**COMMENT:** Nice composition and lighting. I would like to see more possibilities here that tell more about the interesting textures and shapes from closer POVs.



*03-Backyard Nasturtium*

Charlie Gibson

STAR RATING: 4

**COMMENT:** Clean, sharp image with an intentional design. Good use of contrast between the wood and flower, and good use of the available light.



*04-California Clematis on Fence*

Jared Ikeda

STAR RATING: 2

**COMMENT:** Flowers are difficult subjects due to their beauty. Since it is so tempting to photograph them, the photographer must think about how to create an image that brings something new or unique. I recommend exploring in that direction.



*05-Carrizo Plains Lunch Date*

Carol Fuessenich

STAR RATING: 3

**COMMENT:** Beautiful landscape and color. The monochrome setting makes the image stand out from an average landscape picture. I recommend not over utilizing the digital enhancement tools, particularly when we are showing nature.



*06-Cayucos Pier Shadows*

Janet Azevedo

STAR RATING: 5

**COMMENT:** This image is remarkable in the sense that there is no human element visible, but the presence is given only by the shadows. We can tell the time of day, and almost the temperature. The simple composition breaks the photograph in half driving our attention. I would recommend to try to contrast or brighten it very slightly in order to give more depth to the foam texture.





*07-Chairs in the River*

Brian Spiegel

STAR RATING: 4

COMMENT: Nice composition that tells a story precisely of what's not there. The arranged chairs and lack of persons create an almost melancholy scene. The image seems underexposed, as if it were shot measuring on the high lights that are almost absent.



*08-Grasshopper on Window (Schistocerca nitens)*

Karen Schofield

STAR RATING: 5

COMMENT: Clean image that tells a story despite its simplicity. The human element is known only because of the reflection, as it is really invisible. The two very different blurred colored backgrounds are a great support for the insect that, in contrast, is perfectly in focus on its foreground side.



*09-Great Egret (Ardea alba) in a Florida Restaurant*

Bill Shewchuk

STAR RATING: 2

COMMENT: I'm not sure if the photographer had the intention of placing a light bulb above the egret's head, which I find humorous. The issue with the image is that there is too much going on, everything clearly and neatly depicted, so the viewer has a hard time keeping the eye in one place. A much more selective focus and backing up a bit would allow the subject to stand out.





*10-Log over the River*

Brian Spiegel

STAR RATING: 5

COMMENT: This composition that might look like an average image of running water stands out because of a very balanced composition that looks intentional. The main element to focus on divides the photograph in golden section. We can perceive the movement of the water as it is slightly blurred, and perhaps that would be the only one thing to experiment more here: a longer exposure time to blur the running water even more.



*11-Matilija Poppy Growing next to Chair*

Jared Ikeda

STAR RATING: 3

COMMENT: Flowers are difficult subjects due to their beauty. Many times, we want to make a point about their perfection, whereas other times we may want to show their irregularities, what we don't usually pay attention to as we go by them. This poppy is halfway in between, and the button that is not open on the right gets lost against the gray background, even though it plays an important part in the composition as a whole. Maybe a different lighting, at a different time of day, would help.



*12-Pacific Serenade*

Sandie McCafferty

STAR RATING: 2

COMMENT: Good composition overall. The high contrast in the foreground doesn't seem to respond well to the scene in the background, and that may be due to lack of definition that was enhanced digitally, not sure.



*13-Photographer at Moonset - Turret Arch, Utah*  
Karen Schofield  
STAR RATING: 2

COMMENT: Nice atmosphere and colors resulting from this shot. The human element seems placed, as opposed to playing a part on the nature depicted. The composition could be played with a little in order to get a better balance.



*14-Summer Tanager of Costa Rica*  
Carol Fuessenich  
STAR RATING: 5

COMMENT: Very nice shot, great use of color background. The profile of the bird seems like the ideal positioning for us to see it.



*15-The Leavings of Man*  
Janet Azevedo  
STAR RATING: 3

COMMENT: Good, balanced composition, and we do see a story here. The color hues on the image, though, did not help the result. All the textures seem to be competing.



*16-Tree Hugger*

Sandie McCafferty

STAR RATING: 3

**COMMENT:** The photo is technically very correct, and there is an intentionality. It would be interesting for the photographer to try other POVs and play with other light and elements around.



## Top Three Winners - Green Group



**First Place - *Cayucos Pier Shadows***  
*Janet Azevedo*



**Second Place - *Grasshopper on Window***  
*Karen Schofield*



**Third Place - *Summer Tanager of Costa Rica***  
*Carol Fuessenich*

## Honorable Mention - Green Group



*Log over the River*  
*Brian Spiegel*

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## *01-Afternoon Drink*

Soaring Uyematsu

STAR RATING: 4

**COMMENT:** Good composition and use of a somewhat short DOF to enhance the bird and the color contrast in general.



## *02-Ant Parade on Sink*

Brooks Leffler

STAR RATING: 1

**COMMENT:** This image seems too accidental, and even when cropping is allowed for this contest, the narrow crop is not justifiable and makes the viewer think it was meant to cut some accidental element that made it into the image field. It needs more intentionality.



## *03-Bull Fighting A Man*

Rick Thau

STAR RATING: 4

**COMMENT:** Good image, with a lot of tension due to time stopping in that particular jump (and not knowing what happened to the human subject a second later!) The composition is well balanced, both between the two characters, and with the human framed between two posts.





*04-Canadian Bike Trail*

David Eisen

STAR RATING: 2

**COMMENT:** The image is pleasant, but the approach lacks freshness. The image would benefit by having the photographer explore more creative perspectives. The image definition seems overly enhanced, which makes it look artificial.



*05-Carmel Valley Spring*

Andrea Madsen

STAR RATING: 3

**COMMENT:** This is a pleasant shot of a bucolic scene. My recommendation would be to lower the POV slightly, and maybe backing up a bit, in order to have a more dramatic view of the purple flowers in the foreground. The composition is good otherwise.



*06-Covered Well*

Ilene Eisen

STAR RATING: 1

**COMMENT:** In this image I can appreciate an intentionality to play with objects at different distances, but it needs attention to a couple of details: what to leave out and into the frame, regardless of its size or distance; and keeping the horizon line horizontal (unless that's the intention of the photo, which does not seem to be the case here). The digital saturation of this image was not beneficial. The colors look manipulated, and the leaves against the sky are framed with a white halo.



*07-Date For Lunch*

**Soaring Uyematsu**

**STAR RATING: 1**

**COMMENT:** There is too much going on here. The bird on the right is not immediately noticeable because its pink head competes with the red cylinder of the feeder, and the composition does not allow for the eye to follow through. The green bird on the right gets lost in the foreground, and the DOF is too broad.



*08-Dogs Playing*

**Victoria Blackmon**

**STAR RATING: 5**

**COMMENT:** This is a nicely designed image, well balanced, from an unusual and interesting perspective which allows the viewer to relate to the subjects in a more intimate way. The moment in time is stopped decisively and the DOF is just right. The human element, though, does not play a crucial part.



*09-Early RR vs Donner Pass*

**Rick Verbanec**

**STAR RATING: 3**

**COMMENT:** Good composition overall, but the image does not propose something remarkable to look at. It would be a good exercise to try the same POV at different times of day and with various light conditions.





*10-East African Crowned Crane*

Dick Light

STAR RATING: 2

COMMENT: Beautiful bird and beautiful POV. The image would benefit from narrowing the DOF to a very selective focus, so that the bird gets defined better against the background.



*11-Fishermens Wharf Reflections*

Andrea Madsen

STAR RATING: 2

COMMENT: Nice texture and gradient of colors on the water reflection. On the other hand, the image stops there and there is not much of a story.



*12-Great Blue Heron*

Dick Light

STAR RATING: 4

COMMENT: Very well exposed, defined and composed image. The only thing I'd do here is either backup or zoom back just a bit in order not to feel that the bars on the left are about to be cropped out of the frame. Giving that little extra room to visual elements can make a big difference overall.





*13-Hornets' Nest, Peaks Restaurant, Wuksachi Lodge*

Clarissa Conn

STAR RATING: 1

COMMENT: I cannot discern what I'm looking at.



*14-Maine Lighthouse*

Ilene Eisen

STAR RATING: 1

COMMENT: This image is much more about the lighthouse and the people taking the photo than about nature, and seems more like a snapshot as opposed to an intentional shot. The digital definition enhancement did not benefit the results (look at the halo around the black elements of the lighthouse and the branches against the sky).



*15-Natures Work*

Jerry Loomis

STAR RATING: 2

COMMENT: Beautiful slot canyon. Unfortunately, there are many shots of slots canyons, that it would be needed to make a perfect shot with the perfect light conditions in order to have a remarkable image beyond what has been done. The human element seems accidental and does not add to the image result.



*16-Outside Looking In*

Patti Gilbert

STAR RATING: 4

COMMENT: The photographer took good advantage of the serendipitous moment. The atmosphere is felt by the viewer, and the selective focus keep the eye on the subject. In terms of composition, I would have liked to have the camera move to the left just enough to have the open space in front of the gull and not behind it.



*17-Quiscalus mexicanus reading sign*

Victoria Blackmon

STAR RATING: 4

COMMENT: Nice image. We have a story and sense of humor clearly established. The fact that the bird's eye is so neat and visible really makes the viewer think whether it is considering to wade or swim. The defined bird is against a light-colored and out-of-focus background – its tail mostly framed by the shrub's branches on the right. The only adjustment I would suggest is either move the lens to the right or crop the image on the left slightly, as the vegetation on that side does not add information to the picture and it's a little distracting.



*18-Raven on Parking Stumps*

Don Eastman

STAR RATING: 5

COMMENT: Very nice composition and use of the available light. Many exposure zones covered just on the bird from the bright chest to the tail. The selective focus keeps the eye of the viewer on the bird, and the overall composition is nicely balanced.



*19-Red Tail Hawk on Fence*

Don Eastman

STAR RATING: 3

COMMENT: The composition of this image is very well balanced and the texture of the bird is well achieved. There is something about the way it was manipulated digitally, though, that makes the bird look as if it were inserted on the background. Perhaps it was too much digital blur or something I'm not sure about, but I see a strong white outline all around the subject that makes it look like a collage.



*20-Tempting Nature*

Rick Verbanec

STAR RATING: 2



**COMMENT:** The composition between tree and elk is good. The light and contrast are very nice. The human cuts the image in half, right in the middle of the photogram, pulling the attention to himself and it does not benefit the image. There is a soft focus all over the picture or a lack of definition that does not seem to be intentional. Might be the lens was not a true telephoto, not sure here.

*21-The Way*

Jerry Loomis

STAR RATING: 3



**COMMENT:** Nice composition and good tone range. There is a good balance overall. I would like to see this photographer exploring more perspectives and playing more between background and foreground to get the elements to play together in more interesting ways.



*22-Towering Ecchium*

Brooks Leffler

STAR RATING: 1

**COMMENT:** Correct snapshot to document the towering flowers, but the image itself does not offer enough artistic value. The light is too flat, the chimney is covered by one of the plants, when it could have been placed in between by moving the camera slightly to the left. The door and doorway are visible but not participating.





*23-Training a show horse, Arles France*

Rick Thau

STAR RATING: 2

**COMMENT:** The horse is the main element of this image and it's not fully in focus. Images taken while the subject is so active are challenging, but it's worth to keep shooting many images one after another to get the right composition. A fraction of a second before or after the horse's head would have been framed by the beam, or if the photographer's POV were lower, the neck would have been "crossed" by the beam.



*24-Wise Decision*

Patti Gilbert

STAR RATING: 5

**COMMENT:** Nice light, excellent composition, with the angles of the fern on the right and the owls' "log" complementing each other. Even though the light is not high contrast, each element stands out from its background, and every hair is clearly defined. The overall feeling is that everything falls into a golden section grid. And the sense of humor is great.



*25-Wooden Pipeline-1*

David Eisen

STAR RATING: 3

**COMMENT:** This is a good composition in general, and every element is clearly defined and playing against the other. What I am lacking here is a story or an intention, and I'm not sure what the photographer wants to communicate.

## Top Three Winners - Red Group



*First Place - Wise Decision*  
*Patti Gilbert*



*Second Place - Raven on*  
*Parking Stumps*  
*Don Eastman*



*Third Place - Quiscalus mexicanus*  
*reading sign*  
*Victoria Blackmon*



## Honorable Mention - Red Group



*Outside Looking In*  
*Patti Gilbert*



*Bull Fighting A Man*  
*Rick Thau*



*Dogs Playing*  
*Victoria Blackmon*



*Afternoon Drink*  
*Soaring Uyematsu*