



ROYAL ALBERTA MUSEUM

WILDLIFE
PHOTOGRAPHER
of the year 2008



TROUBLEMAKER © STEFANO UNTERTHINER (ITALY). THE WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR COMPETITION IS OWNED BY THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM AND BBC WILDLIFE MAGAZINE.

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EDMONTON JOURNAL



NEWS RELEASE

May 15, 2009

Discover the world's best wildlife photos at the Royal Alberta Museum

Edmonton... Be inspired by stunning photographs that reveal the splendour, drama and variety of life on Earth in the North American premiere of the 2008 *Wildlife Photographer of the Year* exhibition at the Royal Alberta Museum. This annual showcase displays a wondrous selection of photographs from the world's largest and most prestigious wildlife photography competition. The exhibition will be presented at the Royal Alberta Museum from May 23 to September 13, 2009.

This year's exhibition showcases winning entries from the 2008 competition. Visitors will experience an inspirational collection of more than 80 winning and highly commended entries, chosen by an expert panel as the most expressive and creative from 32,351 entries from around the world. The Museum will be supplementing the touring show with a host of photography presentations and films.

The photographs document the world's stunning variety of wildlife and their unusual habits. Just as fascinating as the shots themselves are the photographers' stories describing the lengths to which they went to achieve their remarkable shots. Visitors of all ages will be captivated by these photographs and perhaps inspired to enter their own into next year's competition.

Since its inception in 1964, the *Wildlife Photographer of the Year* competition has aimed to find the world's very best photography featuring natural subjects. It's open to amateur and professional photographers worldwide and continues to be the most prestigious competition of its kind. The competition and exhibition are organized by the Natural History Museum in London, England, and *BBC Wildlife Magazine*.

Details on Museum hours and program schedules are available online at www.royalalbertamuseum.ca or by calling 780-453-9100 (dial 310-0000 for toll-free access within Alberta).

- 30 -

Note to media: On Friday, May 22, media representatives are welcome to come to the Museum for gallery tours and interviews with curators anytime between 10 am and 2 pm. The Royal Alberta Museum is located at 12845 - 102 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

For more information, contact:

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ABOUT THE COMPETITION

The competition began in 1964 with just 600 entries. This year, there was a record 32,351 submissions from both amateur and professional photographers from 82 countries. The images were judged by an expert panel, and the results again raise the bar for contemporary nature photography.

Each year, the title prize of £10,000 is awarded at a special gala evening at the Natural History Museum in London. The exhibition always debuts at the Natural History Museum, and then tours to more than 60 cities around the world, inspiring us all to see the world with new eyes.

FIRST ROUND JUDGES

Phil Hurst – Photographer, the Natural History Museum
Paul Lund – Photographer, the Natural History Museum
Tor McIntosh – Picture editor/researcher
Wanda Sowry – Picture researcher, *BBC Wildlife Magazine*
Kevin Webb – Photographer, the Natural History Museum

SEMI-FINAL AND FINAL SELECTION JUDGES

Mark Carwardine – (Chair) zoologist, writer and photographer
Tom Ang – Photographer and author
Ross Hoddinott – Natural history photographer
Phil Keevill – Creative Director, Kitcatt Nohr Alexander Shaw (KNAS)
Rosamund Kidman Cox – Editor and writer
Jouni Klinga – Nature photographer
Flip Nicklin – Photographer
Norbert Rosing – Wildlife photographer
José Ruiz – Nature photographer and author
Sophie Stafford – Editor, *BBC Wildlife Magazine*
Cristina Mittermeier – Executive Director, International League of Conservation Photographers (ILCP)



EXHIBITION ELEMENTS

The exhibition is divided into 18 sections mirroring the various categories in the competition. The categories' winning entries and a number of commended/runner up photographs are presented in each section.

Each of the exhibition's categories is listed below, followed by a selection of category winners and the stories behind their amazing photographs.

Overall Winners

Wildlife Photographer of the Year

Young Wildlife Photographer of the Year

Special Awards

Gerald Durrell Award for Endangered Wildlife

One Earth Award

Adult Awards

Animal Behaviour: Birds

Animal Behaviour: Mammals

Animal Behaviour: All Other Animals

The Underwater World

Animal Portraits

In Praise of Plants

Urban and Garden Wildlife

Wild Places

Animals in their Environment

Nature in Black and White

Creative Visions of Nature

Junior Awards

Ten years and under

11-14 years old

15-17 years old

SELECTED WINNERS AND THEIR STORIES

Wildlife Photographer of the Year

This is the photographer whose picture has been voted as being the most striking and memorable of all the competition's entries. The award-winner receives a £10,000 prize and the coveted title Wildlife Photographer of the Year.

WINNER

Mountain prowl

Steve Winter; USA



'Choosing high ridges to set up remote cameras was tough, especially with the altitude and the steep, difficult terrain of India's Himalayas. Part of this ridge was very narrow, so I set a camera where the cat had no choice but to walk directly in front of it, with the beautiful expanse of the mountains as a backdrop.'

Snow leopards are scattered throughout the high mountains of central Asia, mostly between altitudes of 1,800 and 5,500 metres. Their short forelimbs and long hind limbs help them overcome the challenges of this mountain habitat. These beautiful cats are active mainly at dawn and dusk, hunting goats, sheep, yak and horses.

Canon EOS Rebel XT + 10-22mm lens at 13mm; 1/200 sec at f18; ISO 100; waterproof camera box + Plexiglass tubes for flashes; Trailmaster 1550-PS remote trigger.

Young Wildlife Photographer of the Year

This award is given to the photographer whose single image is judged to be the most striking and memorable of all the pictures entered by young photographers.

WINNER

The show

Catriona Parfitt; UK



'As it walked slowly towards the waterhole at Hobatere Lodge in Namibia, this solitary giraffe kept looking over towards four lions on a nearby ridge. One of the lions, an ambitious young male, raced down from the ridge to chase the giraffe for some distance, watched by the assembled oryx.'

Lions are the giraffe's main predators, and giraffes are particularly vulnerable to attack when lying down, drinking or feeding from the ground. Unlike females, male giraffes tend to live alone, which also makes them more open to predation.

Canon EOS 400D + Canon EF300mm f4 IS USM lens + Canon EF 1.4 extender; 1/200 sec at f5.6; ISO 100.

Animal Behaviour: Birds

Images in this category must show memorable, unusual or striking behaviour. As with all categories, originality is key here.

WINNER

Clash of eagles

Antoni Kasprzak; Poland



'Photographing in Poland, I found a dead moose that would be ideal bait. Five hours later, an adult and an immature white-tailed eagle arrived together, and a struggle broke out. The older, more experienced bird won, forcing the immature eagle to wait its turn for more than an hour, along with other scavengers.'

White-tailed eagles are the largest eagles in northern Europe, with a wingspan of more than two metres. Mature birds have a yellow beak, while the juveniles are a darker brown. Eagles will swoop and catch fish, but will also feed on carrion. When winter is particularly cold, and food is scarce, fights over food break out.

Canon EOS 40D + Canon EF500mm f4 IS USM lens; 1/1000 sec at f4.5; ISO 500; tripod.

Animals in their Environment

Images in this category must be powerful and memorable, showing the relationship between the animal subject and the place it lives or the environment it is pictured in.

WINNER

Snow swans

Yongkang Zhu; China



'To photograph the swans in their environment meant I had to endure the same conditions – snowstorms and high winds that roll the snow across the flat land in great waves. The storm was so bitter I wished I could have escaped along with the swans.'

Every winter, huge flocks of whooper swans migrate from the far north of Europe and Asia to warmer lowlands. The Rongcheng Swan Lake nature reserve in eastern China is a major overwintering sanctuary for whooper swans. But even here, when the fresh water freezes, the birds are forced to feed in the fields digging through the snow for grass.

Canon EOS 20D + Sigma 300-800mm f5.6 lens at 300mm; 1/1250 sec at f6.3; ISO 200; tripod.

Animal Portraits

Images must capture the character or spirit of the subject and focus on it. The key here is striking originality.

WINNER

Troublemaker

Stefano Unterthiner; Italy



'I nicknamed this young adult Troublemaker. He was interested in me, so getting a close-up wasn't difficult. But he would leap at me and kick off my back like a trampoline. It was part play, part confrontation, part attention-seeking, part curiosity. I think Troublemaker's expression captures the spirit of these wonderful monkeys.'

Black-crested macaques live on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi. They usually forage in the forests, but sometimes their search for food takes them to the edge of the trees to the coast. They wander along the beach scouring the rocks for fallen fruits and nuts or, in the case of the young ones, paddling in the waves.

Nikon D2X + Nikon 12-24mm lens; 1/250 sec at f10; ISO 125; graduated neutral-density filter; flash.

Creative Visions of Nature

Photographs should reveal new ways of seeing natural subjects or scenes, representing them in an imaginative or abstract way. Judges look for originality and artistic vision.

WINNER

Polar sunrise

Miguel Lasa; UK/Spain



'So many of the photographs I'd seen of polar bears failed to show the power of the animals or any sense of the harshness of the polar environment. While the bears paced the beach waiting for the ice, I waited for the perfect light. Finally I got the shot I was after – a bear backlit by the first rays of sunlight.'

During winter, polar bears live on the frozen seas of the Arctic. In summer, in areas where the ice melts completely, they spend months ashore living on a variety of foods. They will also swim in the water and catch birds. By the time the seas freeze again in autumn, they are eager for fresh seal meat.

Canon EOS 40D + Canon EF500mm f4 IS USM lens; 1/1250 sec at f4 (+2/3 compensation); ISO 400.

Urban and Garden Wildlife

Original pictures are what count here, showing wild animals or plants in obviously urban or suburban settings, including gardens.

WINNER

New occupant

Jamie McGregor Smith; UK



‘Gaining access to this derelict room symbolised the adversity overcome by this plant. As I peered in and saw the fresh fern fronds, backlit by sunshine streaming through the window, its colour and sense of life seemed exaggerated by the room’s grim, drab appearance. Against all odds, the fern was thriving, gaining nourishment from the decomposing floorboards.’

Ferns, along with lichens and mosses, are often the first plants to colonize new or harsh environments. They grow in sites that sometimes aren’t ready for flowering plants, shrubs or trees because of poor soil or a lack of nutrients. By creating soil as they decompose, ferns change the local environmental conditions, making them more suitable for other plant species to follow.

Canon EOS 20D + Sigma 18-200mm f3.5-6.3 DC OS lens; 8 secs at f22; ISO 100.

10 Years and Under

WINNER

Snow pose

Alessandro Oggioni; Italy



‘I was skiing in Gran Paradiso National Park in Italy when I spotted this fox looking at me from a tree. I took off my skis and tried to take a photograph, but it climbed down and wandered off. I took many photos, but I like this one because it has everything – the landscape, the fox, the fox tracks, the shadow of the fox and the tree, all together.’

The red fox is the most widespread of all fox species, ranging throughout the northern hemisphere. They are sometimes found in even colder places than Arctic foxes, but because they are bigger they need more food. That is why they can’t survive in the food-sparse Arctic.

Nikon D70 + 18-70mm f3.5-4.5 lens at 70mm; 1/800 sec at f9; ISO 200.

In Praise of Plants

The aim of this category is to showcase the beauty and importance of flowering and non-flowering plants, whether by featuring them in close-up or as part of the habitat.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Leaf drop

Darran Leal; Australia



'Picking my way through the ruins I came across a small tree backlit by the sun and sparkling with rain. A jewel-like drop, with its perfect reflection of leaves inside, struck me as a great symbol of the re-growth of the rainforest, but I had to move fast. The challenge was to capture the moment in spite of gusts of wind and the great magnification required.'

In 2006, the rainforest in far north Queensland in Australia was rich in nature and opportunities to take wildlife photographs. Then Cyclone Larry reduced the area to stumps and tangled undergrowth. This photograph was taken a year later.

Canon EOS 5D + 100mm macro lens; 1/125 sec at f22; ISO 100; Canon 580EX flash + TTL auto cord.

The Underwater World

These photographs can show marine or freshwater animals or plants. The most important criteria are aesthetics, but judges will also be looking for unique and memorable imagery. Supported by Project AWARE Foundation (International)

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Colourful business

Noam Kortler; Israel



'Fish that cruise past get a quick clean - whether they want one or not. Most big reef fish, though, make a point of turning up at the cleaning station for a daily grooming session, which can last several minutes. Queues can form as reef fish wait their turn.'

Moses Rock, off the coast of Eilat, Israel, is a regular cleaning station for large reef fish. Similar cleaning stations occur in shallow reefs in tropical water around the world. Big fish, like the dazzling bullethead parrotfish, hold their mouth open so a little cleaner fish can peck inside for parasites. The cleaner fish advertises its identity, and its services, with its black-striped costume and a special jerky swim.

Nikon D2x + Nikon 105mm f2.8G VR micro lens; 1/125 sec at f13; ISO 100; Seacam housing; two Ikelite DS125 strobes.

MUSEUM INFORMATION

Admission:

Adult (<i>18-64 years</i>)	\$10
Senior (<i>65 and over</i>)	\$8
Student (<i>with ID</i>)	\$7
Youth (<i>7-17</i>)	\$5
Family (<i>Two adults and children 7-17</i>)	\$28
Children (<i>aged 6 and under</i>)	FREE

Annual Mammoth Pass:

(Unlimited Admission plus benefits)

Adult (<i>18-64 years</i>)	\$35
Senior (<i>65 and over</i>)	\$30
Student (<i>with ID</i>)	\$30
Youth (<i>7-17</i>)	\$20
Family (<i>Two adults and children 7-17</i>)	\$70
Grandparent (<i>Two grandparents and grandchildren 7-17</i>)	\$60

Enjoy half-price admission on Saturdays and Sundays between 9 am & 11 am.

Hours:

Daily 9 am to 5 pm

Visit www.royalalbertamuseum.ca for more information on our galleries, collections and research.