



ROYAL ALBERTA MUSEUM

presents



Wildlife Photographer of the Year

January 28 – April 23, 2006



News Release

Tour the Earth's wild places... at the Royal Alberta Museum

Edmonton... Be inspired by stunning photographs that reveal the splendour, drama and variety of life on Earth in the **Royal Alberta Museum's *Wildlife Photographer of the Year*** exhibition. In its North American premiere, the annual showcase will display a wondrous selection of photographs from the world's largest and most prestigious wildlife photography competition.

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 hopefully inspired to enter their own into next year's competition.

This year's exhibition is the competition's forty-second. It showcases an inspirational collection of 90 winning and highly commended entries, chosen by an expert panel as the most expressive and creative from almost 17,000 entries received from more than 55 countries.

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

The ***Wildlife Photographer of the Year*** will be presented at the **Royal Alberta Museum** from January 28 to April 23, 2006.

The **Royal Alberta Museum** is located at 12845 - 102 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Visit our website at www.royalalbertamuseum.ca

For more information:

Todd Crawshaw
Communications Coordinator
Phone: 780-453-9186
Fax: 780-454-6629
Email: todd.crawshaw@gov.ab.ca

Julie Calderbank
Head, Marketing & Communications
Phone: 780-453-9111
Fax: 780-454-6629
Email: julie.calderbank@gov.ab.ca



Exhibition Elements

The exhibition is divided into 20 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.

The photographs feature dozens of species in wild and urban environments. Some are breathtaking, some are disturbing, but all give us a glimpse into the habits and rituals of our wild neighbours.

Below is a selection of nine of the exhibition's categories, followed by descriptions from the winning photographers.

Overall Winners

Wildlife Photographer of the Year (Page 4)

Young Wildlife Photographer of the Year
(Page 5)

Special Award

Innovation Award (Page 6)

Adult Awards

Animals in their Environment (Page 7)

The Underwater World (Page 8)

Animal Portraits (Page 9)

Urban and Garden Wildlife (Page 10)

Junior Awards

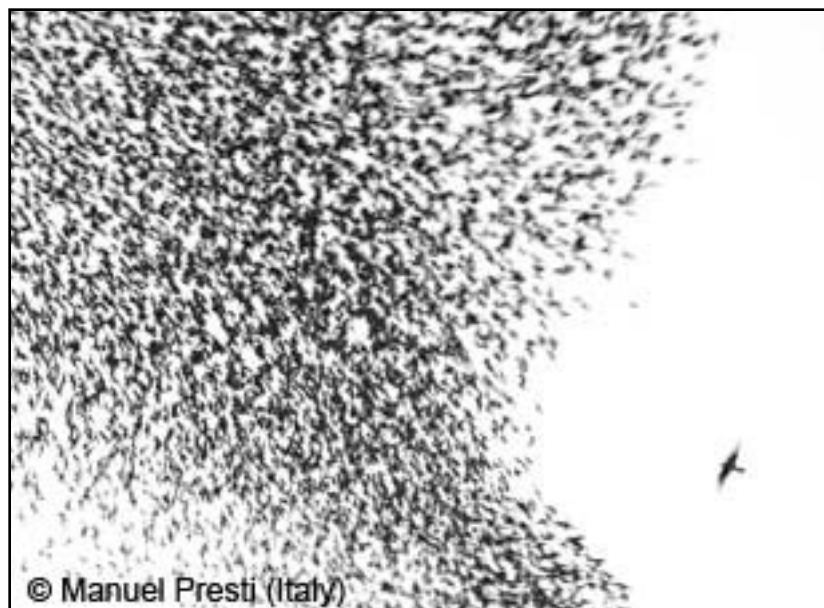
11-14 years old (Page 11)

15-17 years old (Page 12)

In addition to the 90 photographs, a number of mounted specimens from the Museum's *Natural History* collections will be featured in the Gallery, as well as a special DVD presentation of all of 2005's winners in the Gallery's mini-theatre.

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 big cash prize and the coveted title *Wildlife Photographer of the Year*.



Winner
Sky Chase
Manuel Presti (Italy)

Massive gatherings of starlings choose to roost in city parks in Rome, where it is warmer than the surrounding countryside and usually safer – except for the resident peregrines. When photographing the phenomenon, Manuel chose to work with two cameras: one a hand-held zoom, so he could rapidly follow the flocks as they swirled and whirled across the skies, merging into bigger and bigger clouds; the other on a tripod with a long lens, to capture details of the event. "This allowed

me to take pictures of the amazing flock shapes as well as the dynamics of the peregrine attacks," he says. It's a stark, dramatic picture of one of the world's great natural spectacles – a spectacle becoming rarer and rarer with the rapid decline in starling populations throughout Europe.

Canon EOS 10D with Canon 500mm f4 IS USM lens and 1.4x converter; 1/50 sec at f5.6; 800 ISO; tripod.

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
Inquisitive Jay
Jesse Ritonen (Finland)

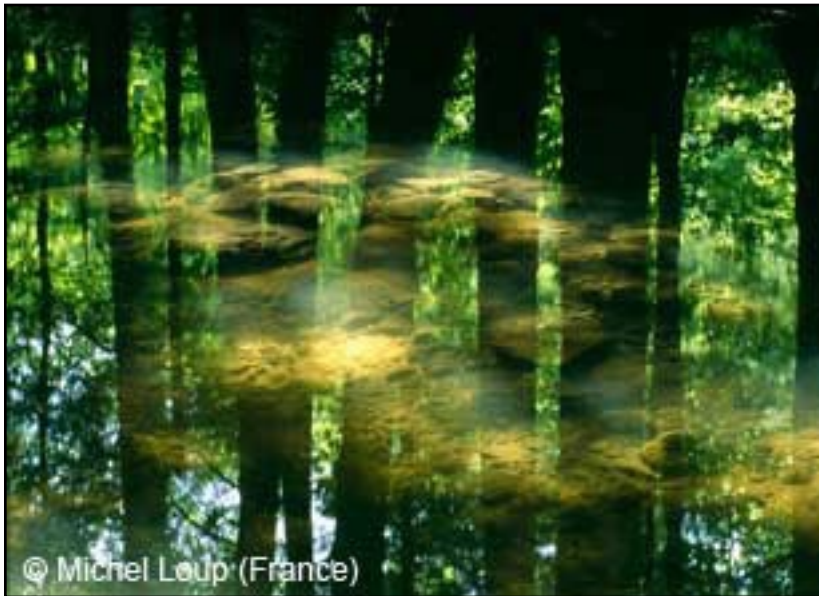
Last January, on his tenth birthday, Jesse received what he had been wanting since he was seven – an SLR digital camera. In February, his father took him for a couple of days to a hide in Utti, Finland, to photograph birds. Jesse has been interested in wildlife since he could first walk, and so this was a very special trip for him. The weather was overcast, but several jays, crows and two goshawks visited

them. This jay came in the early morning and perched on the snowy branch of a pine tree opposite, staring directly into Jesse's camera. "I was so excited," says Jesse, "to have such long eye-contact with a wild bird."

Nikon D70 with Nikon 70-200mm f2.8 ED VR lens and 2x teleconverter; 1/320 sec at f5.6; tripod, hide.

Innovation Award

This award exists to encourage innovative ways of looking at nature. It is given for the photograph that best illustrates originality of both composition and execution.



Winner River of Dreams Michel Loup (France)

Wandering alongside the Hérisson River on a warm June day, through the beautiful eastern French countryside, close to the lakes of Jura, Michel came across this stretch of river and was drawn to the scene's absolute tranquility. The water was as still as glass, and rays of the noonday sun overhead were filtering down through the dense beech foliage, bathing the riverbed in golden light. With a careful

choice of angle, exposure, frame and focus, he set out to contrast darkness and light and merge actuality with reflection, to create a multidimensional sense of space that would conjure up the magic of the moment.

Nikon F5 with 80-200mm lens; 1/8 sec at f11; Fujichrome Velvia 50; tripod.

Animals in Their Environment

In this category, a photograph must convey a sense of the relationship between the plant or animal and its habitat, which must be as important a part of the picture as is the subject.



© Martin Eisenhauer (Switzerland)

Winner

Whooper Swans at Dawn
Martin Eisenhauer
(Germany)

In February, temperatures in Hokkaido, Japan, can plunge to -20°C (-4°F). Overwintering swans (migrants from Scandinavia) therefore seek out thermal lakes, where there are always patches of melted ice. Martin wanted to frame the peaceful, misty scene with an overhanging branch and its reflection and spent a long time trying to find the ideal spot. Having

found his viewpoint, he had to bend over the water and wait in this position until the cold wind dropped for a moment, the swans settled down and the water was mirror-smooth enough to create the picture he had visualized.

Canon 1D mark II with Canon 17-40mm lens; 1/60 sec at f16; 200 ISO.

Underwater World

Marine or freshwater animals or plants feature in this category. The most important criteria are aesthetic ones, but interest value is also taken into account.



Winner Leopard Seal Pass George Duffield (UK)

Leopard Seals can be shy or inquisitive and sometimes aggressive, but you don't know how an individual will behave until you're in the water with it. Antarctic water is also numbingly cold, often with terrible visibility. Only on the last day of a filming trip to Antarctica did George get a chance to dive with Leopard Seals in clear water. Three huge ones were swimming around a small berg of ancient, clear ice – a perfect underwater backdrop. This 3.6-metre-long (12-foot) individual was particularly

curious about the human interloper and came closer and closer at every pass. This shot was the last shot George took of the seal as it swept by, close to his face. It was time to retreat. As he swam back to the boat, the seal followed, nipping at his fins all the way. A thrilling but sobering experience.

Canon 1DS mark II with 17-40mm f4 lens; 1/200 sec at f6.3; 320 ISO; Seacam housing.

Animal Portraits

This category – one of the most popular in the competition – invites portraits that capture the character or spirit of the subject they focus on.



Winner
Snapper Shoal
Alexander Mustard (UK)

The Bohar Snapper is as fearsome as it looks, being one of the larger reef predators in the Red Sea (this one was about 70 centimetres – 27 inches). Alexander travelled to Ras Mohamed National Park at the tip of the Sinai Peninsula, Egypt, in June, specifically to photograph snappers and other fish during their spawning season. Snappers are normally solitary, but when spawning, they are found in huge aggregations. Alexander wanted to illuminate the strange face

of the fish, while at the same time give an impression of the menacing scale of the gathering. But it is the snappers themselves that are in danger, as outside the safety of the park, fishermen will target shoals, catching them before the fish have had a chance to spawn.

Nikon D100 with Nikon 105mm f2.8 lens;
1/45 sec at f13; 200 ISO; Subal underwater housing, Cobra head and Subtronic flash.

Urban and Garden Wildlife

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



Winner

Bogong Swarm

Julian Smith (New Zealand)

Some photographers spend months trying to get a winning shot. Julian Smith was simply killing time in a dusty Australian town, waiting for his car to be fixed. But as he wandered the streets for three days, he never stopped thinking as a photographer – and opportunity loves a receptive mind. On his last evening, he watched players on a rugby field and spotted the Bogong Moths swarming around the floodlights. “The locals told me that millions of Bogongs often descend on the town in

spring as they migrate south,” he says. Julian realized that a long exposure would translate the moths’ flutters as scribbled signatures on the black sky. He had just one frame left on his last roll of film. By the time he returned with fresh film, the lights were off, and the moths and the opportunity were gone.

Canon F1n with Canon 135mm f3.5 lens and 2x teleconverter; 8 secs at f7; Fujichrome Velvia 50; tripod.

Junior Awards

The junior awards are for photographers aged 17 and under and are split into three categories based on age group. In each age group judges are looking for original, beautiful or striking shots rather than rare or exotic subjects, meaning that you don't necessarily have to stray too far away from home to get a winning shot.



Winner 11-14 years old
Red Squirrel Pose
Mart Smit (The Netherlands)

You'd be hard pressed to take a portrait of a tame animal as perfectly as this, let alone a lively wild one holding not just any piece of wood but a gnarled, silver stump. The squirrel was one of four that played right in front of Mart's hide in a Norwegian forest. It suddenly stopped its antics and posed for him in the early evening light.

Canon EOS 10D with Canon 100-400mm lens; 1/250 sec at f6.3; 400 ISO; Gitzo 1228 tripod.

Junior Awards



© Matthew Burrard-Lucas (UK)

Winner 15-17 years old
Chimpanzee Meditation
Matthew Burrard-Lucas (UK)

On the fourth and final day of a family holiday in Tanzania, Matthew followed a troop of about 40 chimpanzees in the Mahale Mountains. He watched them eat termites using grass stalks as tools and witnessed numerous noisy disputes. But the poor light, together with the chimps' black coats confused the camera's autoexposure, and it was frustratingly difficult to get fast enough shutter speeds. "To take the

photograph," explains Matthew, "I edged closer on my stomach, trying to ignore the angry safari ants that were crawling all over me." This image of the alpha male looking thoughtfully into space was more than Matthew had hoped for.

Canon EOS 300D with 55-200mm Sigma lens; 1/200 sec at f5; 800 ISO.



Museum Information

Admission:

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

Hours:

Daily 9 am to 5 pm
 Visit www.royalalbertamuseum.ca
 for more information on our
 galleries, collections and research.

Annual Mammoth Pass:

(Unlimited Admission plus benefits)

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

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

The Museum Shop

Throughout the exhibition, we'll be
 featuring official *Wildlife Photographer
 of the Year* merchandise unavailable in
 local stores, including posters, mouse pads,
 postcards, the exhibition's soundtrack and
 official compilation books.

The Museum Shop is the perfect place to
 find unique gifts for discerning and unique
 tastes. You'll find one-of-a-kind pieces of
 jewellery, heritage books and keepsakes,
 colourful clothing and toys from days
 gone by.

Try our exclusive *Museum Tea*, and lose
 yourself in the new *Synchrude Gallery of
 Aboriginal Culture* book.