**JANUARY 2024**

**Nairobi King**

**Torie Hilley
Lion, Nairobi National Park, Kenya**

***Photographer’s Image description*** *"It was my first morning in Kenya and we visited the Nairobi National Park as a 'warm up' for our photo safari. We honestly weren't expecting much from the local park, but anything can happen. Our guide was chatting to us about what we could expect to see, when surprisingly we found this male lion right by the road. He was roaring as he was walking, looking for his pride.*

*The sun was just starting to rise, which created this soft light and purply colour on the ground. But the scars on his face indicated that he was potentially battling to be king. What a welcome to Kenya.*

*The national park was established in 1946 and sits near the city centre with a diverse habitat. Classified as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List, the African lion calls the Nairobi National Park home. However, with habitat loss, trophy hunting, human wildlife-conflict, and poaching threatening lion populations across Africa, conservationists fear that the city's national park is quickly losing its place as a critical habitat for wildlife. According to the Kenyan Wildlife Services, 70% of some species in the park have declined in the past 40 years due to the increasing infrastructure around and inside the park. "*

**About the Photographer:** Born and raised in California, I am a wildlife conservationist, artist, and photographer. I was originally a wildlife researcher studying the behaviour of predators throughout Southern Africa, before I switched to visual arts. First studying the behaviour of lions, I then got a master’s degree in animal behaviour and specialised in the second most endangered carnivore in Africa, the African Painted Dog.

**Tech spec:** Canon R5, Canon RF 400mm f/2.8 at 400mm and f/2.8, 1/500, ISO 2500

**Judges comments:** "A simple and beautifully effective image that roughly uses the rule of thirds and sensitively deploys dead space that turns a static image, that could so easily have been dull, into one that encourages the viewer to ask questions. What has caught the male lion’s attention? Is it prey or threat, a female or a rival male? What will the lion do next: run forward or retreat? Any photo that poses questions rather than providing answers – any photo that shows, rather than tells – is a very good photo indeed."

**FEBRUARY 2024**

**Avalanche**

**Paddy Scott**

**K6, Himalayas, Pakistan**

***Photographer’s Image description:*** *“An avalanche thunders down the face of the mountain. Watching these avalanches in real-time, they seem to move sedately down the mountain. This belies their destructive power. In fact, they are travelling hundreds of kilometres an hour and will clear anything in their path.*

*Also known as Baltistan Peak, at 7282m, the mountain dominates the head of the valley. On this expedition, our base camp was under its face, and you could feel its presence looming over you. On days like this, it was a sight to behold when it was shaking off a thick coat of snow.*

*I was there photographing a climbing expedition attempting a nearby unclimbed peak. Shortly after arriving at base camp, a massive fall of unseasonable snow coated all the surrounding mountains.*

*As weather patterns change across the planet due to global heating, weather patterns are becoming evermore unpredictable. “*

**About the Photographer:** I am a cameraman and photographer based in the UK, currently in London studying an MSc in Global Environmental Politics and Policy. Travelling with my work over the last 15 years, the effect that humanity is having on the planet has become increasingly apparent to me. Whether retreating glaciers in Patagonia or deforestation in the Amazon, the consequences of our burgeoning population are becoming increasingly apparent.

**Tech spec:** Canon 5dmk iv 70mm ISO100 f11 1/640

**Judges comments:** "This one caught the attention of the judges, given its huge scope, monochrome tonality and dramatic atmosphere. It takes some effort to reach mountainous regions like the Himalaya, and part of the additional gravitas of this shot is that it doesn’t rely on singular rockstar peaks but takes in the entire landscape, from the dappled light on the vertical striations of the mountain face to the far-off movement of the snow - and avalanche danger that might ensue for those in its wake. It is cinematic in its majesty."

**MARCH 2024**

**Swingtime**

**Ria Waugh**

**Mountain Gorilla, Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, Uganda**

***Photographer’s Image description*** *“Within the mountainous cloud forests of central Africa live the last surviving Mountain Gorillas - a subspecies of the Eastern Gorilla. Their sole habitat consists of a network of parks crossing the borders of Rwanda, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Since their discovery in 1902, their population has endured years of civil unrest, poaching, habitat loss, and disease - threats so severe that it was once thought the species might be extinct by the end of the 20th century. Despite the odds, the subspecies has made a remarkable comeback in recent years, although their continued survival depends on conservation efforts. During an unforgettable gorilla trekking expedition through the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, I had the opportunity to observe these incredible creatures up close. Our trek led us to a family group with many young gorillas that were enjoying swinging through the trees. I would frequently see young gorillas, such as this one, swing above my head, followed by a crash on the forest floor as they were still developing their skills. Nevertheless, they quickly got back up and tried again. It was an extraordinary experience that highlighted the importance of protecting these magnificent animals.”*

**About the Photographer:** I’m a photographer currently living in Dublin, Ohio, USA. My parents instilled a sense of adventure in me, moving our family from Southern California to Australia and England for work and sparking my passion for exploring new places and cultures. My photography showcases my fondness for intimate landscapes, captivating wildlife, and the unique lives of people I have encountered on my journeys. My desire to capture the diversity and beauty of the world continues to drive my work, whether I’m photographing far-off locations or everyday beauty closer to home.

**Tech spec:** Fujifilm XT-2 + XF18-135mm: 1/250 sec at f/6.4 ISO 800

**Judges comments:** “We’ve all seen plenty of images of mountain gorillas in the wild – often in larger groups or with the focus resting on an impressively large, seated adult, perhaps spied through vegetation. So, to see this infant in close proximity, in an action shot perfectly situated to the left of the frame with its intense eyes firmly planted on something out of shot, is unusual and endearing."

**APRIL 2024**

**Water for Survival**

**Apurba Kumar Das**

**Green-tailed Sunbird, Rishop, West Bengal, India**

***Photographer’s Image description*** *“This photo was taken in India, in Darjeeling. As we know, forest lands are decreasing day by day resulting in conflict between humans and wildlife. Every living being needs water for survival and that water is not easily available in all places – such as this. Some people help to conserve wildlife by providing food and water in these harsh environments - without help, in such extreme conditions, they may not survive. This sunbird was trying to quench its thirst.”*

**About the Photographer:** I am an Ex-Indian Revenue Service Officer and 65 years old. I have been doing photography as my hobby for the last 20 years. “

**Tech spec:** Nikon Z9, Lens Nikor 400mm + 1.4 TC= 560mm ,f/5.6.1/4000.ISO 2800

**Judges comments:** "Photographing a bird in flight is difficult. It is hard to get both a fast enough shutter speed (to freeze the action) with a sufficient depth of field (to get the whole subject in focus), and to manage the latter while still achieving nice smooth background bokeh. A bird with both light and dark plumage, as with this sunbird, is also tricky to expose correctly without either burning the highlights or underexposing the dark areas."

**MAY 2024**

**Sunset**

**Tracey Graves**

**Cheetah, Mara North Conservancy, Kenya**

***Photographer’s Image description***“It was our first game drive at Kicheche Mara in the Mara North Conservancy. We had sat with two sleeping cheetah brothers for over an hour and they did not seem inclined to move. I had jokingly said to our guide that it would be nice to get a silhouette of a cheetah up a tree, as there was a dead one nearby, but did not think this was likely. As the sun went down they slowly woke up andstarted to stretch, but not much else. The other few vehicles at the sighting left for sundowners and we were rewarded with the shot I had asked for, with just enough light to play with.”

**About the Photographer**: I am 48, a doctor and I live near Cambridge. I am an amateur wildlife photographer, mainly practising on safari, but I also shoot birds in the UK. I guess I entered as I had a bit more time on my hands lately as I was recuperating from an operation. The photo was taken on my first trip three months after major surgery and we were a bit nervous about whether we would be able to go or not, given all of the climbing into and out of land cruisers that this entails.

**Tech spec:** Canon 5D mark III, EF 200-400 f/4, ISO 1600, f4, 1/3200

**Judges comments**: "If photography is all about the light, then this image exemplifies that beautifully. It’s the contrast between the dark silhouettes and luminously warm sky that draws the viewer to this photograph. What’s more, the perfect composition – with all parts of the cheetah delineated, from raised front paw to recognisably curling long tail – allows us to follow its trajectory and imagine the next step. "

**JUNE 2024**

**The Giants**

**Subi Sridharan**

**Savannah Elephants with Mount Kilimanjaro, Amboseli, Kenya**

***Photographer’s Image description***“It was one of those days when everything came together. Mount Kilimanjaro was partially clear, and I had been anxiously waiting for an elephant herd to arrive. The wait was worth it and I was able to take this picture.

Elephant conservation is a crucial endeavour aimed at protecting and safeguarding these majestic creatures from numerous threats they face. Elephants are confronted with habitat loss, poaching for ivory, and conflicts with humans. Conservation efforts include establishing protected areas, implementing anti-poaching measures, promoting community involvement, and reducing human-elephant conflicts through innovative solutions. Strict laws and international collaborations are enforced to combat the illegal ivory trade.

Elephant orphanages and rehabilitation centres provide care for injured and orphaned elephants, while educational programmess raise awareness about the importance of elephant conservation. Preserving elephants not only ensures their survival but also safeguards ecosystems and maintains the delicate balance of nature.”

**About the Photographer:** I’m a 50 year old IT Consultant living in Birmingham, UK.

I have always had a passion for wildlife photography and conservation. Wildlife photography plays a vital role in conservation by raising awareness about the importance of biodiversity and ecosystems. Through captivating images, it fosters empathy and emotional connections with wildlife, encouraging people to take action for conservation.

These photographs can be powerful tools in advocacy campaigns, influencing policymakers and the public to support conservation initiatives. Ultimately, wildlife photography serves as a visual bridge, inspiring collective efforts to protect and preserve our natural heritage for future generations.

By working with Explorers Against Extinction I want to use my photographs to support them and be a small part of their great conservation work.

**Tech spec:** Canon EOS 5D Mark IV, EF 24-105mm f/4L IS II USM, f/4, 1/2000, ISO 100

**Judges comments:** “In stripping this image of its colour, the photographer focuses our attention on form. This, in turns, reduces the image to four essential elements: a group of elephants, parched ground, montane backdrop and searing sun. And these four elements tell a story: the story of survival in a demanding setting. A story revealed, boldly and beautifully."

**JULY 2024**

**Cloud Walker**

**Torie Hilley**

**Coastal Brown Bear, Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, Alaska, USA**

***Photographer’s Image description*** *“It was July 2022 and my first time travelling since the pandemic began. I needed a change of scenery to boost my psyche. I knew Alaska would be perfect. Every day, I slowly trudged through the sticky mud with the professional bear guide to take photos of the bears clamming on the mudflats. I was exhausted by the last day, and bored of the grey skies that dominated the week. After testing different angles, I saw the sky gradually start to change colours. I bent down to hover my massive lens over the water to create a smooth foreground. Then the colours began to reflect upon the mudflats. I couldn’t believe what I was seeing. It looked as if the bear was walking on clouds. In a matter of minutes, the colours disappeared.*

*There was a recent win for wildlife conservation in the area. Mining companies proposed to build a massive open pit mine (known as the Pebble Mine) with heavy infrastructure in Bristol Bay, which would be too close for comfort to the Lake Clark and Katmai National Parks. However, the US Army Corps of Engineers rejected the proposal, thus, avoiding a domino effect that would have irreversibly damaged brown bear and other wildlife populations, as well as one of the last intact salmon ecosystems.”*

**About the Photographer:** Born and raised in California, I am a wildlife conservationist, artist, and photographer. I was originally a wildlife researcher studying the behaviour of predators throughout Southern Africa, before I switched to visual arts. First studying the behaviour of lions, I then got a master’s degree in animal behaviour and specialised in the second most endangered carnivore in Africa, the African Painted Dog.

**Tech spec:** Canon R5, Canon RF 400mm f/2.8 at 400mm and f/2.8, 1/1000, ISO 400

**Judges comments:** "Sometimes the simplest images can be the most impressive. The photographer watching a single brown bear as it searches for food on an Alaskan mudflat sees the scene suddenly come to life when the sky changes, and violets and pinks warmly intertwine with the bear’s opaque shadow on the glistening ground. The horizon disappears as reflected sky and earth meld together. The image was taken at exactly the right moment."

**AUGUST 2024**

**Homeward Bound**

**John Leigh**

**Arabian Oryx, Murqquab, Dubai, UAE**

***Photographer’s Image description*** *“The Arabian Oryx was declared extinct in the wild in 1972. They were reintroduced into the Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve, an area of 225km2 with an aim of providing a viable breeding population of Arabian Oryx within a diverse desert landscape. Initially 118 individuals were introduced into the Al Maha Reserve and provided with water, supplementary feed and shelter. The scheme has been a resounding success and has added improved biodiversity with the flora and fauna flourishing. On a 4 x4 safari we were lucky to come across a group heading towards a watering hole. Under a beautiful sunset sky this is something we will never forget.*”

**About the Photographer:** I live in Sheffield, South Yorkshire.I am 64 years of age and I retired as a Company Director six years ago. My family and I are keen wildlife supporters. My motivation for entering is because I believe that everyone should do all they can to preserve the habitat of all wildlife and to preserve ecosystems to help maintain this. Locally my family and I are spending a lot of time in encouraging hedgehogs to visit our garden( we currently have at least 4 regular visitors) . We have created nests and feeding stations to assist in their growth and chances of survival .We have also become a hoglet friendly home where hedgehog rescue centres send young abandoned hoglets to us to assist in their development.

**Tech spec**: Canon Eos 5d Mark4, Canon 100-400 zoom f5.6 and 1.3 extender. Shot at 1/1600 sec, f7.1

**Judges comments: “**This is one of those photographs that combines so many elements to draw the eye – perfect light, a group of three and a photographer’s vantage point that allows the oryx to dominate their environment. The footprints in the sand and middle animal’s dragging hoof evoke ancient stories of Arabia and great traverses over the dunes. Sometimes we can’t do anything about positioning – the photographer perhaps aches for a little extra space between animal two and three to achieve ultimate compositional perfection – yet the group of three is still beguiling."

**SEPTEMBER 2024**

**Safely Intrepid**

**Gabriella Comi**

**Cheetah Family, Serengeti National Park, Tanzania**

***Photographer’s Image description*** *“A cheetah cub on a termite mound peeping out from under the long tail of his mother, displaying an intrepidness that relies on the strong feeling of safety and protection provided by mama.*

*Cheetahs are the most vulnerable of big cats and on the brink of extinction. There's only around 7000 left in the wild*. *Just 10% of cheetah cubs survive to adulthood, having to face daily threats by other apex predators (exp. lions and hyenas) and in some areas being the highest toll to human-wildlife conflicts, often related to climate change.”*

**About the Photographer**: I am a 51 year old Italian, and I am a high rank police officer of the Italian State Police. I was born in Milan but am currently in charge of a local police office in South Sardinia.

I have been a fierce conservationist since childhood, had even considered becoming a veterinarian but facts of life led me to get a degree in Law and even work as a lawyer for a while. Nevertheless, my love for nature and animals has never failed, and in the last decade I have become an avid safari goer. Whenever I am out in the bush I feel blessed and privileged and grateful for being able to witness the beauty of Nature, so Wildlife Photography started just as a way to share that feeling.

I have a passion for predators, especially the big cats, but I am particularly fond of cheetahs.

When I saw the call for entries it was a no brainer: my secret agenda is to make the whole world fall in love with cheetahs one shot at a time! Love is the first sparkle for interest, then awareness, then concern and protection.

**Judges comments:** "We are used to seeing photos of big cats in ways that demonstrate their might, their dominance. Here the photographer focuses on feline fragility. This is a beautiful moment of intimacy and uncertainty, rendered all the more poignant by the use of monochrome, which focuses our attention on the adult female’s curves… and her youngster’s gaze."

**OCTOBER 2024**

**A Flicker of Hope**

**Simon Hilbourne**

**Sperm Whales, Caribbean waters of Dominica**

***Photographer’s Image description*** *"These two sperm whales offer a flicker of hope. Once a primary target of commercial whaling fleets, sperm whale populations were decimated by whalers looking to harvest the oil for candles, lubricant and lamps.*

*Thanks to international bans on commercial whaling and increased awareness about their ecological importance, sperm whale populations appear to be rebounding in several regions.*

*They still face numerous threats from fatal collisions with ships, pollution from plastics, chemicals, to noise pollution disrupting their communication and health. Sperms whales are evidence that when human pressures are released, nature can rebound."*

**About the Photographer:** 31 year old marine conservationist and founder of Fish Free February, based in the Seychelles, but often abroad.

I've had the opportunity to explore many corners of the ocean and spent countless hours on the sea. Many species of whales and sharks are incredibly difficult to find and partly because their populations have been decimated by fisheries. When I finally got the chance to meet sperm whales in Dominica, I wanted to use my imagery to highlight how this population is a flicker of hope. These sperm whales show that when the pressures of exploitation and fisheries are removed, the oceans can be incredibly resilient and bounce back. We just need to give them that chance.

**Tech spec:** Canon R5 with Canon RF 15-35mm at 15mm, f/16, 1/160s, ISO1000, natural light

**Judges comments:** "An intimate moment between two sperm whales, captured beautifully with impressive exposure control, a glorious sense of gentle, perhaps winding movement, and taken in a coloured sea that lends tonal richness to what otherwise might have been a monochrome image."

**NOVEMBER 2024**

**In the Pink or on the Brink**

 **Amarjeetsingh Bishnoi**

**Lesser Flamingos, TS Chanakya wetlands, Mumbai**

***Photographer’s Image description*** *“Studies have shown how TS Chanakya wetlands and mangroves are critical sites for shorebirds and winter migratory species. TS Chanakya has one of the highest congregation of shorebirds in the Thane creek ecosystem.*

 *Currently, these sites are facing threats from landfilling excavation, blocking tidal water movement, mangrove incursion, fishing, recreational and commercial development and other factors.*

*A service road project by Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation was halted by the Mangrove Cell of the Maharashtra Forest Department. The excavated periphery of the wetland site now stands like an eyesore. Over the past few days, the waterbody has dried up drastically, too.*

*It would be a travesty and tragedy of the highest order if these wetlands were to become another anthropogenic disaster.”*

**About the Photographer:** I am an ornithologist living in Pune, India. I was born in the Bishnoi Community - we believe in conservation and preservation of nature.

I have personally reared 1500 butterflies in my house! We can all do something to help save earth.

**Tech spec:** Canon 6 D MK-II, Tamron 150-600mm

**Judges comments:** “Shorebirds such as these sandplovers are vulnerable to disturbance and predation, so often retreat from the water’s edge to miniature islands. Space on these safe havens is inevitably restricted, so birds jostle for position. This image captures the moment of bickering perfectly, the movement contrasting with the serene water below, and the bright hues of the sandplovers’ breasts finding their echo in the backdrop of a flamingo flock.”

**DECEMBER 2024**

**My New Toy**

**Celia Kujala**

**Steller sea lion, Norris Rocks, Hornby Island, British Columbia**

***Photographer’s Image description***“Play is very important in the development of young Steller sea lions and they love playing with anything that they find in their environment. When I was diving at Norris Rocks off Hornby Island, I watched this young sea lion play with a sea star. As I watched her, she swam over to me to show me her beautiful toy. I was able to capture the image just as she was presenting the sea star to me. Sadly, Steller sea lions are listed as Near Threatened on the IUCN Red List. By observing their playful nature, I hope people will feel a connection with them and want to protect them and their environment.”

**About the Photographer**: Celia Kujala is an international award-winning wildlife and underwater photographer from the United States. From the moment she saw California sea lions for the first time at the Prospect Park Zoo when she was fourteen months old, she has felt a special bond with them. However, it wasn’t until she got scuba certified and started underwater photography in 2017 that she felt she found her true calling. She strives to learn everything she can about her subjects before she meets them in order to most accurately and intimately tell their stories. She is currently working on a project Seal Peace about all the Pinnipeds of the world. She wishes to share the stories of these charismatic marine mammals as a way to engender an appreciation not only for each individual species, but as a way to appreciate their diverse environments and the challenges these environments are facing. She is honored to be a member of the Explorers Club and Ocean Artists Society.

**Tech spec:** 10mm, Dual Sea & Sea YS-D2J Strobes. F/11, 1/250, ISO 500.

**Judges comments:** "Who doesn’t love an animal photograph that combines an element of playful behaviour with a wild and beautiful environment? Given the wide-eyed, direct address with the lens, the viewer is given a privileged insight into the brief moment of interaction between sea lion and diving photographer, caught in a swathe of light that allows for the inclusion of the seabed as part of the underwater scene."