



## Wildlife in North Carolina 2022–2023 PHOTO COMPETITION

Neil Jernigan of Snow Hill was perhaps destined to win the Grand Prize of the Photo Competition. After all, he grew up a shutterbug.

“Everything in my life growing up guided me into the world of photography,” Jernigan said. “We always brought cameras with us when we went hunting, fishing and traveling. Also, my mom ran a scrapbook business, so cameras were used to document our lives daily. It just made sense to combine my love of wildlife with photography.”

Jernigan said that he loves photographing in and around swamps and rivers in eastern North Carolina and that his favorite subjects to photograph are black bears and elk. His specialty is employing remote camera traps—not trail cameras—to capture shots of elusive animals like his winning bobcat. *National Geographic* magazine provided an early spark for Jernigan.

“I loved seeing *National Geographic* photographer Steve Winter’s photography when I was younger,” he said. “He used remote camera traps to document big cats like lions and tigers. One of the main reasons I’m drawn to camera trap photography is the ability to create close-up and intimate portraits of species not typically seen by most people.”

For aspiring photographers, Jernigan had a couple of thoughts.

“I would recommend two things to any aspiring photographer,” Jernigan said. “First and foremost is to study and try to understand your subject. The more you can learn about them the better you will be able to find and photograph them. Secondly, spend as much time as possible outside in nature. The more time you invest, the more experiences you will be rewarded with.”

Go to [youtube.com/@NeilJernigan](https://www.youtube.com/@NeilJernigan) to learn more about his techniques.

The Photo Competition had over 1,700 entries this year, and, as always, judging was difficult. “Every year, the readers of this magazine impress the judges and staff with their amazing photography,” Art Director Marsha Tillett said. “We received so many wonderful images, and it is an honor to be one of the judges. This year’s grand prize winner was a first for this competition. It is the first time a camera trap image won the top prize. This beautiful portrait of a bobcat was the favorite of all the judges. It is an amazing image that truly captures the beauty and solitude of this animal.”

In addition to Tillett, other judges included graphic designers Jodie Owen and Bryant Cole, retired Commission photographer Melissa McGaw and photographer/naturalist Mike Dunn. A tip of the cap to Commission IT specialist Adell Chase for her technical assistance.

To learn more about the Photo Competition, including past winners and rules information, visit [ncwildlife.org/WINC](https://ncwildlife.org/WINC) and click on the Photo Competition link.

–Mike Zlotnicki

## GRAND PRIZE WILDLIFE IN NORTH CAROLINA 2022–2023 PHOTO COMPETITION



### Neil Jernigan, Snow Hill

#### Bobcat on dam

For years I’ve been trying to photograph bobcats with my DSLR camera traps. After discovering a local beaver dam, I set up my camera, sensor and lights in hopes of photographing the elusive cat. After a couple of months capturing many different species, like foxes, squirrels and raccoons, I was finally able to create this photograph. On this day, a bobcat passed in front of my camera just before 7 a.m., which helped create a dramatic portrait in early morning light. Three images were created in the sequence, and this was the final frame as it turned to slowly cross the dam.

(Canon Rebel T6, Canon 18–55mm lens, f/4, 1/60 of a second, ISO 800, three Nikon Speedlights)



**BIRDS FIRST PLACE**

**Brady Linkous, Valdese**

Flock of marbled godwits

My son and I were excited to travel together to Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge in January 2023. My son was hoping to do some fishing and my plan was to photograph the winter birds. However, we quickly realized that the weather forecast was off a bit, and we were faced with Nor'easter conditions. High winds, cold air and even a few snowflakes kept us huddled inside for a good bit of the weekend. On our final morning, I headed for the public photo blind provided by the refuge and planted my tripod. There were a few tundra swans just in front of the blind. I clicked off a few yawn-worthy frames of them tucking those elegant necks into a cold-weather position. The next couple hours were even slower. While making a tripod adjustment, I heard a distant mass flutter and caught a passing glimpse of a flock of handsome marbled godwits darting and dashing my way. I was able to click off a few frames as they passed in front of my portal.

(Canon 5D Mk IV, Canon 500mm f4 and Canon 1.4 extender, f/5.6, 1/2,000 of a second, ISO 1,250)

**BIRDS SECOND PLACE**

**John Mauser, Hubert**

Morning swans

It takes some commitment, but I love photographing tundra swans at sunrise in the dead of winter. As I sat in the frozen grass of the marsh trying to stay warm, I could hear the calls from hundreds of swans waiting for the sun to rise so that they could take flight. On this morning, we had a cloudless sky and a brilliant sunrise. I hoped to catch the birds backlit by the warm glowing light, so I positioned myself facing directly into the sun and photographed each group of swans as they passed through the light.

(Sony A7 IV, Sony 200–600mm lens, shot at 547mm, f/6.3, 1/2,000 of a second, ISO 1,250)



**BIRDS THIRD PLACE**

**Matthew Cuda, Tobaccoville**

Hummingbird spilling nectar

Each year I try to add to my body of work called, “The Hummingbird Project,” and each year I try techniques I have not used previously. Normally, I photograph hummingbirds using a multi-flash setup, but this time I decided to go simple and use natural lighting with extremely fast shutter speeds to freeze motion in the wings. I was pleased to see this was possible with less motion blur than I had imagined. This ruby-throated hummingbird was frozen as it shook its head. This produced the flying nectar seen in the image. The gorget (throat patch) has that bright ruby red appearance due to being right on the sun angle.

(Sony A9: Sony FE 200–600 mm at 594 mm, f/6.3, 1/5,000 of a second, ISO 800)





**MAMMALS FIRST PLACE**

**John Wright, Virginia Beach, Va.**

Red wolf in the beans

I headed to Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge with hopes of photographing some wildlife with a lens that I had rented. The sun had just risen as I came upon this red wolf pup eating beans in one of the fields about 30 to 40 yards off the road. I pulled over, mounted the camera on the tripod and watched until I had a somewhat clear view of the wolf. I switched to manual focus and I was able to capture this image.

(Nikon Z9, Nikon Z 800mm f/6.3 lens, f/6.3, 1/1,000 of a second, ISO 3,600)

**MAMMALS SECOND PLACE**

**Brady Linkous, Valdese**

Cataloochee Valley bull

Before 2022, I had never photographed or even seen an elk in the wild. However, the Cataloochee Valley has now become an obsession of mine. I have made countless early morning treks there, a two-hour drive if the weather is good. In mid-December, I arrived there to find several elk quietly grazing in the “church yard.” The rut was over and the mood was much more subdued than in recent weeks. A large bull was content with me fiddling with my gear just off the road. I had decided to rest my lens on a “bean bag” using the bed of my truck as its support. This was quick and quiet as I worked to get a few frames in the early morning light. When a bull elk makes eye contact with you, it’s always memorable. He stood there in the light for a bit, long enough for me to get a few frames, and then he headed off to the trees just beyond the church.

(Canon 5D MKIV, Canon 500mm f4, f/4, 1/800 of a second, ISO 1,250)



**MAMMALS THIRD PLACE**

**Neil Jernigan, Snow Hill**

Back-lit black bear

While searching for wildlife, I discovered this large black bear feeding in a soybean field in the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge. The rising sun gave everything a nice, warm glow. I decided to create a silhouette-style photograph and metered the light that was brightest in the scene. I then underexposed my camera by three stops, which caused all the shadow areas to fall completely dark and only allowed the sun’s warm light to be left around the edge of the bear’s outline. I was very excited to see the outcome on the back of the camera.

(Canon 1DX Mark III, Sigma 150–600mm lens at 600mm, f/6.3, 1/1,250 of a second, ISO 2,000)



## REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

### WILDLIFE IN NORTH CAROLINA 2022–2023 PHOTO COMPETITION



#### REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS FIRST PLACE

**Glen Barnette, Greenville**

Hungry anole

I had been watching several anoles for approximately 30 minutes in our backyard garden. It was August and hot, but I wanted to photograph an anole catching an insect. This anole popped up from under the flower to catch the fly. The anole did not appear to be bothered by my camera or me being just a few feet away. It enjoyed its meal and went looking for another fly.

(Nikon D7200, Nikon 70–200mm at 190mm, Kenko 36mm extension tube, f/4, 1/1,000 of a second, ISO 400)

#### REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

##### SECOND PLACE

**Ana Sapp, Raleigh**

Sandhills coachwhip

Taken in the North Carolina Sandhills, this coachwhip was the perfect individual for my favorite style of photography, portraiture, due to its striking features. Coachwhips are named for their “rope-like” tail pattern. I was able to capture the eye of the snake and the tail pattern in my photo, two of the most defining characteristics of this snake.

(Canon Mark II 7D, EF100mm f/2.8L Macro IS USM at 100mm, f/5.6, 1/160 of a second, ISO 1,000)



#### REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

##### THIRD PLACE

**John Rabb, Lenoir**

Baby timber rattlesnake

Last year, I met up with a few N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission reptile biologists. The knowledge I gained was instrumental in helping me educate the public about getting too close at gestation sites in late summer. When pregnant females are scared into hiding, they lose body temperature regulation, which delays births and causes babies to have less of a chance to survive winter. Through personal interaction, I've also learned that rattlesnakes are incredibly docile despite having an unfair reputation. This little beauty resting on a pine cone captured my heart.

(Sony A7R IV, Sigma Art 24–70mm at 70mm, f/8, 1/800 of a second, ISO 50)





**INVERTEBRATES FIRST PLACE**

**Mark Weir, Mocksville**

Hummingbird clearwing moth

I selected a spot in Tanglewood Park in Clemmons near a stand of Pickerelweed to test my new mirrorless camera. It was a warm summer morning with plenty of insects pollinating flowers. I set the focus manually and waited for interesting subjects to fly into the scene. The hummingbird clearwing became the star attraction. I am pleased with the colors in this image and the long proboscis in a spiral shape.

(Nikon Z7 II, Nikon AF-S 500mm f/5.6E PF ED VR + TC-14E III teleconverter + FTZ adapter at 700mm, f/8, 1/2,000 of a second, ISO 3,600, Peak Design tripod with Wimberley gimbal head)

**INVERTEBRATES SECOND PLACE**

**Drew Trenholm, Wake Forest**

Fly on flower

I take walks with my camera on a greenway near my home looking for macro or close-up subjects. One day I spotted a fly landing on a small flower near me. His large red eyes caught my attention and became the focus of my shot. The fly held still just long enough to get a couple of shots. Fortunately, I had the right lens and my camera set for such a shot as I had to act fast.

(Olympus E-M1 Mark III, 60mm f/2.8 macro lens, f/7.1, 1/250 of a second, ISO 1,600, handheld, natural light)



**INVERTEBRATES THIRD PLACE**

**Sellers Hill, Wilmington**

Jumping spider in a web

While exploring an overgrown field on the coast of North Carolina, I spotted a jumping spider nest—no larger than a dime—nestled within the grass. I was ecstatic to find that it was occupied. Crouching down, I adjusted my flash to illuminate the nest and focused through the nest entrance on the subject inside.

(Fujifilm X-T3, Laowa 65mm f/2.8 2x Ultra Macro APO, f/5.6, 1/60 of a second, ISO 80, Godox TT350F strobe)





**WILD PLANTS FIRST PLACE**

**Drew Trenholm, Wake Forest**

Frosty leaf

A couple of years ago I started carrying my camera while walking on a greenway near my home. I quickly learned that looking for macro or close-up targets vastly increased the number of interesting photographic subjects. On one December morning, I noticed a lot of frost, so I grabbed my camera and headed for the greenway. I spotted a dead leaf on the ground with an interesting shape on one side outlined by the frost. I held my camera as parallel to the leaf as I could to keep all the frost detail in focus. When converted to black and white, it further emphasized the detail in the frost.

(Olympus E-M1 Mark III, 60mm f/2.8 macro lens, f/5.6, 1/250 of a second, ISO 1,600 handheld, natural light)

**WILD PLANTS SECOND PLACE**

**Ana Sapp, Raleigh**

Dew on sundew

Taken on the coast of North Carolina, this sundew drew my attention because of the way it reflected light. The plant had speckles of morning dew scattered across its sticky leaves, which created a cascade of light as the sun hit the plant. I used a low aperture to create a “bokeh” effect, which produces circular patches of light in the photo.

(Canon Mark II 7D, Canon EF100mm f/2.8L Macro IS USM, f/4, 1/320 of a second, ISO 100)



**WILD PLANTS THIRD PLACE**

**Mark Kwiatkowski, Wake Forest**

Mushrooms on moss

During the fall, I love to go into the woods hunting for the perfect mushroom picture after it has been raining and the ground is nice and moist. I came across this batch of mushrooms growing out of the soft moist moss on an October day in Stem at Ledge Creek Forest Conservation Area owned by the Tar River Land Conservancy. Getting set up with camera gear and getting on my hands and knees, I was able to capture this beautiful patch of mushrooms in all its glory. Sometimes it is easy to overlook the small things that can be so beautiful.

(Sony A-77II, 85mm, f/8, 1/20 of a second, ISO 800)



## OUTDOOR RECREATION

### WILDLIFE IN NORTH CAROLINA 2022–2023 PHOTO COMPETITION



#### OUTDOOR RECREATION FIRST PLACE

**Jesse Liddle, Roxboro**

Milky Way at Jordan Lake

I was enjoying a nice night at Jordan Lake trying to do some astrophotography and decided to see what would happen if I stood at the end of the dock with my headlamp on while staring up at the sky. After a few attempts, I was able to stand still long enough to get this photograph. Even though this photo has a lot of light pollution from the cities, I was super excited to see that I had captured part of the Milky Way.

(Nikon Z6ii, Tamron 15–30mm f/2.8 lens at 15mm, f/2.8, 15 seconds, ISO 3,200)

#### OUTDOOR RECREATION

##### SECOND PLACE

**Kenny Onufrock, Wilmington**

Sunrise surfer

Every year, we rent a vacation home on Topsail Island, and I make the drive from Wilmington to meet up with family for the week. This morning, my niece Maggie Onufrock was going surfing, as she loves to do. I wanted to capture the sunrise over the ocean as she paddled out. I knew I wanted to get low and capture the splashing waves grabbing the first rays of light, so I squatted down, got a little wet and fired off a few frames. I was stoked with the results.

(Sony A7RIV, Sony 135mm lens, f/1.8, 1/8,000 of a second, ISO 100)



#### OUTDOOR RECREATION THIRD PLACE

**Jeremy Parnell, Asheville**

Sunset on the river

My wife and I took an evening stroll after making dinner at our Goose Island State Park campsite. Shortly into our walk, we came upon two fellow campers taking in the incredible sunset on a perfect spring night. I really appreciate the colors of the scene and the silhouette of the Spanish moss. It's a moment in time I will never forget. We are so lucky to live in the great state of North Carolina.

(Sony a6300, Sony 18–105mm f4 G OSS at 85mm, f/4, 1/100 of a second, ISO 4,000)



## WILD LANDSCAPES

### WILDLIFE IN NORTH CAROLINA 2022–2023 PHOTO COMPETITION



#### WILD LANDSCAPES FIRST PLACE

**John Rolland, Waynesville**

Foggy morning forest

Before dawn one morning in late October, I left my home near Waynesville and headed up to the Blue Ridge Parkway near Wagon Road Gap in hopes of photographing a nice autumn sunrise. It was too cloudy at the higher elevations to see what I was hoping for, but as the fog began to clear shortly after sunrise, a lovely view of the treetops down in the valley below took shape. The late autumn hues of the trees in the early morning mist created a delightful opportunity for an unexpected photograph.

(Nikon D810, Tamron 200–500mm lens at 380mm, f/8, 1/500 of a second, ISO 250, EV-0.67, tripod)

#### WILD LANDSCAPES SECOND PLACE

**Carrie Hanrahan, Inman, S.C.**

Mountain sunset

This was my first time to Roan Mountain, and it didn't disappoint. I went specifically to capture the landscape and flowers at sunset and arrived just after a storm had blown through. I hiked to a large rock outcropping right before sunset and was rewarded with the setting sun kissing the remaining storm clouds and throwing sunrays over the lush rhododendron bushes. This awe-inspiring view was one of many that I continued to take until the sun went down.

(Fujifilm X-T4 mirrorless camera, Fujinon XF 16–80mm F4 R OIS WR lens at 16mm, f/14, 1/20 of a second, ISO 160)



#### WILD LANDSCAPES THIRD PLACE

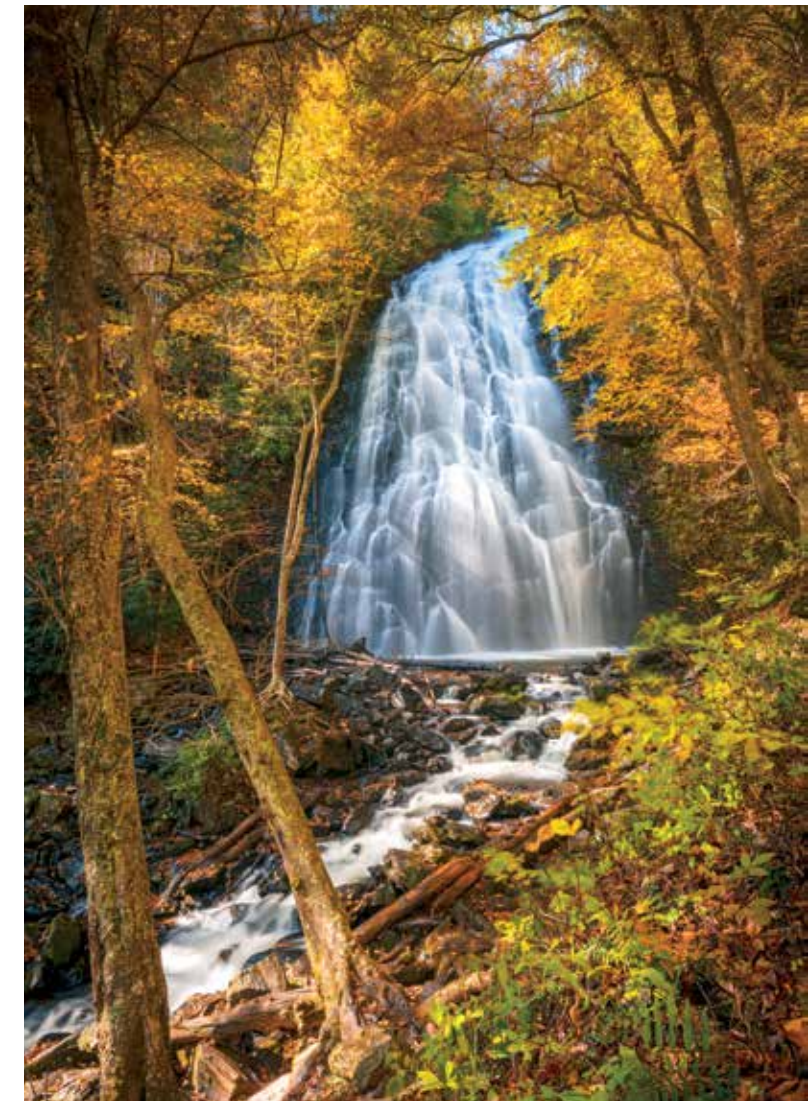
**Michael Jones, Leland**

Crabtree Falls

Autumn can be extremely vibrant in the mountains of North Carolina. I had been to Crabtree Falls several times and decided to hike down to it to experience its beauty amid autumn's colorful show. I was not disappointed. It was early morning with clear skies and the sun streaming through the woodlands along the top of the falls. This illuminated the upper foliage of the trees which were covered in intense yellow and gold leaves with touches of red and orange. The reflected light of the foliage illuminated the lower portion of the falls and the forest floor, opening shadows and adding a soft light to the waterfall itself.

I shot several different angles looking for different perspectives, and I really liked how this one came out, picking up the lower flow of the water cascading down the gully.

(Nikon D810, Nikon 18–70mm zoom at 22mm, f/20, 1.6 seconds, tripod)





## ANIMAL BEHAVIOR

WILDLIFE IN NORTH CAROLINA 2022–2023 PHOTO COMPETITION



### ANIMAL BEHAVIOR FIRST PLACE

**John Mauser, Hubert**

Warbler at a millpond

Prothonotary warblers are one of my favorite photography subjects. They seem to glow against the dark backgrounds of their riverine habitats, almost like they are lit up by a lightbulb. I came upon this warbler while it was feeding among the cypress trees of an old millpond. It would hop from tree to tree in search of insects, from crane flies to dragonflies. I kneeled down and quietly followed it with my lens, firing off a burst of shots each time it grabbed a beak full of bugs.

(Sony A7 IV, Sony 200–600mm lens at 600mm, f/6.3, 1/1,000 of a second, ISO 6,400)

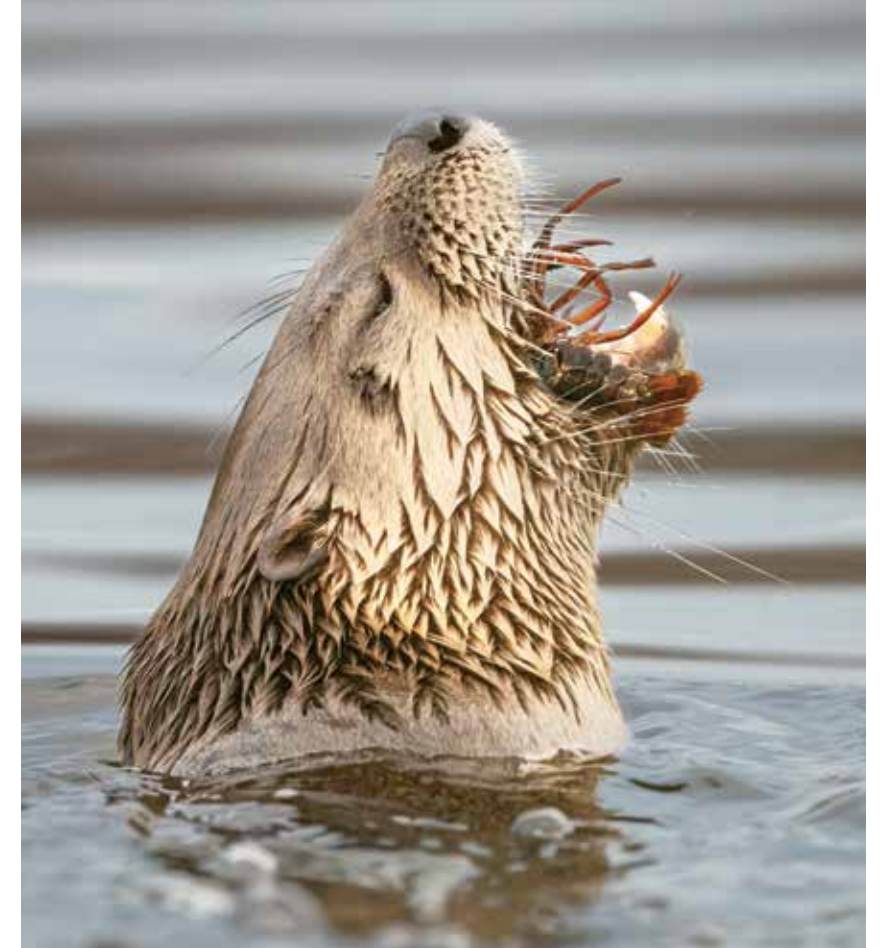
### ANIMAL BEHAVIOR SECOND PLACE

**John Mauser, Hubert**

Otter eating crayfish

While photographing winter waterfowl on one of our national wildlife refuges, I came across a group of river otters swimming in a roadside canal. After a few seconds, I realized they were hunting for a meal. I ran up the road and laid in the cold, wet grass, waiting for them to come past me. As they swam by me, this otter surfaced with a large crayfish in its mouth. It treaded water for a few seconds while crunching on its meal. I took aim and fired off a series of images.

(Sony A7 IV, Sony 200–600mm lens, at 600mm, f/6.3, 1/2,000 of a sec, ISO 4,000)



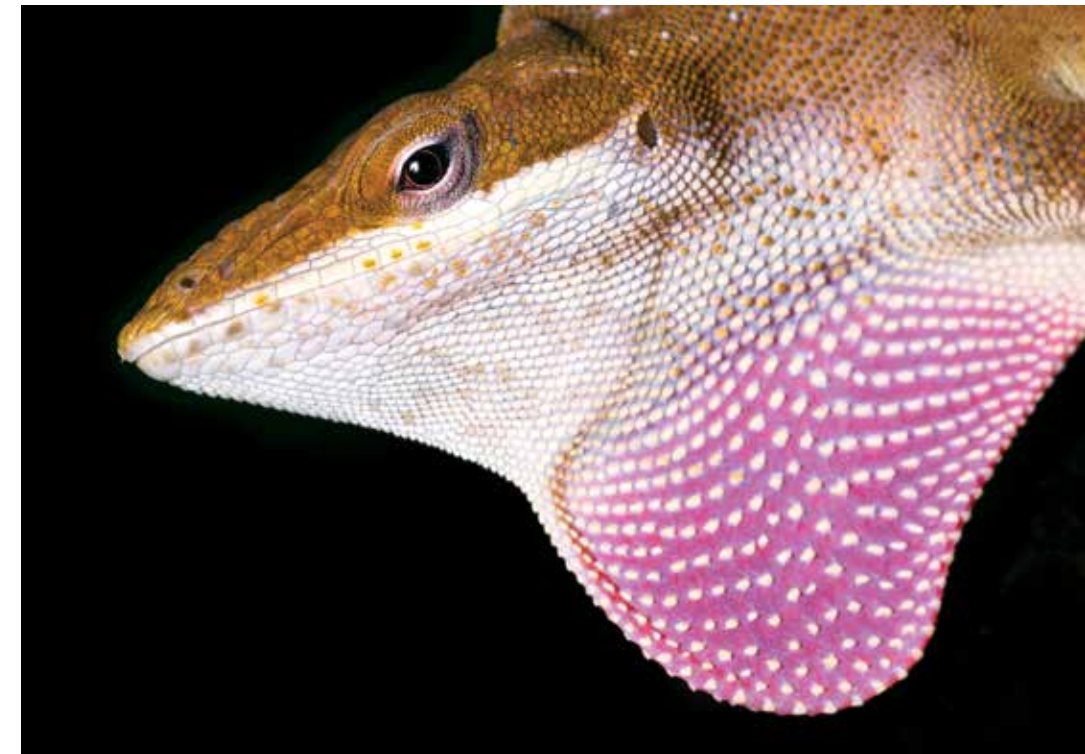
### ANIMAL BEHAVIOR THIRD PLACE

**Sellers Hill, Wilmington**

Anole's dewlap

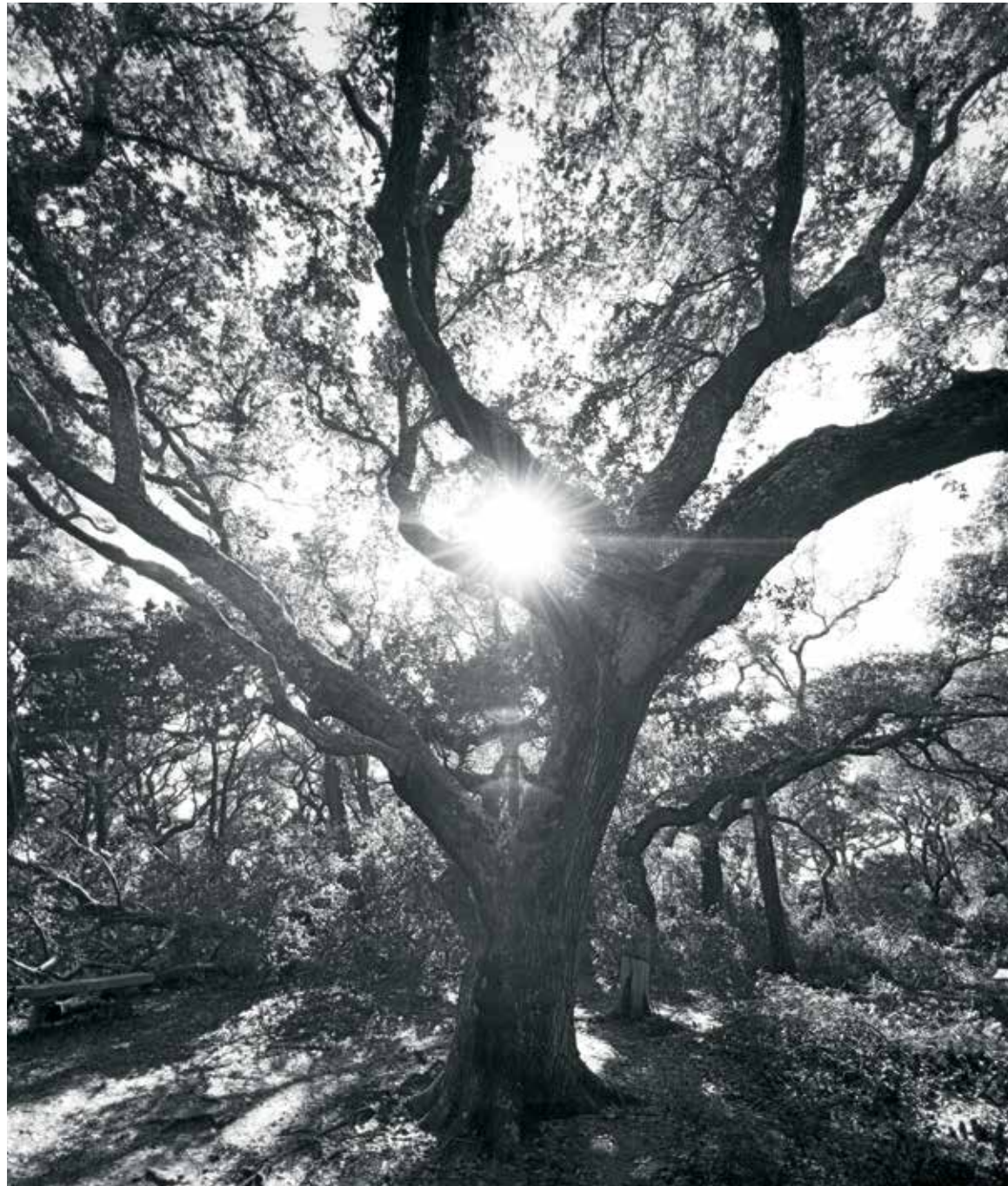
I have always been fascinated by the green anoles that emerge in the spring and summer, sometimes displaying their bright throat fans (dewlaps) for mating. Walking at Greenfield Lake in Wilmington, I noticed this male anole flashing his throat in quick bursts. Approaching slowly, I grabbed this macro shot, capturing the incredible variety of texture and color on these animals.

(Fujifilm X-T3, Laowa 65mm f/2.8 2x Ultra Macro APO, f/5.6, 1/125 of a second, ISO 80, Godox TT350F)



## YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 13–17

### WILDLIFE IN NORTH CAROLINA 2022–2023 PHOTO COMPETITION



#### YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 13–17 FIRST PLACE

**Rina Lavinder, Pittsboro**

Ocracoke oak

Every year my family and I visit Ocracoke Island in the Outer Banks. I took this photo of a live oak at Springers Point Nature Reserve. I love the forest there with the intricate branches of the ancient-feeling trees intertwining overhead. I initially took this photo in color and then changed it to black and white to enhance the patterning of the small branches and the tree's leaves. The setting sun provided the perfect focal point.

(iPhone 13 Pro Ultra-wide tree's 14mm, f/1.8, 1/444 of a second, ISO 32)

#### YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 13–17

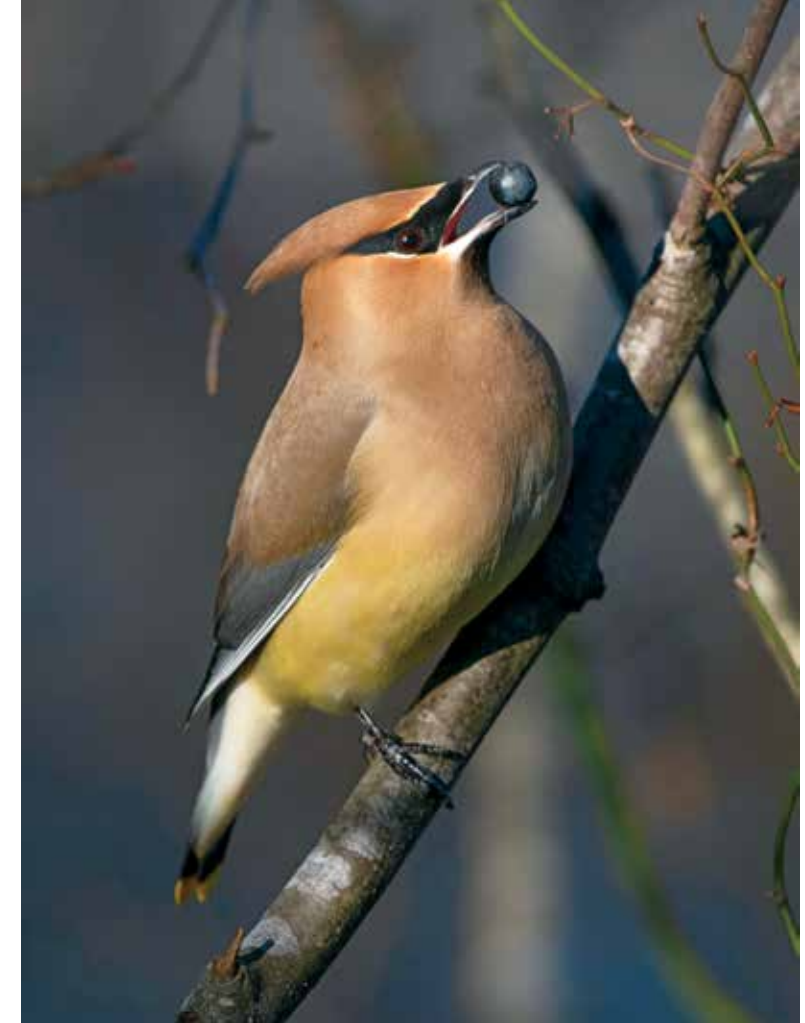
##### SECOND PLACE

**Ava Kornfeld, Charlotte**

Hungry cedar waxwing

Ever since I saw my first cedar waxwing, I had been dreaming of a picture of one eating a berry. One Saturday, I decided to go on a walk with my county's Audubon group. We were following a lone cedar waxwing that was eating berries right next to the walking path. It flew into the most perfect lighting, and I took as many pictures as I could. After it flew out of our view, I checked my camera's picture preview to see what I had gotten. I was ecstatic! I had finally gotten my dream shot!

(Nikon D3500, Nikon 200–500mm at 480mm, f/5.6, 1/1,250 of a second, ISO 320)



#### YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 13–17

##### THIRD PLACE

**Seth Harris, Mooresville**

Rat snake profile

I was inside my house one afternoon when I heard my siblings making a commotion about something outside. I went downstairs and out to the front porch where they were and saw a long, black rat snake slithering about on one of our chairs. I ran back upstairs to grab my camera as I saw that this could be a great opportunity to get some close-up shots of the snake. After coming back with my camera, I was trying to find a good angle to take some pictures of it when the snake started slithering its head farther off the side of the chair. It was super cool to see how strong their bodies really are, as it was holding up its floating head. I finally got a super-cool shot with its forked tongue out while it was sensing its unfamiliar surroundings.

(Canon EOS M50, Canon EF-S 55–250mm f/4.0-5.6 IS STM at 175mm, f/6.3, 1/200 of a second, ISO 640)





**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 13–17  
HONORABLE MENTION**

**Ayaan Barodawala, Cary**

Backlit plant

I was carrying the camera as my dad and I walked toward the community pond to capture some images of a group of vultures that had just come to rest close to our garden. As I walked past the pond, the bright light from the sun was blinding my eyes. However, a few plants helped block the sunlight and they looked like plants made of gold due to the strong sunlight reflecting on them and the pond. I had to capture that gold plant with the camera to keep forever.

(Canon EOS REBEL T5i, 75mm, f/8, 1/400 of a second, ISO 100)



**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 13–17  
HONORABLE MENTION**

**Ava Kornfeld, Charlotte**

Great blue heron silhouette

Last October, my dad took my brother and me to our favorite local birding spot. When we arrived, the sky was lit up with a gorgeous orange sunrise. My brother pointed out a great blue heron sitting atop a tree across the lake. The heron and trees were silhouetted against the sky and were the perfect subject for a picture.

(Nikon D3500, Nikon 200–500mm at 450mm, f/5.6, 1/1,250 of a second, ISO 400)



**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 13–17  
HONORABLE MENTION**

**Carolyn McShane, Hillsborough**

Soaring bald eagle

This photo was taken after my dad and I saw an eagle's nest in the distance from a country road. Unfortunately, it was on private property. Before going any closer, we asked for permission to walk the property and hiked through their back woods to get closer. After waiting about an hour, we were lucky enough to find a mature eagle flying overhead.

(Canon EOS 77D camera. Lens Sigma 150–600mm at 600mm, F 6.3 1/1,000s ISO 250)

**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 12 & UNDER**

**WILDLIFE IN NORTH CAROLINA 2022–2023 PHOTO COMPETITION**



**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 12 & UNDER  
FIRST PLACE**

**Leo Richmond, Hillsborough**

Anole portrait

I was at the North Carolina Botanical Gardens in Chapel Hill when I saw a small green lizard sunning itself on the concrete in front of the gift shop. I carefully lifted it up and moved it to some plants nearby that I thought would make a nice backdrop. I positioned my camera and took a few shots. I later found that this photo was my favorite. I like this photo because of the dominant green and the prominence of the anole's scales.

(Minolta MN35Z, 9mm, f/3.5, 1/200 of a second, ISO 125)



**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 12 & UNDER  
SECOND PLACE**

**Leo Richmond, Hillsborough**

Frog in a creek

I was at the small creek near my house when I saw a small species of frog named the spring peeper. I had brought my camera, so I moved closer to the frog and angled my camera in a way I thought looked good and snapped a few photos. I like this photo because it's unique; the frog is under the water and hidden in the leaves. I also like the swirls in the water.

(Minolta MN35Z, 9mm, f/3.5, 1/200 of a second, ISO 125)

**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 12 & UNDER  
HONORABLE MENTION**

**Adley Cooper, Cary**

Beetle on a leaf

On our annual camping trip to the mountains, we decided to go to Mount Mitchell and hike. As we were starting out, I saw this pink spotted lady beetle shining bright on the green foliage. This lady beetle was so magnificent looking that it caught my eye from a distance. I was able to get close enough to take this photo before it flew away. I was taught to enjoy the little things as much as the big things in nature.

(Canon PowerShot SX720 HS21mm, f/5.6, 1/2,000 of a second, ISO 400)



**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 12 & UNDER  
HONORABLE MENTION**

**Rohan Yadav, Morrisville**

Great blue heron

I was at the Crabtree Watershed area when I saw this great blue heron in the water. It was looking for fish and other things to eat. I chose this heron because of the speckles in the water and the brilliant reflection that it produced. I also liked it because of the exciting pose it took, which gave the photo a layer of suspense.

(Canon EOS Rebel SL2, Canon EF 70–300mm f/4–5.6 IS II USM at 200mm, f/6.3 1/100 of a second, ISO 200)



**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 12 & UNDER  
THIRD PLACE**

**Ellie Cooper, Cary**

Damselfly on a log

We were hiking at Raven Rock State Park when I noticed this big mushroom and started taking some photos of it. While I was sitting on this log, along came this beautiful damselfly and started looking at me. This is one of my favorite insects because damselflies are so photogenic. It's like they want their photo taken. I love how you can see some greens from the moss and ferns and an almost electric-looking insect that makes this whole scene pop.

(Canon PowerShot SX620 HS, 4.5mm, f/3.2, 1/160 of a second, ISO 125)

**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 12 & UNDER  
HONORABLE MENTION**

**Kailey Hayes, Asheboro**

Glowworm

I was 6 years old when I took this picture last October. I was in my friend Hannah's yard and we were looking for something to take a picture of for the *Wildlife in North Carolina* photo contest. We lifted up a rock and found a glowworm! I chose this picture for the contest because not many people have seen a glowworm and I wanted to share it. I love how it looks when it glows. The pattern is so neat! It is also called a railroad worm because the pattern looks like train cars when it glows. I used my mom's iPhone to take this picture.

(Apple iPhone SE, 3.9mm, f/1.8, 1/4 of a second, ISO 2,000)

