Nate Bacheler’s dominance in the *Wildlife in North Carolina* 2006 Photo Competition is somewhat of a good news/bad news situation. The bad news is that he might not need the Ph.D. he is working on through N.C. State University. The good news is that the reason he might not need a marine biology doctorate is because he is an excellent photographer.

Bacheler, who won two second-place awards in last year’s competition, cleaned house this year with five awards, including the grand prize, first place in Wild Plants, and third place in Mammals, Invertebrates and Outdoor Recreation. He also earned an honorable mention in Peaks, Valleys and Plains.

Part of Bacheler’s secret is to live in beautiful Morehead City, close to lots of other scenic places such as Croatan National Forest and Carrot Island. But the key is to get outdoors often and take lots of pictures. His winning photos span the state from Great Smoky Mountains National Park to the Gulf Stream, where Bacheler captured his grand prize photo of a Wilson’s storm petrel from a boat off the coast of Ocracoke. The picture combines the whimsical action of the bird’s feeding behavior — skipping across the water and scooping up food — and the fluid beauty of the warm blue water.

In the second year the competition has been held, 1,088 photographers entered a total of 5,133 photographs. The competition is intended to encourage high-quality nature photography and to identify talented wildlife photographers working in North Carolina. More than 140 young photographers entered in the two youth categories, more than double last year’s number. The most popular subject was Invertebrates (893 entries), followed closely by Birds (826) and the landscape category, Peaks, Valleys and Plains (762).

Our top-notch judges included *Wildlife in North Carolina* art director Vickie Cumbee, W INC photographer Melissa McGaw; educator Mike Dunn, coordinator of teacher education for the NC. Museum of Natural Sciences; marine biologist and professional wildlife photographer Todd Pusser, a 2005 category winner in the prestigious BBC Wildlife Magazine Photographer of the Year competition; and John Hansen, the photo editor for the features section of *The News & Observer* of Raleigh.

We wish to thank our corporate sponsors, Great Outdoor Provision Co. and J.W. Photo Labs of Raleigh, for their generous participation in this year’s competition. Valuable support was provided by our co-sponsor, the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences. All winning photographs may be seen on exhibit through March at the museum. Details on the 2007 competition will be posted on www.ncwildlife.org in May, and entries will open on June 1.

— Greg Jenkins
BIRDS

SECOND PLACE
Regina Jo Chayer, Garner
Cormorant, Carolina Beach

Thayer took up photography as “something to get me out of the house.” She spied this cormorant early one morning on a lagoon near the beach. “I was just in the right place at the right time,” she said.

BIRDS

FIRST PLACE
James K. Pullen, Warsaw
Black-crowned night heron, Buxton

Pullen, a teacher in Warsaw, captured the attention of the judges with this unusual photo of a black-crowned night heron landing in the top a dead tree near Cape Hatteras Lighthouse. Pullen is relatively new to photography, having “really gotten into it over the past year” after buying a new camera. The purchase was necessitated when his young son broke the less expensive model he had been using.

BIRDS

THIRD PLACE
Ed Ziegler, Raleigh
Ring-billed gull, Nags Head

While at Nags Head for the weekend, Ziegler noticed a lone gull calmly walking on the beach. When another gull appeared, Ziegler’s subject took offense and began attacking the other bird. That’s when Ziegler snapped his photo. “I’m not sure why he reacted that way,” Ziegler said.
MAMMALS
WILDLIFE IN NORTH CAROLINA 2006 PHOTO COMPETITION

MAMMALS FIRST PLACE
Hazel Erikson, Sharps Chapel, Tenn.
Elk, Cataloochee Valley

Erikson was out with her camera club at dawn when she photographed this elk having breakfast. Golden morning light illuminates the scene perfectly, and a fortuitous turn of the head hides the tracking collar and ear tag the bull was wearing.

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MAMMALS HONORABLE MENTION
Ed Erkes, Goldsboro
Great crested flycatcher, Wayne County

Erkes used his skill with high-speed photography to snap this dramatic shot of a great crested flycatcher, which breeds in North Carolina during the summer. “I used the same setup as I would for shooting a hummingbird — high-speed flash, painted poster board and infrared beam,” Erkes said.

BIRDS HONORABLE MENTION
Gene Furr, Raleigh
Brown pelican, Carolina Beach

While walking about and not finding much to photograph, Furr noticed this pelican hunkered down on a piling about 5:30 in the afternoon. “The fishing boats were starting to come in, and I think he was just waiting for a meal,” Furr said.

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**MAMMALS THIRD PLACE**

**Nate Bachelor, Morehead City**

Running horse, Carrot Island

Bachelor was out photographing insects when this wild young pony came running past him. Unsure whether it was threatening him or just having fun, he was able to click off three frames as it dashed by at full speed.

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**MAMMALS HONORABLE MENTION**

**Gary Carter, McLeansville**

Cotton rat, McLeansville

Carter is a firm believer that you don’t have to travel far to find interesting subjects to photograph, as his shot of a common cotton rat taken in his back yard shows.

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**MAMMALS SECOND PLACE**

**Lori Cash, Grandy**

Deer, Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge

Cash spends a lot of time in the numerous wildlife refuges located in the northeastern corner of the state. She liked that this photo contains only the two most compelling parts of this young deer’s face — its seemingly oversized eyes and ears.

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**MAMMALS HONORABLE MENTION**

**Charles Twine, Chapel Hill**

Black bear cub, Grandfather Mountain

This perfectly posed cub in a hemlock tree made for a wonderful portrait by Twine.
**REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS**

**SECOND PLACE**
Mark McDermott, Carrboro
Alligator eye, Fort Fisher

Liverpool, England, native McDermott, a UNC-Chapel Hill student, loves photographing North Carolina’s wildlife. He snapped this fascinating close-up of a captive juvenile at the N.C. Aquarium at Fort Fisher.

**REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS**

**FIRST PLACE**
Gene Furr, Raleigh
Gray treefrog, Raleigh

Furr was working on his deck one afternoon when he spied this treefrog in the afternoon light. “I stopped working, got my tripod and started taking shots of him,” Furr said. The result was this intriguing image.

**REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS**

**THIRD PLACE**
Mark Kostich, Mebane
Salamander egg mass, Chapel Hill

Kostich, who works at UNC Hospitals, found and photographed this egg mass at the N.C. Botanical Gardens during his lunch break.
REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS
HONORABLE MENTION
Mark Kostich, Mebane
Five-lined skinks hatching, Mebane
Kostich’s young son discovered these skink eggs under the family’s deck and covered them with leaves to protect them. After checking them every day, they discovered the hatchlings emerging and captured these two siblings greeting one another in their first moments of life.

REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS
HONORABLE MENTION
Michael Kozichek, Raleigh
Fence lizard, Bullock
While out last spring taking photos of orb spiders, Kozichek somehow spied this superbly camouflaged fence lizard and created a compelling photo.

INVERTEBRATES
INVERTEBRATES FIRST PLACE
Ed Erkes, Goldsboro
Dragonfly, Johnston County
This dragonfly, its color still vibrant, appears to be in suspended animation in a spider’s web. Erkes said he was searching for dew-covered webs at Howell Woods when he came upon this life-and-death tableau.
INVERTEBRATES

INVERTEBRATES HONORABLE MENTION
Ben Koski, Boone
Grasshopper, Union County

Koski got close to take a photo that makes this common insect seem somewhat alien.

INVERTEBRATES THIRD PLACE
Nate Bacheler, Morehead City
Glassy-winged sharpshooter, Carrot Island

On one of his frequent photo trips to the small island off Beaufort, Bacheler photographed this colorful leaf hopper on a yucca plant.

INVERTEBRATES SECOND PLACE
Patrick Chipley, Pikeville
Jumping spider, Pikeville

Gotcha! Chipley made superb use of his macro lens in capturing this extreme close-up during the summer of 2006.

INVERTEBRATES HONORABLE MENTION
Thomas Curd, Pollocksville
Paper wasp, Pollocksville

Curd found a wasp nest in a windmill palm in his backyard and peeked between the leaves to create this menacing photo.
WILD PLANTS
SECOND PLACE
John Stroud, Raleigh
Water lilies, Chapel Hill

Last year’s grand prize winner Stroud captured the simple beauty of water on lily pads on a photographic trip to the N.C. Botanical Garden.

WILD PLANTS
THIRD PLACE
Hobart Jones, Mount Airy
Dandelion, Mt. Airy

Jones was taking a walk about his yard testing a brand-new camera when this dandelion, with a seed waiting for a ride on the wind, caught his eye.

WILD PLANTS FIRST PLACE
Nate Bacheler, Morehead City
Maple leaves, Croatan National Forest

After a sunrise rain near Havelock, Bacheler got right up on these maple leaves and composed an excellent shot that contains all kinds of beautiful color.
OUTDOOR RECREATION FIRST PLACE
Hazel Erikson, Sharps Chapel, Tenn.
Surf fishing, Cape Hatteras

Erikson hit the beach at dawn and climbed up on a waterfront deck to get this gorgeous wide-angle photo of surf anglers in fall 2005.

WILD PLANTS
HONORABLE MENTION
David Hattori, Apex
Maple leaf, Blue Ridge Parkway

Hattori’s composition shows how two ordinary things, a fallen leaf and frost, can make an arresting photograph.

WILD PLANTS
HONORABLE MENTION
Jim March, Campobello, S.C.
Poplar leaf, Polk County

This poplar leaf near the Green River reveals its intricate patterns when lit by the sun.
OUTDOOR RECREATION
SECOND PLACE
Jessica Benton, Greensboro
Hiker, Appalachian Trail at Max Patch

Benton’s photo shows the expansiveness of this mountain bald and the solitude that sometimes goes with hiking the AT. The hiker seems to be headed right into the clouds.

OUTDOOR RECREATION
THIRD PLACE
Nate Bacheler, Morehead City
Camping, Croatan National Forest

The Neusiok Trail makes a great two-day hike. Bacheler took advantage of his one-night stopover to capture this idyllic image of morning light streaming through the forest onto his campsite.

PEAKS, VALLEYS & PLAINS
FIRST PLACE
Lance Richardson, Chapel Hill
Cypress and clouds, Neuse River

Richardson was visiting a friend near New Bern to help set flounder nets when this perfect combination of trees, water and approaching storm clouds demanded his attention.
PEAKS, VALLEYS & PLAINS
SECOND PLACE
Lynne Townsend, Boone
Mountains in mist, Boone

After waking many times and seeing tranquil, foggy sunrises, Townsend decided to capture the view from the top of Green Knob Mountain Road with her camera.

PEAKS, VALLEYS & PLAINS
THIRD PLACE
Peter Larkins, Burke, Va.
Three Top Mountain, Ashe County

While hiking with friends, Larkins was struck by the beauty of these icy peaks with low clouds rolling past.

PEAKS, VALLEYS & PLAINS
HONORABLE MENTION
Bruce Siulinski, Brevard
Looking Glass Rock, Blue Ridge Parkway

Siulinski waited for the perfect moment at sunset to record this striking image near his home in Brevard.

PEAKS, VALLEYS & PLAINS
HONORABLE MENTION
Nate Bacheler, Morehead City
Waterfall, Big Creek

Bacheler traveled far from his coastal home to visit the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, where he photographed this small triple waterfall on Big Creek.
ANIMAL BEHAVIOR SECOND PLACE

Peter Rulon, Stella
Twin blue herons, Swansboro

Rulon first saw and photographed only one blue heron, but then he snapped away as another heron approached and the two began circling and threatening one another in a dance of dominance.

ANIMAL BEHAVIOR THIRD PLACE

Charles Twine, Chapel Hill
Cardinal bathing, Mecklenburg

Twine’s photo of the state bird is all flying feathers and water droplets as the cardinal makes use of a birdbath.

ANIMAL BEHAVIOR FIRST PLACE

Paul Wagner, Cary
Mating fruit flies, Raleigh

Using an 800-millimeter macro lens and flash, Wagner illuminates the miniature world of these fruit flies caught mating on a zinnia at the J.C. Raulston Arboretum.
YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 13–17 HONORABLE MENTION
Sarah Adcock, Oxford
Grasshopper, Oxford
Adcock creates a striking study in green with this grasshopper on a sunflower.

YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 13–17 HONORABLE MENTION
Catherine Marshall, Greensboro
Jumping spider, Raleigh
Marshall caught this jumping spider, a predatory species, as it was hunting at Prairie Ridge.

YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 13–17 HONORABLE MENTION
Scott Cory, Lexington
Immature bird, Lexington
Cory found this young bird eyeing its future habitat in his mailbox.

YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 13–17 SECOND PLACE
Todd Fishman Elliott, Union Mills
Fishing spider, Union Mills
This fishing spider waits motionless at water’s edge, perfectly camouflaged, waiting in ambush for its next meal.

YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 13–17 THIRD PLACE
Nathanael Gass, Durham
Broadhead skink, Durham
Gass, who was the 12 & Under winner last year, scores again with this striking photograph of a skink among hydrangea blossoms.

YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 13–17 FIRST PLACE
Todd Fishman Elliott, Union Mills
Green frog, Union Mills
Elliott won second place in 2005 in the 12 & Under category. This year he earned both first and second in the 13–17 group. After hearing frogs singing at a pond near his home, Elliott snapped this vivid close-up view.
YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 12 & UNDER WILDLIFE IN NORTH CAROLINA 2006 PHOTO COMPETITION

HONORABLE MENTION

Hannah Styles, Robbinsville
Snowy woods, Robbinsville
Hannah, 10, loved the beauty of this snowy scene in her backyard and cropped her photo for maximum effect.

Emily Smith, Morganton
Mushrooms, Morganton
Ten-year-old Emily photographed these emerging mushrooms in her backyard during the spring of 2006.

Lucas Bobay, Holly Springs
Grasshopper, Raleigh
Lucas, 10, snapped this close-up during an August 2006 photo class for kids at Prairie Ridge.

FIRST PLACE

Margaret Malone, Apex
Eastern black swallowtail caterpillar, Apex
Eight-year-old Margaret’s parents planted this fennel in their yard specifically to attract caterpillars. She liked that the swallowtail was positioned on the plant so you could see its legs. The composition of her photo is flawless.

SECOND PLACE

Anna Sorenson, Clayton
Tachnid fly, Durham County
On a photo expedition with a botanist, 10-year-old Anna captured this interesting insect on a mountain mint plant. Her photo is so tack-sharp, you can see every little hair on the fly.

THIRD PLACE

Anna Gass, Durham
Toad, Eno River
While walking along the Eno, Anna’s attention was drawn to this toad resting on a log.

YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 12 & UNDER WILDLIFE IN NORTH CAROLINA 2006 PHOTO COMPETITION