



WILDLIFE IN NORTH CAROLINA 2018 PHOTO COMPETITION

Many people don't like snakes. A few are ambivalent. And very few, like Anton Sorokin, truly like the reptiles. Sorokin, an East Carolina University graduate school student studying biology, said his favorite subjects when wielding his Canon are reptiles and amphibians. He made his debut in the 2017 Photo Competition with a third-place finish in Reptiles and Amphibians for his photo of a spadefoot toad and first place in Animal Behavior with a picture of Southern toads mating. This year, Sorokin captured top prize for his photo of a rough green snake.

"I was incredibly excited and surprised," said Sorokin, 29. "Snakes are not as charismatic as birds and mammals. It was really cool.

"I do like snakes. Reptiles and amphibians are my favorite subjects and I think they are underappreciated. If you are careful, you can get close to them without disturbing them."

While he has been interested in photography for as long as he can remember, Sorokin said he got serious about it four or five years ago and started reading more about photography techniques online. "I started getting more manual in my camera settings," he said.

"The depth Sorokin created through his use of angle and aperture, in combination with the warm hues and composition of the image, impressed the entire judging panel. The setting sun adds interest to the image, creating a secondary focal point," said Marsha Tillett, art director for *Wildlife in North Carolina* magazine. "Sorokin was able to capture the beauty and grace of an animal most would generally describe as dangerous."

In addition to Tillett, judges for the contest included staff graphic designers Amy Friend and Bryant Cole, staff photographer Melissa McGaw and social media manager and photographer Thomas Harvey. Also serving as a judge was Mike Dunn, a retired senior manager of outreach at the N.C. Museum of Natural History and a veteran nature photographer.

Kevin Nestvogel, who won the Grand Prize last year with a drone photo of a salt marsh in New Hanover County, continued his winning ways this year by placing second in Outdoor Recreation and third in Wild Landscapes.

All winning photographs will be on display at the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences in Raleigh and on our website at ncwildlife.org.

—Mike Zlotnicki

GRAND PRIZE WILDLIFE IN NORTH CAROLINA 2018 PHOTO COMPETITION



Anton Sorokin, Greenville

Snake eye

It was late evening when I saw a rough green snake hidden in the foliage of a low branch in Pitt County. I was using a wide-angle lens so I could include the habitat in the photo, which meant that I needed to get close to the snake. Moving slowly so as not to startle the snake, I got into position. Rather than being startled, the snake moved closer to investigate the lens. I was able to get the photo that I had in mind by framing the image to include the snake's whole body and making sure that the sun wasn't obscured by leaves or branches. Soon after, the snake moved into denser vegetation for the night.

(Nikon D810, Tokina 10–17mm, f/18, 1/40 of a second, ISO 500)



BIRDS FIRST PLACE

Janet Ogren, Virginia Beach, Va.

Barn swallows

It was early May, an overcast day at Mackay Island National Wildlife Refuge. Migrating barn swallows were hunting for insects and gracefully darting over the marsh and fields. I thought it would be difficult to get a shot. However, ever so briefly, two birds paused at water's edge to rest on last year's dried reed grass. One was looking south as if to say, "That's where we came from." The other was looking north, to say, "That's where we're going."

(Nikon D750, Nikon 500mm f4, f/5.6, 1/800 of a second, ISO 640)

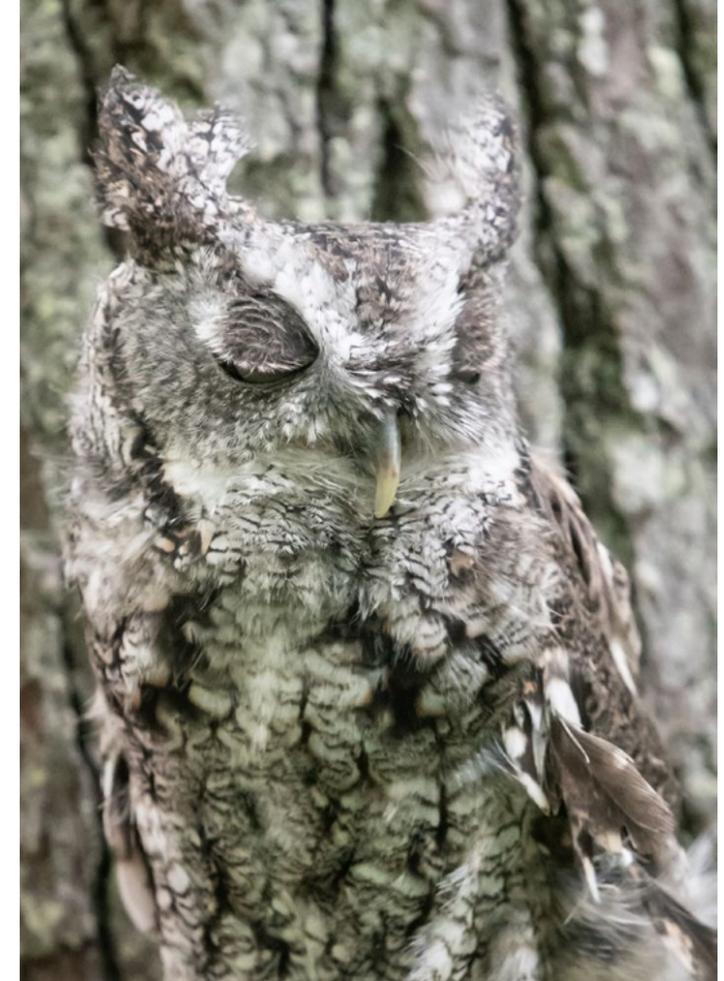
BIRDS SECOND PLACE

Mark Weir, Mocksville

Eastern screech owl

My photo of the gray morph Eastern screech owl was taken at Grandfather Mountain during their Nature Photography Weekend. The male owl, named Mojo, was shown by Jessie Schmitt of Banner Elk. His left wing had been injured, requiring partial amputation. The morning clouds and tree canopy provided soft, low light during the photographing raptors session. Jessie positioned Mojo in front of a hickory tree to demonstrate his camouflage defense. When I reviewed my images, this one with Mojo's eyes closed stood out—it's the complete camouflage.

(Nikon D500, Nikor AF-S 300mm f/4E PF ED VR [35mm equivalent 450 mm], f/4.0, 1/640 of a second, ISO 6,400)



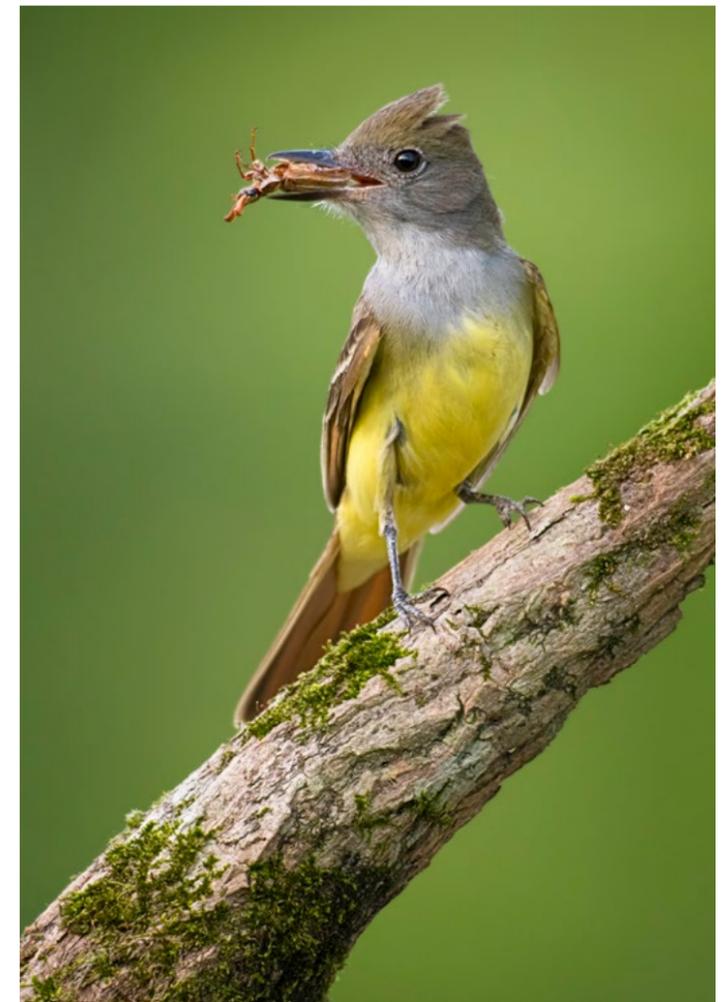
BIRDS THIRD PLACE

Ed Erkes, Seven Springs

Nesting flycatchers

Great crested flycatchers have nested in one my bluebird nest boxes for the last six to eight years. I placed an attractive perch near the nest box and photographed them as they brought in food for their young. I used a blind to avoid disturbing them. I observed the nest box from a distance with binoculars, first to see how frequently the parents were visiting the nest. It was only by knowing their normal routine that I could really tell if my presence was disrupting their behavior.

(Nikon D500, Sigma 300–800 f/5.6, f/5.6, 1/500 of a second, ISO 1,600)





MAMMALS FIRST PLACE

Robert Mullen, Winterville

Wild horses

The wild horses of Corolla are amazing animals to photograph. This horse was in a marsh grazing and the sunlight added to its beauty. These horses are somewhat used to people but still keep their distance.

(Sony a7R II, Tamron 150–600mm at 600mm, f/6.3, 1/1,000 of second, ISO 600)

MAMMALS SECOND PLACE

Una Davenport, Virginia Beach, Va.

Raccoon

My husband and I love visiting Mackay Island National Wildlife Refuge in Currituck County. We spotted “Rocky” on a dead tree, surrounded by water. He looked a little puzzled that we were photographing him. I think he had just woken up from a nap and peeped out of the tree, giving us the opportunity to take a shot. The texture of the tree, his incredible eyes and his claws that seemed to match the weathered wood made this photo memorable for me.

(Nikon D7000, Nikkor 300mm AF-S 1:4E PF ED, f/4, 1/1,000 of a second, ISO 800)



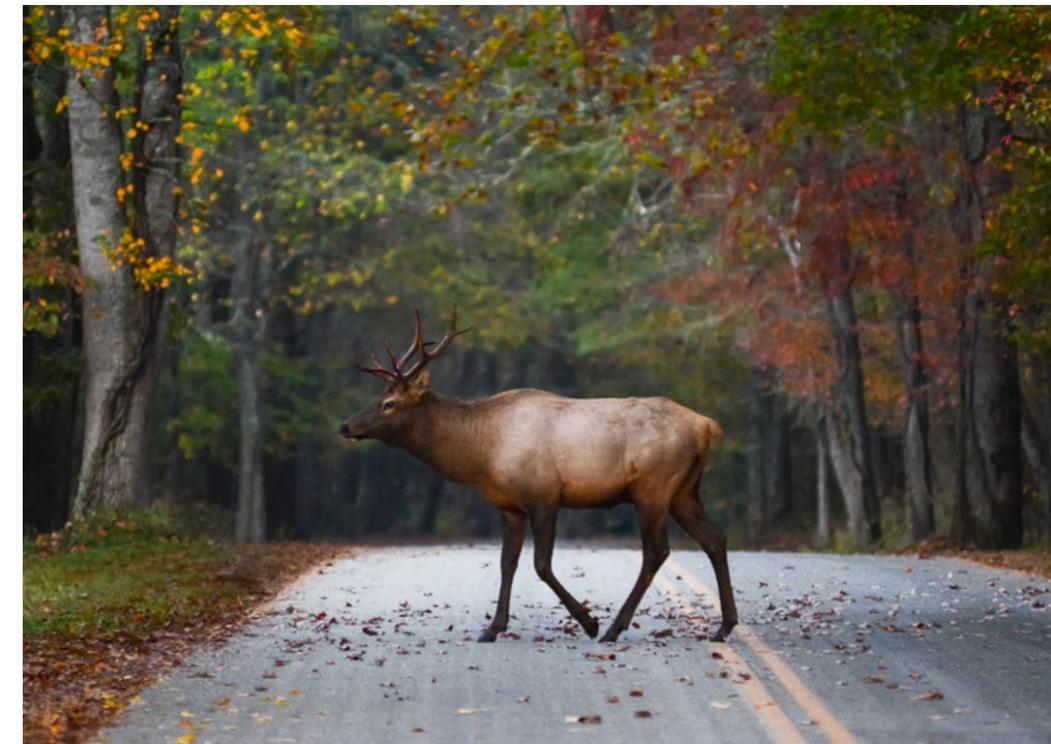
MAMMALS THIRD PLACE

Ginny Williams, Cornelius

Elk crossing

It was a cold and foggy early October morning at Cataloochee Valley in the Great Smoky Mountains. I was there early to see the wild elk, which come out at dusk and dawn. As I arrived, they started moving from one side of the street to the other to graze in an open field. I quickly got out of my car and captured a young bull elk crossing the street. I love how elegant and majestic he looks surrounded by beautiful autumn-colored leaves.

(Nikon D7100, Nikon 80–200mm zoom at 200mm, f/2.8, 1/250 of a second, ISO 2,000, monopod)





REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS FIRST PLACE

W.R. Bullock, Chapel Hill

Queen snake

I took this shot while on a stroll along the bank of New Hope Creek in Orange County on a beautiful April afternoon. I noticed this 2- to 3-foot-long snake in the water with its head just above the surface. The water was clear and shallow enough to shoot a few shots of the entire snake. Since it wasn't bothered by my presence, I experimented with some other angles and camera settings. I decided to try a shot as close to the surface of the water as I could. Reluctantly, I laid the camera on the gravel bar at the edge of the creek, the lens almost in the water, and took this shot. I was surprised to see the effect of the oblique camera angle on the surface of the creek. Sometimes those experimental shots pay off!

(Canon EOS 70D, Canon EFS 55–250 at 250mm, f/8, 1/640 of a second, ISO 800)

REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

SECOND PLACE

Alan Clark, Raleigh

Green frog

A green frog perches on an underwater plant, appearing to float on the surface. I was drawn to the light, colors, reflection and composition. I shot it handheld and lying down from the edge of a small pond in Johnston County.

(Nikon D850, Nikon 200–500mm f5.6 at 500mm, f/8, 1/500 of a second, ISO 640)



REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

THIRD PLACE

Neil Jernigan, Snow Hill

Copperhead close-up

My dad discovered this young copperhead in the yard late one evening. After receiving his call, I brought over a mini studio to set up around the snake. Being very cautious and using a telephoto macro lens, I created this image with a small off-camera flash. Focusing on its eye and using a very wide aperture allowed the eye to be sharp and everything else to be out of focus. Once I created a few different exposures, we relocated the snake to a more secluded area.

(Canon 5D Mark IV, Canon 100mm f/2.8L, f/5.6 1/160 of a second, ISO 320)





INVERTEBRATES FIRST PLACE

Mike Koenig, Lenoir

Stag beetle

I found this giant stag beetle while mountain biking up a local range trail. It had been tossed from a tree by a rival during mating season and was laying stunned. In fact, I thought it was dead. Imagine my surprise when it latched tightly onto my finger when I picked it up. I put it in my sack and brought it home to show my kids. I fed it water, peaches and decaying mulch for a few days. Stag beetles get their name because they resemble male deer, called stags. Males use their pincers to battle for mates. Coincidentally, they have white hairs on their underside, like many stag species.

(Nikon D500, Nikkor Micro 60mm f/2.8D, f/4.5, 1/100 of a second, ISO 400)

INVERTEBRATES SECOND PLACE

Kirk Pullen, Mount Olive

Long-legged fly

I noticed small colorful flies on some gardenia bushes. The great thing about these colorful flies is they are not spooked by light bursts from a flash. The fly I was photographing would see the flash, jump in the air and return to the very spot it was sitting over and over again. I used a flash on a light stand about a foot away; the flash was set to high-speed sync. The light was placed slightly behind and to the right of the fly, so it would give texture to the fly and leaf it was perched on.

(Nikon D810, Tokina 100mm f/2.8, f/18, 1/4,000 of a second, ISO 1,600, Manfrotto 190 Go Aluminum Tripod, Flashpoint strobe and trigger)



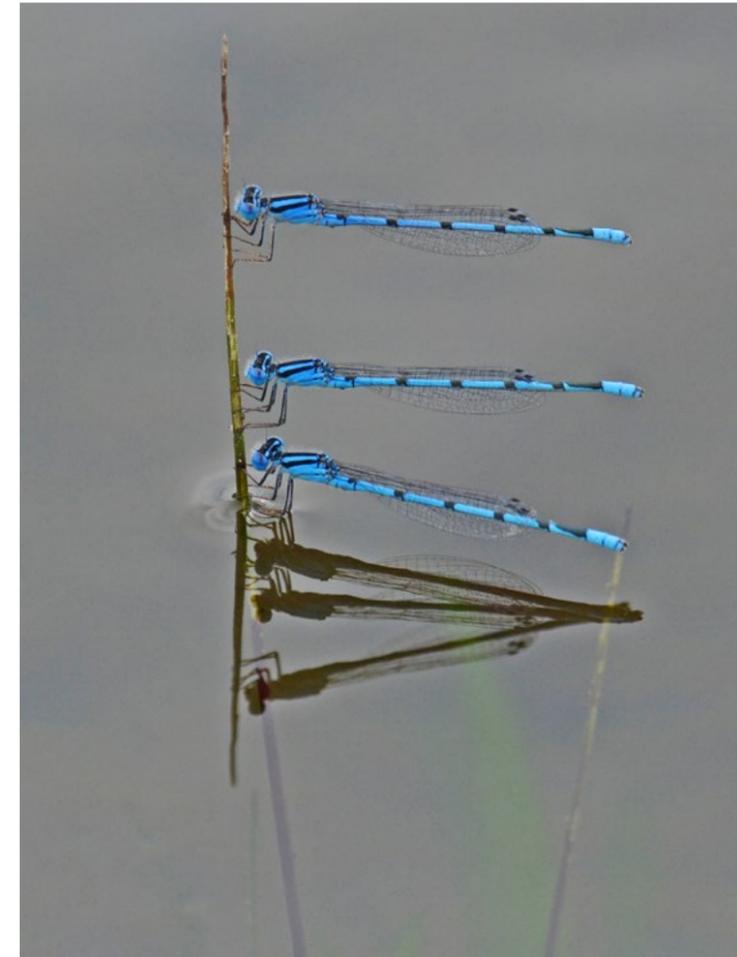
INVERTEBRATES THIRD PLACE

Mark Sheilds, Holly Ridge

Damselflies

I found this trio of damselflies perched on a stem in a pond at Stones Creek Game Land in Onslow County on an overcast day. The contrast between the bright blue damselflies and the dull gray background of the sky reflecting in the water is what first drew my attention. While photographing this scene, I noticed that the alignment of the damselflies in the reflection did not match their actual alignment on the stem. This mismatch adds another element of interest to the photo.

(Nikon D7100, Nikkor 300mm, f/5.6, 1/1,000 of a second, ISO 400)





WILD PLANTS FIRST PLACE

Sujata Roy, Morrisville

Hibiscus in sunlight

These are dried seed pods of the hibiscus flowers. I took this image in Duke Gardens around April 2018. By this time, the new spring flowers had yet to bloom but the leftover seed and dried plants gave many interesting opportunities to photograph. These plants are lined along the pond and we were on our way back around noon, and light was falling harsh from the top on these pods. I wanted to use that light for details of these pods and to have some strong shadow effect around them.

(Canon 7D Mark II, 100–400mm EF II USM, f/7.1, 1/500 of a second, ISO 160)

WILD PLANTS SECOND PLACE

Ellen Devenny, Kings Mountain

Tiny bluets

This photo was taken in Kings Mountain, toward the end of March. I had just purchased a new Canon EF 70–200mm f/4L lens and was anxious to try it out. The shot was taken in the late afternoon, a few hours before sunset. I found several clusters of tiny bluets growing on a small hill in our front yard to use as my subject. I wanted to blur both the foreground and background, leaving only the flowers in focus. To do this, I had to lay flat on the ground and shoot at eye level with the flowers. The result was exactly what I had hoped for!

(Canon 6D, Canon EF 70–200mm f/4L at 200mm, f/8, 1/500 of a second, ISO 400)



WILD PLANTS THIRD PLACE

Mathew Cromer, Moncure

Fern fronds

This photo was taken during a photo trip along the Blue Ridge Parkway near Mount Mitchell on the last day of May 2015. A foggy morning provided a perfect soft and even illumination of the scene. These newly-emerged fern fronds attracted my eye and I stopped and took a couple dozen photos with my macro lens, trying to capture images with a conjunction of in-focus and out-of-focus elements. This image is my favorite of the bunch. I like the well-developed juxtaposition of extreme amounts of detail in the ferns in the plane of focus, quickly dissolving into a soft background bokeh.

(Sony Alpha 65, Tamron 90mm macro, f/2.8, 1/1,000 of a second, ISO 100)





OUTDOOR RECREATION FIRST PLACE

Neil Jernigan, Snow Hill

Angler and gulls

I came across this scene early one morning last fall while visiting Emerald Isle. I loved the three different fishing carts just sitting on the beach, but the only thing missing was the fisherman. I positioned myself and waited patiently for my composition to be complete. After several minutes, a fisherman began to make his way back to his cart. Just before he entered the scene, a large flock of gulls took to the air above him. Everything came together perfectly.

(Canon 5D Mark IV, Sigma 150–600mm, f/6.3, 1/6,400 of a second, ISO 100)

OUTDOOR RECREATION

SECOND PLACE

Kevin Nestvogel, Wrightsville Beach

Surfer solitude

It was a humid August morning when I arrived in Wrightsville Beach and noticed the cloud layer on the horizon, effectively blocking the sun. After waiting a few minutes, I realized the sun would crest over the cloud layer and I decided to go out for a swim. A lone surfer paddled out about 100 yards and I instantly felt compelled to show the peacefulness in solitude. I held my breath and lowered the camera as close to the surface as possible, framed the surfer in the left and waited for the rippling waves to pass me by.

(Canon 5Ds, Canon EF 24–70mm f2.8 L II, at 55mm, f/3.5, 1/2,000 of a second, ISO 250, SPL Waterhousing)



OUTDOOR RECREATION

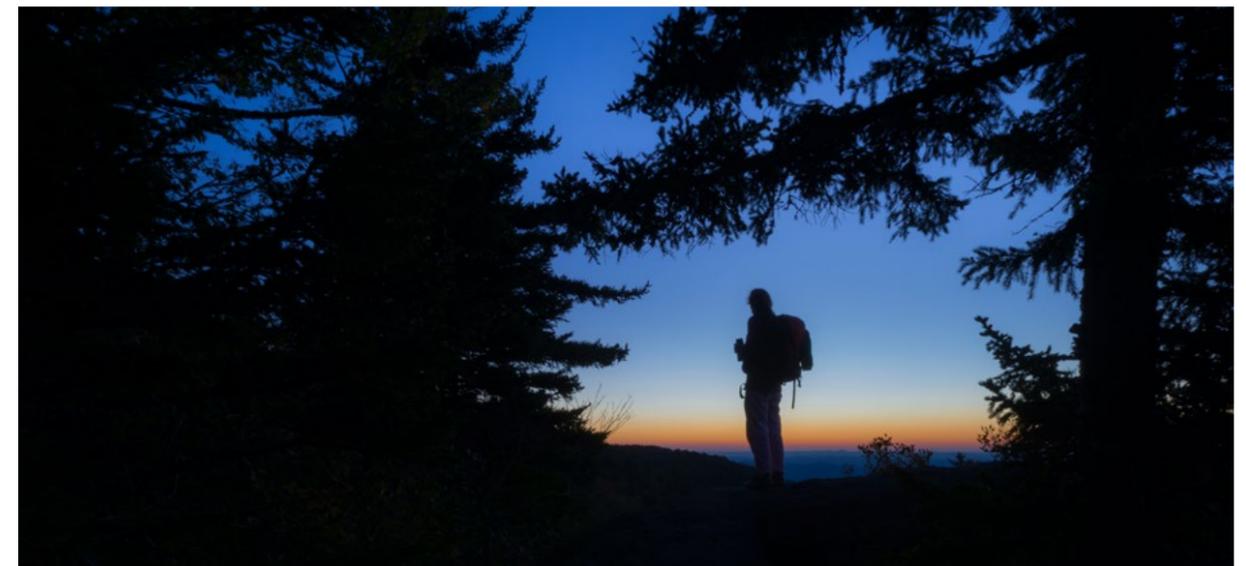
THIRD PLACE

Skip Sickler, Newland

Mountain sunrise

This photo was taken on Oct. 1, 2017 at Sheer Bluff on Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation. My wife, Lisa, and I had arrived early to photograph the sunrise overlooking Rough Ridge on the Blue Ridge Parkway. As she stepped through the opening in the trees, I liked how she was framed by the dark trees with the beginning colors of sunrise in the distance. Since I knew I would be using a long shutter speed, I asked her to stand still while I took three to four photos. On the computer, I later cropped away the lower portion of the photo containing black shadows to more balance with the light coming through the tree opening.

(Nikon D800, Nikon 17–35mm at 17mm, f/20, EV 1/3 stop, 1/4 of a second, ISO 400)





WILD LANDSCAPES FIRST PLACE

Kathryn Greven, Winston-Salem

Grandfather Mountain

As one of the highest peaks in North Carolina, Grandfather Mountain is very rugged with its peak exposed to extremes in temperature, moisture and wind. I was lucky enough to be at the top shooting toward the sunset when I happened to look behind me and saw this beautifully lit cloud. I loved how the color reflected in the pools of water that had collected between the rocks. The small bent fir trees and rugged vegetation demonstrate the affect the highly variable weather and wind have on the plant life on top of this mountain. I quickly repositioned myself to capture the scene.

(Nikon D850, Nikon 14–24mm f/2.8 with polarizer, f/16, 4/10 of a second, ISO 320, Really Right Stuff tripod)

WILD LANDSCAPES SECOND PLACE

Kirk Pullen, Mount Olive

Lighthouse steps

The jetties at the old site of the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse have provided protection for the beach and lighthouse for many years. Erosion and tide can reveal things you don't often see. This was the first time I remember seeing steps next to the third jetty. I used a 10-stop neutral density filter and shot this during the middle of a sunny day, which allowed for a 15-second exposure. This long exposure time gave the water a ghostly appearance.

(Nikon D750, Nikon 24–70mm, f2.8 at 45mm, 15 second exposure, ISO 50, Hoya 10 Stop ND Filter, Manfrotto 190 Go aluminum tripod)



WILD LANDSCAPES THIRD PLACE

Kevin Nestvogel, Wrightsville Beach

Foam barrels

It was a hot summer day on the Outer Banks in Avon, the tide was ebbing and the sun was high in the sky. I wanted to capture some photographs of the waves rushing onto shore but had no way of truly predicting the shape of the water in each frame I captured. I laid prone on the sand, dug a little hole for my camera and waited for the set of waves to roll onto the shore. With each wave that rolled in, I clicked away with the shutter. "Foam barrels" shows beauty in the motion captured in a blink of an eye.

(Canon 5Ds, Canon EF 24–70mm, f2.8 L II at 59mm, f/4, 1/5,000, ISO 500, SPL Waterhousing)





ANIMAL BEHAVIOR FIRST PLACE

Neil Jernigan, Snow Hill

Raccoon in a tree

One afternoon, while searching for wildlife in Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, I discovered a raccoon sleeping in a persimmon tree. With the hopes it would wake up soon, I decided to sit and wait. After taking a pretty lengthy nap, she woke up and began feeding on ripe persimmons. She would quickly smell each one individually, and if it wasn't to her satisfaction she would go to another. She would go all the way out to the end of each limb searching for the right one. This went on for about 30 minutes before she moved on to a different tree for another nap.

(Canon 5D Mark IV, Sigma 150–600mm, f/6.3, 1/800 of a second, ISO 800)

ANIMAL BEHAVIOR SECOND PLACE

David Richardson, Denver

Osprey

Lake Norman has numerous artificial osprey nesting platforms that are placed to limit birds nesting on shoal markers and homeowners' rooftops. The platforms also provide a wonderful opportunity for photography. While it is possible to boat right up to the platforms, I use a 600mm telephoto lens and a high-resolution camera that allows me to crop into the image. That gives me the ability to observe, photograph and enjoy the osprey from a distance without disturbing their nests. Trying to do that type of photography from a boat just adds to the challenge.

(Canon 5D Mark IV, Tamron 150–600mm, f/5.6, 1/2,000 of a second, ISO 1,250)



ANIMAL BEHAVIOR THIRD PLACE

Alan Clark, Raleigh

Bluebird

An Eastern bluebird sits atop its nest box with a beak full of pine needles. I composed the shot to have the bird, with its beautiful plumage, set against a bank of pink azaleas. It was shot in my backyard in Raleigh.

(Nikon D850, Nikon 200–500mm f5.6 and Nikon 1.4x teleconverter at 550mm, f/9, 1/640 of a second, ISO 1,600)





YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 13—17 FIRST PLACE

Maylee Collins, Wake Forest

Butterfly landing

This photo was taken at Horseshoe Farm Nature Preserve in Raleigh on a beautiful sunny day, just right for shooting butterflies. The only problem was there were no butterflies to shoot, and I had been searching all morning only to find the occasional grasshopper or bee. I was just about to turn in when my mom spotted a monarch. After chasing the butterfly nearly halfway across the park, it finally landed on some purple flowers alongside another monarch. I held my breath, praying that it wouldn't fly away. Thankfully, it didn't.

(Canon Rebel t2i, Canon EFS 60mm, f/3.5, 1/1,600 of a second, ISO 400)

YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 13—17

SECOND PLACE

Jacob Reeve, Chapel Hill

Green Frog in a creek

I was wandering through the N.C. Botanical Garden in Chapel Hill, admiring and taking pictures of the beautiful flowers. As I crossed the bridge over a small pond, I spotted this green frog (identified by a dorsolateral ridge extending from its eyes) evading North Carolina's summer heat. He posed for my camera as I took several photos and he gave me plenty of time to adjust my camera settings to get the picture I wanted.

(Canon EOS Rebel t5, Canon 18–55mm f/3.5–5.6 IS II, f/5.6, 1/60 of a second, ISO 100)



YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 13—17

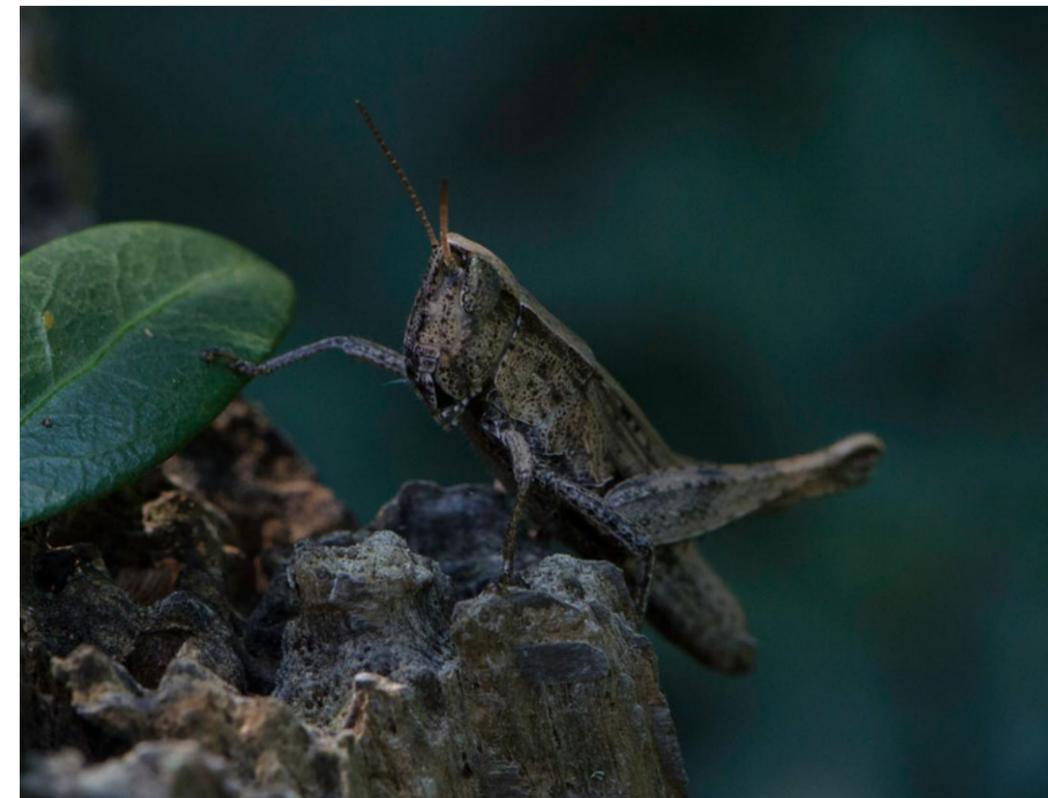
THIRD PLACE

Emma Halstead, Walkertown

Grasshopper

I found this little guy when my mom and I were walking around outside in our yard taking pictures of wildlife. We almost did not see him because he blended in so well with the stump. He was quite cooperative with us and posed for me for several minutes before he got spooked and hopped off.

(Nikon D3100, Nikon 85mm, f/9, 1/125 of a second, ISO 400)





YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 13-17

HONORABLE MENTION

Clarice Perry, Raleigh

Hummingbird clearwing moth

I was walking down the sidewalk in front of my house to check the mail when I noticed this hummingbird clearwing moth feeding on the butterfly bush at my mailbox. I quickly ran back inside to grab my camera, hoping that the moth hadn't already moved on. By the time I got back, I managed to have a few minutes of snapping photos before it flew away. One thing that I love about this picture is that you can see so much detail, even down to the hairs on the moth's back.

(Nikon D3300, AF-S Nikkor 55-200mm at 200mm, f/5.6, 1/500 of a second, ISO 2,800)



YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 13-17

HONORABLE MENTION

Isaiah Lilly, Oakboro

Chipmunk

I usually bring my camera everywhere I go, even on short trips to the grocery store. This day, right after it had finished raining, I headed out to Oakboro Park to walk around with my family and, of course, I had to bring my camera. When I first saw the chipmunk, I slowly got closer to the point I felt as if the chipmunk wouldn't scurry off. I ended up having to get on my knees in the wet leaves to get a stable shot. I like this picture because it shows the environment the chipmunk was living in and it also shows you how small chipmunks really are.

(Canon EOS Rebel t5, Canon EF 75-300mm at 300mm, f/3.5, 1/500 of a second, ISO 4,000)



YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 13-17

HONORABLE MENTION

Clarice Perry, Raleigh

Birds at sunrise

My family and I spent the day at Holden Beach during the early spring. There were lots of birds flying around because very few people wanted to go to the beach in April, and I realized the potential for a good photo op. So, the next morning I woke up early and headed down to the beach before sunrise. Right around when the sun rose, birds started flying around and interacting in the surf. One thing I love about this picture is the dynamic between the two birds that I was able to capture on the almost deserted beach.

(Nikon D3300, AF-S Nikkor 55-200mm at 200mm, f/5.6, 1/640 of a second, ISO 640)

YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 12 & UNDER WILDLIFE IN NORTH CAROLINA 2018 PHOTO COMPETITION



YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 12 & UNDER

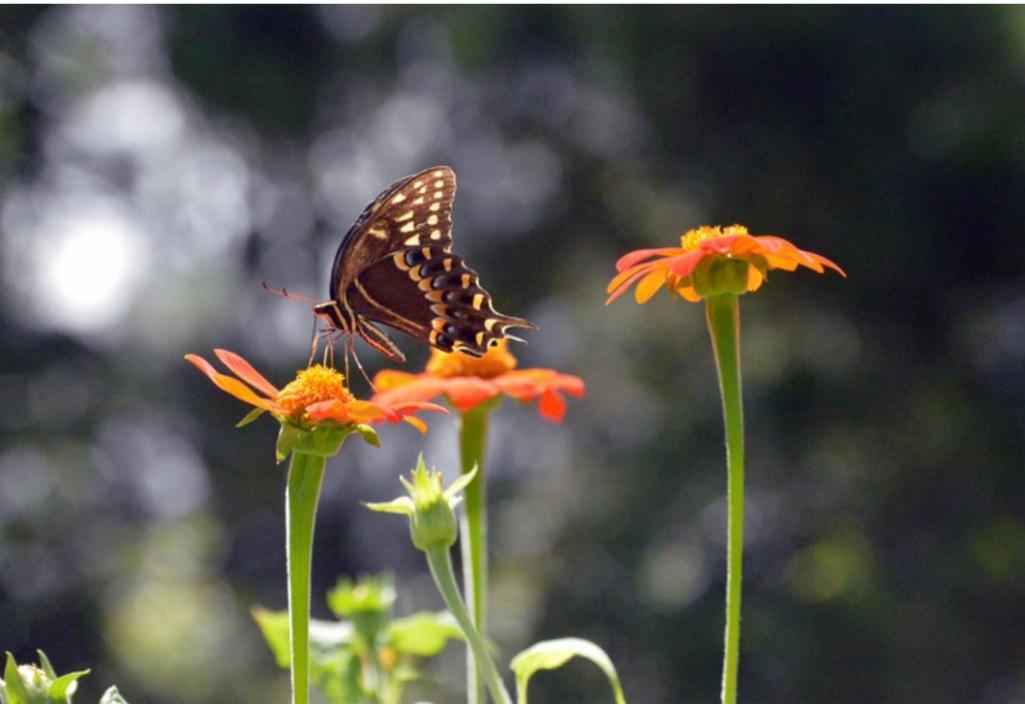
FIRST PLACE

Jordan Rowan, Boone

Flowers in the Sun

It was a sunny day in my yard in Boone and I laid down in the grass and took this picture. We didn't even know I captured a flying insect until my mom developed the photo. What a surprise!

(Canon PowerShot SX40 HS, 14mm, f/4, 1/640 of a second, ISO 200)



**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 12 & UNDER
SECOND PLACE**

Gracie Yopp, Bolivia

Butterfly on flower

This picture was taken in Bolivia. My mom let me use her nice camera and I really wanted to try and get a picture of a butterfly. The butterfly was sitting on a Mexican sunflower, so I tried to get as close as I could.

(Nikon D3200, Nikon DX 55–200mm at 100mm, f/6.4, 1/4,000 of a second, ISO 6,400)

**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 12 & UNDER
HONORABLE MENTION**

Kylee Reynolds, Roaring River

Bee on a flower

My papa and I were taking photos around the pond when I saw a bee flying around the flowers. The hardest part of taking this photo was the bee kept flying away. After several misses, I moved slowly and finally got close enough to get this photo of the bee. It was a struggle!

(Nikon D3000, micro Nikkor 85mm 1.35 G, f/8, 1/400 of a second, ISO 100)



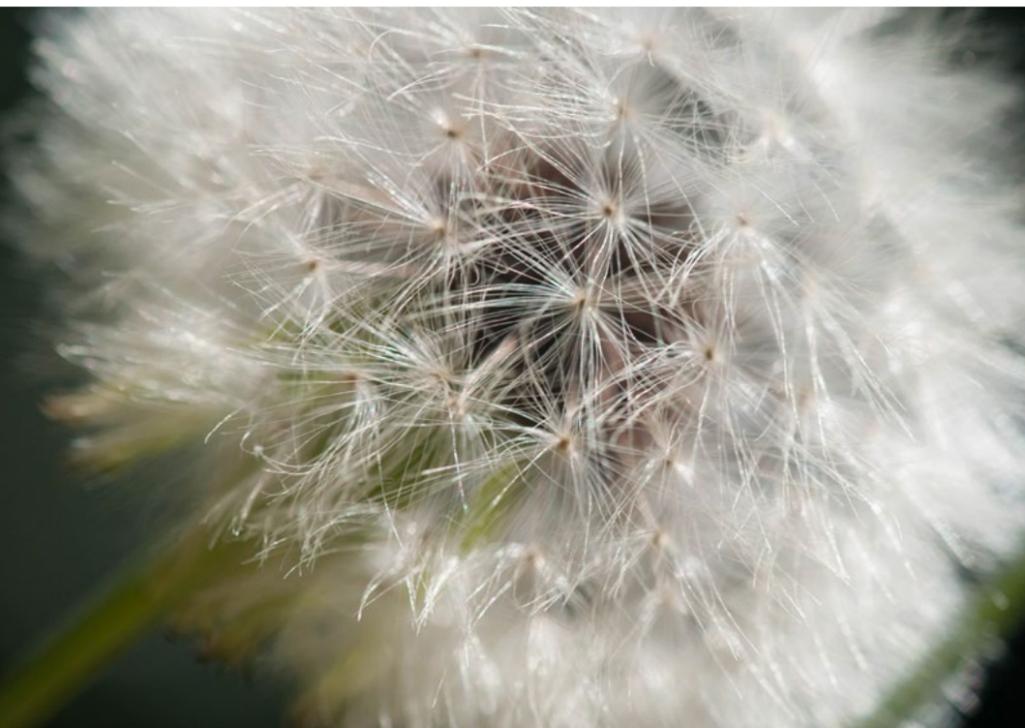
**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 12 & UNDER
HONORABLE MENTION**

Rina Lavinder, Pittsboro

Yellow fungi

I was on a hike during summer camp in Celo when I came across this log covered in fungi. The tree had fallen across a ravine and I was able to walk underneath it. The sunlight was filtering through the canopy and I loved the way it backlit the edges of the fungi. I also loved the green of the moss with the yellow of the fungi together.

(Nikon Coolpix S31, f/3.3, 1/25 of second, ISO 160)



**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 12 & UNDER
THIRD PLACE**

Kylee Reynolds, Roaring River

Dandelion up-close

My papa showed me last year's *Wildlife in North Carolina* Photo Contest and it made me excited about trying it myself. He gave me his old camera and I started taking photos. On this shot, I got down on the ground and got really close. I took several shots at different angles and this one with the dark background came out the best.

(Nikon D3000, Nikkor 85mm 1.35 G, f/8, 1/250 of a second, ISO 100)

**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 12 & UNDER
HONORABLE MENTION**

Rina Lavinder, Pittsboro

Icicles

Early one winter morning, I woke up hoping to see snow. I looked out my window and saw that my wish came true. I pulled on my boots and went outside. As I crunched through a thin layer of icy snow, the sun was low in the sky and the shadows on the trees were still long. They fell at an interesting angle to the icicles hanging along the edge of our well-house roof. The icicles were so clear that you could almost see through them.

(Nikon Coolpix S31, f/3.3, 1/1,600 of a second, ISO 80)

