

Judges Comments – Nelson Camera Club – Nature

Judge – Robyn Carter

Digitals

1	01 Amanita muscaria Ron Willems	The most widely recognized fungi which was accidentally introduced into the Southern Hemisphere and is now very common. The lighting has been handled well and there are lovely colour tones in this image. In my view, I'd like to see you get down a little further and show me the gills underneath, which would bring this to the next level. I also think the composition could be made stronger by giving it slightly more space at the top of the image above the cap. I like that the surrounding habitat tells us more about this fungi and where it could be found.	Merit
2	02 Amanita muscaria Irene Buchan	I like the presentation of 3 toadstools in this image, with one showing the gills. It gives the viewer so much information on the life of this fungi, showing three specimens at different stages. In my view, there are two main distractions that my eyes are drawn to, taking my eyes away from the subject – the small light patch below the gills of the back Toadstool, and the orange leaf (or fungi) to the right of the same Toadstool. I wonder if you had brought your camera round so the back Toadstool was separated from the two in front, whether this would have made the composition stronger	Merit
3	03 Bellbird - Anthornis melanura Caroline Foster	You've caught this Bellbird well, all fluffed up, with lovely sharp feather detail. Very unusual not to see his wings which he has obviously tucked away. Viewing this image, I can imagine his call. Lovely muted background. In my view the branch on the left is a wee bit distracting, but I do understand that there is nothing you can do about it. This is a male adult due to its colouring of olive green with a purple tinted head. Females have a narrow white-yellow stripe across the cheek from the base of the bill .	Merit
4	04 Birds Nest Fungi (Family Nidulariaceae) Dianna Hambleton	Good spotting. Great image. The fungi is nice and sharp with lots of detail, and stands out well against the darker natural environment. Lighting well handled and great colour tones throughout.	Honours

5	05 Black Mealybug (Exochomus nigromaculatus)	Good catch with these tiny critters that only grow to 4mm when adults. In my view the image is too central, a crop on the left and top, cropping out the black distraction at the top of the image would improve the composition. There are also some blown white on the top of the bug. Using a diffused flash would help with this, or toning this down in post production.	Acceptance
6	06 Black Petrels in Feeding Fight	These Petrels are massive birds compared to the cape pigeons, when squabbling over food it always looks and feels like all hell breaks loose. Here they seem to be cheered on by the cape pigeons! In my view the image the image appears to have been taken in harsh light conditions, and therefore it is very contrasty, with bright light and dark shadows. This affects the quality of the image to tell the story. Composition wise, I'd like to see a little more at the top, as there is one cape pigeon cut off	Acceptance
7	07 Bracket Fungus Carolyn Hope	Nice composition showing the bracket fungus amongst the moss and lichens of the forest. The image is sharp all the way through and the lighting has been well handled and exposed for the whites.	Merit
8	08 Campanella tristis Heather Knapp	Stunning detail of this lovely fungi. Good lighting, composition and depth of field; it really stands out against the background. No distractions to take your eye away from main subject.	Honours
9	09 Celmisia Jean Willis	Lovely detailed image of this large Mountain Daisy. The pistil is nice and sharp and you have nailed the depth of field with the nicely blurred background. Have you thought about making this into a square crop? In my view this would improve the composition making the flower stand out. Nice lighting with no blown out whites.	Merit

10	10 Cortinarius Ring Helen Howie	The Cortinarius fungi are the largest species of the world and there are 1000s of different types. The author of this image has captured this fungi in different stages of it's lifecycle, thus telling the viewer a strong story. Love the earthy colour tones, the details of both cap and gill, and the composition is lovely with the greenery framing side and top showing the fungi in its natural habitat. In my view, the far left fungi has been cropped out and I wonder if you had included this it may have strengthened the composition of image. The author has described this as a sub species 'Ring'. Ring is not a subspecies. What the author is referring to is the ring visible on the stem they have cortinas covering their gills when young (hence the name of the genus); sometimes the tiny fibers of the cortina are ephemeral and disappear, but they frequently collapse against the stem to create a ring zone. It should have been titled Cortinarius sp.	Merit
11	11 Crepidotus species Irene Callaghan	Stunning detail, of these Crepidotus parietalis, showing each in different stages of its lifecycle. The lighting has been handled superbly and there are no distractions. Lovely to see both the cap and gills. Composition is strong with the slant of the tree and the angle the image has been taken with. These fungi grow on tree trunks, and the author has told this story well.	Honours
12	12 Entoloma hochstetteri	This was a print - ignore	
13	13 Entoloma_hochstetteri2	3 is one of the magic numbers in photography so this is well spotted. The fungi is nicely in focus. In my opinion, the image could be improved by doing a tighter crop around the main subject, cropping out the white branch on the right which is blown out and because it's so light, my eyes go automatically there. The foreground is also quite dark, you could try lifting the shadows in post-production which will further improve the image. You could also try using a deflector screen to shade the direct light from creating the contrast across the caps.	Acceptance
14	14 Eyelash Fungi Rebecca Bowater	Lovely presentation of the eyelash fungi which stands out well from the background. In my view the top and bottom fungi is not quite sharp. Try increasing your F-stop to compensate to make	Merit

		sure all is in focus. The composition is strong and tells us a lot about the habitat it grows. I like that you have shown the fungi in different stages of its lifestyle which also makes the image strong.	
15	15 Fantail Piwakawaka Rebecca Bowater	I was in Marlborough last week at the Taylor Dam and had about 20 of these flitting around me. They are so hard to photograph sometimes as you just want them to sit still longer for 2 seconds! I have lots of images of empty branches! Your fantail is posing very nicely for you and there are no distracting branches. Eye is sharp and there is lovely catchlight in its eyes. Nice feather detail. The tail is slightly out of focus which is probably from movement – try increasing your shutter speed or ISO to help freeze this.	Merit
16	16 Fly agarics - Amanita muscaria Caroline Foster	Lovely shot of the Toadstool showing both the cap and gills, and tells me the story of the growth of this fungi. Lighting and composition well handled. In my view the image could be improved slightly with a crop on the right as the dark negative space adds nothing to the image. But otherwise a great image.	Merit
17	17 Gentianella bellidifolia	I love alpine flowers, they grow in such harsh conditions yet are some of the most spectacular flowers. This Gentian is one such flower. I love the way you have presented this – your composition is great and shows the plant in varying stages of flowering. In my view the flower is burnt out and lacks detail both on the petal and the pistil. Try increasing your F-stop to enable you to get everything in focus. To compensate for the bright sunny day, and the fact that the petals are white, reduce your exposure compensation by half to 1 stop. A diffuser screen held over the plant would also stabilize the light reduce the dark/light contrasts.	Acceptance
18	18 Gentianella stellata	This was a print - ignore	
19	19 Irwin's Greenhood Pterostylis irwinii Heather Knapp	Fabulous image of our native orchid. Composition, and lighting superb. Great depth of field making this stand out against the background. Stunning	Honours
20	20 Kaka Nestor meridionalis detail	Lovely head shot of our native Kaka. Good detail in the eye and beak. Good depth of field with the blurred background allowing the bird to stand	Acceptance

		out. In my view the top of the head is slightly blown out and lacks some detail in the whites. Lifting the shadows in post production would allow more detail below the beak and neck area.	
21	21 Kowhai and bee Rober Ball	Love the composition and detail in this image. Everything in sharp focus. Colour tones are beautiful, and great depth of field. In my opinion, the image could be taken to the next level if you had just included the bottom part of the flower at the bottom of the image. My eyes keep going down there looking for it.	Merit
22	22 Leratiomyaes ceres (frilled)	A Great group of Redlead Roundhead fungi. Lighting is well handled and composition is good. In my view the top and bottom group aren't sharp. Try increasing your F stop to enable everything to be in focus. The image tells the story well by showing the surrounding habitat. Lovely colours and tones.	Acceptance
23	23 New Zealand Fur Seal Barry Doig	Nice close up detailed shot of the NZ Fur seal. I like the composition with the eyes on the first third. In my view the lighting is a little flat and this could be lifted in post-production, especially the bottom eye.	Merit
24	24 Paprides nitidus Carolyn Hope	Excellent image of the short horned grasshopper. Lighting has been handled well, and the detail is superb. Good depth of field which allows you to focus on the grasshopper. Great story telling showing the grasshopper in its natural environment.	Honours
25	25 Peacock & Hen	Good to see both male and female in the same image. Colours are vibrant but not oversaturated. In my view the image is not in focus, and the top of the male peacock head feathers have been cut off. It could be that they moved, so by increasing your shutter speed, or ISO would have helped to freeze the frame to get more in focus.	No Award
26	26 Pied Shag (Phalacrocorax varius varius)	By the look of the shadow under the bird, it looks like you took this image around midday, so you've handled the lighting well as there are no blown out areas on the bird with lovely detail in the feathers. Composition is good and there's a nice background that has no distractions. In my	Acceptance

		view, the image is a little dark around the eye area with no catch-light. Perhaps just waiting a few more seconds and getting a shot with the head on a different angle might have done the trick.	
27	27 Pied Stilt in the shallows	Lovely minimalistic image showing the pied stilt in its natural fishing environment. I love the wake which works as a great leading line to the bird. In my view the bird is over exposed and lacking detail in the feather, but this detail is in the reflection. You could try bringing down the highlights in post-production, or bringing your exposure compensation down when taking images where there is a lot of white. The composition could be made stronger if the bird had more to move into on the right.	Acceptance
28	28 Rat	Lucky to catch this image in broad daylight, but I worry for our native birds! Lighting well-handled and lots of detail in the rats fur. In my view the image needs a hard crop on the left as the negative space there adds nothing to the image. This will bring the focus back to the rat instead of your eye travelling out of the image with nothing to draw it back. The dark shadow in the foreground obstructs the viewer from seeing full body of the rat. I wonder if this could be helped by lifting the shadows in post-production.	Acceptance
29	29 Tasman Glacier Face Dianna Hambleton	Stunning image. Lighting is excellent. I like the use of the panoramic format which often strengthens the composition. The story is well told, showing the terminal face of a retreating, collapsing glacier possibly hundreds of years old. This also tells the story of climate change and how it is affecting not only our glaciers in NZ, but also around the world.	Honours
30	30 The Giant Moss Dawsonia superba Don Pittham	They call it Giant, but I know they are still very small. You've captured a group in flower and they look stunning. Lighting on the flower is superb so they pop against the background. Composition is good, concentrating on the main subject.	Merit
31	31 Tomtit (Petroica macrocephala)	The Tomtit is perfectly in focus, sharp detail in the feathers, and that lovely catchlight in its eye.	Merit

	Sharee Davidson	I love the composition on the angle and you can clearly see its natural habitat of the forest. The background is very busy, and the stick behind the birds head is distracting. There is also a light patch above his head where your eye is drawn to. In my view darkening this slightly would help improve the image.	
32	32 Trafficious obstructious	<p>The author has a sense of humour as we all know this is not a nature image. Love the leading lines to the whale tail, and the light coming off in the water. However, we know the whale is large and the water is obviously shallow as you can see the double yellow lines, therefore I'm worried that the whale might be in danger of getting stranded and you should call for help immediately. The rain on the window looks like you are in a car, so I feel the obstructious is not the whale but the actual water. I hope you hosed the salt water off your car once you got to dry land!</p> <p>A fun composite which I think you should enter into the Creative Focus Competition run by Pukekohe club. Just watch the light rimming around the whale's tail before you enter.</p>	No Award
33	33 Tui Ruth Duffield	What a stunning pose this Tui has done for you. Composition is excellent, the colours are all complimentary with the yellow blues and greens. Feather detail is superb and lighting is excellent with lots of details in the white feathers which is often hard to get right. The image has a strong story showing the Tui not only in its habitat, but also the pollen on his beak tells us that the kowhai flowers is what he feeds on.	Honours
34	34 White Banded house jumping spider	Interesting view of this spider. I used to be scared of spiders, until I got my macro lens, which I realise now protects you from all things dangerous (I hope). Love the catchlight in his eye and the lovely detail in the hair covering his body and head. In my view, there is a ring where the image isn't sharp – all around the feet. Try increasing your Fstop to get everything in focus. Keep trying	Acceptance
35	35 White Faced Heron Roger Ball	Lovely lighting on the white faced heron as he takes off in flight. Excellent detail in feathers and	Merit

		the eye has lovely catchlight. In my view the log in the water at the top of the left wing is distracting, you could try darkening it slightly so your eye isn't drawn there.	
36	36 White Heron in Nesting Plumage Ron Willems	Composition is great – love the square format with the bird on the third. Lighting superb – and the feather detail is stunning. Eyes are nice and sharp. These birds are often difficult to get right due to their white feathers, it's so easy to have it blown out, but you've captured it beautifully	Honours.

Prints.

1	Australasian Grebe - Podiceps cristatus Caroline Foster	I've had to come back to this several times as I find the Grebe amongst all the vegetation quite intriguing. The grebe is detailed, and the eye very clear. There is some backlighting around the birds head and neck. There is also a whiter blown out bit of vegetation above the birds beak which is distracting. You could try darkening this in post-production slightly. However, the story has been told well showing the Grebe in a natural setting.	Merit
2	Bacidiomycete (Gilled Fungus)	Lovely presentation of this fungi showing the cap and gill. Depth of field is good with the blurred background. In my view the fungi isn't sharp all the way through. Try either increasing your F-stop, or shoot a little further away then crop. Most cameras these days are high in megapixels, and you can afford to do this without losing quality.	Acceptance
3	Black Gold	Lovely composition showing the contrast of golden and black Ironsand (titanomagnetite) in the bay. Colours are complimentary. Have you thought about cropping the cliffs out at the top and just concentrating on the sand and water to enhance the focus of the black sand? In a nature competition be careful with your names, Ironsand (titanomagnetite) would be the correct way to name this.	Acceptance
4	Bull Kelp (Durvillaea antarctica)	Love the Bull Kelp in the water, and the swirls show the movement clearly, but still tack sharp. Beautiful complimentary colours. I'm not sure what the white bits are – whether it is foam in the water, however there is no texture and those bits of white are blown out. Try bringing your	Acceptance

		exposure compensation down a bit to control this a bit more.	
5	Drone Fly (Eristalis tenex)	Lovely composition with the drone fly on the angle. Nice and sharp body left wing. In my view the fly underexposed and the viewer could have difficulty identifying the species.. Try using a reflector with your macro. Doesn't have to be much – just a bit of tin foil. The background behind the fly is overly bright and is distracting as my eyes go straight there. Trying toning this down in post-production.	Acceptance
6	Entoloma hochstetteri	I have yet to see one of these myself, I like my autumn and winter comforts in front of the fire too much! Lovely composition and detail of both cap and gill in its natural environment showing the habitat in which it thrives. In my view the image is let down by the bottom of the stem being cut off. The composition would be much stronger with some more space around the fungi.	Acceptance
7	Fern Frond	Lots of detail in the fern frond and the composition is strong with the frond on the 1 st third. In my view the top of the frond is overexposed slightly. This could be toned down in post-production. The story has been told well showing the emerging frond in its natural habitat. Good depth of field standing against the background.	Acceptance
8	Gentianella stellate Don Pittham	The Pistil and petals are nice and sharp with a great depth of field with the blurred background making the flower stand out. In my view, I would have liked to see the flower not quite so central, further over on the right, which would strengthen the composition. Lighting has been handled well. I like that you have shown the plant with the flowering in different stages, but my eyes are looking for more of the plant to complete the story.	Merit
9	Gymnoplectron Jean Willis	Cave Weta's are often in dark areas, and hard to photograph. I've sometimes not even been able to focus on one because there was not enough light. Great detail on the weta, in sharp focus all the way through. In my opinion the print is let down because you've cut off his left back foot when framing the image. In the digital image	Merit

		supplied, it was not cut off so this is a framing issue. However the sharpness, colour and habitat tells a strong story.	
10	Matagouri Carolyn Hope	Lovely example of our only native plant with thorns. I like the way you've honed in on the flower, which is sharp. You've handled the lighting well. The story is told well showing both flowers unopened and opened. Good depth of field with the background muted. In my view we need to see more of the plant to tell the complete story. Or perhaps call this Matagouri Flower?	Merit
11	Morepork – Ninox novaeseelandiae Caroline Foster	Fabulous image. Great composition, the feather detail is superb, and the eyes are so intense. Great depth of field with the background nicely blurred. Lighting is excellent	Honours
12	Mycena sp Carolyn Hope	Stand out image with superb composition, lighting and depth of field. Beautiful tones, lighting excellently handled.	Honours
13	Northern Buller's Mollymawk Diomedea bulleri	I am always amazed by the wingspan of these birds. The bird is nicely framed, and the composition is good with the bird having some space to move into on the right. Lots of detail in the eye, beak and wing feather. In my view the bird is burnt out in the white part at the bottom of its neck. There is no detail to see here. Always reduce your exposure compensation when photographing birds that have white to control the lighting. You could try toning overblown white in post-production	Acceptance
14	NZ dotterel (Charadrius obscurus) Tom Young	These birds are hardly ever still, so it's nice you caught one napping! The surrounding elements tell the story of this bird's habitat well and portrays the dotterel at rest. In my view the eye is not sharp, but the story is still very strong.	Merit
15	NZ Fungi West Coast	A lovely big group of fungi with lovely light and detail. In my view two things let this image down. Firstly you've cut off the fungi on the left. By seeing the whole group would strengthen the image. The yellow flower at the top right is distracting. You could try toning this down in post-production, but as it is, my eyes go straight up there instead of being focused on the subject. However the story is strong and the habitat is described well in this image	Acceptance

16	Petroica australis	Very close up image of the South Island Robin Good depth of field with the background nicely blurred. I would like to see more space above the bird, it is too tightly cropped. In my view the image is let down by two things – firstly the frame crops off the Robins foot on the branch. Secondly, the hard crop has made the feathers and eye detail over pixelated.	No Award
17	Phocarctos Hookeri (Sea Lion with Pup) Heather Knapp	I love the social interaction you have caught between the sea lion and her pup. Lighting is well handled, and the composition is strong Lots of detail on the animals and in the water. Colour and placement of the subjects is very strong. Lovely nature story.	Honours
18	Speckled rose	A lovely rose, but it falls into the cultivated plant and not accepted by nature. I have given it no award so you may enter it into another competition. Just one thing – in my view, the coloured matting detracts from the image, stick to neutral colours so it doesn't compete with the image.	No Award
19	Tui novaeseelandiae	Lovely composition with the tui on the 3 rd , and is nicely contrasted against the sky, with complimentary colours of the kakabeak. In my view you have overprocessed the image when trying to bring out the shadows. This can be seen by the white rimming around the flowers and bird and lets the image down.	No Award
20	Wandering Albatross Diomedea exulans	Great composition with interesting movement. The feather detail is detailed and eye pin sharp. In my view the head of the Albatross is over-exposed as that lacks detail. You could try toning down the highlights in post-production or lower the exposure compensation when shooting the image. The bottom beak is not sharp. You could try increasing your shutter speed or ISO to help freeze that action.	Acceptance
21	White Heron Kotuku	Lovely catch with the Kotuku flying past. In my view, to strengthen the image, try cropping into hard – 5cm off the left and the same off to the top which would focus on the subject more. Lighting on the bird is harsh and overblown and feather detail cannot be seen. Take your exposure compensation down by half to 1 stop	No award

		when photographing white birds to help control the lighting.	
22	White Fronted Tern (<i>Sterna striata</i>) Dianna Hambleton	Great catch for both the photographer and the Tern. Lovely lighting on the wings and tail. You can even see the eye so this has been done well. Good depth of field with the blurred out sea. In my view there is a slight blown out white on the body next to the black head. There is no detail to be seen there. Taking down your exposure compensation when photographing white birds would help to control this. You could try toning this down in post-production.	Merit