

Nelson Camera Club – Nature – June 2023

Judge John Reid APSNZ ANPSNZ AFIAP

A grade Digital

Amanita nothofagi

I think this is a very well described image of an Amanita, but I'm pretty sure that it isn't *nothofagi*. *Amanita nothofagi* is recognised by a dark brown cap with large light-brown irregular shaped veil fragments. I'm pretty sure that this is *Amanita pareparina*, in its later stages as the cap is starting to curl. I would like to see more of the habitat that it is growing on, just to place it a little more accurately and describe the story a little better. The colour rendition is perfect along with the depth of field. Acceptance

Asian Elephant - Elephas maximus

Juvenile elephants always make great subjects, this image tells the story of this very young elephant feeding off its mother. The composition is tight, providing the viewer with pretty much exactly how a baby elephant suckles. The detail of both the adult and the baby are well described in terms of colour and texture. The distinctive hair over this baby's head helps to describe that it is an Asian Elephant. Accepted

Celmisia semicordata

I think the direct lighting has really helped to define this *Celmisia semicordata*, the plant has been composed in a way that even though it is in direct sunlight there aren't any harsh shadows. The focus is on the leaves and the flowers, which accurately describe the species. The surrounding habitat is also described, and it appears this plant is growing amongst some *Ranunculus*, as well as other alpine species. The colour is pretty much perfect. Merit
Rebecca Bowater

Clay Cliffs, erosion of alluvial layers

I think that this composition is quite strong with the central column of eroding stone framed by the surrounding columns. One can get the sense of this geological story as these cliffs have been eroded away over millions of years. The blue sky and the clouds add another element to the composition, and in some ways helping to define the scale and define the shapes caused by the erosion. The colour is accurate, and everything is sharp. Merit
Irene Callaghan

Crepidotus

This fungus is very well described, as being of the genus *Crepidotus*. The hint of backlighting really highlights the texture of the gills, and the subject is tack sharp. I think the placement of the branch that the fungi is growing on, running on a diagonal through the composition adds some strength to the overall story. In my view the opposing facing dark branch in the background appearing from directly behind the subject is a little distracting, perhaps a slightly different composition could have changed this outcome. Apart from that one branch, the background has been rendered quite natural allowing the main subject to be really well defined in this image. Acceptance

Cyanistes caeruleus - Eurasian Blue Tit

This little bird has an interesting pose, the photographer being lower than the subject has created a strong element framing the subject against the sky. In my view I think the image has been cropped quite hard, the reason I say this is the feather detail doesn't appear to be fine but looks to be quite thick, and not quite natural in appearance. There is a little bit of haloing on the right side of the bird, this may have been caused by slightly over sharpening. The focal point is on the eye which is tack sharp, and this leads the viewer through the subject. The colouring through the head and around the neck is accurate, this helps to identify the species. Acceptance

Fly

Once seen my eye stayed riveted to the fly. I'm not quite sure what the fly is sitting on but this element and the background element feature very strongly in the image, I think it's the uniform brown colour and the opposing lines between the foreground and the background that achieves this. What this does do is put your eye nicely on the fly, which is a different colour, perfectly exposed and has some great detail. The subject being slightly right of centre, is composed on what I would call a hot spot within this composition. The detail in the eye of the fly adds to the story. Merit

Helen Howie

Gannet Coming in to Nest

This tells the story of the Gannet pair early in the breeding season constructing a nest. Well timed, the outstretched wings of the landing bird are in exactly the right position to slow the bird as it comes into land. The shutter speed has frozen the action leaving everything sharp with some beautiful detail. One can appreciate the expectation of the waiting bird on the nest about to receive the nesting material from its partner, this of course is also being keenly watched by the bird on the left. The backdrop to the sea below adds to the story and just creates another element that supports the story being told. Exposure is perfect and the lighting provides some vibrant colour. Merit

Ron Willems

Humidicutis mavis

The placement of the subject matter within this composition is very strong. This is because the cap of the larger specimen being more or less on the top right third with the stipe leading down on a diagonal to the smaller specimen on the bottom third. The lighting on the bigger fungi is exquisite allowing the viewer to really appreciate the detail of both the cap and the gills. The depth of field has kept both subjects sharp along with most of the habitat, this has helped describe everything really well. Exposing for the bright whites makes the subjects stand out from the greens in the background, creating quite an arty effect. Honours

Heather Knapp

Hypholoma brunneum

The caps as shown on these fungi, describe the species and I think this part of this story has been told really well. I really enjoyed seeing the water drops on the spider's web and I think this really adds something special to this photograph. In my view, being a nature image I want to see more detail in the stipe of these fungi, I feel that the depth of field used hasn't quite given the detail I want to see in this area. The dark background and the small well-lit ferns add another strong element. Merit

Heather Knapp

Kea

The side lighting has helped define this kea against the alpine background. The photographer has timed this well by capturing the kea looking at the camera. It looks like one of those kea looks when it is wondering just how good that lens might taste. In my view the composition just needs a bit more space above the kea's head to place the eye more on the top third. The feather detail and colour are spot on. Merit

Tom Setkowski

Milvus Milvis - Red Kite

This is a well-balanced composition with the Red Kite filling the frame, the wings are a strong element perfectly outstretched using the diagonal of the image. There is some beautiful detail in the primary wing feathers and the eye is tack sharp. The clear blue sky is almost symbolic behind the bird as it soars perhaps looking for a meal. The colour describes the species perfectly. Merit

Caroline Foster

Mute Swan

An interesting portrait of the swan's head. In my view as this is a portrait, the composition would have been stronger had a portrait orientation been used. I think the space right and left detracts from the overall composition. The swan has been feeding and there is a trail of weed/slime hanging from the far side of its bill, I don't think this adds anything to the story being told and perhaps waiting for another exposure of the bird could have eliminated this. I think the whites are on the verge of being overexposed, this caused a loss of some of the detail in the feathers. The focal point is on the eye and the depth of field used has kept the subject nicely focused and separated from the background. Accepted

Mycena

I'm pretty sure that these aren't *Mycena sp* but then I'm not sure what they are. I think the giveaway is the size of these fungi as they appear to be quite big, the insect right adding some scale. We can see some reasonable detail of the gills and the stipes, but no caps. The lighting has created some harsher brighter areas and I think the image would be stronger had the lighting been more even and balanced, the light spots in the background right are quite distracting. We can see enough of the habitat to work out that they are growing on a tree which is a key part of telling the story. Accepted

Mycena mariae

It appears that these *Mycena mariae* are in the later stages of development, there is still enough detail in the caps and stipes to identify them. The composition is strong, and I like the way that the photographer has taken advantage of the diagonal running from bottom right to top left, when placing the group of fungi within this composition. The larger specimen, top makes the cluster quite distinctive, being almost like an umbrella standing above this less developed of the cluster. The lighting is beautiful allowing the colour and detail to be well described. We can clearly see the habitat these fungi are growing on and there are no distractions. Honours

Rebecca Bowater

New Zealand Falcon

I enjoyed this composition, I think the photographer has composed this well, putting the falcon into the landscape, even though the background is quite blurred we can get a sense of what the

landscape is like. The falcon has been placed on the bottom left third and is looking through the composition, this is a strong element. The falcon is beautifully sharp with excellent detail. **Honours**
John Miles

Nidula niveotomentosa

These birds nest fungi have been really well described, the different stages telling some of the story about this species. The image is extremely well lit, with the detail and colour being superb. We can clearly see what these fungi are growing on. The portrait orientation suits the composition. **Honours**
Irene Callaghan

NZ green walking stick (genus Acanthoxy)

This image just shows us how cryptic these green stick insects can be. I think the placement of the subject within the composition is strong, the stick insect although being on the edge of quite a large leaf still has space in front of it. The lighting and the focus helps to define the subject against the greens in the background. In my view I would have just liked to have seen the legs of the insect to be as sharp as the body, just a bit more depth of field was needed to achieve this. The detail shown through the head and body of the subject is fantastic. Merit
Dianna Hambleton

NZ sea lion (Phocarctos hookeri)

This image just reminds us of the social interactions of these marine mammals, unless they are asleep, they are always up to something and make great subjects. I like that the photographer has gotten down nice and low to capture this shot, nicely timed as these two square up to each other. The movement and the action has been frozen nicely and is perfectly exposed. I enjoyed seeing the White-Faced Heron walking away, it almost has a disdainful look on its face, as these two mock play on the beach. The panorama format works well. Merit
Dianna Hambleton

Ready for takeoff

I'm pretty sure that this is a Red-billed Gull, Tarāpunga, *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae*. With nature images the photographer should try and identify the species and name the image appropriately. In this case the title could have been Red Billed Gull – Ready For Take Off. I think the image tells the story quite well and has some strong elements. The photographer has gotten down really low and composed the subject in a way to best tell this story. The side lighting really helps to define the gull and make it stand out from the surroundings. The exposure has been well handled, with the whites perfectly exposed. The stance of the gull, legs apart, gives a hint about what might happen next, the reflection adds another element, and the habitat is well represented. Accepted

Red Damselfly

The direct overhead lighting has really helped to describe this Red Damselfly. Every detail of the fly can be seen and the whole subject is tack sharp. The colour rendition across the subject is pretty much perfect. The photographer has placed the subject on a strong diagonal while also isolating it against a pretty much clean out of focus background. I think the strong shadow underneath the damselfly adds another interesting element to this composition. Merit
Tom Young

Red Squirrel (Sciurus vulgaris)

There is quite an interesting story happening here, you just have to look at the image for a minute to work it all out. This squirrel must regularly feed at this spot, we can see that it is currently busy eating something but when we look just below it, we can see all the husks from the food that it has been eating previously. The focal point is clearly on the subject, with the squirrel being tack sharp. I think the three out of focus green leaves between the photographer and the squirrel just let the overall composition down a little bit. The softly blurred background works really well and the lighting is soft and warm allowing the viewer to appreciate the colour of the species. Merit Tom Young

Sand Patterns

This image came up really small on my screen and I think it could have been sized more appropriately for viewing on a bigger screen. The patterns in the sand are clearly evident and one could assume that they have been caused by water running back down the beach as the tide has receded. The sun must be reasonably low as the strong side lighting has created shadows that define the patterns somewhat. The weathered iron (iron oxide) in granite gives the sand its golden colour and may help to describe where this image was taken. Accepted

Satin Bowerbird

There is an interesting story being told in this photograph, I had to google it as I'm not that familiar with this species, so it's always nice when I see something different and can learn about it. This is a male Satin Bowerbird and he collects anything blue to attract a mate, and then places it in front of the bower. That's the dead grass/twig structure on the right. The blue objects are supposed to replicate his colouring and give him an advantage in that space. The photographer has gotten down really low and quite close to take this image; the subject is tack sharp and the feather colour has been beautifully presented, the eye of the subject is placed perfectly within the composition, and I think the story has been incredibly well told. The only thing missing is the female. Honours

Carolyn Hope

Slime Mould being eaten by Collembolans

Another fascinating nature story that has been well described in this image. The portrait composition and the arrangement of the elements within the composition is reasonably strong. There is enough depth of field to describe the subjects that we can easily see and the habitat where this has been found is also well described. I think that just a little more light was needed on the Collembolans bottom left, just to really bring out the colour and make this area of the composition pop a little bit, I say this as this is where the story is really being told. Everything else has been perfectly exposed. Merit

Don Pittham

Southern Alps

This tells some of the story about the Southern Alps as seen from the east. In my view the structure of the photograph lets it down. I think the story is about the dryer tussock lands merging with the alps rising to great heights in the background. I suggest that to achieve a stronger composition the photographer needed to eliminate the distractions as I think the trees that we see have become quite dominating within the composition. As the title is about the alps, these need to be the dominating element and the proportion of tussock land should be much less. To get some drama in the landscape I suggest this type of image needs to be taken in the golden hour, either in the morning or evening. Technically the image is fine. Accepted

Southern Mist

The mist hanging over the foothills in this rural scene is well described. In my view though this image is more about the rural landscape rather than a nature image. I think the photographer should have composed an image of just the hills and the mist as this area of the photograph is very strong. Not Accepted

Sparrow Hawk with prey

I think the subject has been placed perfectly within the composition, with the fallout (feathers) from the kill being scattered to the right and the bird looking into this space. There has certainly been a lot of plucking going on and the Sparrow Hawk is about to tuck into some tasty breast meat. I suggest that the main subject could be a bit brighter and perhaps some work could have been done in post-production to achieve this as I feel the image overall is quite flat and I can see the potential to really bring the colour out more on the bird and making these colours pop. The subject is sharp throughout. Accepted

Sunflower Seed

I found this composition to be quite interesting, although my eye tendered to wander around in it until settling on the centre stamin and flower, and then wandering away again. I think in this case less would be more as the title suggests that image is about the sunflower seed, where I think this is more pictorial rather than a nature image. We can see the seeds reasonably clearly in the centre flower. The exposure and colour help to represent the story photographer is trying to tell. Accepted

Tara - Sterna Striata Eggs

These eggs are really cryptic, almost blending in perfectly with the surrounding stones. I don't think this story is quite complete and I have to ask, what happened to the adult birds? The photographer is right over the top of the nest looking down on the eggs. In my view the over exposed area top right becomes a distraction. Everything is in focus and the colour is accurate. Accepted

Tara - Sterna striata

Maybe this story is a bit more complete with the image depicting the nesting site and the White Fronted Terns sitting on eggs and other birds coming and going. The nesting sites and the nesting Terns here blend in quite well with the surrounding habitat. I think that this composition could be stronger, I say this as my eye wandered around in the image and I suggest that had the photographer concentrated on the nest sites amongst the logs to the right of the left third of the image the story would have been told a little better through the photograph. The photographer has gotten down reasonably low, and this has added some strength to the composition. Accepted

Tremella fruciformis

This image certainly shows the structure of this fungi species. The whites have been perfectly exposed here, maybe at the detriment to the habitat in the background and I suggest that lightning the shadows in post-production may have recovered some of this information as I think its important to try and show what the species is growing on. In saying this the detail, we can see of the fungi is quite spectacular, the colour is perfect, and we can almost feel the texture. Merit Barry Doig

Variable Cicada Kikihia muta

I think this tight composition describes this species of cicada quite well. Everything is in sharp focus. I found the colouring of this particular specimen to be quite interesting, being almost a brown/orange colour but noting there are different colour variations and I think this photograph describes the colour seen here very well. The lighting is really consistent and perfectly exposed.

Merit

Don Pittham

White Coral Slimemould

There is enough information in this photograph to describe this slime mould and what it is growing on. We can see the clusters of the slime mould forming and starting to cover the host. The depth of field works, and the photograph is nicely exposed. The lichens and the fungi also present add some other elements to the composition as well as adding scale. Merit

Carolym Hope

White Faced Heron Kotuku

I think this composition of this White-Faced Heron works reasonably well. The heron has been placed on the right third, facing towards the left, the log appearing from underneath the heron and filling in the foreground to the left adds to the story being told. The photographer's title is not quite correct as this species is White-faced Heron | Matuku moana, not Kotuku. Kotuku is NZ's White Heron. The feather detail and colour is well described, with the eye of this heron being particularly sharp, the background is nicely muted and we can see that the heron is probably on the edge of an estuary. Merit

Roger Ball

White Heron in Nesting Plumage

This image tells the story of the breeding plumage and colouration of the Kotuku during the breeding season. I think the way the bird has been composed within the composition is reasonably strong, the subject being placed on the right with the head looking towards the raised breeding plumage and the empty space on the left works well. The exposure has been set to compensate for the harsh light on the whites and the detail in the feathers has been retained. The green colouration on the skin in front of the eye and the dark beak are also part of the breeding colouration and this is well represented. The dark background just helps to emphasis the subject, with just enough detail to describe the setting. Honours

Ron Willems