



# WILDLIFE IN NORTH CAROLINA 2011 PHOTO COMPETITION

Sometimes you have to break the rules to get results. Gene Furr, the 2011 *Wildlife in North Carolina* Photo Competition Grand Prize winner, did that for his winning shot of the great egret. “Most of the time, you do not want to photograph birds from the rear, but breaking this rule gave me a special image,” said Furr. “I was near Southport searching for egrets starting to build nests in early March. It was a cloudy day with very little color, and photographing white egrets against a cloudy sky is not the best weather to wish for. I am so honored to win the Grand Prize. This is the fifth straight year that I have placed in the contest, but first time to win the Grand Prize.”

Furr said he exposed for the white sky and over exposed it by two f/stops to get a white background, knowing a white egret would record a half a stop less than the background. Furr was using a Nikon D300 with a 200–400mm f/4 zoom. Exposure was 1/1500 sec. at f/5.6 (handheld).

Furr is no newcomer to photography. During his 30 years at *The News & Observer* of Raleigh, he won over 300 awards while serving as staff photographer, chief photographer and photography coach. He retired in 2002 and started photographing wildlife. “I always felt that winning the *Wildlife in North Carolina* Photo Competition is such an honor because of the number of entries,” he said. Birds are Furr’s favorite subject, especially wading birds. But for next year he’s going to “downsize” and pursue songbirds.

Marsha Tillet, art director at *Wildlife in North Carolina*, was one of the five judges for the contest. She gave her thoughts on Furr’s winning image.

“One of the things I really like about the winning image is... not that it’s just a beautiful image, but it’s a white bird on a white background,” she said. “He shot a white bird on a white background and there’s no loss of definition. You still see every feather on the bird. That’s what caught my eye. There’s also nesting material [in the bird’s mouth] and movement [flight], but it’s not blurred.”

Tillet also explained the process of judging the contest.

“Each of the judges picked out 10 favorites per category and we then reviewed them silently while they were on a computer screen,” Tillet said. “The second time we viewed them someone had to speak up for an image or it didn’t make the cut. Some images evoked more support than others, and there was some give and take to it. Most of these images are not only shot well technically, but they’re also composed so well.”

Tillet is a fan of the annual event, now in its seventh year. “It gets our readers involved,” she said. “For children, it gets them outside and learning about nature. The contest is a gateway to get people outside and involved in the world of nature.”

Other judges were: WINC photographer Melissa McGaw; Mike Dunn, coordinator of teacher education for the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences; Charlie Peek, public information officer for the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation; and Wildlife Resources Commission Public Information Officer Jodie Owen.

Valuable support was provided by our co-sponsors, the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences and the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation. All winning photographs may be seen on exhibit through March at the museum thanks to our exhibition sponsor, JW Photo of Raleigh. Various North Carolina state parks will exhibit selected photos from the competition throughout the year. Details and rules for the 2012 competition will be posted on [www.ncwildlife.org](http://www.ncwildlife.org) in May. The entry period will open on June 1 and close on Sept. 1. This year’s field totaled 3,689 photographs. In the competition’s seventh year, approximately 1,000 photographers took part.

– Mike Zlotnicki

**GRAND PRIZE** WILDLIFE IN NORTH CAROLINA 2011 PHOTO COMPETITION



**Gene Furr, Raleigh**

Egret Building a Nest, Wilmington

Veteran photographer Gene Furr captured this egret in breeding plumage carrying nesting material last March. Although photographing birds from the rear is not usually an optimum angle, it proved to be one for Furr. The shot was taken near Southport on a cloudy day with very little contrast.

(Nikon D300, 200–400mm lens, 1/1500 of a second, f/5.6)



**BIRDS FIRST PLACE**

**Ed Erkes, Seven Springs**

Prothonotary Warbler with Prey, Johnston County

The image was taken at Howell Woods Environmental Learning Center, a 2,800-acre natural wooded area in Johnston County. Erkes does volunteer work there monitoring the bluebird nesting boxes each year and also spends a lot of time photographing there. He spent three days photographing a prothonotary warbler nest in a swampy area. He used four flash units to freeze the motion of the female in flight as she flew to the nest carrying a jumping spider.

(Nikon D300 with a Nikon 200–400mm zoom, ISO 100, 1/250 of a second, f/22)



## BIRDS SECOND PLACE

**Jeffery Lewis, Manteo**

Common Yellowthroat, Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge

Lewis was shooting on the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge when he captured this common yellowthroat singing. He used his car as a blind for closer approach. Lewis said that the common yellowthroat is one of the first birds to sing in the spring. “The energy that these tiny birds put into defending their territory is amazing,” he said.

(Canon 50D, Canon 100–400mm at 400mm, ISO 500, 1/1600 of a second, f/5.6, aperture priority mode)



## BIRDS THIRD PLACE

**Jim Ruff, Blowing Rock**

American Kestrel, Pungo Lake

Ruff captured this image of an American kestrel near Pungo Lake in January of 2011. He was trying to photograph snow geese and tundra swans when this little falcon “kept flying around begging for attention.” “When he posed on a nearby tree limb, I couldn’t refuse!” he said.

(Canon 7D, 500mm IS lens + 1.4 tele-extender, ISO 800, 1/500 of a second, f/9.5)





**MAMMALS FIRST PLACE**

**Scott Hotaling, Cullowhee**

Elk Before Dawn, Cataloochee Valley

After hiking a short way into the Cataloochee Valley before dawn on a cold, October morning, the rising sun revealed quite an impressive sight for Hotaling. “Fog and low-angle sunlight combined for an ethereal atmosphere that only got better when this lone bull elk walked in front of my lens and bugled,” he said. “Due to the stillness of the morning, the fog from his breath hung around his impressive antlers like a crown of sorts.”

(Canon EOS 5D MK II, 200mm focal length, ISO 200, 1/400 of second, f/4)



### MAMMALS SECOND PLACE

**Charles English, Wilmington**

Red Fox Portrait, Airlie Gardens, Wilmington

This inquisitive red fox walked “right on up to me,” said photographer English of Wilmington. He got the shot at Airlie Gardens.

(Canon EOS 5D MII, 420mm focal length, ISO 200, 1/400 of a second, f/4)



### MAMMALS THIRD PLACE

**Scott Hotaling, Cullowhee**

Bull Elk Bugling, Cataloochee Valley

This lone tree in the Cataloochee Valley is one of Hotaling’s favorites. It looks especially regal in the fall. “On this particular morning as a bull elk bugled to his harem, it appeared he was bugling directly up at this impressive tree,” he said. “That’s the story I wanted to convey, the impressive wildness of the place.”

(Canon EOS 5D, 168mm focal length, ISO 400, 1/320 of a second, f/9)



**REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS FIRST PLACE**

**Mark Stanley, Wilmington**

Turtle Crossing, Pender County

How did the turtle cross the road? In the hands of the photographer. Stanley found this Eastern box turtle crossing Stag Park Road in Pender County and seized the moment. After some crazy looks from drivers while he lay in the rain-soaked road shooting pictures, the turtle was moved to safety.

(Canon 40D, Canon EF 70–200mm IS, ISO200, 1/320 of a second, f/7.1)





REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS  
**SECOND PLACE**

**Alan Cameron, Flat Rock**

Green Salamander with Eggs, Transylvania County

The green salamander is the only one of the state's 66 species of salamander listed as "rare and endangered." Cameron came upon this female guarding her eggs in Transylvania County and used a simple point-and-shoot camera to capture this shot, which shows that you don't need a high-dollar camera to take winning photos.

(Casio EX-Z50, 1/60 of a second, f/4.4)



REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS  
**THIRD PLACE**

**Patti White, Bear Creek**

Anole on Ginger Lily Leaf, Bear Creek

"This handsome guy walked to the edge of the leaf and posed for his portrait," White said. "I love the shallow depth-of-field I get with the 105mm lens. It allows that beautiful eye to be the main attraction."

(Nikon D7000, Nikkor 105mm lens, ISO 800, 1/250 of a second, f/4.5)





**INVERTEBRATES FIRST PLACE**

**Ryan Montgomery, Greenville, S.C.**

Going Home, Cape Point, Hatteras Island

This was shot at Cape Point on Hatteras Island in January of 2011. Montgomery grew up on the coast of South Carolina and said he had never seen so many starfish and “mermaid’s purses” at one time. He got soaked by the freezing water while taking this, but it was worth it for a unique sunset shot.

(Canon EOS 5D Mark II, Really Right Stuff tripod and ball head, Canon 17–40mm at 17mm, 1/2 of a second, f/11, cable release)

## INVERTEBRATES SECOND PLACE

### Ed Erkes, Seven Springs

Moths to a Flame, Seven Springs

Last August was such a hot month that Erkes didn't do much photography during the heat of the day, so he decided to spend several evenings trying to attract and photograph moths on his front porch. He attached a light bulb to a tripod and placed two flash units in front. The flashes were set to rear-curtain sync to fire the flash at the end of the exposure. The result was blurred wing beats lit by the light bulb during the  $\frac{1}{10}$ -second exposure, followed by sharp images of the moths when the flashes fired.

(Nikon D300, Sigma 17–70mm lens,  $\frac{1}{10}$  of a second, ISO 200, f/22)



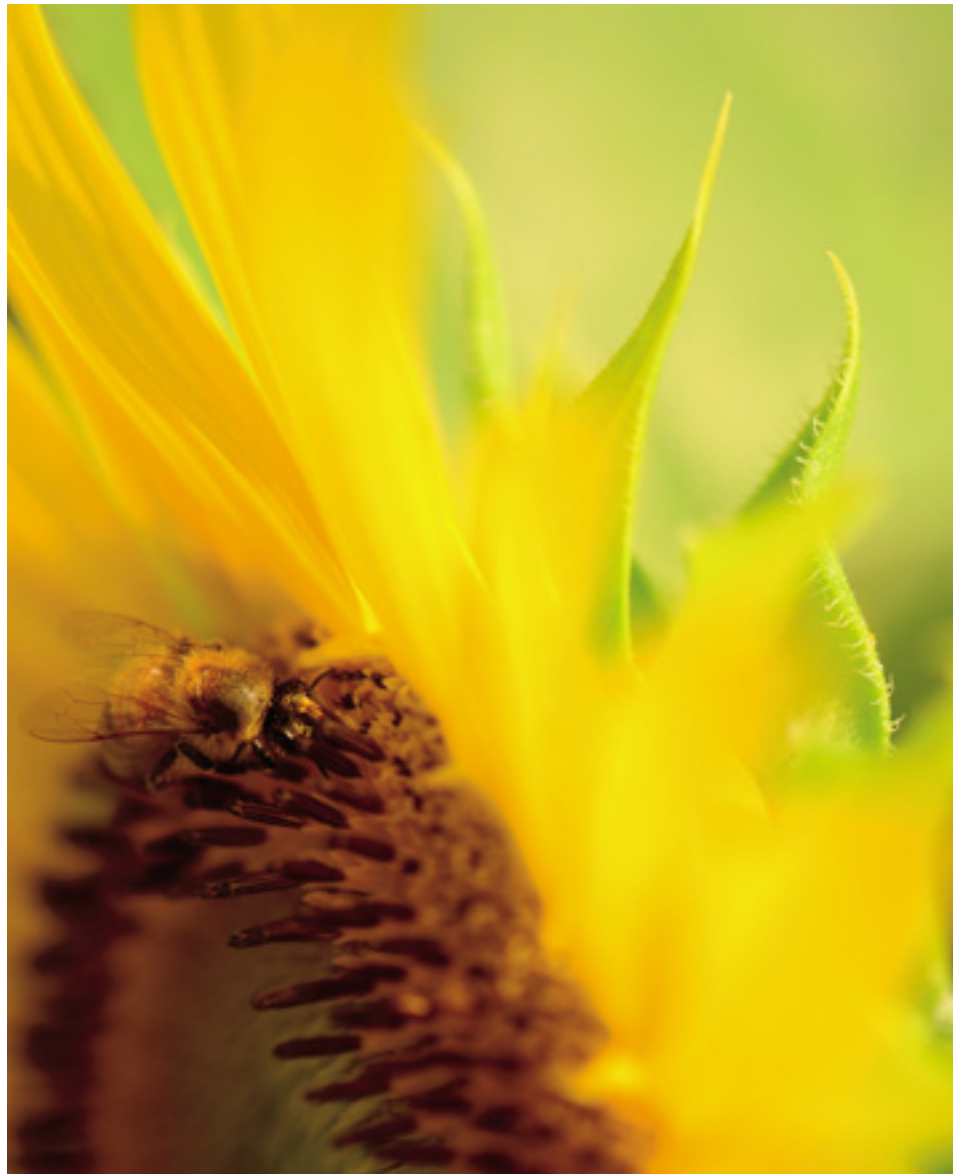
## INVERTEBRATES THIRD PLACE

### Patti White, Bear Creek

Bee on a Sunflower, Bear Creek

White said a friend wanted her to try his extra 105mm Nikkor lens, while another friend called to tell her about a beautiful field of sunflowers she'd passed on the side of the road. "This photograph is the end result," she said. "And yes, I ended up buying the lens!"

(Nikon D7000, Nikkor 105mm 2.8 lens, ISO 100,  $\frac{1}{1000}$  of a second, f/3.3, exposure bias +0.3)







**WILD PLANTS FIRST PLACE**

**Scott Hotaling, Cullowhee**

Fresh Snow, Blue Ridge Parkway near Cherokee

Hotaling said, “I’ve been looking for this photograph for years. Blue sky and snow and ice-laden trees. At no other time of the year, in my opinion, is a place as beautiful as the first clear day after a fresh snow.” For this particular shot, Hotaling walked through the forest just after sunrise, craning his neck in search of something geometric, something that “made sense.” Luckily, he happened upon this diamond-shape in the canopy.

(Canon EOS 5D, 20mm focal length, ISO 250, 1/125 of a second, f/18)



**WILD PLANTS**  
**SECOND PLACE**

**Monty E. Combs, Wilkesboro**

Azalea Reflections, Grandfather Mountain

Combs was visiting Grandfather Mountain last May. It had rained the night before, and the early morning sun had not dried all of the rain drops from the flame azaleas. He thought the reflections of the flowers, sky and sun would make a nice shot. And it did.

(Canon 5D, 100mm macro lens, ISO 100, 1/250 of a second, f/4.5)



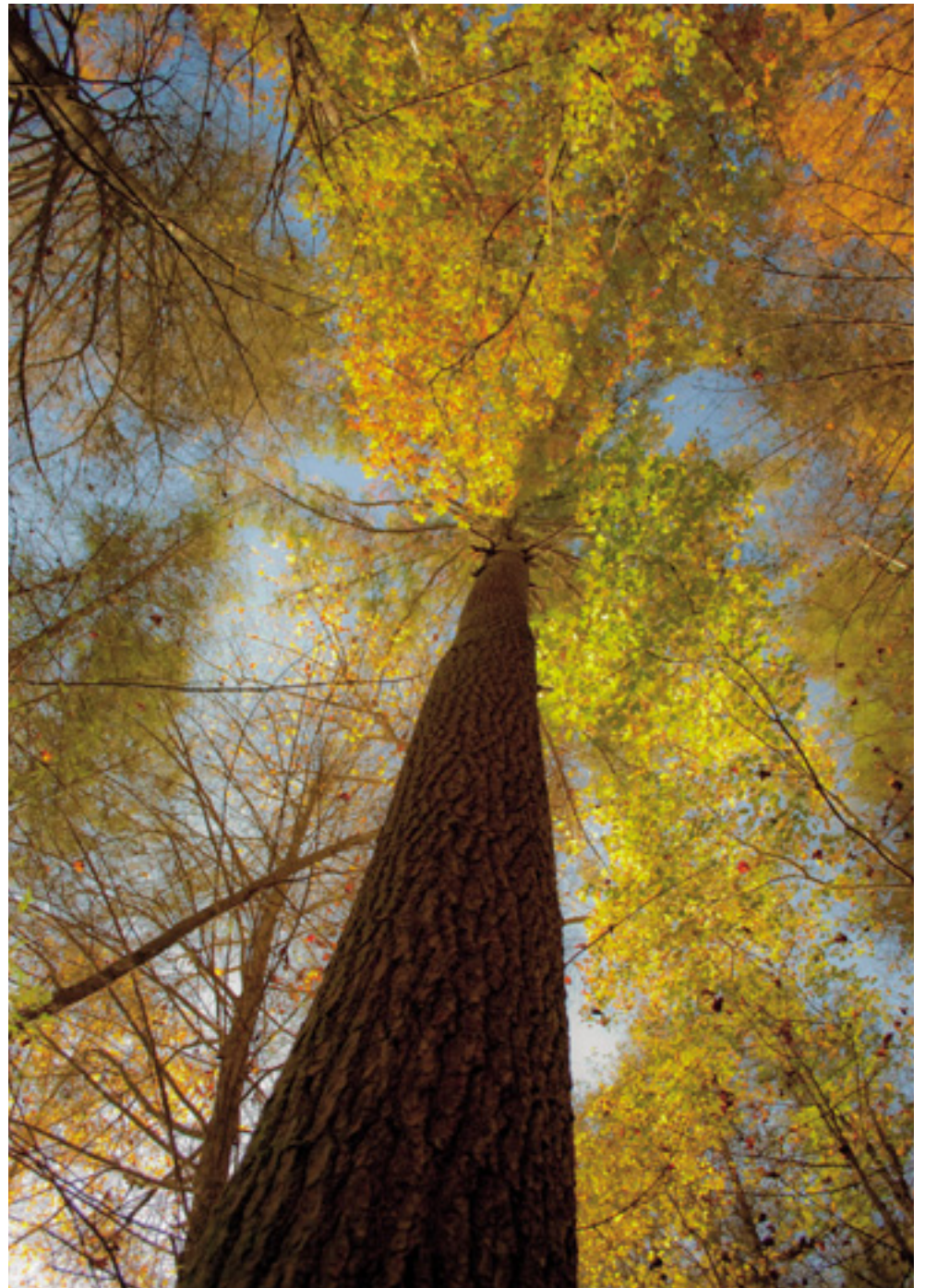
**WILD PLANTS**  
**THIRD PLACE**

**Cindy W. Yount, Morehead City**

Unexpected Overhead, Dupont State Forest

Dupont State Forest was the scene for this canopy shot captured in October of 2010. Yount was headed for a waterfall to shoot when she heard a hawk call in the forest. She looked up and didn't see the hawk but did see this scene. "It made me realize that from time to time, as we walk along the paths of life, we should all pause, stop and take a look upward for the unexpected," she said.

(Nikon D60, 18–55mm lens, ISO 200, 1/60 of a second, f/4)







**OUTDOOR RECREATION FIRST PLACE**

**Amanda Prince, Fletcher**

First Flight, Hooper's Creek

Prince and her husband Jonathan had been trying for years to fly this “difficult” kite they bought in Kitty Hawk on their honeymoon. Finally, a blustery fall day set the stage. “I grabbed my camera, my husband grabbed the kite and we were thankful to capture our ‘first flight’ after so many unsuccessful attempts,” said Prince of the picture, taken at Hooper’s Creek.

(Nikon D200, 10.5mm fisheye lens, ISO 400, 1/800 of a second, f/8)

**OUTDOOR RECREATION  
SECOND PLACE**

**Karen Doody, Morehead City**

Divers on the Hangline, Atlantic Ocean

Twenty miles off the coast of Morehead City lies the U.S.C.G. cutter *Spar*, sunk as part of the artificial reef program. Doody said sea conditions were perfect to capture the divers waiting on the hangline before surfacing, and the curious barracuda added some “local color” to the shot.

(Nikon D300 in a Sea & Sea underwater housing, Sea & Sea strobes, Tokina 10–17mm lens, ISO 200, 1/320 of a second, f/6.3)



**OUTDOOR RECREATION  
THIRD PLACE**

**Scott Hotaling, Cullowhee**

Ice Climber, Jackson County

On cold winter days, the roadside of NC 215 near the Blue Ridge Parkway becomes an ice-climbing gym of sorts. “On this particular morning, one of my fellow climbers was ascending a particular dramatic patch of ice in ‘fat’ conditions,” said Hotaling. “We got a good amount of fun climbing before the wind and snow picked up as the sunlight faded.”

(Canon EOS 5D, 40mm, ISO 500, 1/125 of a second, f/8)





**WILD LANDSCAPES FIRST PLACE**

**Kevin Council, Chapel Hill**

Oak and Wisteria, Chapel Hill

This is an infrared shot, and we'll let Council explain. "Infrared wavelengths are reflected very strongly by most types of vegetation," he said. "This, coupled with the near-black sky IR provides, can produce some very dramatic results." "I find the sculptural forms made by wisteria and kudzu very interesting as they overgrow trees, even more so when lighting conditions are good," he said.

(Fuji Finepix IS1, 28mm, ISO 80, 1/125 of a second, f/3.2)



## WILD LANDSCAPES SECOND PLACE

**David McKenzie, Mooresville**

Dropoff, Jacobs Creek

McKenzie frequently shoots streams in South Mountains State Park, but his intention this day was to shoot macro shots, so the only lens he brought was a 180mm macro. He shot without a polarizing filter in order to give the water a “liquid glass” look. The fixed-focal length lens made the framing harder than normal.

(Nikon D300, tripod, Sigma 180mm macro lens, ISO 200, 3 second exposure, f/22)



## WILD LANDSCAPES THIRD PLACE

**Jim Ruff, Blowing Rock**

Hump Mountain, Avery County

It was a cold and windy day when Ruff took this shot of Hump Mountain in 2010. He said wind chill factors in the -20 to -30 F range made capturing this image especially rewarding.

(Canon 7D, 100–400mm IS lens at 100mm, ISO 100, 1/30 of a second, f/22)







**ANIMAL BEHAVIOR FIRST PLACE**

**Mark Stanley, Wilmington**

Striped Bass School, N.C. Aquarium at Fort Fisher

“It is not every day that a low-budget photographer gets his hand on a piece of glass like the 85mm/1.2,” said Stanley. He and his family were visiting the North Carolina Aquarium at Fort Fisher when another photographer asked if he would like to try his new lens. The winning picture was the fourth image Stanley took with the lens. “I knew right then it was a keeper,” he said.

(Canon 40D, Canon EF 85mm, ISO 200, 1/250 of a second, f/1.2)



**ANIMAL BEHAVIOR  
SECOND PLACE**

**Mark Turnau, Hendersonville**  
Squirrel in Snow, Hendersonville

It was an Easter weekend snow in the spring of 2009. Looking out the back deck, Turnau and his wife saw this squirrel just sitting there with its eyes closed, looking so cold, so he grabbed his camera and captured this precious shot.

(Nikon D90, 180mm focal length, ISO 200, 1/294 of a second, f/5.6)



**ANIMAL BEHAVIOR  
THIRD PLACE**

**Ed Erkes, Seven Springs**  
Wood Duck Rush, Seven Springs

“The wood duck drake doesn’t have a defined territory in the sense of a defined area of land and water,” Erkes said. “The territory he defends is an area around his mate. If another male gets too close, as happened here, the drake will rush at him at high speed.” This image was taken from a photography blind on Erkes’ 1-acre backyard pond last May.

(Nikon D300, Sigma 300–800mm lens with 1.4X tele-converter, ISO 500, 1/640 of a second, f/11)



**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 13-17**  
**FIRST PLACE**

**Stockton Ray, Cary**

Sunrise at Table Rock, Burke County

It was around 7:45 on a foggy, cool autumn morning. Ray had camped out the night before at the Table Rock Campground and had risen early in the morning to take the 15-minute hike from the campground up the ridge at The Chimneys to watch the sunrise. “After climbing up to the edge of the ridge, I found the valley engulfed in the morning fog,” he said. “I turned around and composed this picture of Table Rock from that vantage point.”

(Nikon D3, Nikkor 24-70mm at 24mm, ISO 800, 1/125 of a second, f/11)

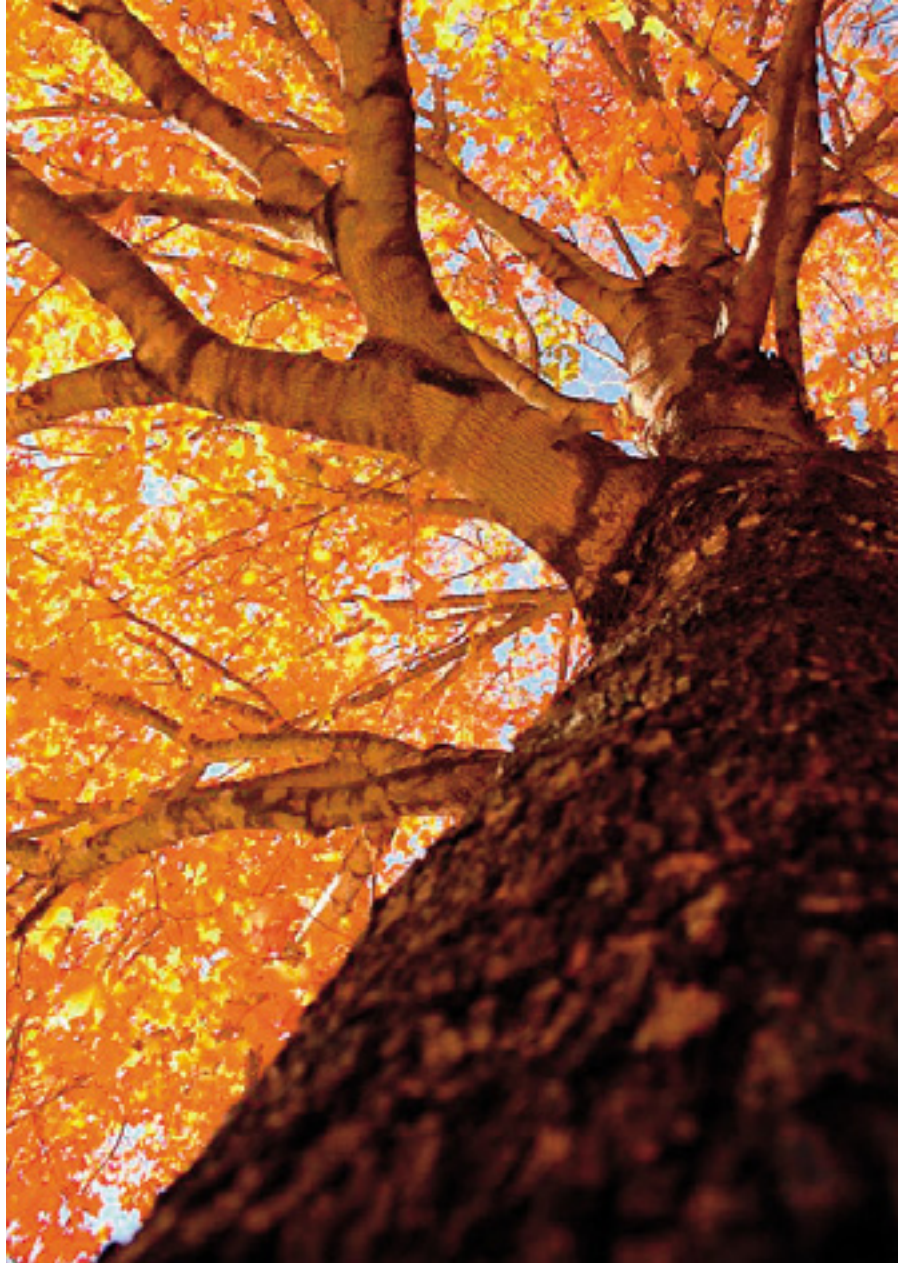


YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 13–17  
**SECOND PLACE**

**Maggie Clerkin, Raleigh**  
Up and Autumn, Raleigh

Clerkin was walking in Williams Memorial Park in Raleigh back in Nov. of 2010 when she looked up and saw a winning scene. “The sky was so blue and the leaves so orange, it really looked like fall,” she said. “I love fall photos. I tend to do most of my shooting in autumn. I love looking at things in my own way.”

(Canon EOS Digital Rebel XSi, EF 18–55mm lens at 18mm, ISO 100, 1/125 of a second, f/5.6)



YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 13–17  
**THIRD PLACE**

**Joe Congleton, Clayton**  
Cope's Gray Treefrog on a Fence, Clayton

Photo subjects are where you find them, even in the backyard. “The frog was on the backyard fence, appearing to hide in the fence rail hole,” Congleton said. “I just thought it would make a neat picture, so I took it.” Congleton used the “close up” setting on his Nikon Coolpix to capture this image.

(Nikon Coolpix, Nikkor 6–50mm lens, ISO 50, 1/105 of a second, f/2.7)







**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 13–17  
HONORABLE MENTION**

**Danielle Atkinson, Ronda**  
Dead Dragonfly, Ronda

At first Atkinson thought the insect was alive and proceeded to shoot it. She later learned it was dead, “But it made a fabulous picture, if I do say so myself,” she said.

(Data unknown)



**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 13–17  
HONORABLE MENTION**

**Anna Blythe Davis, Swan Quarter**  
A Closer Look, Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge

Davis was participating in a photography workshop at Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge in January 2011 when she took the picture. The workshop was a 13th birthday present from her parents. She was there to photograph birds, but her best picture of the day was a bird feather.

(Canon EOS 50D, 60mm lens, ISO 100, 1/160 of a second, f/5.6)



**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 13–17  
HONORABLE MENTION**

**Stockton Ray, Cary**  
Hummingbird in Flight, Cary

Before he started working on this picture, Ray had a clear idea of the result he wanted—a ruby-throated hummingbird evenly lit, frozen in flight against a black background—but it turned out to be much harder than he had thought. “The picture was taken off my back porch in the late evening near my feeder,” he said. “I set the camera with a neutral density filter and low ISO so that the background would be completely black, then shot the picture through a ring light which lit the bird allowing for the strong contrast and extreme high speed.” Got that?

(Nikon D3, Nikkor 24–70mm at 70mm, ISO 400, 1/320 of a second, f/11)



**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 12 & UNDER  
FIRST PLACE**

**Jack Montgomery, Greenville, S.C.**

Heaven's Gate, Great Smoky Mountains

Montgomery, 8, was in the Great Smoky Mountains with his father Ryan (First Place, Invertebrates) and his grandfather to see the sunset, but there were too many clouds. He said his father and grandfather “were not paying attention” when some light broke through, so he shot it with his dad’s camera.

(Nikon D7000, tripod, cable release, Sigma 120–400mm at 120mm, 1/500 of a second, f/8)



**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 12 & UNDER  
SECOND PLACE**

**Nicole Howren, Cary**

Deer in Reeds, Cape Hatteras

This picture was taken near the Cape Hatteras lighthouse at dusk last spring. Howren was compelled to return to the lighthouse to see the family of deer that would appear each evening to graze and walk along the dune line. "It was a beautiful sight to witness as the sun set," she said.

(Canon EOS 40D, Canon 400mm lens, ISO 800, 1/800 of a second, f/5.6)



**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 12 & UNDER  
THIRD PLACE**

**Darren Germann, New Bern**

Dandelion, New Bern

This photo was taken in April of 2011 at Fisher's Landing off US 70E in New Bern. After taking several shots of the dandelion, Germann decided to zoom in really close and "get the inside scoop." "After looking at the shot, I decided that it reminded me of two things: a cluster of snow fairies or a kaleidoscope," he said.

(Nikon D7000, 105mm macro lens, ISO 100, f/7.1)





**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 12 & UNDER  
HONORABLE MENTION**

**Darren Germann, New Bern**

Grand Grasshopper, Great Smoky Mountains

During a trip to the mountains in August, Germann went out to find some interesting things to shoot. Amongst some roadside weeds Germann spied this grasshopper munching weeds and he decided that it would make a great shot.

(Nikon D7000, 105mm macro lens, ISO 100, f/10)



**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 12 & UNDER  
HONORABLE MENTION**

**Jacob Thomas, Waxhaw**

Green Treefrog, backyard

Thomas found this treefrog in the yard of his Union County house, and used a Nikon Coolpix camera to get the shot. "One of the many reasons I like this picture is because of the detail it holds and the texture it shows," he said.

(Nikon Coolpix, ISO 80, 1/50 of a second, f/3.1)



**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 12 & UNDER  
HONORABLE MENTION**

**Ethan Whitaker, Wallburg**

Grasshopper Eating Plant, Wallburg

The Whitakers had been watching this grasshopper eat this plant for weeks. One morning in August last year, Ethan Whitaker, 8, asked his mother Kathy Whitaker if he could take some pictures. "That was the day Ethan and I discovered he had real talent and enjoyment for photography," Kathy Whitaker said.

(Nikon D50, Nikkor 28–80mm lens at 80mm, ISO auto/400, 1/800 of a second, f/5.6)