

Contents

Foreword by Nigel Marven	8
Director’s Note	10
Birds on the Brink	12
Judging Panel	15
Competition Photographs Include the Following Images:	
Birds in Flight and Bird Photographer of the Year Winner – Liron Gertsman	16
Birds in the Environment Winner – Franco Banfi	29
Creative Perspectives Winner – Philipp Egger	37
Best Portrait Winner – Steffen Foerster	81
Urban Birds Winner – Alex Pansier	117
Bird Behaviour Winner – Francesco Guffanti	145
Conservation (Single Image) Winner – Sarthak Agrawal	151
Black and White Winner – Jannik Jansons	173
Portfolio Award Winner – Mateusz Piesiak	234
Conservation Documentary Award Winner – Joshua Burch	240
Young Bird Photographer of the Year Winner – Tomasz Michalski	246
Featured Photographers	254

Sunset and Stork

Birds in the Environment □ COMMENDED
Dani Salgado, Spain

White Stork, *Ciconia ciconia*. Cabo Sardão, Portugal

At Cabo Sardão in Portugal there is a unique spectacle, with several pairs of storks nesting among the sharp rocks on the cliff. The last light of the day illuminates the rocks, creating a great colour contrast between the warm tones of the stones and the cold blue sea. Seeking to contextualise the birds in their unusual environment I used a short focal length. To reinforce their prominence in the image despite their limited presence in the frame I used long exposures of more than two seconds, a technique that enhanced the contrast between the stillness of the storks and the movement of the sea.

Canon EOS 5D R with Canon EF 70–200mm f/4 lens. 100mm; 3.2s; f/18; ISO 50.





Best Angle

Best Portrait ☐ COMMENDED

Daphne Wuenn, United Kingdom

Common Redshank, *Tringa totanus*. Brownsea Island, United Kingdom

A Common Redshank was standing preening in the shallow water of a lagoon. When it spotted me with my camera at eye level, it paused for a while. The stillness of the water mirrored the bird's graceful form, creating beautiful symmetry. Despite the overcast conditions producing a greyish hue, the bird's speckled plumage and bright orange legs and bill stood out vividly. Shortly after, the redshank moved off to muddy ground in search of food. I was left feeling a deep connection with nature, grateful for this fleeting encounter.

Sony a1 with Sony 200–600mm f/5.6–6.3 lens. 600mm; 1/800s; f/9; ISO 640.

Crossbills Couple

Best Portrait ☐ COMMENDED

Maxime Legare-Vezina, Canada

Two-barred Crossbill, *Loxia leucoptera*.

Forêt Montmorency, Québec, Canada

I set up a bird feeder with carefully chosen perches in the boreal forest in Canada, hoping to attract some interesting visitors. After a long wait, a pair of crossbills finally landed together, offering me this perfect scene. The contrast between their colours and the delicate lichens made the wait more than worth it!

Canon EOS 5D Mark IV with Canon EF 600mm f/4 III lens. 600mm; 1/400s; f/10; ISO 2,000.







Structures

Birds in the Environment □ SILVER

Levi Fitze, Switzerland

Rock Ptarmigan, *Lagopus muta*. Alpstein, Switzerland

I spotted this Rock Ptarmigan walking slowly up a snowy hillside in the Swiss mountains on a frozen winter's day. Ptarmigans are masters of camouflage, their white winter plumage blending in so well with the snow. I noticed that the footprints this bird was leaving in the snow, emphasised by the low, flat light, were perhaps more noticeable than the bird itself. I framed the image so that the bird was part of the picture to highlight its expansive environment and show the wonderful textures in the snow.

Sony a7 IV with Sony 200–600mm f/5.6–6.3 lens. 512mm; 1/2,000s; f/6.3; ISO 800.

Capercaillie

Black and White □ COMMENDED

Claudio Sferra, Italy

Western Capercaillie, *Tetrao urogallus*. South Tyrol, Italy

It is rare to come across a capercaillie in the Alps but territorial males are sometimes attracted by human voices and walk out of the thick forest vegetation or fly in and land on roads or even ski slopes. These birds have a proud attitude and an elegant posture, but are unaware of the danger they may be in: unfortunately, it seems that few people know how to behave appropriately in their presence, and some may even attack them out of fear.

Nikon Z 8 with Nikon Z 100–400mm f/4.5–5.6 lens. 240mm; 1/1,250s; f/5; ISO 220.

Inverted Dive

Birds in Flight ☐ COMMENDED

Karen Cohen, United States

Bald Eagle, *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*. Homer, Alaska, United States

Eagles rely on their aerial skills to survive, and Bald Eagles are renowned for their aerobatics, including barrel rolls and flying upside down. When an eagle dives for a fish it often flips over onto its back, only to rotate at the last few seconds and extend its talons to grasp its prey. It looks as though it is dropping out of the sky. I took this photo handheld using a very fast shutter speed; panning to follow the bird flying against a textured rock face presented a challenge for focusing but I was pleased with the result.

Sony a1 with Sony 70–200mm f/2.8 II lens. 197mm; 1/8,000s; f/2.8; ISO 320.

Locked on Target

Birds in Flight ☐ COMMENDED

Odd Nielsen, Norway

Hen Harrier, *Circus cyaneus*. Klepp, Norway

The temperature had dropped to well below freezing and the light was fading. In the distance, I noticed a Hen Harrier flying low over the edge of the reeds. Hoping to capture a photo I got ready and, to my surprise, the harrier suddenly changed direction and headed straight towards me. I took a quick series of shots and, as suddenly as it appeared, the bird vanished. Every year, a small number of Hen Harriers overwinter near my home, and I usually only get the chance to observe them from a distance. This experience was one of the greatest I have had in many years; the photos were just an added bonus.

Nikon Z 9 with Nikon Z 180–600mm f/5.6–6.3 lens. 600mm; 1/2,500s; f/6.3; ISO 640.







What You Looking At

Creative Perspectives □ COMMENDED

Sean Weekly, United Kingdom

Dalmatian Pelican, *Pelecanus crispus*. Lake Kerkini, Greece

I've tried taking funny pictures of the pelicans at Lake Kerkini so many times over the years, wanting to highlight their unique personalities. After many attempts, I finally took a great comical shot when one landed on the boat's canopy and this encouraged me to attempt more wide-angle shots. It was then a matter of waiting for the bird to look directly at the camera, leading to this amusing but powerful portrait.

Canon EOS R6 with Canon EF 16–35mm f/2.8 III lens. 35mm; 1/400s; f/5.6; ISO 1,600.

Under Your Nose

Creative Perspectives □ BRONZE

Jim Lee, Singapore

Buffy Fish Owl, *Ketupa ketupu*. Hampstead Wetlands Park, Singapore

This photo is of a Buffy Fish Owl perched atop a street light, a frequent spot from which these birds hunt. The contrast between the dark night sky and the bright light results in the owl going unnoticed by most passersby. To capture a unique perspective, I positioned myself directly beneath the bird, using a wide-angle lens and pointing my camera upwards. The lamp post serves as a leading line, drawing attention to the owl centred in the frame. The street light and treetop branches create a striking blend of urban and natural elements, highlighting the owl's adaptability to urban life.

Sony a1 with Sony 16–35mm f/2.8 II lens. 35mm; 1/20s; f/2.8; ISO 1,600.





Eyes to the Sky

Bird Behaviour ☐ COMMENDED

Matthew Glover, United Kingdom

Common Goldeneye, *Bucephala clangula*.

Killingworth, North Tyneside, United Kingdom

A male goldeneye tosses back its head in an elaborate courtship display. Hoping to catch the eye of a female, this is one stage of the dramatic and choreographed behaviour that this diving duck exhibits during the mating season. This image was taken at an urban lake close to Newcastle upon Tyne where these birds thrive; their extravagant rituals can be very entertaining to watch.

Canon EOS R5 with Canon RF 100–500mm f/4.5–7.1 lens. 500mm; 1/1,250s; f/7.1; ISO 1,600.

Looks

Best Portrait ☐ HIGHLY COMMENDED

Oscar Diez Martinez, Spain

Dalmatian Pelican, *Pelecanus crispus*.

Lake Kerkini, Greece

Winter is the mating season for Dalmatian Pelicans, when their plumage, especially that of the males, is at its brightest. The feathers on the forehead become curly and look quite hairy, and the pouch under the bill becomes very red. One cloudy afternoon I was able to photograph this bird against the white water of the lake, overexposing the image to highlight the bird against the background; the shape of its neck with the bill held vertically in front made for a very special portrait.

Canon EOS 1D X Mark III with Canon EF 70–200mm f/2.8 II lens. 200mm; 1/800s; f/8; ISO 3,200.





Forest Serenade

Birds in the Environment ☐ COMMENDED

Mateusz Piesiak, Poland

Western Capercaillie, *Tetrao urogallus*.

Jura, Switzerland

A male capercaillie displaying in the heart of an old pine forest. The morning light illuminates his tail as he calls from the highest vantage point in the area.

Canon EOS R5 with Tamron 15-30mm f/2.8 lens. 15mm; 1/1,250s; f/5; ISO 1,600.

Trapped

Conservation (Single Image) ☐ SILVER

Charlotte Keast, United Kingdom

Shoebill, *Baleniceps rex*. Entebbe, Uganda

In heartbreaking contrast to its wild peers, this Shoebill stork is confined in a small dirty cage in a zoo in Entebbe, Uganda. Known for their solitary and elusive nature, Shoebills thrive in vast wetlands, hunting in silence and flying gracefully over open landscapes. Here, trapped behind glass for the entire day and on full display to the public, this majestic bird is deprived of space to fly, hunt or retreat from the constant gaze of visitors. Just a few miles away its wild counterparts enjoy the freedom of Uganda's marshes – a stark reminder of the unnatural conditions that captivity imposes on such extraordinary creatures.

Canon EOS R5 with Canon RF 14-35mm f/4 lens. 14mm; 1/2,500s; f/4; ISO 160.

This haunting image of a shoebill trapped in captivity powerfully captures its forlorn gaze towards the world beyond its enclosure.

The bird appears almost abandoned, prompting deep reflection on the fate of animals in captivity, particularly in zoos with substandard conditions. The composition is outstanding, and the message behind the image is profoundly moving. WILL NICHOLLS





First Snow

Birds in the Environment ☐ COMMENDED

Tom Nickels, Finland

Willow Grouse, *Lagopus lagopus*. Kiilopää, Lapland, Finland

This photo of a Willow Grouse was taken during the first snowfall of winter in Kiilopää in Lapland. I spotted the bird sitting close to the path during 'blue hour'. To capture the moment, I calmly lay down in the snow to achieve an eye-level perspective. The gentle snowfall adds texture and mood to the image.

Sony a1 with Sony 400mm f/2.8 lens. 400mm; 1/1,000s; f/2.8; ISO 8,000.

Morning Routine

Best Portrait ☐ COMMENDED

Peter Ismert, United States

Sage Grouse, *Centrocercus urophasianus*. Colorado, United States

Every spring, like clockwork, male Sage Grouse form a lek, where they show off to the females and try to exert their dominance over other males. They start each day with the same routine on the lek, spreading their tail feathers, puffing out their chest, and emitting low booming sounds. Although fights often break out between the males, by mid-morning the grouse are all friends again and go off into the sagebrush to feed and rest before they start all over again the next morning.

Nikon Z 9 with Nikon Z 400mm f/2.8 lens. 400mm; 1/3,200s; f/2.8; ISO 1,000.





Grace in Flight: A Flock of Flamingos over Lake Magadi

Black and White ☐ COMMENDED

Dilip Shah, India

Lesser Flamingo, *Phoeniconaias minor*. Lake Magadi, Kenya

The abstract beauty of nature's artwork unfolded beneath me – soda ash deposits crafting unique patterns on Lake Magadi. When some flamingos flew into the frame, I knew that a black-and-white image would bring out the true essence of this incredible moment.

Sony a1 with Sony 24-70mm f/2.8 lens. 70mm; 1/320s; f/7.1; ISO 100.

Overflight

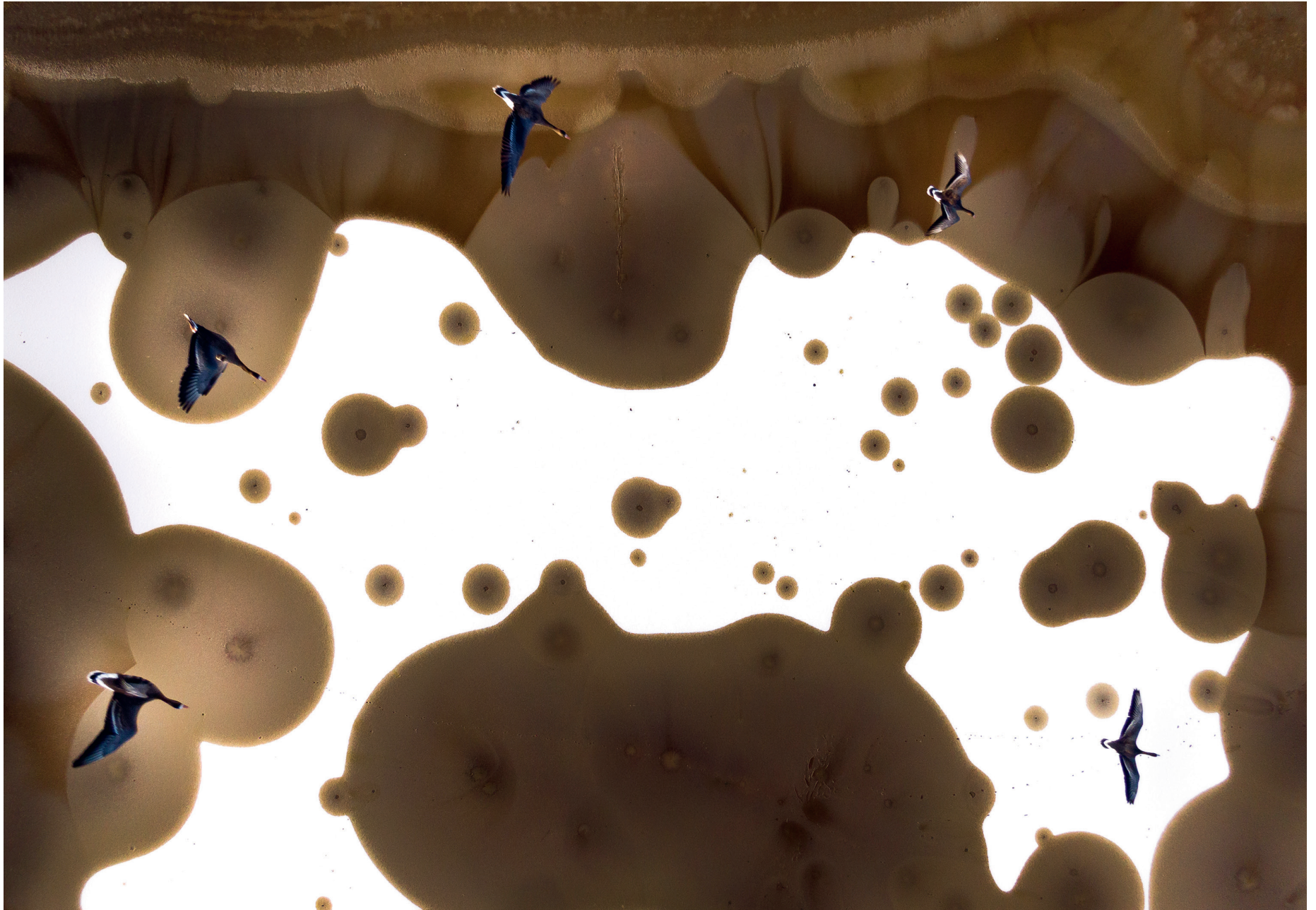
Birds in Flight ☐ BRONZE

Tibor Litauszki, Hungary

Greater White-fronted Goose, *Anser albifrons*. Akasztó, Hungary

It was January and nature had created some very interesting shapes in the saline lakes near Akasztó in Hungary. I sent up my drone and was looking for the right composition when a dozen geese suddenly flew into view. I immediately started taking photos and luckily everything fell into place – the composition as well as the geese.

DJI Mavic 2 Zoom. 4mm; 1/1,000s; f/2.8; ISO 100.





Alpine Chough

Birds in the Environment ☐ COMMENDED

Christoph Kaula, Germany

Alpine Chough, *Pyrrhocorax graculus*. Ramsau, Austria

Gliding effortlessly through the crisp mountain air, the Alpine Chough is a true acrobat of the high peaks. With their glossy black plumage and striking yellow bill, these intelligent and highly social birds thrive where few others dare to venture. Adapted to life at dizzying altitudes, Alpine Choughs navigate sheer rock faces and swirling updrafts with ease, often using the wind to perform graceful aerial displays. Taken in their rugged domain, this photograph captures not just the bird's agility but also its resilience. I took this photo from the observation platform of a mountain station.

Canon EOS R5 with Canon RF 14–35mm f/4 lens. 14mm; 1/2,000s; f/10; ISO 1,600.

Serenity on the Salt Lake

Birds in the Environment ☐ COMMENDED

Nikunj Patel, United States

American Avocet, *Recurvirostra americana*. Great Salt Lake, Utah, United States

Lying in the mud of Utah's Great Salt Lake, I was trying to photograph the synchronised feeding of a flock of American Avocets. The peaceful scene was interrupted when the birds got startled, freezing in instinctive response, their breeding plumage illuminated against the Wasatch Mountains. This moment reflected the delicate balance of life in the lake's ecosystem, threatened by rising salinity and fluctuating water levels. The image not only showcases the avocets' beauty but also serves as a reminder of the urgent need to protect these fragile habitats for future generations.

Nikon Z 9 with Nikon 600mm f/4 lens. 600mm; 1/800s; f/11; ISO 500.





Snowy Symphony

Birds in the Environment □ COMMENDED

Yoshiki Nakamura, United States

Red-crowned Crane, *Grus japonicus*. Hokkaido, Japan

Red-crowned Cranes are one of the world's most beautiful and elegant birds. Their behaviour, especially their family communication, play and dances, often resembles human interactions. They call to each other with their head raised, as if singing. I love capturing images of cranes in heavy snowfall and I secured a spot with a dark background to make their white bodies stand out. The cranes eventually moved to the higher stage I had hoped for and began calling together. It was the perfect moment I had been waiting for – a truly magical scene.

Nikon Z 9 with Nikon Z 400mm f/2.8 lens and 1.4x teleconverter. 560mm; 1/1,250s; f/4; ISO 125.

Call of Spring

Bird Behaviour □ COMMENDED

Wojciech Sobiesiak, Poland

Common Crane, *Grus grus*. Krzykosy, Poland

Hidden behind a masking net at the forest's edge, I waited as dawn broke, casting its soft light over the wetland. A Common Crane appeared, standing still in the mist, its long neck stretching towards the sky. The cold air revealed its breaths, each rising in a gentle puff. I raised my camera slowly, being careful not to disturb the bird. As the first rays of sunlight kissed the scene, the crane's breath hung in the air like smoke. With a soft click, I captured the perfect shot – nature's quiet beauty preserved in a fleeting, unforgettable instant.

Sony a7 III with Sony 200–600mm f/5.6–6.3 lens. 529mm; 1/1,600s; f/6.3; ISO 400.





Rivals

Black and White ☐ COMMENDED

Jess Hartley, Australia

Brown Noddy, *Anous stolidus*. Great Barrier Reef, Queensland, Australia

During a visit to Michaelmas Cay on the Great Barrier Reef in Australia I lay on the hot sand observing the seabirds as they interacted. Their behaviour was fascinating – flying aggressively in the air and stomping their feet in the sand. The harsh midday lighting made it challenging to capture the scene, but I managed to freeze this moment in time. The image was later converted to black-and-white to emphasise the contrast and drama of the scene. In the shot, a noddy stands on the ground while another bird swoops overhead, attacking from above.

Nikon Z 8 with Nikon 500mm f/5.6 PF lens. 500mm; 1/2,500s; f/5.6; ISO 250.

Dragons Fight

Bird Behaviour ☐ COMMENDED

Hubert Mielnik, Poland

Great Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax capensis*. Kościan, Poland

I took this photo at close range from a boat while observing a group of cormorants resting on tree trunks sticking out of the water. There were many more birds than available places to perch and fights broke out from time to time: the photo shows one such situation.

Canon EOS R5 with Canon RF 400mm f/2.8 lens and 2x teleconverter. 800mm; 1/1,600s; f/9; ISO 640.





Dance of Light and Flight

Creative Perspectives □ COMMENDED

Diana Schmies, Germany

Great Egret, Black-headed Gull and Caspian Gull, *Ardea alba*, *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* and *Larus cachinnans*. Zlín Region, Czech Republic

Hérons and gulls can often be seen in the same environments, drawn together by common food resources and ecological conditions, yet their survival strategies could not be more different. Great

White Egrets stand motionless, relying on patience and precision when searching for prey, while gulls take off and swirl in restless opportunism. Their contrasting behaviours not only reduce competition but also create subtle synergies – gulls may stir up prey, while egrets hunting may reveal new feeding opportunities. To capture this interplay, I chose a long shutter speed, blurring the gulls' motion while preserving the egrets' stillness, allowing me to define aesthetically their distinct roles in a shared habitat.

Nikon D500 with Nikon 200–500mm f/5.6 lens. 500mm; 1/50s; f/18; ISO 100.

Another Perspective

Best Portrait □ HIGHLY COMMENDED

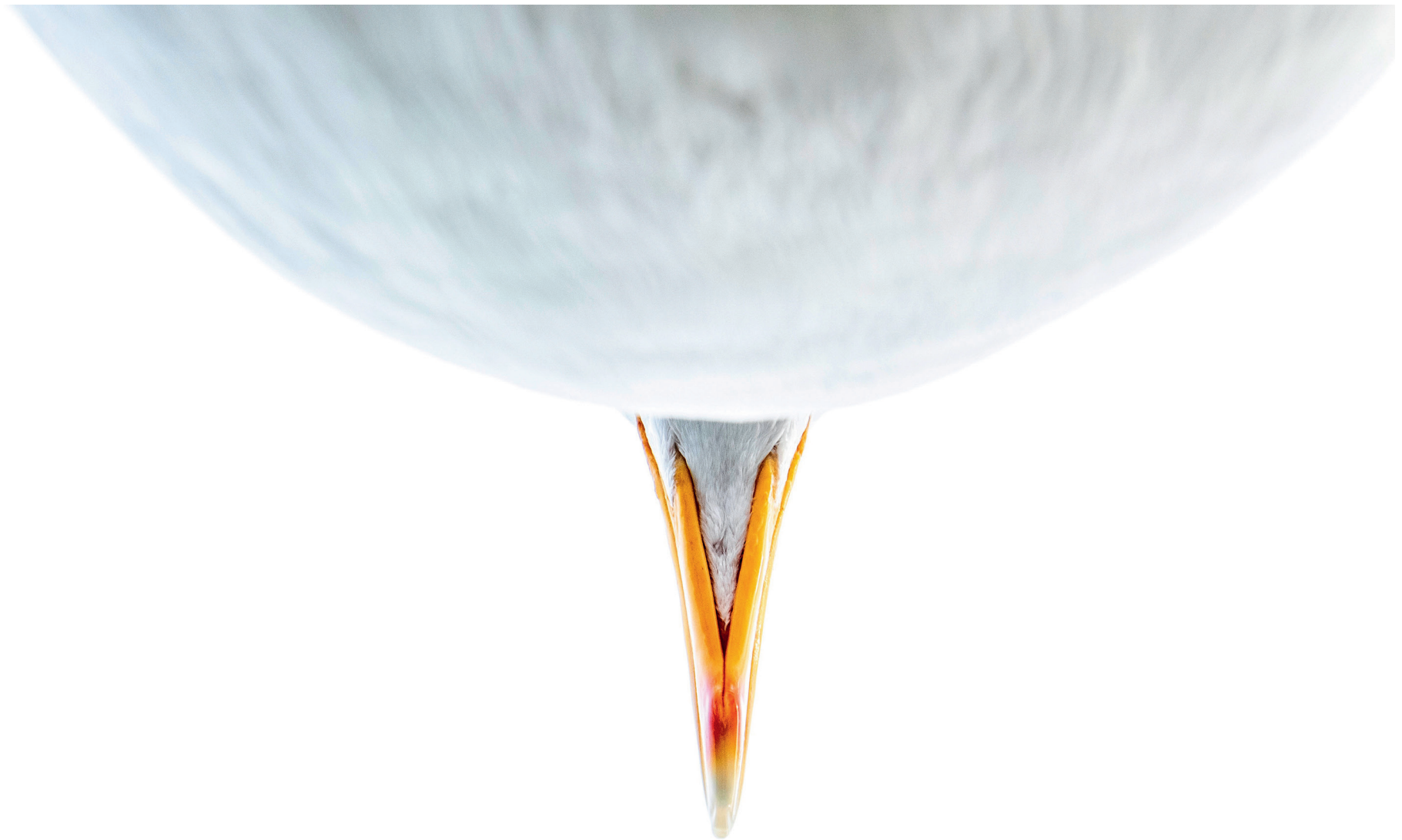
Oscar Díez Martínez, Spain

Herring Gull, *Larus argentatus*. Flatanger, Norway

During the spring I visited the Norwegian coast intending to photograph White-tailed Eagles. The gulls here are very confiding, to the point that one of them landed on my hat! At that moment I grabbed my wide-angle lens and took some pictures looking up, showing a Herring Gull from an unusual perspective.

Canon EOS 7D Mark II with Canon EF 16–35mm f/4 lens. 28mm; 1/250s; f/8; ISO 1,000.

The unique perspective and simple colour palette make this image stand out. With no eye visible, the pop of colour on the beak draws the viewer's attention to the key defining detail. The result is both striking and delightfully quirky. RICHARD PETERS





Uncommon Beauty

Best Portrait ☐ COMMENDED

Alexandre Lafontaine, Canada

Mallard, *Anas platyrhynchos*.

Rimouski, Québec, Canada

Despite being one of the most common ducks, the Mallard has an attractive plumage that often goes unnoticed. This drake glided in front of my hide early one quiet spring morning. The surrounding red shrubs lit up the water at sunrise and created a wonderful atmosphere that highlighted the beauty of the bird.

Canon EOS R8 with Canon EF 500mm f/4 lens.
500mm; 1/1,000s; f/4; ISO 1,250.

Hunting Cormorants

Bird Behaviour ☐ COMMENDED

Wayne Lai, China

Cape Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax capensis*. Port St Johns, South Africa

A group of cormorants hunts for sardines in the unusually clear waters off the Eastern Cape of South Africa. The birds' streamlined body enables them to be propelled swiftly through the water as they pursue their agile prey. The distinct bubble trails behind each cormorant emphasise their rapid, purposeful movement and add a strong dynamism to the image, making it seem as if the action is unfolding right before our eyes. The bubbles also enhance the depth of the scene, highlighting the excitement of this natural predator-prey encounter.

Canon EOS 5D Mark IV with Canon EF 14mm f/2.8 II lens. 14mm; 1/800s; f/6.3; ISO 4,000.





Bloop!

Bird Behaviour ☐ COMMENDED

Nicholas Stroh, United States

Snowy Egret, *Egretta thula*. Maryland, United States

While I was lying in the mud in the marshes of Maryland's Eastern Shore, just at the end of the 'golden hour' after sunrise, one of the Snowy Egrets that frequent the area flew in close to me to feed. The morning sun made the background foliage look gold, and the bird landed

in shadow, providing a yellow backdrop for the scene and nice, even light on the subject. I watched the bird hunting, hoping to capture some action before the perfect conditions changed. Luckily, I was able to capture this frame just at the moment when the bird struck for prey. I was very happy to be able to freeze not only the bird, but also the splash and water droplets created by the action.

Sony a1 with Sony 600mm f/4 lens. 600mm; 1/2,000s; f/4; ISO 400.



Air Dance

Creative Perspectives ☐ HIGHLY COMMENDED

Alex Pansier, Netherlands

Northern Gannet, *Morus bassanus*. Heligoland, Germany

A Northern Gannet battles strong winds above Heligoland's cliffs, its dark webbed feet silhouetted against the bright sky. Captured during a May afternoon storm, this

minimalist study reveals the remarkable adaptation of these seabirds.

The symmetrical composition emphasises nature's engineering, showcasing feet designed for precise landings on rugged cliffs. As the bird defies the wind with effortless control, it embodies resilience in the harsh coastal environment.

Sony a1 with Sony 400mm f/2.8 lens. 400mm; 1/3,200s; f/2.8; ISO 4,000.

Marching to the Beat of Its Own Drum

Best Portrait □ COMMENDED

Jonas Beyer, Denmark

King Penguin, *Aptenodytes patagonicus*.

Fortuna Bay, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands

I was standing on the beach observing the penguins on their morning march to the ocean and spotted this individual that had turned around and was going against the flow.

Sony a1 with Sony 200-600mm f/5.6–6.3 lens. 600mm; 1/400s; f/6.3; ISO 1,250.

Triumphant Arrival

Birds in the Environment □ BRONZE

Steffen Foerster, Germany

King Penguin, *Aptenodytes patagonicus*. Volunteer Point, Falkland Islands (Malvinas)

I photographed this group of King Penguins emerging from the ocean on a cloudy summer morning. I lay flat on the shore to capture both the dramatic sky and the reflections in the wet sand. When one of the penguins started trumpeting and pointing its head towards the clouds, it felt to me like a celebration of life, a triumph over the dangers of traversing the vast ocean in search of food. For the penguins, however, these calls are finely tuned songs (although they may not sound very melodic to the human ear) that allow mates to recognise each other amidst a sprawling colony that can contain thousands and thousands of individuals. So, this call effectively translates as one resounding “I’m back home!”

Canon EOS R5 with Canon RF 70–200mm f/2.8 lens. 86mm; 1/1,000s; f/2.8; ISO 4,000.





Fatal Jump

Bird Behaviour □ COMMENDED

Bence Máté, Hungary

Barn Swallow and Marsh Frog, *Hirundo rustica* and *Pelophylax ridibundus*.

Kiskunság National Park, Hungary

Human activities have drastically reduced the number of Barn Swallows breeding in Europe over recent decades. In addition to the creation of chemical-free, arthropod-rich habitats, the installation of artificial

nests can play a major role in increasing the population. Having placed such nests in the buildings of my farm in Hungary, the population has increased from zero to nineteen pairs in five years, more than half of which have had two broods. I spent a month photographing swallows drinking at one small garden pond, which they do without landing, their bills just skimming the water. On this one occasion, a Marsh Frog leapt into the air just as the swallow flew past, producing a striking image.

Canon EOS R5 with Canon EF 200mm f/2 lens. 200mm; 1/4,000s; f/8; ISO 2,000.



(continued...)