

Teamwork in competitions

A bi monthly publication is hardly the most apt publication to discuss today's topics but my comment in the last Editorial about this subject encouraged the following two responses which is gratifying and I include them for your records.

Avid readers will no doubt be on the edge of their seats to hear whether my attempt at teamwork in competitions had any success and I am here to stand up and tell you that it did not. Not because the team wouldn't work together for they most certainly did but to our credit the images entered by 'the team' were all in the winners enclosure, so to speak, and it was certainly a step in the right direction.

Anyway whilst I'm still on the subject and with half a column to spare, if we are to accept that competitions are a healthy way to encourage the progress of underwater photography then the organisers as a whole must realise how important competitions are and the role they play in encouraging development and innovation.

Part of that responsibility must be in the choice of judges; they are the funnel from which emerges significant influence and therefore future direction. I suspect that not enough thought is put into who is genuinely suitable to make such important decisions.

Now I don't think for one minute that an entrant will modify their choice of entries to suit what they think are the tastes of the judges but it is only natural to look at winning images and to try and emulate them in the hope of success.

As a result the choices made by judges will have a marked effect on how we all develop.

Peter Rowlands
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Editorial

Teamwork responses:

Your editorial in UWP104 is a breath of fresh air, a brave move and it goes right back to the early days of BSoUP when guys shared ideas rather than squirrel them away - congratulations.

As a fellow boat skipper (as you know) I'm sometimes amazed at the competitiveness of the snappers onboard and often their tendency not to work together whereas in your very memorable example teamwork paid off, for which, I am always grateful for you as a model. I'm now intrigued to find out what is in UWP105!

Charlie Hood
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Your compelling arguments for the idea of team work in photo competitions, highlights another aspect of modern day photo comps that has fallen behind the times. In becoming so individual-centric, the major comps in the world today reflect no acknowledgement of the story-telling power of collaborative work.

Going back over the past century or more, through to the modern day, collaborative work by the likes of Richard and Cherry Kearton, Orsolya and Erlend, Haarberg, Des and Jen Bartlett, Andy and Sarah Skinner, Hans and Lotte Has, Ron and Valerie Taylor, Armand and Michaela Denis, and many others, have raised awareness and enhanced understanding of the Earth's natural history, and entertained and inspired people in the process.

By definition, no individual photographer, no matter how capable and committed, can match the comprehension and captures of two or more dedicated observers, each with their unique interpretations, each looking for different aspects within the form and behaviour of a common subject, and each equipped with different selections of lenses and techniques. From their collaborative work can emerge a far wider, more in-depth, more nuanced narrative. Plenty of scope there for 'Portfolio' awards featuring inputs from multiple collaborating photographers, I would think.

I made the recommendation for a collaborative entry category to the NHM comp last year. I had several sperm-whale birthing activity u/w shots, which are OK in their own right: Robyn has some above-surface shots that are also OK on their own, but both sets are incomplete without the other. Combined, they create a really interesting narrative that has not been previously photographed. And, I'll bet, there are heaps of husband/wife, brother/sister, sister/sister, mate/mate et al combos out there with similar stories to tell.

NHM seemed then to have no interest, so a ground swell from your readership, stimulated by your original idea might well start to change that. See how it goes!

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