

Veolia Environnement Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2011 - Underwater World



© Paul Souders/ Veolia Environnement Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2011.
Canon 1Ds II + 16-35mm lens; 1/160 at f6.3; Seacam housing.

Underwater World WINNER

The grace of giants

Paul had gone to Svalbard in Arctic Norway hoping to photograph walrus under water. He knew they could be dangerous, but he planned to appear as unthreatening as possible and hoped that the walrus would just be curious about him. The first sight of one approaching out of the gloom was the gleam of white tusk.

Paul instinctively used the glass dome of his camera housing as a shield. The walrus investigated him, pressing up against the dome, while its giant herd-mates slowly circled Paul. 'Their curiosity satisfied,' says Paul, 'they moved off in search of something more entertaining than a hyperventilating photographer.'



© Clark Miller/ Veolia Environnement Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2011.
Canon EOS 7D + Tokina 10-17mm lens at 13mm; 1/100 sec at f8; ISO 320;
Nautican housing + Zen dome port

SPECIALLY COMMENDED

False killers, disguised dolphin

The arrival of a pod of false killer whales scuppered any plans Clark had of observing sperm whales.

To make the most of the time left Clark turned his attention to the false killers. These individuals found something fascinating about Clark, buzzing him and coming ever closer, stopping only just a couple of metres (six or so feet) away, all eyes on

him. This time it was Clark who was nervous. Then in the mélange, he saw the dolphin – and realized he had the chance of a very special shot.

Scientists have long known that bottlenose dolphins sometimes associate with false killer whales, but this is almost certainly the first time the relationship has been photographed.



© *Louis-Marie Préau/ Veolia Environnement Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2011. Canon EOS 5D + 16-35mm lens; 1/125 sec at f4; ISO 800; Ikelite housing.*

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Beaver

‘I have never forgotten,’ says Louis-Marie, ‘the first time I saw a European beaver under water delivering a branch to its family.’ He is passionate about beavers and has returned each season for the past four years to the same spot on the Loire River in France to try to photograph what he saw that first time. Last summer, wearing snorkelling gear, Louis-Marie eventually got lucky.

Using weights so he could lie

on the river bottom, being careful not to move and frighten the beavers, he finally photographed this adult dragging a poplar branch back to the dam for its kits. ‘It looked like hard work,’ says Louis-Marie, ‘a long journey and a long time holding its breath.’



© *Thomas P Peschak/ Veolia Environnement Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2011. Nikon D700 +16mm f2.8 lens; 1/10 sec at f11; ISO 640; Subal housing; two Inon Z220 strobes.*

HIGHLY COMMENDED

The salmon jam

Backing up in a pool at the base of the waterfall were hundreds of pink salmon, waiting for the right moment to leap up the fall and continue their journey upriver to their spawning grounds in the Great Bear Rainforest, British Columbia, Canada. Thomas wedged himself into a crevice under the fast-flowing water and for more than two hours hung there waiting for the moment when the salmon were bunched up sufficiently to fill the

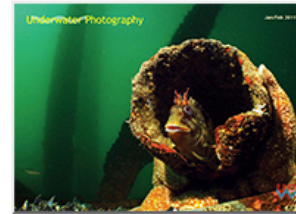
frame. Salmon are an integral part of the temperate rainforest ecosystem, returning to spawn and die where they were born. Not only do they feed seals, bears and wolves, but their discarded remains also fertilize the trees of the surrounding forest.

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