



Grand Champion - Animals -
Best in Category - *Pura Vida* by
Margaret Udinski of Ocean View, DE

2020 Art in Nature Photo Festival

BY KRISTIE CLATTENBURG

During the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, everyone was home in their own bubbles (with the exception of the amazing front line workers, who went to work every day for the rest of us). Most of us were working from home, schooling from home and living our entire lives from home. In a way, the world stood still.

Photographers had, and continue to have, a special role in documenting this new normal. Seeing photographers capture new points of view from home and the new front lines, online, was inspirational. So it only made sense to consider all of this while creating the 2020 Art in Nature Photo Festival – and to take that festival online. While many missed the comradery that happens when wandering the gallery exploring all the photographs that line the walls, we at least had a virtual community to bring us together while we were physically apart, and we had the opportunity to see far reaches of the world through photographers' eyes.

To make the contest broader for our new and expanded virtual audience, taking into consideration feedback from previous festivals, we added categories that explored the many facets of photography. In addition to the favorite "Birds" category, animals and plants got their own spotlights, and artistic photographers had their own category in "Creative Concepts." "Drone and Aerial Photography" made its debut in our contest, along with "Documentary Photography," among others. We tried to find categories that would appeal to all photographers documenting art in nature. And with the contest being virtual, paper size was out the window and photographers could enter as many photos as they wanted.

Another perk to this new virtual format contest was that judges could be from anywhere in the world, weighing in on

photos from the comfort of their homes. We had the honor of having Nigel Barker (noted fashion photographer from *America's Next Top Model*) judge virtually alongside returning judges such as Salisbury, MD's, own Andrew Tawes (WBOC TV) and Maryland-based Edwin Remsberg (Remsberg, Inc.). Other judges included David Greaves, Semaj Thomas, Tony Weeg, Jacqueline Deely, Akasha Rabut, Eric Smith, Dasha Pears and Serge Ramelli. The talent of all of these artists is remarkable, and we are grateful they donated their time to judge. Barker and Erin Sullivan (Erin Outdoors) also each judged social media contests leading up to the Festival.

While we missed the face-to-face interaction of previous years, the new virtual format saw our highest participation levels in the Festival's 10-year history: 384 photographers submitted 1,698 photos from 28 states and 14 countries. And yet, out of all of these, the Grand Champion hails from our back yard: Delmarva. "*Pura Vida!*" by Margaret Udinski of Ocean View, DE, took the highest honor. Second in Show went to Samir Al Busaidi of Muscat, Oman, with his photo "*Way to Trees*" and Third in Show went to "*Take A Knee*" by Kevin Kielty of Los Angeles, CA. Kylie King of Seaford, DE, was our Best in Division winner for Youth.

This coming year is the Festival's 10th anniversary. Gearing up for a historic year, we have decided to embrace the expansion of the festival and are rebranding the competition as the Ward Museum Photo Festival. This gives us more room to explore different facets of photography related to the Museum's mission, both virtually and in-person, if possible. Check back at wardmuseum.org soon for more information and be sure to save the date – July 16-18, 2021 – for the 10th anniversary of the Ward Museum Photo Festival.