

JUDGES REPORT

2024 – March – Marine Environment

Judge: Fran McFadzen. YEPPON

PREAMBLE: I have a question for Club Members. Since Marine Environment is a pretty vague concept and without a definition provided by the club, I have to ask - does an Aquarium satisfy the criteria for 'marine environment' or not?

There are few shots which could have been taken in an Aquarium: **Blue Spotted Stingray; This is My Home; Underwater Beauty**. I did an internet search, and once you get past the ethics of keeping animals in captivity, the consensus seems to be that they are. So, let's go with that.

Image Title	Comments	Score
Seals Enjoying the Beach	Are they juveniles? I suspect so. Your image has captured them nicely as they seem to be playing. And it is a funny thing about 'environment'. I've said previously that we don't need to see so much of it to know and understand where the subject is. It is representational. To clarify - If we see a person's foot, we know it is a person. We don't need to see the whole person. Same with the sea. I would crop closer.	6
Underwater Beauty	Fabulously clear shot of this soft coral and it has great colour. It is pretty interesting and unusual as a subject, and nicely framed. My small concern is about the use of the front on flash which has blasted the image with light. For improvement, if you had time and were interested in experimenting, try an off-camera flash, or try bouncing the flash off something beside the tank to increase the modelling of the interesting shapes you spotted.	7
Rocks, Waves and Molluscs	Glad you have the wave in the shot, otherwise it would have been a bit dull for a competition image. I just feel that for more points – it needs something more.	6
Working Boat	I find this shot a bit ordinary too. Perhaps a different time of day when the sun was lower, and there were rosy colours in the sky may help.	6
Shell Middens	Errr! I don't think that they are middens, in the true sense though, but I really don't know what they are. Very interesting though. Good spotting, and the oyster shells clustered along the base are a bit tempting. Must be a National Park, or the shells would all be	7

	empty. Well executed technically; intriguing subject; definitely marine!	
Show Boating Perhaps	How odd. The lighting in your shot is very strange. I can't quite work out whether the foreground canoes are in deep shade sitting on the beach, or if they have been inserted in postproduction. That said, the composition is awkward, but I am at loss to suggest to how it might be improved, unfortunately.	5
Rollingstone Sunrise	Good colour, and the silhouetted palms provide interest. For improvement, crop a lot of the bank at the bottom, so that the point where the beach leaves the shot on the left side almost touches the bottom frame. All that black is not helping, so removing it helps the viewer concentrate the sky and the sea.	6
Splash	My eye was immediately drawn to the colour change on the ocean beyond the second wave on the beach in this image. The one behind the rocks, not the one hitting the rocks. I eventually decided it might be some kind of natural change of lighting conditions. The result however is that the splash on the rocks really stands out well. Small suggestion for improvement to the image. Crop at the bottom to where the sand is smooth. When you take out the vegetation and the churned-up footprints on the sand, the image is a lot more impressive.	7
Coastal Life	All manner of critters in your seaside image. The image of seals and terns together is striking. Small suggestion though, in my opinion, the third wave at the top of the shot is an unnecessary distraction. Perhaps use the same aspect, but bring the top of the image down. That would also bring the seals closer to the viewer.	7.5
Low Tide in North Queensland	Framing your shot with the orange mangrove roots has really emphasised the turquoise colour of the sea in the background. That is what complimentary colours do. Bright, shadow free lighting has also accentuated the clarity of the colour and the composition. Well done	7.5
Low Tide Sand Patterns	Wellllll, it is marine. And I see what your intention is, I think, but it is so muted and ashy looking that it has let you down.	5
Sand Ripples	Super scene. The diagonal ripples almost guide our eye back to the sea and mountains behind. Reflections of the clouds on the pools are a real bonus. Marvellous lighting – and it is all about the light really.	8

Blue-spotted Stingray	What a ripper critter. I don't mind the close-up crop, because it lets us see so much detail in the eye and skin. For improvement, I suggest that the coral above the stingray could be made darker so that the purple spots and the creamy skin advances and that textured coral recedes.	7
This is my Home	How lovely. Can't beat this. Brilliant.	9
Tide Is Running Out	Very marine. Very busy though. When there is such a number of boats crammed into a harbour, it can be hard to find the line of where to simplify an image by cropping. Maybe start by cropping out some of the greenery at the top of the image. If you have postprocessing ability, I suggest selecting the line of building behind the harbour and darkening it down. That serves to draw attention to the now brighter foreground boats.	7
Cast Thy Net Upon the Waters	I am not a fan of the way you have added the curly textures to the whole image in post processing. I suggest a selective addition, because it really works on the shallow waves below the fisher, but not on his trousers, on the cast net or on his left hand which has ended up looking a bit gross. Positioning of the fisher within the frame is good, though the B&W may be better if you open up the exposure half to three quarters of a stop in postprocessing. It's just a bit too dark.	6.5
Not in the Heat of the Day	The subject of the image is good, with the classic foreground, middle ground, background of a landscape composition, but what has happened to the lighting.? It looks like a sunny day, but the whole image is impossibly dark. I don't know your intention with the shot looking like this. For correction – try the Auto button previously mentioned. The shot will pop with a single click.	4
Something Fishy in the Turquoise Bay	The whorls of the algae species in your shot are fabulous. So clear, so colourful, so nicely framed within the composition. This one is all about the light. The fish is almost redundant, but, being such a neon contrast to the colour of the algae it really stands out. Love your work.	8
Sorry Can't Keep My Big Mouth Shut	Quirky. Who knew that giant clams had such sparkly mantles. The zig-zag pattern of the opening being such a close up really works splendidly. Little fish at the bottom serves to tell us 'this way up'. Very different. Very good.	8
Home is the Sailor	This is a good example of not needing to see the sea for the viewer to understand that the paraphernalia	8

	reeks of fish. Nothing more marine than fish, so good choice of subject. The bright colours and jumble of equipment is different and creative. Good work	
A Place to Call Home	Title is interesting. Must be an oyster speaking!!!. I find the out of balance pylons of the Pier disturbing. It's unbalanced. I suggest a square crop at the bottom of the first pylon on the right side may help. Great colour and detail though.	6
All Alone	That the seals eyes are shut is a potential issue. The viewer usually expects to see the eyes of an animal, and when the eyes are shut, might wonder 'what is it that your image is telling me". The eyes are less of an issue for me than the crop though. It could be improved if the seal was off centre and further towards the right side of the composition. Looking room. It is important – even if the eyes are not looking.	6.5
Bridge Over Troubled Waters	Your image has me wondering if you may have overcropped. The rock formations are almost too close to us and that makes it harder to appreciate the scene. The frothing wave at the bottom has obscured the image. Is it a bridge? We can't see though that spray. If the shot was taken (or cropped) a little wider – I suspect the bridge may become more obvious. Then there is something odd about the rainbow. It is as if its height is a bit much. It looks a little unnatural. Regardless of that, the colour, framing, and subject are all well done.	7.5
Cathedral Cave NZ	Excellent: Love your work, especially the colours of the time of day and the repetition of the rock 'window' frame and its repetition of the shape of the pyramid in the background.	9
Bidding Farewell as it Heads out to Sea	WOW! Fabulous sailing ship, and the water spraying salute from the tug is a bonus. All aspects of your image are first rate.	8
Fighting the Ocean	The two vessels are well placed within the composition. The colours are a bit muted though. Try adding some postprocessing Vibrance if your software does that, to Pop the shot.	7
A Beachcomber's Reward	Good close up, pleasant colour and composition.	7
Spinner Dolphins	That blue water is startling. The two dolphin fins tell the story 'cruising by'. Could be in a pool, but I doubt it. The image is well captured, good camera settings, pleasant close-up framing. Fine work.	8

Hunting	Great close up; excellent detail; love the composition. But I have a dilemma. We can only see the sky, and the Caspian Tern ranges all over inland Australia, not just near the ocean. I can't tell where it is. It is a great image, but I have taken a point off for lack of information about where it actually is.	7
Joie de Vivre	Great close up; excellent detail; love the composition. No suggestions for change.	7.5
Chinstraps Claim the Rock	Rule of Odds; rule of thirds; harmonising colours; looking good. The penguins a fair way back in the composition so that we know that the environment is the hero of your image. Very pleasant.	7
Polar Bear Searching	Maybe it is Marine environment. Hard to tell in Polar regions. Let's say it is. Well done.	7
Humpback Breaching	Perfect moment in time capture. Needs to be cropped closer in my opinion. I'd fill that frame more with the whale. The vastness of sea in the background is not really needed.	7
Whale Splashing	Bit ordinary for a comp image. Would be good to see some portion of the whale, I think. Well framed, and good choice of camera settings to capture the fine detail of that splash, but the exposure is a little dull, and could be improved by postprocessing brightening.	5
Right Spot at the Right Time (Forster)	Brilliant. Perfect capture of the critical moment. Well done you for having your camera ready.	8.5
Star Quality	The through the water effect has made the sea star semi-abstract. Great colour, and the intermittent patterning of the green seagrass against the white sand pays a dividend in the image. I just feel an itch from the location of bubble/droplet rings above the star. (I want to move it to between the star and the top left corner – it's a graphic designers thing. I should be counselled on this kind of obsession. Not suggesting you do it, okay.	8.5

IMAGE OF THE MONTH
(ONE only for each Grade please)

Grade	ID	Image Title	Reason for Placing
		This is my Home	Great composition, harmonising colour, and use of negative space to force the eye back to the subject – which is the fish in combination with the soft corals. (Toni Brosnan)