

JUDGES REPORT

2024 – March - Open

Judge: Fran McFadzen. YEPPPOON

PREAMBLE: If you are wondering why I say lots of good things about your image, and only give you a lowish number, it is because your image has to be compared against the work of other members in a club competition. Don't take it heart, if you get a six. It means, because in reality, you are only competing against yourself – next time, you will be thinking about how you can improve your work and increase the marks. Six is not bad. It just could be better, okay.

Image Title	Comments	Score
Rugged Coastline	The OPEN subject always provides members with a dilemma – how to compete with all the other possible subjects. Will a landscape score well against a posed person portrait, or a charming furry animal? Often, the answer is – no. So, when you submit a landscape image, it needs to be of exceptional quality, interest, or unusual location. Your coastline in this image is conventional, and although it has great colour and texture, the composition is a bit empty of interest. Maybe some breaking waves or some late afternoon colours in the sky would help.	5
Smashing Wave	Another rugged coastline – it has to be Western Australia, I reckon. That colour palette is iconic. The wave is good, big, and being stark white in all that ochre, attracts the eye. Overall, the image is a bit busy, even though the wave is the hero of the image. Composition-wise, I suggest a crop from the left side about half way between the frame and the left side of the wave. That would put the wave crash off centre, making it more pleasing as a composition.	7
Colours of the Coast	Your image of the headland does show good colour in the foreground rocks, and the composition with the sweep of background headland reaching into the sea works well. Overall, although there are interesting rock colours, photographing it at a different time of day may help this image and make it a little more creative. Imagine it with some overtones of pink or purple in the lighting. Because it is uniformly cloudy, there is also a lack of detail in the dark headland which might be revealed in post-production. A trick I always use is when I open in Lightroom is to click on the “Auto” button at the top left of the Edit line. Sometimes the result is good. Sometimes not. But it's always interesting to see how the software interprets the image first.	6

Early Morning Walk	A foggy morning, and a man who is loitering. His posture looks purposeless. If he had his back to us or if he was actually walking – he would be there for a reason. As he is, seemingly standing still and facing right, he looks like a prop without intent. For next time – think about what story you want us to interpret about what your figure is actually doing. And for improvement, try that Auto button I mentioned. It may well reduce the murkiness of the image. Good perspective in the disappearing road, and in the layers of fog into the background though.	5
Early Morning on the Jetty	Purples and oranges are almost complimentary colours. Note how the colour palette magnifies the intensity of the image. The person on the jetty adds to the interest. One small flaw. Cutting the left side edge of the jetty roof ever so slightly detracts from the image. It needs some space on that side too to balance the image.	7
Getting a Lift	It is different and it is telling me a story. Story in an image is one of the opportunities for snagging a higher score. I see it is a weight, or pulling or some kind of competition. The audience in the background is a bonus because they provide the context that it is a competition. For improvement, the image could be cropped to show more audience and less vehicle. We can see that it is the back of a ute without needing to see the cabin. It could be brightened in postprocessing. And missing the top of the subject's hat is not helpful.	7.5
Aurora at Tekapo	OMG! You not only saw, but also captured the Aurora. I'm so jealous. This image has impact. Colour and composition are good, and your camera speed and aperture combination have given you good dot point stars. Lighting on the Church and on the foreground grass gives excellent depth and interest to your image. Well done you!	8
Ready for Liftoff	Hahaha! Love the face on the parachute. It is the star of the image. Good composition placement of the boat in the overall scene. There is a smattering of story present – we can see it is a holiday adventure activity. Now something to consider: I see the word "Queenstown" back to front on the parachute. I understand that it is probably meant to be seen from the other side, and is correct in your image. What if you flipped the image and made the word around the right way? Would it be better? Or would it be more distracting?	7
Southern Highlands Scene	Now this is a good landscape. Look at that soft ochre colour in the rocks and that the ochre is repeated in the greens of the vegetation. Look at that texture of the tree against the sky. That it is taken from below is a bonus, because it emphasises the tangle of branches. Why is this a good tangle – because there are two trees, and each has a distinct fan formation arching across the sky. No suggestions for improvement, but	7.5

	not quite an honour – only because of the high standard of other members’ images.	
Standing Seedpod	The graphic starkness of your image is delightful. Good spotting. Positioned as it is on the plain granite background, it ticks my boxes. It signals the ‘rule of odds’ because there are three seedpods, and three strong supporting shadows. The depth of field is wide, textures are dominant, the simplicity works and the colours harmonise. Bonus... it is a phone photo. Well done you.	8
Fimbristalis Ferris Wheel	You nearly caught me out. I thought at first glance it was a dead agapanthus head. But no - It’s a species of grass. The image is well composed, being off centre, oriented diagonally, and has quirky content. It’s also well focused and the black background, courtesy of the use of the flash for lighting makes the subject really stand out. No suggestions for improvement.	7
I’m Hungry, Please Visit	What an interesting subject you chose. No flies on you! But you are wishing for them. Pitcher plants have marvellous sculptural qualities. Your image has good colour and the black background shows it off to good effect. Suggestion for improvement is to get the image off centre. The composition would be more pleasing to the eye.	7
Curves and Colours	Love the idea and love the colours. It’s good to see something fresh and experimental. I’m thinking about how you might have done this. If it was mine, I would have used the Photoshop Pen tool to draw the lines so that the graphic arcs were a lot smoother instead of being a little lumpy in the execution. But your software is ACR, so ... I accept your offering as a work of creative art. For more points – smooth off those curves.	7
Kitty	Whilst I like the composition crop you have chosen, being such a close up of the cat face, your exposure of the image has let you down. There is a great deal of potential detail in your image which is not visible in this version you provided. For improvement, again, take your image into Photoshop, and choose Filter/Camera Raw Filter, when it opens, click on Auto (middle of the top Edit line) and watch the detail appear. The image really POPS, showing every tiny and very sharp hair is there.	5
Murky Waters	Sunlight reflecting on the surface of the water has given your image great texture. The trees are in a complete tangle though and are not doing justice to the rest of the image. Not much you can do for this image in postprocessing, though, in my opinion. But for next time, I would look for trees which don’t have that foreground messy and complicated distraction. Ideally, then, the trees would enhance the image and emphasise that lovely light on the wave tops.	6

Your Turn Will Be Soon	Waterlilies are always lovely. And this image is too. The low angle works well, and the dappled light and shade on the background water, coupled with a narrowish depth of field and the way the sunlight has highlighted the flowers themselves is striking. For improvement, in postprocessing, I would add a 25% to clear Gradient down behind the waterlilies from the top. The gradient should go behind the lilies though, and that means some layer work would be required if your ACR software does that. ACR is not software I am familiar with though, sorry	7
A Lover's Tiff	Oooo! I'm immediately a bit torn. Clubs don't usually allow text or watermarks on images, but when I checked, I'm told that your club has no policy on the issue. So – Your image is beautifully exposed. Every detail of the feathers stands out and is sharp. Not always easy where there is such a contrast between white and black in an image. To the text. It is not good. For improvement – people read from left to right, and from top to bottom, so your caption (which is also image name) should have appeared on the top right. Then there is the contrast between what the two cockatoos are doing – kissing & smoodging – and what you say they are doing – having a tiff. It does not gel, sorry. Without the text, I would have awarded a Merit.	6
Hard Hot Day at Yardie Creek	The landscape is positively brooding. The light is ominous and the sky threatening. See, an emotional interpretation of a landscape is possible... Texture is the dominant feature after mood, and the curve of the creek below the escarpment makes a good composition element. I see your intent in the darkness of the image, but to me, the image could be improved by a slight lightening in postprocessing.	7
Hello You	Perfectly focussed on the eye – as required in creature images, your bird is well framed in composition. Your camera settings have given you excellent depth of field to separate the Black Fronted Dotterel from the background. It's a lovely image, which might only be improved if there was some bird behaviour visible. Always a challenge – but that is the next step for you to aim for. Picking an insect, fluttering a wing, interacting with another bird. This is not a criticism – it's the step from 'bird portrait' to 'bird in action. Well done.	8
Looking For a Bee	Pleasant image, excellent crop, first-rate depth of field, but it needs a POP (as in previous image suggestion). The colours will intensify, and the detail will increase. And, I suggest a little dodge brush over the eye to brighten it a little more. For increased marks, some bird behaviour would help. As it is – it's	6.5

	a classic 'bird on a stick' or 'bird portrait', and sadly, they rank more lowly than where the bird is 'doing something'.	
Barrel Racing	Lovely action image: The look on the rider's face shrieks joy & excitement. What a story. The horse and rider are well framed as the centre of attention and we can just see the barrel as they accelerate away. The kick up of sand, and the non-intrusive background makes this image stand out well.	7.5
Feeding on Honey	How lucky are you – getting a clear shot of a bandicoot. If it was mine, I'd be thinking it is a triumph to capture such a shy creature. But here's the thing. I would be completely emotionally besotted with my image because I know about the creature and I know the effort I may have taken to get this image. But in the cold light of a competition, who else knows what went into getting the shot? An emotional attachment to an image can be a trap. When the rest of the members see your image, they may think "how is this a competition image? It's very brown; it is rather flat because it is night and you had to use a flash; its composition is centered and it might have been better to be off centre." And so on. Of course, I could have all of this completely wrong. But all I have is your image and no real knowledge other than what I see. I guess my message for better points is – when you choose your competition shot – think about what the other members (or Judge) is going to see, and try not to pick one which you may have so heavily invested in emotionally.	6
Cattle Egret Couple	The courting pair in their breeding plumes are quite lovely, framed as they are by the branches of the bottlebrush. That said – it is a difficult challenge to get the exposure right in this situation. The contrast between the bright white of the feathers against the shadowy dark of the background means that the whites look overexposed. For improvement, you could play around with post production to see if you can make modifications. One more thing though. Your focus point seems to be in the centre of the wing of the front bird. The result is that their eyes and tops of their head plumes have slipped behind the focal plane. Perhaps try a bigger F stop? F8? F10. Your points for such a perfect composition.	6.5
Sacred Kingfisher and Bug	Fan-bloody-tastic image. Great shot, great behaviour on display, great camera settings chosen. For the higher honour – try that Auto button previously mentioned. The image will, once again, really Pop!	8
Colourful Gerberas	WOW! Colour, composition, depth of field, simplicity, you have it all. No suggestions for improvement.	9
Tig	Hmmm! Good sharp image of puss. Great depth of field and excellent detail of fur and eyes against the blurred background. The B&W works well in this case, because you	7.5

	<p>have good tonal range. So why ‘hmmm’? Tig is not happy. Tig feels put upon, and is not impressed with having that big glass thing pressed in his face. From the posture, Tig is also being hand held in position and is not the least bit comfortable about that either. How can I tell? As a cat owner... it is all in the eyebrows and the flattening of Tig’s ears. So, for improvement, and for next time, let the cat settle down and relax when it is your subject. Then take the shot.</p>	
Breakfast Sorted	<p>In your image, the narrow depth of field accentuates the bird and the moth and lets the background grass disappear. So good choice of speed aperture combination. Bee-eaters have such wonderful colour, but sadly, I think your image is oversaturated to the point where it looks very unnatural. For improvement, use the Saturation Slider to reign in the overly bright colour in post-production. Great composition though.</p>	6.5
Bridal Falls	<p>Your mono conversion shows a good range of tones from the black of the shadows in the rocks, through greys to the white of the water. To me, the composition looks a bit cramped. The waterfall comes from nowhere at the top, and goes nowhere at the bottom. Not what I want you to be conventional, but... often waterfalls show the top lip where the water launches forth, as well as the splashes of arrival at the bottom. For your image – I suggest a wider crop may help. The longer exposure time does enhance the dreamy nature of the flow of water though.</p>	5
Blue-faced Honeyeater	<p>That is a fine high-speed shot of the Blue-Face. The shape of the flight feathers is very pleasing to the eye. I like the way the lighting is shining <u>through</u> the feathers, picking out the shape of each, as well as the way there is a play of sunlight and shadows on the body of the bird. This is a very good flawless shot and is a credit to your skill.</p>	7
Had My Share	<p>That is a good sharp eye. Excellent focus on the key part of the subject, especially when it is launching forth from the feeder at speed. Well executed technically to balance lighting with speed for your action shot.</p> <p>To get to an Honour, I suggest you try some selective Dodging and Burning on the birds, if your software can do that. If you would like to see the difference, you should ask me to modify your image so you can see what is possible. Without your permission I can’t make changes to your image.</p>	8
Stockpiling the Salt	<p>Wow, this is a really interesting subject. Here is an industrial story_of manufacturing. It might be a common commodity, but how often do we see so much salt? The image itself has a very good composition, with the bright pyramids of salt standing tall against the darker foreground furrows. The bulldozer on the left side and the overhead conveyor crane actually provides balance to the image. It’s good...</p>	7.5

Sturt's Desert Pea	I've taken these. They are deceptively hard to shoot because they lie along the ground and hide in the grass like they are here. So, this shot is not bad, though the depth of field could be better. The principal flower is nice and sharp, but the foreground buds in the centre of the image are a distraction.	6.5
Morning Tranquillity	There is mist in the background, and a good gradation of tones from black silhouette foreground vegetation through to pale and receding sky. I do wonder if the B&W conversion was the best option though. I tried a Selenium (bluish mono) tone in Lightroom (which I see you also have). If you want to try it too, and you have the presets loaded, it is the BW12 in the Style: B&W series. Now to your image: It is a bit ordinary for a competition image. The vast pool, lightly rippled by a breeze, means that your birds are a long way off. Perhaps crop from the right of the swan from the left side to bring the rest of the image closer.	5
Ocean Pattern	Minimalism at its best. Love your work! Nothing to improve here.	9
Father and Son	Such a contrast in size between these two animals. Baby and Mr Big. Well framed, well exposed, your trip to Africa has provided you with a fairly conventional image though. I thinking that you were in probably in one of those safari cars with lots of other photographers all vying for their memorable best shot. Small suggestion – a slight crop from the left side to remove some of the thorny bush would push the large elephant more towards the thirds line. I just find a non-centred image more pleasing to the eye. Not everyone agrees.	7
Who Can Jump the Highest	Zulu on Masai Mara, I think. This is a cultural practice - the jumping. Four of the warriors' feet are in the air, but it is hard to see because they are so close to the men standing behind them who are still standing or starting to jump. Your image is nicely framed, well exposed and has good complimentary red-green colour. Small suggestion and obviously too late now; in a situation like this, you might have kneeled down and taken the shot from a lower angle. That should have given the jumping men's feet some small separation from the ground.	8

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

Grade	ID	Image Title	Reason for Placing
	128	Ocean Pattern	Although there are two 9 value Honours in this set, Ocean Pattern, to me, is better because of the potential for story that it is telling, for its minimalist nature and for the simplicity of its colour palette. (Phensri Rutledge)

