

JUDGES REPORT

2026 May – Theme - Open

Judge - Stephen Labaschagne - Bribie Island

Image Title	Comments	Score
Early Morning Snack	The beautiful soft golden light separates the subject nicely from the dark background. The red flower contrasts with the dark background and the green foliage of the plant. The green is bright and overwhelms the image and you lose the bird. It is very difficult to get separation when the subject is so close to the background. Overall, the image is slightly overexposed, and the focus is on the chest of the bird with the slightly soft eye. The feather details are very good on the bird, and the photographer did well to capture the bird in very difficult lighting conditions.	6
Ocean View	A peaceful scene, the small white waves in the foreground give us a starting point and our eyes go to the heavy rocks on the right and we follow the edge of the rocks down to the sailboat. The horizon line is slightly lower on the right compared to the left of the image; this is easily fixed in post processing. I do feel that a bigger crop to reduce the foreground and reducing the empty space on the left would be stronger. Try cropping so that the boat is about a 1/3 rd from the left and approximately ½ of the water to above the crest of the second wave. The rocks are now very strong and the boat more prominent in the image, add some color vibrance and the image could be very strong. Good image with lots of shapes in the rocks and lines formed by the trees and water. Focus is good and a pleasing image to look at	7
Antarctic Fur Seal Portrait	Very good details were captured in the fur of the Seal. Image is sharp with a relative shallow depth of field. The background is detailed but out of focus enough to keep attention on the Fur Seal. Lighting conditions aren't ideal with overcast conditions, but very well handled with enough color and contrast to make it a good image. Having the subject in the left 1/3 rd the composition is strong and leaves the subject with space to move into. Add a small amount of brightness' over the eye area to make it slightly brighter and it will enhance the image. A very good image.	8
Can I Use This Fluff in a Nest	A good image of the bird with some white fluff. Due to what looks like slightly overcast conditions the contrast is low and the result is that we don't have overly dark or bright areas. It	8

	<p>worked in your favor as there are now details visible throughout the bird. The image can be slightly brighter but overall, the exposure is well handled, image is sharp, and the depth of field is good with a soft background. If there is enough canvas in your original image, consider cropping from the bottom and showing more of the top part of the image. That will not only move the birds' eye below the center line of the image but also give it space above its head. The space in front of the bird is enough and overall; the composition works well.</p>	
Amongst the Ice	<p>The placement of the Penguin front left gives us a sense of scale in the image, the small penguin, bigger boat and even bigger mountains covered in snow. The small amount of yellow in the penguin and the red of the lifeboat adds a pop of color to break the monochromatic look of the image. The lead in line of the water also adds to the strong composition.</p> <p>Exposure tends to be slightly dark and can do with a bit more brightness and try reducing the white balance towards to blue to make your whites less grey. The focus is nice and sharp throughout with good depth of field.</p> <p>The photographer made good use of size and color to highlight certain aspects in the image.</p>	8
Gentoo Penguins at Godthul	<p>The white and black of the penguins are very difficult to photograph. Our camera light meter will either over or under expose depending on what is the most dominant luminosity in the image. The blacks are detailed, almost on the too bright side and the whites are overly bright. In post process reduce the white a small amount, take care not to make them grey, also drop the shadows or blacks a small amount. The white rock or wood is blocking our views slightly and being white tend to grab your attention. If it is possible, try moving slightly left or right to reduce distractions. The color of the mouths is nice and bright and keep our attention. Focus is good, but the shutter speed is slightly slow as there are movement in the head of the one penguin. There is a story here and the photographer did well to capture it well</p>	7
Eye to Eye in the Savannah	<p>A very beautiful male lion with a very distinct pose. Focus is nice and sharp, and the depth of field is shallow enough to make the background less distracting. Unfortunately, the image was taken during the heat of the day, the shadow of the lion is below it and the contrast is very high, thus losing visibility in the black mane and causing the dark shadows in the lion's eyes. When doing post processing, don't forget to check for chromatic aberration, it is the purple that can be seen in the dark areas, specifically the tree behind the lion and the darker areas in front of the lion. Have a look at your white balance, the image is on the yellow side and a slight dop in white balance will help.</p>	5

Water in the Desert	The golds, whites, blue, browns and blacks work together very well. The lines, shapes colors and angle of the image all work very well together, and the impact of the image is immediate, and you make up a story in your head about the place.	9
Embossed Rhapsis Leaf Shadow	I am not sure what I am looking at, but the lines and shapes are very interesting. The monochromatic conversion works well here and a bit of contrast to emphasize the darker areas would be beneficial. The star effect is placed on the left side of the image and maybe move it slightly lower so it fits in the bottom left 1/3 rd can enhance the composition. The lines, shapes and textures are well captured and with some small adjustment the image will do good.	8
Entrapped	The leading line of the stem takes your eyes to the bursting flower head, lots of lines and shapes as well. The composition is strong, but I do think flipping it horizontally will be a better composition. The image is nice and sharp, and you can see the water droplets on the flower. The background is grey and makes the image look dull. Experiment by making the background completely white, almost blown out and darken the flower for a very high contrast image. Just take care, there is a very bright spot on one of the flower petals it does catch your eye.	6
He Is My Buddy	Cute little dog. The image is taken in the shade, and the overall exposure is well handled, one or two small bright areas but not that distracting. The details on the fur on the body of the dog are well defined and sharp. Unfortunately, the most import part, the eyes are soft and too dark. The image is also very busy with the color of the blanket and a few bright items in the background compete with the dog. The crop is not ideal, some of the ear is cropped of as well as the one foot. Try going in closer and make it a portrait. The light would be easier to control and focus on the eyes will make the image strong.	5
Surface Tension	Well seen, the yellow autumn leave in the water surface creates the very nice-looking surface tension ripples around the leave. The bright areas in the water over power the image and take attention away from the leaf and the ripples around it. The color of the leaf can be slightly brighter and more saturated to enhance the brown spots and keep the viewers' attention and by desaturating the background water slightly the focus will be more on the leaf. I am not sure if zooming in on a small part of the leave to reduce the background will be better.	6
Misty Morning	I really enjoy looking at the image. It creates a relaxing atmosphere, and the monochrome conversion works very well. Composition is good, the road, trees, fence all going in the same direction and disappear into the mist leaving you wondering of what is out there. Try making the image slightly	8

	brighter and then add some contrast back to preserve the dark areas. Have a look on the camera sensor, there are two distinct spots bottom right in the mist visible. Easy to remove in post. A very good image.	
My Pride and Joy	High contrasting image of the man and his machine. The monochrome conversion is done well, maybe make his face slightly darker. There is just enough light in the motorcycle to make out details, and it is an impactful image with good lighting, and it tells a story.	9
Eastern Reef Egret	The blue grey color of the egret is well separated from the background in what looks like a slightly overcast day. Contrast is low and by adding small amount of brightness and increasing the contrast the image can be improved. The Egret is doing something, and it caught a small fish. There are some movements in the fish and in the Egrets head, a slightly faster shutter speed would eliminate subject movement and improve sharpness. The composition is good with space in front of the bird to move in and the details in the feathers are well defined. Don't be afraid to experiment with shutter speed and f-stop as well as changing the angle, a low perspective to get to eye level will render the background soft and can improve the image. A very well taken image	7
Hello There	The Rainbow Lorikeets as such colorful birds with real character. The photographer captured two birds at what looks like a nest. The exposure is well handled with details in the blacks and only a small bright area bottom left. The focus is on the back bird, thus leaving the front one slightly soft. If the focus was on the front bird's eye, the aperture used should be enough to have both in focus. The birds are colorful and the photographer did well not to over saturate the image and make it look unnatural. There is enough space for the birds to move into.	7
Butterflies and Bokeh	A very good idea about having the subject with the bokeh in the background. It creates contrast, color and luminosity separation between the subjects and the background. I do feel that only one butterfly zoomed in a bit more would have been a stronger image. The top butterfly is slightly soft and with the two being far apart, your eyes don't settle on one, it keeps on jumping between the two. The bokeh balls are also on the small side so the light emitted from them are very harsh, a soft big ball creates a dreamy and glowing light and will soften the overall look of your image giving you the impact that you are looking for. The blues in the background and on the butterflies complement each other and the overall color even though a bit over exposed are not overly saturated.	5
Go	The image is captured at the peak of the action with dust flying around the hoofs of the horse and you can see the rider	7

	<p>concentrating very hard. The slow shutter speed gave you movement in the hoofs of horse, and it shows movement. Unfortunately, this also caused the movement in the head of the horse and the rider and make it look as if it is out of focus. The rest of the image is in focus and if possible, try using faster shutter speeds to freeze the action, even if you have to sacrifice a bit of ISO. Exposure is well handled and the lower contrast due to what looks like an indoor event works well, a bit more brightness and vibrance can make the image pop a bit. A slight crop on the top will reduce the bright distracting background and focus our attention more on the rider and horse. A good image under difficult conditions.</p>	
That's a Crazy Look	<p>The photographer caught the Blue-faced Honeyeater just as it stuck it's tongue out. The image is taken at an upwards angle with the background of blue sky and well out of focus foliage. The image is on the slightly dark side, and we lose detail and color in the head and on the back of the bird. Focus is on the eye, and the rest of the bird is well in focus, and the purple flowers compliment the blues of the bird's face. A good image.</p>	7
Twin Bridges Under the Milky Way	<p>The two bridges lead us from either side and disappear into the night sky where there is a small amount of light. The Milky way fills the sky and adds another dimension to the image. The image however is too dark. The Milky way disappears into the sky, and we don't get the colors we are used to when looking at it. The bottom right corner is also very dark and devoid of any details. Add some exposure to the image to brighten it up and make the Milky way more visible and bring out the colors. The green area in the bottom right will also be brighter and add another dimension to the image. The bright areas can be toned down to not distract. Good composition and well in focus image and with some post processing it can do well.</p>	6
Happy to be Here	<p>Good closeup of the Brown Honeyeater. The bird fills the frame well and the composition is good with the tail leading from bottom left to the head top right with the Honeyeater singing its song. Focus is on the eye, and the depth of field blurs the background. The time of day is not ideal with a very high sun, and the results are high contrast areas on the bird's chest area, and the eye loses the light blue shade, the bright areas in the background attract unwanted attention and compete with the subject instead of complimenting it. The green foliage and red flower compliment the bird with just the right amount of color and vibrance.</p>	6
Kenya Sparrow	<p>The image was taken with the bird on the ground. The time of day that the image was taken is not ideal. When looking at the shadow it is almost directly below the bird it indicates a high sun angle, causing very high contrast and difficult lighting conditions with possible heat haze that can affect focus. The</p>	4

	<p>focus is on the bird's eye with some details on the feathers but overall, the image quality is affected by the light. The angle is not ideal, you look down on the bird, and the result is that the background is very close and not out of focus enough to create separation between subject and background. A lower angle, preferable eye level works very well with birds.</p>	
Dollar Bird	<p>Summer visitor to the Australian shores. A colorful and beautiful bird. Unfortunately, the image is very dark with very high contrast and most of the color and details on the bird is lost. The composition works well; the perch leads us from left to right where the bird is on a 1/3rd bottom right. Focus is nice and sharp. Just very dark with very high contrast causing parts to be totally black</p>	5
Safe Landing	<p>A good capture of the egret. Focus is on the eye, and a slightly shallower depth of field would have made the background slightly softer even though it is close to the subject. The exposure is well handled, the rocks are dark and the egret whites, it is a very difficult situation for your cameras metering system and you did well in getting exposure to not over or under expose, a few slightly bright areas in the whites, but not so much as to distract from the overall exposure. The time of day might not be ideal, but the reflective light from the water adds light to the bottom of the wings to help with the darker areas caused by a higher sun angle. There is enough space for the bird to move into, a slight crop top and bottom for a more landscape look will add to the image and having the bird's wings open elevates the image from a portrait to a subject in motion. A slight bump in vibrance will also enhance an already good image.</p>	7
Here's Looking at You	<p>The Wildebeest are looking straight at the photographer and the eyes grab attention. The focus is sharp on the eyes, and the depth of field works well with a soft out of focus background. Exposure on the dark areas are well handled but due to the time of day when the photo was taken there are areas that is over exposed. A high sun angle creates high contrast areas and having darks well exposed will cause lighter areas to be over exposed and vice versa. There are 3 animals in the image, we see three sets of legs and with the one behind the other two we lose the head of one of the animals. It is better to have them separated slightly so the faces of all three are visible. Take care when editing, when you select the subjects make sure everything is included that should be, between the horns top left and a few other spots were missed and distract from the image overall.</p>	4
Storage Hut in Iceland	<p>Such a lovely peaceful scene. Focus is nice and sharp throughout and it is what you want in a landscape. The conditions made for a dull flat colored image. I do think by</p>	8

	<p>cropping some of the clouds, specifically the bright area top left out and a small amount from the bottom, do not remove the white flowers as they are essential to the image, you will then get an almost panoramic effect and it will enhance the composition as the hut will be lifted above the center line of the image and the cross to the left will be more prominent and offset the bigger hut. Slightly brighten the hut and the cross to separate them from the background and a small amount of vibrance. The image will then be elevated to the top tier. A very pleasing and beautiful scene and well captured.</p>	
--	--	--

Image of the Month

ID	Image Title	Reason for Placing
22	Water in the Desert	<p>The secret of the image is the use of color, lines and shapes. The small number of blues contrast very well with the gold while the darker line with the whites adds another dimension. There is a story, impact, light and the skilful use of angle and shapes get the attention of the viewer. (Elsbeth Twyman)</p>