

CUPOTY CHALLENGE: Water – Captions

//©-Tibor Litauszki-Between the Stars-CUPOTY//

//CREDIT//© Tibor Litauszki | cupoty.com

Overall Winner

Name: Tibor Litauszki

Title: Between the Stars

Nationality: Hungarian

Further information: Instagram: @tiborlitauszki_naturphtgrphy

'In Germany, where I live, there are many clear and slow-flowing streams that provide excellent habitat for alpine newts. I have been following their lives for years, and last year was no exception. A few days after the frogs lay their eggs, at dusk, the newts appear and feast on the spawn all through the night. I wanted to capture this moment underwater. To do this, I placed my camera in an underwater housing, attached it with weights, and placed it under the frogs' eggs. I was a bit nervous at first because I wasn't sure if the underwater housing was completely waterproof. But I figured that if no bubbles appeared, my camera would stay dry. I manually set the focus on the lens beforehand and hoped to get lucky. Waiting nearby until it got dark, I illuminated the first newt that appeared with an LED light and triggered the camera with a homemade wired remote release.'

Technical information

Camera: Canon EOS R5

Lens: Laowa 15mm f/4 Ultrawide Macro

ISO: 1250

Aperture: f/16

Shutter speed: 1/128sec

Accessories: Underwater housing, LED light

//©-Ian Gilmour-Poppies Tiarella in Ice-CUPOTY//

//CREDIT// © Ian Gilmour | cupoty.com

2nd Place

Name: Ian Gilmour

Title: Poppies Tiarella in Ice

Nationality: British

Occupation: Retired

Further information: Website: www.iangilmour.co.uk, Facebook:

IanGilmourPhotography

'I submerged some wild poppies in water with tiarella flowers and froze them overnight. I then placed the frozen block on a lightbox and photographed them using my Venus Laowa super macro lens. My first attempt was unsuccessful as the water was cloudy, so I boiled the water before re-freezing for the second attempt, which seemed to give a better result.'

Technical information

Camera: Pentax K-3

Lens: Laowa 65mm Super Macro

ISO: 100
Aperture: f/5.6
Shutter speed: 1/40sec
Accessories: Tripod, remote release, lightbox.

//©-Sebastien Blomme-The Ice Skater-CUPOTY//

//CREDIT// © Sebastien Blomme | cupoty.com

3rd Place

Name: Sebastien Blomme

Title: The Ice Skater

Nationality: French

Occupation: Engineer

Further information: Website: www.sebastienblomme-photo.com, Instagram: @sebastien_blomme, Facebook: [sebastien.blomme.79](https://www.facebook.com/sebastien.blomme.79), Twitter: @donlopephoto

'For a long time, the idea of capturing the graceful ballet of dragonflies flying over the Garonne (the river that winds near my home) had been running through my head. It's enchanting to observe hundreds of these creatures circling, skilfully capturing midges and other insects in mid-flight every summer. One day, I settled in the water at a spot where I had noticed a dragonfly regularly returned to rest. I waited patiently for its return. At each appearance I fired my camera in burst mode, hoping to capture the moment when its wings would be spread in all their glory. After a hundred attempts, I finally managed to obtain the image I desired.'

Technical information

Camera: Pentax K-1
Lens: Pentax DA 300mm
ISO: 100
Aperture: f/4
Shutter speed: 1/1600sec

//©-Gabi Swart-You see better with four eyes-CUPOTY//

//CREDIT// © Gabi Swart | cupoty.com

Finalist

Name: Gabi Swart

Title: You See Better With Four Eyes

Nationality: German

Occupation: Retired Geologist

Further information: Website: www.gabi-swart-naturfotografie.de, Instagram: swartgabi

'This picture was taken in a pond near Ladenburg, Germany. It was shot from a low angle so that the reflection of the frog's eyes are just visible. I then decided to turn it upside down to confuse the viewer and encourage him/her to look more closely.'

Technical information

Camera: OM SYSTEM OM-1
Lens: M.Zuiko Digital ED 150-400mm, f/4.5
ISO: 500

Aperture: f/5.6
Shutter speed: 1/1600sec

//©-Tony North-Milking Bonnets-CUPOTY//

//CREDIT// © Tony North | cupoty.com

Finalist

Name: Tony North

Title: Milking Bonnets

Nationality: British

Occupation: Workshop Teacher

Further information: Website: www.artofmacro.com, Instagram: [tnorth67](https://www.instagram.com/tnorth67), Facebook: [tony.north3](https://www.facebook.com/tony.north3), Flickr: [tonynorth1](https://www.flickr.com/photos/tonynorth1)

'I found this clump of mushrooms with an almost perfect shape and number in Marbury Country Park, UK. I lit the scene from behind with an LED panel, both to fill the bonnets with light and to illuminate the droplets, which I created with a fine mist spray. My aim was to enhance the natural beauty of the fungi by adding more light and atmosphere. I focus bracketed 40 frames of the bonnets, then took one shot with the fungi and the "rain". I combined the files later in Photoshop.'

Technical information

Camera: Nikon D500

Lens: Nikkor 105mm f/2.8

ISO: 1250

Aperture: f/6.3

Shutter speed: 1/500sec

Accessories: Tripod, LED panel

//©-Barry Webb-Slime Moulds and Raindrops-CUPOTY//

//CREDIT// © Barry Webb | cupoty.com

Finalist

Name: Barry Webb

Title: Slime Moulds and Raindrops

Nationality: British

Occupation: Gardener / photographer

Further information: Website: www.barrywebbimages.co.uk, Instagram: [@barrywebbimages](https://www.instagram.com/barrywebbimages)

'Following overnight rain, I came across a colony of 2mm tall *Physarum album* slime mould fruiting bodies on a short section of beech branch, lying in leaf litter on the woodland floor. On closer inspection, I spotted this little group encased in raindrops. Carefully positioning the branch in a suitable position, taking care not to disturb the droplets, I shot 101 focus bracketed images to capture the full depth of the subjects. The resulting images were focus stacked using Zerene Stacker software.'

Technical information

Camera: OM SYSTEM OM-1

Lens: M.Zuiko Digital ED 60mm F2.8 Macro

ISO: 200
Aperture: f/3.5
Shutter speed: 1/80sec
Accessories: Tripod, cable release, three extension tubes, Raynox 250

//©-Marco Maggesi-Periscope-CUPOTY//
//CREDIT// © Marco Maggesi | cupoty.com

Finalist

Name: Marco Maggesi

Title: Periscope

Nationality: Italian

Occupation: Photographer

Further information: Website: www.zamenis.it, Instagram: @marco_maggesi,

Facebook: @Marco Maggesi

'This beautiful snake was looking for prey in a pond. I was really lucky because it stopped right in front of me to taste the air. The light was very soft because it was a cloudy day. I used a 300mm lens to capture this portrait. I will never forget this encounter.'

Technical information

Camera: Nikon D810

Lens: Nikkor AF-S 300mm f/4

ISO: 640

Aperture: f/5.6

Shutter speed: 1/4000sec

//©-Sandra Stalker-Plastic Sailors-CUPOTY//
//CREDIT// © Sandra Stalker | cupoty.com

Finalist

Name: Sandra Stalker

Title: Plastic Sailors

Nationality: British

Occupation: Art technician

Further information: Instagram: @teenytinyunderwaterphotos

'Hundreds of items covered in gooseneck barnacles wash up on Chesil Beach, in the UK, every year, carried there by winter storms. These are non-native to the UK and have usually travelled across the Atlantic. This particular item was a plastic bottle with a colony of goose barnacles and some fishing net I found on the beach. To tell the story of ocean litter becoming a habitat for wildlife, I took them to the sheltered side of Chesil in Portland harbour and re-floated them there. The water was about 8°C, I was in a wetsuit and the water was incredibly choppy from the wind, which kept blowing the bottle away from me. I shot upwards as I loved the reflection on the surface of the water, while keeping the bottle and barnacles as the main focus of the image.'

Technical information

Camera: Sony A7R IV

Lens: Sony 28-60mm with Nauticam WWL1-B Wet Wide

ISO: 200

Aperture: f/20

Shutter speed: 1/160sec

Accessories: Nauticam underwater housing, 2x Backscatter Mini Flash, 2x strobes

//©-Claudia Gaupp-Sparkling Crown-CUPOTY//

//CREDIT// © Claudia Gaupp | cupoty.com

Finalist

Name: Claudia Gaupp

Title: Sparkling Crown

Nationality: German

Occupation: Architect

Further information: Instagram: @lostinblooms

'Love-in-the-Mist (*Nigella damascena*) is the epitome of early summer for me. I have always been fascinated by the variety of nigella flowers. From the bud to the dried seed capsule – each phase holds its own secret. In this case I was intrigued by the details of the stamens and petals, which are surrounded by net-like leaves. Shortly after a rain shower, the tiny drops of water caught in the leaves made me think of a sparkling crown on the bloom. I took the picture in my garden in natural evening light and converted it in post-processing to a very cool blue-green background to match the blue of the flower.'

Technical information

Camera: Canon EOS 6D Mk II

Lens: Tamron 90mm f/2.8 Macro 1:1

ISO: 400

Aperture: f/2.8

Shutter speed: 1/250sec

//©-Alexis Tinker-Tsavalas-Moss Springtail-CUPOTY//

//CREDIT// © Alexis Tinker-Tsavalas | cupoty.com

Finalist

Name: Alexis Tinker-Tsavalas

Title: Moss Springtail

Nationality: Greek / Canadian

Further information: Instagram: @naturefold, YouTube @naturefold

'While searching for macro subjects on dead wood in winter I came across this springtail (*Neanura muscorum*) covered in dew droplets. Normally this species is quite active, which makes focus stacking almost impossible, but this individual stayed quite still, giving me the opportunity to get a high magnification focus stack. I used Zerene Stacker to combine the frames and sharpened the final image with Topaz DeNoise AI.'

Technical information

Camera: Panasonic Lumix DC-G91

Lens: Laowa 25mm F/2.8 2.5-5x Ultra Macro

ISO: 320
Aperture: f/2.8
Shutter speed: 1/200sec
Accessories: Cygnustech diffuser and flash

//©-Harald Cederlund-Last Flight-CUPOTY//

//CREDIT// © Harald Cederlund | cupoty.com

Finalist

Name: Harald Cederlund

Title: Last Flight

Nationality: Swedish

Occupation: Researcher

Further information: Instagram: @haralddcederlund

'In early autumn, large quantities of moths were swarming in the mountain birch forest of Grövelsjön, Sweden – giving the hike through it a certain dream-like quality. My hiking buddy wasn't feeling great, so we had to stay and rest in a mountain station, allowing me time to explore the immediate surroundings with my camera. I followed the trail down to Linnés källa – a spring that was supposedly discovered by the botanist Carl Linnaeus. Its surface was littered with large quantities of dead moths, along with some autumn leaves, grasses and algae. It looked to me as if the moths were still dancing over a meadow somewhere, taking one last flight. Later on, I combined five frames in Zerene Stacker to give a greater depth of field.'

Technical information

Camera: Canon EOS 5D Mk III

Lens: Zeiss 100mm f/2 Makro Planar

ISO: 320

Aperture: f/7.1

Shutter speed: 1/125sec

Accessories: Tripod

//©-Pete Burford-Long Over Dew-CUPOTY//

//CREDIT// © Pete Burford | cupoty.com

Finalist

Name: Pete Burford

Title: Long Over Dew

Nationality: British

Further information: Instagram: pbmacro, Facebook: pbmacro, Twitter: pbmacro, YouTube: pbmacro

'At Mousecroft pool, Shrewsbury, I photographed this damselfly covered in dew during the early morning hours, at around 3am, in May. Given that insects are cold-blooded and need warmth to move, they typically rest at night. The sudden drop in temperature causes dew to cling to them. This moment is ideal for portraits as they cannot move or fly. As they warm up with the rising sun in the morning, they wipe away the moisture and fly off. To enhance the visual appeal, I used a coloured background card to add contrast and additional hues to the image. Afterwards, I

stacked the frames in Helicon Focus, edited in Lightroom and Photoshop and then finished off with Topaz DeNoise.'

Technical information

Camera: OM SYSTEM OM-D E-M1 Mark II

Lens: M. Zuiko Digital ED 60mm F2.8 Macro

ISO: 200

Aperture: f/5.6

Shutter speed: 1/50sec

Accessories: Godox V350 flash, Cygnustech Diffuser

//©-Abby Raeder-Pond Geometry-CUPOTY//

//CREDIT// © Abby Raeder | cupoty.com

Finalist

Name: Abby Raeder

Title: Pond Geometry

Nationality: American

Occupation: Retired

Further information: Instagram: @abbyraeder

'The earliest signs of a changing season are captivating to me. By mid-November, nights become biting cold. At morning's light, I visited a pond in Vermont to find the first ice of the season. For me, this scene is thrilling beyond words. Seeing the physical change of water into a striking geometric marvel is an experience that makes me appreciate the glories of life.'

Technical information

Camera: Fuji X-T3

Lens: Fujifilm XF18-135mm f/3.5-5.6

ISO: 200

Aperture: f/7.1

Shutter speed: 1/125sec

//ENDS//