

NANPA LIGHTS THE PATH FOR FUTURE NATURE PHOTOGRAPHERS

BY GABBY SALAZAR

THE NEXT GENERATION OF WORLD-CLASS nature photographers is just beginning to focus on their careers. Although their names are not well known like Frans Lanting, Art Wolfe, or Jim Brandenburg, it's a good bet that some of tomorrow's most promising nature photographers will emerge from the student scholarship programs sponsored by the North American Nature Photography Association (NANPA).

Since 1995, more than 100 students have participated in NANPA's High School Scholarship Program (NHSSP), which offers an intense week of focusing on the art of photographing nature. The goal is to promote awareness, understanding, and an appreciation for the natural environment through photography. This occurs during the annual NANPA Summit, a conference attended by many of the top nature photographers in the world and those who are interested in learning skills necessary to become successful shooters. The week is filled with presentations, seminars, and workshops—both in the field and in the classroom.

Students meet and study with renowned nature photographers to sharpen their skills and build confidence. In 2003, NANPA created a college scholarship program, further expanding the ability of student photographers to be exposed to the talents and guidance of seasoned professionals. Both programs select students based on the quality of their images and their passion for photography.

"It changed my life" is probably the most common statement made by students in NHSSP. As a 14-year-old high school student, receiving this honor provided an opportunity for me to attend my first NANPA Summit. Now, as a college freshman, when I give presentations, interviews, or workshops on nature photography, I always point to participating in the NANPA youth program as the event that made me want to be a professional nature photographer. Before I became involved in NANPA, I fit photography into my life, after NANPA, I fit my life into photography. No one could hold me back.



LEFT: JAPANESE BEETLE ON CLEOME, PLEASANT GARDEN, NORTH CAROLINA, USA, *by Gabby Salazar*

"A gold reflector helped light the beetle's back on an overcast day. Focusing on the beetle, I used just enough depth of field to contrast against the background."
Canon EOS 20D; 180mm f/3.5 macro lens; shutter speed unrecorded at f/5.6; digital RAW capture; Gitzo tripod with Kirk ball head.

OPPOSITE, TOP: GABBY SALAZAR, WASHINGTON, DC, USA
 Gabby delivered a speech to accept the Youth award at the 2003 Nature's Best Photography Awards Ceremony at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History.

OPPOSITE, BELOW: COMMON LOON, ELY, MINNESOTA, USA, *by Tyler Evert*
 "While visiting photographer Jim Brandenburg in Minnesota several summers ago, I took this shot of a lone loon on a lake one hazy morning."
Canon EOS 3 body; 100-400mm IS lens; 1/250 sec at f/5.6; Fujichrome Provia 100F; Gitzo 1325 tripod and Studioball head.

PREVIOUS PAGES: PATH IN THE DOLLY SODS SCENIC AREA, WEST VIRGINIA, USA, *by Gabby Salazar*
 "Mist swirled as I hiked the forest in search of an inspirational image. The path ahead curved and faded into the fog, creating a feeling of depth and endlessness."
Canon EOS 20D; 10-22mm lens; settings unrecorded; digital RAW capture; Gitzo tripod with Kirk ball head.

FOLLOWING PAGES FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:

HUMMINGBIRD, TANDAYAPA VALLEY, EQUADOR, *by Raymond Klass*
 "With a little luck and a lot of patience, I captured this image using an on-camera flash and a fast shutter speed."
Nikon D2x; 300mm f/2.8 lens; 1/250 sec at f/2.8; digital capture; Nikon SD800 flash.

CANNA LILIES, DENVER, COLORADO, USA, *by Nick Langor*
 "Pink tissue paper was used to diffuse the natural light in this still life, taken at the 2006 NANPA Summit."
Canon EOS 20D; 60mm f/2.8 macro lens; 1/320 sec at f/3.5; digital capture at ISO 100; Manfrotto tripod.

BANDON BEACH, STATE ROCK SCENIC VIEWPOINT, BANDON, OREGON, USA, *by Nicholas M. Murphy*
 "I metered an area of the sky near the sun, and waited to capture this fiery sunset reflected on the glassy surface."
Canon EOS 10D; 17-40mm f/4 lens; 1/10 sec at f/16; digital capture; Gitzo 1325 CF tripod, Arca-Swiss B-1 ball head.



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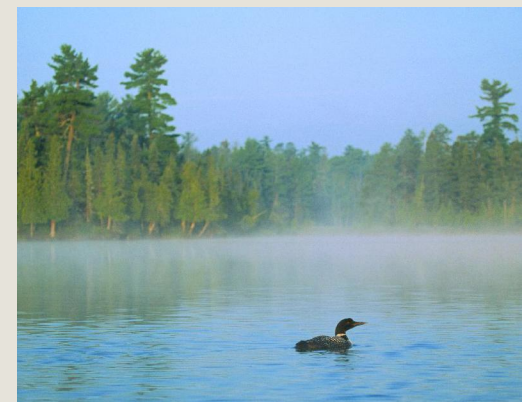
It seems to be that way with many of the students. Ever since NANPA alumnus Tyler Evert picked up his first issue of NATURE'S BEST PHOTOGRAPHY magazine, he wanted to be a nature photographer. At the age of 15, he was accepted into the NHSSP and his photography career was launched. That same year he was the first Youth winner in the Nature's Best International Photography Awards Competition with an image of a red maple leaf floating in a pool painted by autumn reflections. Evert went on to land a dream internship with Jim Brandenburg, and later worked with Pat O'Hara, an internationally renowned landscape photographer. Now a senior at the University of West Virginia finishing a degree in photojournalism, Evert works with Carl Sams, *New York Times* best-selling author and photographer, creating both still and video images of wildlife. With a touch of emotion, Evert says, "I don't know where my life would be if I had not found NANPA."

Nick Murphy agrees. He became a high school scholarship student in 2004, and now returns to the summit every year. "We are as closely knit as a family," said Murphy, reflecting on his experience with other students in the program. "We stick together through thick and thin. This aspect of the program, in addition to the enormous wealth of information about

photography itself, creates an everlasting imprint in our lives." Murphy's image of a black-chinned hummingbird was highly honored in the Youth category of Nature's Best International Photography Awards in 2004. The very next year he was a runner-up in the BBC Young Wildlife Photographer of the Year Competition (BBC YWPY).

Raymond Klass, an alumnus of the scholarship program in 2000, is a recent graduate of Rochester Institute of Technology, pursuing photography professionally. At the age of 22, he published his first coffee table book, *Mammoth Cave National Park Reflections*, based on his Artist-in-Residency at Mammoth Cave National Park. In reflecting on his first NANPA Summit, Klass said, "The most important thing I took away from my experience was the passion that the other photographers shared. NANPA was a lot of things, but mostly it was inspirational." Klass now helps to inspire new students during their first NANPA summits. Coming full circle, he has grown from student to teacher, volunteering his time as a staff member with the NANPA student program.

In addition to being involved with NANPA, one of the best ways for students to see their images in print and gain recognition for their photography is by entering photo competitions. My image of a honeybee stopped in mid-air while flying toward a sunflower was selected as the winner in the Youth category of the 2003 Nature's



Best International Photography Awards Competition. I remember running around my house filled with excitement after being contacted. The thrill was heightened when I learned the image would also be placed into the Nature's Best International Photography Awards annual exhibition at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. It was an honor I will always remember and cherish. The next year, I was named the Young Wildlife Photographer of the Year in BBC's annual YWPY Competition.

Winning prestigious competitions and networking through NANPA has opened up many photographic opportunities for me. I have lived on a ranch in South Texas, canoed through the swamps of Southern Florida, and hiked through remote jungles in Belize—all paid for through my photography. I have also been fortunate to intern with renowned nature photographer and

writer Connie Toops, and look forward to this coming summer when I will join the staff as an intern for NATURE'S BEST PHOTOGRAPHY magazine.

These opportunities and more are available for anyone whose love of nature and passion for photography come together as one. NANPA's Student Scholarship Program is there to support young nature photographers as they begin to focus on this fascinating field—their future brightened by the golden light of possibilities and encouragement from the professionals who once stood in their shoes, eagerly pursuing dreams of making great images.



NATURE'S BEST PHOTOGRAPHY is a proud sponsor of NANPA's Student Scholarship Programs through the WINDLAND SMITH RICE AWARDS, a fund dedicated in the memory of Windland Rice to foster the efforts of young photographers worldwide.



John Brown at the 2006 NANPA awards by Lou Neuhoff

NORTH AMERICAN NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY ASSOCIATION'S STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS—APPLY TODAY

Each year the NANPA High School Scholarship Program (NHSSP) presents scholarships to ten creative students.

To qualify for the college program, you must be at least 18 years of age as of December 31, 2006, a full-time college student in an accredited two or four year college, university, trade or vocational school and have a camera (film or digital) that accepts interchangeable lenses.

The nomination/application deadline for High School is September 30, 2006 and for College is October 30, 2006. More information is available in late May on the NANPA Web site at www.nanpa.org/scholarships.html.

