

# Newsletter, July 2019



## Nature photographer McKinley's double act



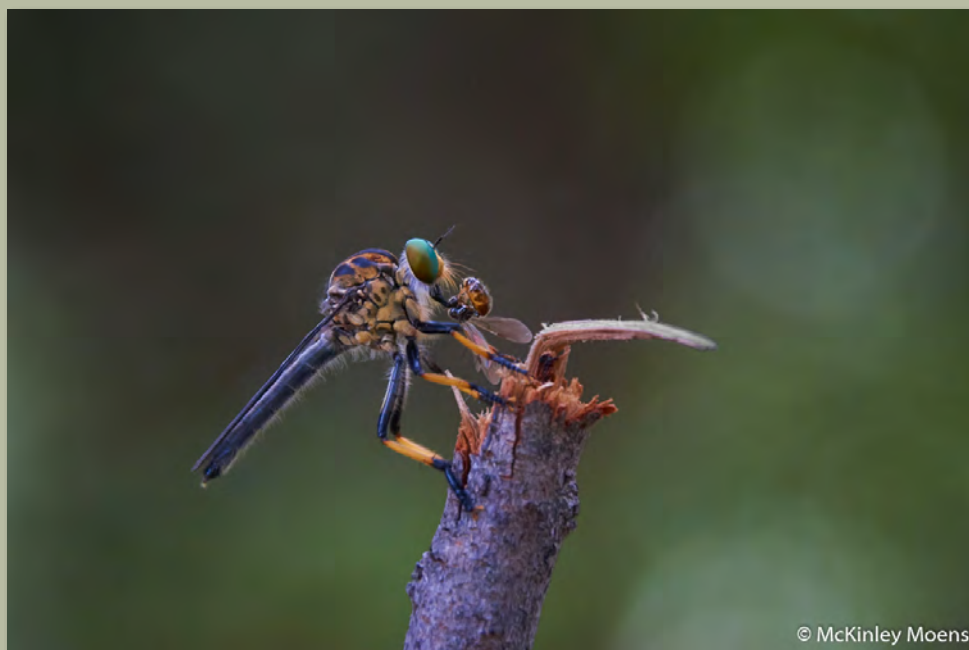
Any photographer who's devoted more than three-quarters of their life to honing their craft can expect to have won a gong or two, right? Perhaps our fellow club members chose one of our shots as the best image at the monthly Exhibition Night? Maybe we've garnered lots of 'likes' for an image posted on Facebook, Instagram or Flickr, or had a photograph published in a local newspaper?

But what if this photographer is barely 14 years old and has not once, but twice, been a finalist in a national photographic competition? Upper Blue Mountains Camera Club member McKinley Moens is this photographer. For the second year running, McKinley is a finalist in the junior division of the Australian Geographic Nature Photographer of the Year competition, which is open to photographers up to age 18. The winners will be announced at the South Australia Museum on 15 August.

McKinley's entry, "Time For Lunch", is an incredible hand-held shot of a robber fly devouring a delectable tidbit in the family's garden in Springwood – the setting and inspiration for a lot of McKinley's work, which she says is made all the easier by being home-schooled.

"I probably wouldn't have found the robber fly that's in the competition if I hadn't been home," she says. "I'd seen robber flies before but I'd always wanted to see one catch something ... so I got my camera and watched it for a little bit. (In a true mark of her professional approach, McKinley's camera lives on the kitchen table, always ready for action, as on this day).

"The fly flew up, caught something [then] it perched on a stick that was on top of a table and it just sat there and devoured [its prey]. It was just pure luck that it came and sat where it did.



© McKinley Moens

*McKinley Moens: Time for Lunch!*

The light was just perfect. The background was just perfect. For it to just land there was amazing.”

McKinley’s done enough scientific research to authoritatively tell the newsletter that robber flies are also known as assassin flies because they inject their prey with enzymes that dissolve their catch, then they “suck up the contents like a smoothie”, she says. Nice!

All photographers know the role luck plays in getting the great shots, but chance only goes so far.

McKinley’s curiosity, patience and persistence are what make her an exceptional photographer, regardless of her age, and one who has been wowing judges and winning competitions for years.

“We [were] absolutely blown away by her talent .... We had no idea she was just 10,” a spokeswoman for the Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife said when McKinley won the foundation’s Australian bird competition in 2015, with her shot of a Sacred Kingfisher.

In 2018, McKinley’s shot of a spotted pardalote (one of Australia’s smallest birds) was highly commended in the “student’s life in the field” category of the Ecological Society of Australia’s annual photography competition. Further, she was shortlisted, twice, in the Birdlife Australia Photography Awards the same year.

McKinley first picked up a camera – her mum’s lightweight digital point-and-shoot – aged three, to stave off the boredom while her parents photographed, the family says. By seven, she was using a Minolta

Dynax, another hand-me-down from her parents, who are both keen photographers. She lugged around this chunky and heavy camera until she was 10, never complaining about its weight and handling, her parents say.

Since then, she’s used a Sony A57 mirrorless camera that is lightweight (about 600 grams) and which has a smaller body that better suits the smaller, teenager hand. Her everyday lens is a Sigma 18-250mm *f*3.5-6.3 but she also uses a Canon 90mm *f*2.8 macro, if time permits changing the lens.

*McKinley untangling a bird prior to banding*





*McKinley with her 2018 entry: Smile ... it's Contagious!*

Photography and science go hand-in-hand and, at this stage in her life, McKinley envisages a career in ornithology – something she's already seriously working towards by taking her first university course – ornithology (comprehensive bird biology) – online with Cornell Lab, part of Cornell University in New York state.

Most weekends she's out and about

bird-banding for the Australian Bird Study Association.

Her mum says McKinley uses "photography as an identification tool ... to satisfy her fascination with the natural world", and the family can spend hours and hours researching subjects they have spotted and photographed.

"If you can take a photograph of it, you can learn about it," is

McKinley's philosophy. She strongly believes photography is a powerful tool in conservation work by "showing [people] how special things are", and she's an effective ambassador for this kind of eye-opening work.

Her father, Cees, a keen bushwalker and photographer, says his daughter has taught him a new way of seeing things. "I've never looked at nature like this", he says of McKinley's macro and close-up photographs.

While McKinley has learned much of her craft from her parents, the club has been a huge fillip for her confidence and technique. When she started coming to the club aged 10, she looked at all the oldies' images and never dreamt she'd be capable of taking such good shots herself, her mum says.

"Winning the People's Choice the first time gave her so much confidence because she was competing against adults who had a lot more experience than she does, and to be able to say 'they chose mine tonight' was a massive thrill for her. Such a massive confidence boost."

With talent like this at barely 14, we

reckon the award-winning photographer and National Geographic Explorer of the Year (2018), [Joel Sartore](#), had better enjoy the trophies in his cupboard while he can: McKinley Moens is coming to steal your crown!

You can see more of McKinley's photography [here](#).

**Liz Morgan**



*Right: Chasing Waterfalls*

# Pressing your back button

The editors advise that this appears to be safe to practice in your own home, and probably anywhere, but to save any embarrassment please do check first that you do have a back button!

In his recent post on [digital-photography-school.com](http://digital-photography-school.com) Simon Ringsmuth alerts us to a better way of taking shots than merely pressing the shutter button.

Of course, with a half- or light-press, typical shutter buttons invoke autofocus and display vital settings in the viewfinder or LCD display.

Ringsmuth claims a better way – to focus *before* taking your shot – was invented by Canon in 1989, and now appears on all quality brands.

Canon's innovation was to provide a back button (AF-ON) for the auto-focusing function, which then leaves the shutter button to act purely as a shutter button.

This can be useful handy when you want to set up the correct focus and then wait for your subject to come into shot. Here, you press the back button to set focus, release it to hold focus, then take the shot.



*Simon Ringsmuth: Example of a pre-focused shot using the back button technique*

Holding the AF-ON button down forces your camera to continually focus on your subject until you are ready to take the shot by pressing

the shutter button. Clearly this is a very useful technique to apply if your subject is moving.

For Simon's post in full, click [here](#).



# Members' choice DPI – “Forecourt study 9”

This shot was taken in the early morning when the forecourt was almost empty. It is from an on-going series taken at and around the Opera House.

The entire precinct has been so thoroughly covered by photographers that the challenge is to find a different perspective.

One benefit of continually revisiting a site over time is a good knowledge of where, when and how the light will be falling. This also makes it easier to pre-select your shooting position. I just sat in a comfortable spot immediately below the Bennelong Lawn, and watched.

The plan was to take a series of ICMs (Intentional Camera Movement) and given the



strength of the light I reduced my shutter speed with an ND filter. But not super-slow, as I wanted my subjects to be identifiable – not just total blurs or smears.

When the young couple with their luggage stood for a brief moment in the sunshine, with no-one else nearby, I had my shot.

I made a single minimal movement down through the vertical plane to produce the ICM effect.

Contrast and clarity were adjusted in Lightroom.

Olympus OMD-EM1,  
M.Zuiko 25mm *f* 1.2,  
ND400 filter, *f* 4.5, 1s,  
ISO 100.

**Greg Pitty**

# Members' choice mono – “Foggy morning”

This image was captured in the early morning along the Olympic Highway near Young.

We had been driving through thick fog for about an hour and like any decent photographer I had half an eye on the road and the other one/half looking out for photographic opportunities. Not the best idea in foggy conditions but hey, an opportunity missed is an opportunity lost.

Approaching an area known as Bendick Murrell I pulled over at a rest stop hoping there would be some trees that would warrant a photograph or two.

Luckily there were a few wonderful old trees peering out from the mist. As I began snapping away a set of head lights emerged out of the murkiness. A farm truck pulled up and proceeded to refuel. Twenty or so shots later I had captured “Foggy Morning”.

Post processing was fairly simple. Monochrome was the perfect choice as the fog had pretty much desaturated the image anyway. A little cropping in Lightroom; into SilverEfex Pro for



the conversion that you see; finally into Photoshop to remove the effects of water droplets on the lens ... in my haste to get the shot I forgot that fog is water-based and will collect on the lens just like rain, doh. With the water

drops gone “Foggy Morning” emerged from the mist.

Pentax K-1, D FA 28-105mm (73), *f* 5.6, 1/800s, ISO 100.

**Rob Skinner**

# Members' choice mono – “Where is mine?”



As we all know, the mountains which we enjoy so much can be a bit cold sometimes. With that in mind, Bronwyn and I decided to visit friends at Port Macquarie and warm up a bit.

The motel we stayed at had an ocean view, which was very nice, apart from the howling southerly and sheets of rain.

In one of the small weather breaks we walked around the road on the water's edge as the late afternoon sun emerged to light up this block of units. It was turned into a natural black and white, with the bright light darkening the verandas.

I walked round and round the building taking lots of pics.

Nikon DF, 24/300 mm (36), 1/200s, ISO 320.

**David Mansfield**



# Members' choice colour – “The ice”

The photograph was taken at the Jokulsarlon glacial lagoon on the south coast of Iceland.

At this point icebergs, which have broken away from the Breidamerkurjokull glacier, travel across the 18 square kilometre lagoon and bump into each other as they pass through a narrow passage before spilling out into the Atlantic Ocean.

It is said the icebergs float in the lagoon for an average of five years before they are small enough to pass through the passage.

They naturally vary in colour from milky white to bright blue, with the colour depending on the amount air trapped within them and the impact of sunlight on the ice crystals.

While this spot and the black sands of the nearby Diamond beach are very popular with photographers, it has also featured in various movies,

including *A View to Kill*, *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* and *Batman Begins*.

Canon EOS M6 (mirrorless),  
Tamron 18-200 mm *f*3.5-6.3 Di II  
VC (20), *f*11, 1/200 s, ISO 200.

**Robert Lipscombe**





# Diary

## Blackheath Horticultural Society Announces September Photography Competition

Club members, and especially all our new members, are encouraged to enter this inaugural competition.

The entrance fee is a measley \$10 and framing is not required, indeed it is not permitted! The required presentation is similar to that for our club exhibition nights: photos mounted with a cardboard mat. Image size to be no larger than 500 mm x 400 mm.

Entries are to be submitted to Laraine Graham, 231 Govetts Leap Road, Blackheath, on **Friday 20 September** from 3.00pm to 7.30pm – the day before the show.

**Please note:** Entry forms are not yet available. When they are we will distribute some at the club. You can request one directly from: [bdhsinc89@gmail.com](mailto:bdhsinc89@gmail.com).

## Sony Alpha Awards 2019

Attention Sony Alpha owners: the 2019 Alpha Awards are now open for submissions until 31 August in eight categories, including: astrophotography, city/street, landscape, nature, portrait, seascape, sports, and wedding. For entry details click [here](#) (scroll down for the well-hidden <Enter Now> button at the bottom right corner of the page).

Owning a Sony Alpha is not required for those entering the youth competition for primary and high school students. Click [here](#) for details.

To see last year's winning photographs, click [here](#).

The prizes are for Sony digital imaging gear. The Grand Prize is worth \$10,000, while each category winner gets \$2,000 worth of gear.



*Ilan Wittenberg: 2018 Sony Alpha winner, Grand Prize and Portrait category*

## Club events

### Next week ...

17 July Info Night is on the "Shadow & Light" theme. Please bring your images to share on a USB stick - 6 images preferably. (max 10)

Rob Skinner will introduce the next theme "Street".

There will also be a brief introduction to file and photo management in Lightroom (Michael Peck) and Adobe Bridge (Greg Wood).

A further session on this topic will be offered the following month if members would find it useful.



## Nature TTL

Will Nicholls is a wildlife photographer and back in 2014, while he was beginning his university studies, he started a blog teaching people about wildlife, landscape, and macro photography called “Nature TTL”.

Five years on that blog is still going strong. It now has over 500 articles written by some of the best photographers in the industry.

To explore this excellent web resource please click [here](#).



One of the currently featured articles on [naturettl.com](http://naturettl.com)



## #ABCmyphoto

If you previously submitted images to ABC Open you may be aware that this feature has recently been replaced with #ABCmyphoto.

You can now add photos directly from your Instagram account to #ABCmyphoto. They can also be uploaded directly to the ABC web site (click [here](#)).

Don't be alarmed by an endlessly spinning wait icon. Scroll way down for the drag-and-drop box or the add files link.

You might also find that your existing ABC account no longer works, so you will have to create another from scratch.

The new photo pages are plagued with technical issues. Currently

clicking on an image of the week gives you the wait icon, forever! Thus you can only see one image of the week, and not a large version of it, nor who created it or the story behind it, if any.

The image on the left is “Hot air balloons over the Hunter Valley” which you can only know from the mouse-over text. Come on ABC!



## Contacts

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## Submitting images

Whether submitting a DPI or digital images of your prints the required format to match the projector is a maximum width of 1024 and a maximum height of 768 pixels.

For a landscape format image, set the longest side to 1024; for portrait, set the longest side to 768, and for a square image, all sides are 768.

