



MACRO BEAUTY

The Smithsonian to display local photographer's winning image

Cottage Grove's 29-year-old Thomas Haney likes snakes, lizards and bugs — a lot. At one point as a kid in Austin, Texas, Haney wrangled over 80 lizards for pets. When his love of reptiles transformed into a love of reptilian (and nature) photography, the world took notice.

In 2004, Haney nabbed second place in the Best of College Photography Annual with a photo of an Ecuadorian vine snake, its yellow eyes holding the viewer's gaze while striking out of the jungle ether with exposed fangs. Three years ago, he won the BBC Wildlife Photographer of the Year's One Earth Award for his haunting entry "The Lone Fir," snapped while following old-growth logging in Forks, Wash. Last week, Haney received more good news: The Nature's Best Photography competition, one of the largest of its kind in the country, awarded him first place in the "People in Nature" category.

"It's a close-up photo of a little raft of bubbles in a tidal pool in Cape Perpetua," Haney says. The macro image features thousands of tiny candy-colored bubbles (the unusual color comes from certain lighting that causes an iridescent effect) and thousands of tiny Haney's, each globule reflecting a silhouette of the photographer with his tripod. The photo will be displayed at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History for the next year. "It's really nice," he says of the win. "It's hard to get known as a wildlife photographer."

The Texas transplant picked up photography when he was 15, exploring Austin's unkempt tracts of land with his lens. Haney decided to focus on macro subjects like snakes and spiders for two reasons: He thought the mammalian kingdom was getting enough attention and the telephoto lenses required to capture soaring bald eagles and fishing bears cost upwards of \$8,000. Today he uses a digital Canon 5D Mark II with a 100 mm

macro lens, 300 mm macro lens and a 16-35 mm landscape lens. He also needs lots and lots of raingear.

Haney's summers are spent as a wildlife firefighter and his winters are divided between photography and building cow-panel greenhouses. He takes three-to-four-day solo trips to favorite spots on the coast or nearby Bryce Creek. "It's always pouring," he says. "It can be really hard to do photography in the rain." Even when he's soaked to the bone, he draws inspiration from his photography idols, French nature photographer Vincent Munier and Minnesotan outdoor photographer Jim Brandenburg, who he admires because of their fine attention-to-detail. That's how he would advise aspiring wildlife photographers. "It's all in the details, like cooking," he says. "Every little detail. Don't settle. Keep working to make it better and better." And, of course, a good lens doesn't hurt. ■

To see more of Haney's photography, visit thaney.com. Don't miss the shot of a terrifying crab spider hunting a fly.

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