



To Be Transported

Powerful wildlife photography can be transformative—and, hopefully, inspire you to save those animals seen through the camera's lens

It's hard not to be transported when you encounter a photo like this one, of an elephant in the early morning haze. You can imagine being there, holding your breath in awe as the elephant shakes its head and two cattle egrets take flight around its big body. The sky is limitless; the savanna stretches on for miles. Despite the vastness of the environment, all is still. The only noise you hear is that of the elephant's muffled footsteps in the grass.

Such is the power of Africa—and the power of photography—that one shot so aptly captures a moment that conveys you to a far-away scene. And that is why AWF is the proud sponsor of the “African Wildlife” category in the Nature's Best Photography Windland Smith Rice International Awards competition. Photos such as this allow even those people who have never been to the continent to understand the splendor of Africa's natural world and, hopefully, be moved enough to act to save it.

Each year AWF publishes winning photos from the “African Wildlife” category, as well as a selection of the highly honored entries, in the pages of this magazine. In celebration of Nature's Best Photography's 20-year anniversary in 2015, we're mixing things up this time around! On the following pages, you'll not only see selections from this year's “African Wildlife” category but also some grand prize photos from past years. Not surprisingly, over the course of the 20-year competition, a large percentage of the best of the best were taken—where else?—in Africa.



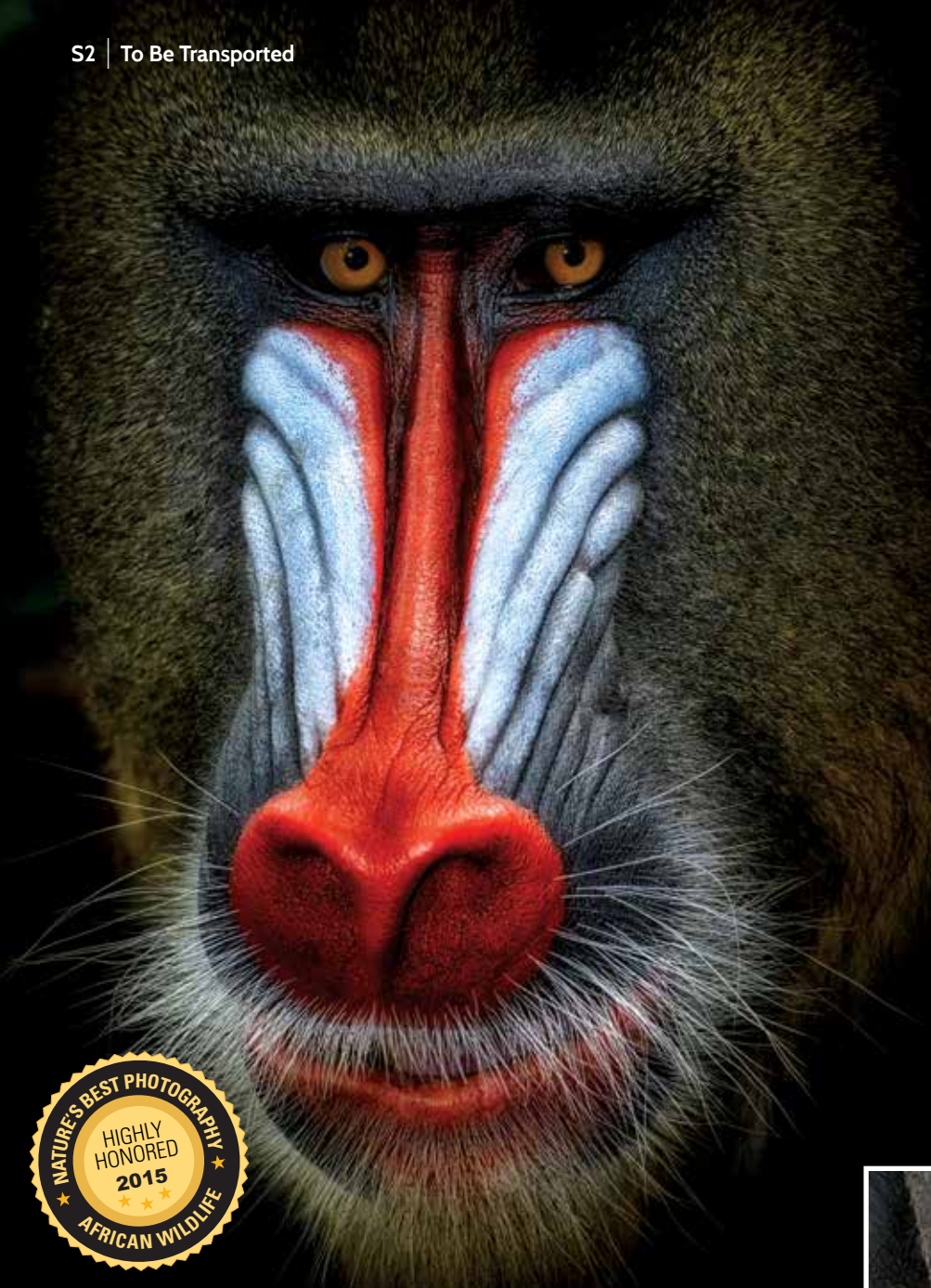
African Bush Elephant and Cattle Egrets

Amboseli National Park, Kenya

By Stuart Porter

Born and raised in Africa, Stuart Porter has lived in Zimbabwe, Malawi and Zambia. He earned his B.A. in wildlife photography at Blackpool and the Fylde College in the United Kingdom. Combining his two passions—wildlife and photography—helped him achieve a long-held dream of operating his own photographic safari tour company. Porter is co-owner of Wild4 African Photographic Safaris. He is a field guide with the Field Guide Association of Southern Africa and a tourist guide accredited by the Tourism, Hospitality and Sport Education and Training Authority.

Of his winning entry, Porter says: “We encountered a blanket of haze and through this misty curtain, we could make out two bulls feeding. I focused on one that had the rising sunlight behind him. A pair of cattle egrets perched on him as he fed. Without warning, the elephant began to lie down, startling the birds and causing one to take flight. It was thrilling to witness such an event.”



▲ **Mandrill**

Lekedi, Gabon
By Simone Sbaraglia

"I was always fascinated by the amazing colors of the male mandrill. For three weeks, I was in Gabon trying to capture them in an abstract way, emphasizing their lines and colors. The environment that mandrills live in is incredibly tough, with very thick forest full of mud, mosquitoes and bugs, making it very difficult to track them."

African Elephant Calf ▶

Masai Mara National Reserve, Kenya
By Margot Raggett

"One evening a herd of elephants was making their way across the plains of the Masai Mara. Taking a closer look, we noticed a tiny calf, just a few weeks old. Finding it difficult to keep walking, the calf would lean against its mother's legs. It seemed to be begging her to stop and was nearly falling asleep."



▲ **Burchell's Zebra**

Makgadikgadi Pans, Kalahari Desert, Botswana
By Richard du Toit

"On the night of my arrival a thunderstorm rolled across the land, dropping nearly an inch of welcome rain. During the next few days, herds of blue wildebeest and zebra arrived as I did some low-level flying. Sometimes as I peered down from my helicopter, an unexpected scene would appear, such as this group of 14 zebras making their way across the gray mudflats."



Lioness and Cub ▶

Masai Mara National Reserve, Kenya
By Carole Deschuymere

"The sun was setting when I saw a lioness standing on the open Mara plains. Upon closer inspection, I realized she was carrying a tiny cub to a nearby bush already occupied by a second cub. I was able to record close-ups of this touching scene with the rising sun behind me."





▲ **Mountain Gorilla**

Volcanoes National Park, Rwanda
By John Reiter

"My guide and I had climbed for hours up a 10,000-ft.-high volcanic mountain through thick bamboo rainforests until we found ourselves within 20 ft. of a family of gorillas in their natural habitat. Observing this nearly 500-pound, chest-beating silverback was one of the most thrilling experiences of my life."

Nile Crocodile and Impala

South Luangwa National Park, Zambia
By Peter Farmer

"As five impalas approached the river, a crocodile was lurking below the surface. Suddenly, the croc leapt up the bank towards them, his jaws narrowly missing as they sprinted away. The action was over within seconds."



See the photos in person

Until early fall, you can view winners from the past 20 years of the Nature's Best Photography Windland Smith Rice International Awards Exhibition at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History in Washington. Submit your best safari and nature images to the next competition, and you too, have a chance to display your work on the walls of the Smithsonian.

For more information, visit naturesbestphotography.com

