

2024 PHOTO ESSAY COMPETITION WINNER and SPECIAL JURY MENTION



Mountain Ghosts © Peter Mather

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Winning Essay: Mountain Ghosts, Peter Mather

Canada's Yukon Territory is a vast wilderness, with surprisingly low wildlife populations. The extreme cold, darkness and limited plant communities of the North are reflected in the abundance of animals. Predators and fur-bearing animals in the North, are also generally very shy due to hunting and trapping. This creates a feeling in the North, that many animals are ghosts, we rarely see them, most often we find passing signs of animals in the snow. I wanted to capture this story in imagery, highlighting how our mountains are home to rarely seen wildlife. Using camera traps, flash and long exposures, I captured these images showing wildlife ghosting in photos.

Peter Mather is a Yukon photographer and filmmaker specializing in outdoor adventure, wildlife, and wilderness landscape photography. He has spent decades following caribou, bears, wolverines and the people of the North. His photography has been published in National Geographic, Canadian Geographic, the New York Times, and Smithsonian Magazine among others. His photo story on wolverines, won the 3rd place prize in World Press Photo competition, in the Nature Stories category and his work has toured across the world.

Peter is represented by National Geographic Image Collection and Minden Images. He is a Panasonic Lumix global ambassador and a fellow with the International League of Conservation Photographers. He recently produced the internationally awarded documentary, "Kings of the North" which was released in April of 2023. www.petermather.com www.instagram.com/peter.mather.photography

Jury Comment:

"Great photos have a way of pulling you in, urging you to take a step closer, and Peter's photos captivated me from the moment I saw them. The 'ghosts' of animals resonated with me, hinting at deeper narratives of mystery, disappearance, and the juxtaposition of humanity and nature. His images evoke a sense of seeing things that aren't always visible at first glance, compelling me to shift from a distant observer to someone eager to explore every detail from left to right. The best storytelling does not have to be linear but rather compels the viewer to feel the story as well as see it."

- Irene Yee, 2024 Jury

"Mather's unique and experimental wildlife photography is like nothing I have seen before. The blend of complex technical efforts and the layers within the photos forces you to look and think twice. Mather's fresh perspective on wildlife photography completely separates his work; he took a big risk submitting a series of unconventional images, which paid off."

- Mattias Fredriksson, 2024 Jury

"Peter's imagery forces a pause. There is power in stating the obvious; the mind instantly makes the connection that these double-exposure frames showcase the more elusive creatures of the Yukon. What immediately follows is the narrative one's mind creates for these creatures, the sense of solitude, distance, and an omnipresent search for survival. Peter's photo essay stood out amongst the crowd as a powerful take on the conversations around climate change, conservation, and diminishing wildlife habitat."

- JoJo Das, 2024 Jury





Special Jury Mention: Through The Clouds and Among The Lonely Mountains, Adolfo Mesías

"At over 4800 meters above sea level, in an almost extinct village where the border between Chile and Bolivia blurs, a silent Aymara family cultivates the land to survive. It is said that the last child was born over 25 years ago, and now, with fewer than seven inhabitants, their daughter must decide whether to continue the family tradition by staying to live in the village or leaves to live in the big city".

- Adolfo Mesías, 2024 Banff Mountain Photo Essay Competition Special Jury Mention

Adolfo Mesías is a multidisciplinary image creator born in Santiago, Chile, whose work is driven by socio-political, ethnic, and environmental concerns. He graduated in filmmaking and photography practice, specializing in documentary photography and cinematography, having been part of the VII Academy and Master PhotoEspaña programs. The film projects he has been involved in have been showcased at international film festivals such as Cinema Du Reel, Dok Leipzig, Locarno, Fidocs, New York Latino Film Festival, and the Centre Pompidou in France. He worked as an international correspondent for SRF (Switzerland) in Chile and as a cinematographer for AJ+.

Mesías' goal is to raise awareness and understanding of socio-political issues through works that encourage viewers to reflect on the current state of society, aiming to foster support for social justice and positive change. adolfomesias.com www.instagram.com/adolfo_mesias

Jury Comment:

"Adolfo's work spoke to me in a very interesting and powerful way, not through its volume, but through its absence: its silence. His photos narrated the story of a culture vanishing into the landscape behind it, prompting me to think about whether the disappearance of such heritage is the inevitable fate of human culture in a rapidly changing world. The images convey both a sense of loss for this way of life and beauty in preserving it before it is gone."

- Irene Yee, 2024 Jury

"Mesías's distinct and scaled-down black-and-white photography gives these images of life in a remote Andes mountain town a raw, documentary feel that undoubtedly speaks to the viewer."

- Mattias Fredriksson, 2024 Jury

"Human emotion is one of the few elements that easily overcomes language and culture barriers. Even without reading Adolfo's words that accompanied this essay, one can see and feel the sense of uncertainty, grit, resignation, and strength. This photo essay illustrates beautifully what can be left behind as the world marches ever "forwards", and that for some, this way of life is worth preserving".

- JoJo Das, 2024 Jury





