

# Wildlife Photographer of the Year opens this weekend

**Hamza Yassin, wildlife cameraman and presenter, was at the official opening event of the Wildlife Photographer of the Year exhibition which opens this weekend at the National Museum of Scotland.**

The exhibition will run until May and offer visitors the chance to see some spectacular images, all of which are on loan from the Natural History Museum in London. The museum is using photography as a way of advocating for the planet by showing stories and species in inspiring and engaging ways. It is the most prestigious photography event of its kind showing the best photography talent from all over the world for nearly 60 years. It began in 1965 and today the competition still receives thousands of entries demonstrating its lasting appeal. The exhibition is now on an international tour and it is expected that around one million people will see it.

This year the competition attracted 49,957 entries from 95 countries which were judged over a week at the Natural History Museum by a panel of industry experts.

French underwater photographer and marine biologist Laurent Ballesta was awarded Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2023 for *The golden horseshoe*, an otherworldly image of a tri-spine horseshoe crab accompanied by a trio of golden trevallies. Young Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2023 was awarded to 17-year-old Carmel Bechler from Israel for his *Owls'*

*roadhouse*, a dynamic frame of barn owls in an abandoned roadside building.

Hamza Yassin said: "I was delighted to be among the first people in Scotland to view this thought-provoking exhibition. As a wildlife cameraman and photographer myself, it was great to see such a variety of incredible images and to appreciate the skill, knowledge of nature and ingenuity that must have gone into capturing them. Photography like this can really inspire us all to think about the beauty and fragility of our natural world, as well as the things we can do to protect it."

Dr Nick Fraser, Keeper of Natural Sciences at National Museums Scotland, said: "These images taken together tell a powerful story, balancing the wonder and beauty of the natural world with its fragility and vulnerability to climate change and biodiversity loss. It is perhaps less well understood how the work of in-house natural sciences teams and external researchers on collections such as ours at National Museums Scotland and those at the Natural History Museum contributes hugely to global understanding of human impact on the environment. We look forward to welcoming visitors to the exhibition when it opens this weekend."

Dr Doug Gurr, Director of the Natural History Museum said: "We are facing urgent biodiversity and climate crises, and photography is a powerful catalyst for change. The Wildlife Photographer of the Year exhibition reveals some of nature's most wondrous sights whilst offering hope and achievable actions visitors can take to help protect the natural world."

Chair of the judging panel, Kathy Moran said: "What most impressed the jury was the range of subjects, from absolute beauty, rarely seen behaviors and species to images that are stark reminders of what we are doing to the natural world. We felt a powerful tension between wonder and woe that we believe came together to create a thought-provoking collection of photographs."

The exhibition at the National Museum of Scotland is supported by players of People's Postcode Lottery and will be supported by a range of public events and activities.

Laura Chow, Head of Charities at People's Postcode Lottery, said: "The Wildlife Photographer of the Year exhibition is truly stunning and inspiring, helping us discover untold stories of species from around the world. Our players have raised more than £3.3 million for National Museums Scotland and I'm delighted their support makes exhibitions like this accessible to everyone, allowing more people to learn about our natural world".

**Dates and times:** 20 January to 6 May 2024, opening 10am to 5pm

**To book tickets:** [www.nms.ac.uk/wpy](http://www.nms.ac.uk/wpy)

Hamza is a presenter of programmes about Scottish wildlife and has appeared on CBeebies, Countryfile and Animal Park. He also won the 2022 Strictly come Dancing contest. And if you're wondering about Hamza's T-shirt it is from a Gaelic song. The lyrics and translation are:

*Togaibh i, togaibh i, cànan ar dùthcha,  
Togaibh a suas i gu h-inbhe ro-chliùitich;  
Togaibh gu daingeann i 's bithibh rith' bàidheil,  
Hi ho rò, togaibh i, suas leis a' Ghàidhlig!*

Praise it, praise it, the language of our country  
Give it honourable status  
Promote it with spirit, and treat it with affection,  
Hi horo, praise it, up with the Gaelic.



Hamza Yassin Wildlife Cameraman opens the Wildlife Photographer of the Year Exhibition at the National Museum of Scotland

With pupils from Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce P5

18/1/2024

PHOTO Alan Simpson



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