

Celebrating Animals



About seven years ago, I bought a macro lens for my camera. I was like a kid looking through a microscope for the first time, crawling around on my hands and knees and chasing bugs for close-ups. Their colors and patterns are just amazing. At my auto shop in upstate New York, my employees yell for me when they find some strange bug. I tell the spiders they have to pose before I let them go outside. I've taken some incredible pictures of spiders we've found in cars.

One morning I went looking for luna moths in the woods behind my shop. This little frog was in a tree about 20 yards away. In the wet landscape, tree frogs are everywhere in early summer. At night, they shimmy up the building's metal siding toward the light.

A lot of my buddies hunt, but I don't. I'd rather get something with my camera. I get so many comments about my pictures hanging in the shop waiting room and on my computer's screensaver. I call these pictures the best of my small world. People don't know what's really all around them every day until they stop and take a look. — *Gary Childs, Wilton, New York*

When I visited my father and stepmother in 2005, dragonflies were flitting everywhere around the backyard pond at their Baton Rouge, La., home. I sat by the water, ready to capture their beauty with my camera. But dragonflies don't sit for pictures. I took dozens of shots in the beautiful evening light—all of them blurry. One finally landed on a nearby reed. As soon as I snapped the shot, I knew it was good.

My father was 83 years old then and hadn't yet been diagnosed with Alzheimer's. A retired English professor, he had a library full of books about animals. After he and my stepmother bought the house by the lake, they had the small pond built out back. He would just sit at the breakfast table with his binoculars and telescope, watching all kinds of wonderful creatures.

As my father's disease progressed, it got to where he couldn't even read anymore. But he was still able to talk about animals. That was his great pleasure. He would get up at 5 a.m., make his coffee, and sit at the breakfast table with his binoculars.

The dragonfly reminds me of his boundless love for all creatures and the good days we had before he declined. The dragonfly is so alive and beautiful. — *Margot Ferguson, Kansas City, Missouri*



YOUR BEST SHOT

Do you have an inspiring photo of a favorite pet or wild animal? Send it to us for possible publication in *All Animals*, along with an explanation of 150 words or fewer about why it's meaningful to you. Photos should be at least 300 dpi at a size of 5-by-7" and at least 2 MB.

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