

Wildlife Photograph of the month — AUGUST

It took Morgan Trimble and a researcher friend seven hours by 4x4 to reach the remote Busanga Swamps of Zambia's Kafue National Park, whose entrance is about an hour's drive southwest of the capital, Lusaka. Arriving at their destination, they set up camp on a night in June, their flimsy pop-up tent the only barrier between themselves and the lions of one of the park's wildest and most isolated regions.

"At about 1am, we could hear two lions roaring. The roaring grew louder, until we knew the lions were almost in camp," recalls Trimble, a 31-year-old ecologist, writer and photographer. There was nothing for it but to dash for the safety of the 4x4 — and keep their fingers crossed the lions would simply move away.

Ten minutes after the predators had prowled past their tent, Trimble and companion were back in it, happily coiled into their sleeping bags for a few hours of sound sleep.

"The lions were gone and we were confident they wouldn't be back to bother us," the laid-back photographer insists.

Up at dawn to photograph the "prolific" swamp things of the Busanga region, the two were blessed with "spectacular morning mists" hanging thick and low.

That mist, which can be seen in the Sunday Times Wildlife Photograph of the Month (see below), "was an incredible photographic feature".

To highlight the male lechwe amid the scene's soft light, Trimble placed the foreground and background out of focus, etching the horned animal's silhouette into a sharp, dramatic outline.

"It was tricky getting the exposure right at dawn — I used exposure compensation to make

the image darker than my camera wanted it to be."

She confesses: "I've entered several images of my Busanga dawn outing into this competition — but I think this shot truly captures that swamp's special, remote sense of place."

See the image caption to find out why the judges chose this photo as the month's top shot.

Trimble's photograph wins R5 000 from the Sunday Times, which also places her in the running to win a R120 000, seven-day safari for two people to photograph the Maasai Mara's 2016 Great Migration. The Sunday Times Wildlife Photographer of the Year and runners-up will be announced in December. Congratulations Morgan!

■ **WINNER**

MIST OPPORTUNITY: Morgan Trimble of Cape Town expertly seized on the first-light mists of Kafue National Park, Zambia, to create a haunting image of the park's little-known and difficult-to-access Busanga Swamps. A lechwe — a wetland antelope — is depicted in a crisp silhouette.

The judges said: A great moment, as well as mesmerising light and composition make for a superb image that evokes beauty and drama. The tree to the right and the lechwe are in strong symmetry, sparsely spaced and sharply lit, making for impressive aesthetics.



■ **HOW TO ENTER:**
E-mail your travel entries to travelphoto@sundaytimes.co.za and your wildlife entries to wildphoto@sundaytimes.co.za by September 30. Good luck!

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■ **HIGHLY COMMENDED**

CAT'S IN THE CRADLE: René van der Schyff of Phalaborwa shot this image in her back yard. "This beautiful male leopard was relaxing on top of the highest leadwood tree on the Letaba road, Kruger National Park," she says. "It was so high and he was so light-footed, relaxing there with a half-eaten impala carcass hanging a bit lower in the same tree."

The judges said: Great catch of a proud, satisfied leopard. Drama. Composition. Excellent use of light.



■ **RUNNER-UP**

WHILE STOCKS LAST: "The Savute Channel in Chobe National Park had stopped flowing in June and the elephants were coming into the marsh in big numbers as other water was drying up," writes Knysna-based photographer Michael Viljoen. "This breeding herd came in to drink at last light. Orange tones touched the trees and water, showing the reflections of the elephants as they were drinking. I used a 200mm-400mm lens. The light was low, so I used a 2 500 ISO and an exposure of 1/640 at an aperture of f5 in AV mode. I pushed the white balance to emphasise the rich colours."

The judges said: The low angle was a clever choice and makes you feel as if you're there. We've received many elephant-at-the-waterhole images, but Viljoen's ticks every box. Each animal's uniform position, the calm water's well-balanced reflection, the forgiving pastel tones and dense woodland acting as a frame for the herd all point to an expertly produced and considered image that could pass for a painting. Drawing together these elements, the photographer creates the sense that you're intruding on a calm, sacred moment and that it's a privilege to witness it.

■ **DON'T BE AFRAID — ENTERING IS AS EASY AS E-MAILING US**

Never entered a photo competition before? Don't be shy — professional as well as amateur photographers are welcome. This year we're giving away R500 000 in gear from Canon and luxury photo safaris from Wild Eye, plus R10 000 cash across the travel and wildlife categories each month, courtesy of the Sunday Times.

Find all competition details and August's top finalists at Timeslive.co.za/sundaytimes/travel/photographer or www.facebook.com/suntimesphoto.