



A research team tracked gelada monkeys (*Theropithecus gelada*) for a year, photographed by primate-behaviour researcher Bing Lin.

NATURE'S PHOTO COMPETITION

After pandemic disruption, the #ScientistAtWork contest returns. **By Jack Leeming**

For a year in the Ethiopian highlands, Bing Lin followed gelada monkeys with a digital notepad. “We did focal follows,” Lin explains. “You follow a monkey around for 15 minutes recording exactly what it does, who it interacts with, what it eats, where it walks. And then, you move on to a different monkey.” Lin took a break, as storms gathered, to photograph one of these processions in action.

Gelada monkeys (*Theropithecus gelada*) are among the last surviving species of monkey

that subsist mostly on grass. Lin was working in Ethiopia for 13 months from June 2017, studying the monkeys with two colleagues and living in a tent. To the right of the frame is Iris Ruby Foxfoot, Lin’s co-manager in the field.

The action picture is the winner of *Nature’s* 2022 #ScientistAtWork photography competition, which returned this year after a pause triggered by the pandemic. We received 123 entries from around the world. Runner-up pictures are highlighted here. All will receive a prize, as well as a year’s subscription to *Nature*. Five *Nature*

art editors and two guest judges selected the winning entries.

Lin captured the monkeys on camera while working as a field manager for a longitudinal research project studying *T. gelada* in the Ethiopian highlands. He is now a fourth-year PhD student in science, technology and environmental policy at Princeton University in New Jersey. He looks back on his time with the monkeys with a wry fondness. “Knowing what the rainy season is like, I was probably soaked,” he says.



Here are the rest of the winning images from the competition.

Under a polar night

Hannes Keck took this photo of himself using a delayed timer on a 15-second exposure, making this photograph perhaps one of the world's coldest selfies, captured at around -35°C . Neumayer Station III, on the Antarctic Ekström ice shelf, is Keck's home for a year as he takes measurements of the Antarctic atmosphere. The shipping containers, behind him, house his laboratory.

On the night he took this photograph, in July 2022, the weather was calm. "Our neighbouring galaxies, the Small and the Large Magellanic Clouds, are visible with the naked eye, polar lights move over the southern horizon, it is completely quiet and breathtakingly cold," says Keck, an atmospheric chemist affiliated with the Alfred Wegener Institute in Bremerhaven, Germany. "I've never seen the like anywhere else."

Sparkles the research assistant

Lynne Quick, a palaeoecologist at Nelson Mandela University in Gqeberha, South Africa, snapped this image of four colleagues during fieldwork at Verlorenvlei on the west coast of the country in September 2022. Among them is Stella Mosher (back), a PhD student analysing the region's fire history. They are joined by Sparkles the inflatable unicorn, who provided "an excellent and hilarious stable floating platform to operate the freeze-corer from", Quick says. Mosher's research involves taking sediment samples from the lake bed, freezing them *in situ* to preserve their layers, and taking smaller razor-blade samples from the frozen tube to link charcoal occurrences with historical fire events in the region. Sparkles is yet to begin negotiations on her authorship rights.



STARS: HANNES KECK/ALFRED WEGENER INST.; UNICORN: LYNNEJ. QUICK; DUST STORM: NATALIA EGUEZ; CORAL: MORGAN BENNETT-SMITH



Dust storm

Clouds of ochre billow in the wind as a group of archaeologists re-enter a site after a dig in Züünkhangai, northwestern Mongolia, in June 2018. Local herders perceive open trenches as a bad omen, where animals can become stuck. So, after collecting data on nomadic people from the Bronze age (around 3000 BC), Natalia Égüez and her international colleagues covered the dig they'd started a month earlier. The wind made the task especially challenging, recalls Égüez, a geoarchaeologist at the University of La Laguna in Tenerife, Spain. "Sand was coming into our eyes, ears and mouths; we could not even see much as the wind speed was so high," she says.



Injecting coral

Marine microbiologist Raquel Peixoto is deep in concentration in this underwater shot, tending to the coral species that she studies at the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology in Thuwal, Saudi Arabia. Here in the Red Sea, she's applying a cocktail of bacteria to a reef — known as the Coral Probiotics Village in the lab — to study the symbiotic relationship between the two underwater life forms. The photo was taken in October 2021, and it's hot down there: the water temperature can reach up to 32 °C.

Photographer Morgan Bennett-Smith joined the university's Red Sea Research Center as a master's student in 2018, and has since moved to Boston University in Massachusetts as a PhD student. "But I still make trips to the Red Sea," he says, "In some ways, it's my home away from home."



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High above the pines

The green surface of California's Sequoia National Park dominates this landscape shot, captured by Anthony Ambrose, co-founder of the Ancient Forest Society, a non-profit organization based in California that researches the impact of environmental change on ancient trees and forests. Ambrose took this photo in summer 2017, of volunteer Ethan Gicker collecting treetop foliage for a range of analyses to be completed back in the lab, 443 kilometres away and 60 metres down.

Ambrose, a plant physiological ecologist, says the sequoia they're sampling is more than 2,000 years old. "It's amazing to be that high up," he says. "You feel small and insignificant in the presence of a living organism so large and old. You don't get that on the ground."

Community prize: Poster problems

The judges decided on an additional prize after seeing this image, which will resonate with many scientists familiar with the issue of folds in fabric posters at international conferences. Paper posters are unwieldy at an airport, so many turn to fabric as a solution, folding it among their clothes. Photographer Michela Milani and colleague Elena Barbon, both postdoctoral researchers at the San Raffaele Telethon Institute for Gene Therapy in Milan, Italy, soon discovered that fabric posters came with their own problems when they arrived at the European Society of Gene and Cell Therapy meeting in Edinburgh, UK, in October 2022. Despite this hiccup, the conference went well, says Milani, who was presenting work on gene transfer into stem cells through a viral vector. "The poster session was great, I had a lot of interactions with the other attendees and in general there was a lot of interest."



Jack Leeming is an Editor at *Nature* in London.

TREES: ANTHONY AMBROSE; IRONING: MICHELA MILANI

Correction

This Careers feature misdated the Bronze Age as being in around 5000 BC, rather than around 3000 BC. It also erroneously stated that Morgan Bennett-Smith was a master's student in Peixoto's lab; he was a student at the same institution, but not in the same lab. The article also misspelt the name of Bing Lin's co-manager. She is Iris Ruby Fox-foot, not Iris Ruby Foxtrot. Finally, Lin did not capture the image while on a teaching fellowship, but rather during his time as a field manager in Ethiopia, and he is now in the fourth year of his PhD, not his third.