

2008 Pro-Tour of Nature Photography: Coastal Bend of Texas

Steady...Focus...Click...

Landowners and Pro Photographers Team up to Shoot for Conservation

article by Diane Smith

The inaugural 2006 Pro-Tour of Nature Photography, held last year in the Texas Hill Country, was a tremendous success. Images for Conservation Fund (ICF) has announced the 2008 Pro-Tour of Nature Photography for the Coastal Bend region of South Texas in April 2008. The Pro-Tour is sponsored by ICF, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization fostering conservation of wildlife through sustainable development using the power of nature photography. This international professional photo tournament offers an unprecedented \$160,000 in total prize money and is the richest competition of its kind in the world.

The Pro-Tour will select 20 landowners from applicants representing an 18-county area in the Coastal Bend of Texas, then randomly match those landowners with 20 international professional nature photographers for an intensive, world-class tournament that will take place April 1 through April 30, 2008.

The goal of Images for Conservation Fund is to create sustainable development of rural economies through the creation and prosperity of the photo nature-tourism industry. Nature photography has the unique ability to preserve habitat permanently by making it profitable. People around the world love to travel and fast-disappearing natural settings are increasingly popular destinations. At the same time, digital cameras and the Internet provide quick and simple access to exciting photography. It's all about capturing the fleeting moment while savoring the great outdoors.

Patterned after major organized competitions such as golf's PGA and tournament fishing, the ICF Pro-Tour of Nature Photography seeks to play a major role in economies around the world by bringing international attention to photo nature-tourism opportunities in select regions such as the Coastal Bend of Texas. Economic potential increases value, providing critical incentives to preserve native habi-



Raccoon, photographed by John Hendrickson/Rosetta Ranch



Photographer John Hendrickson of Clipper Mills, California, with landowner Robert Earl Keen, in hat, one of the 2006 ICF photographer/landowner teams. Photo courtesy John Goodspeed, San Antonio Express.

tats. Suddenly, rare and endangered species become important resources.

"The Pro-Tour is a great way for private landowners to learn about nature photography and its important potential for ranch income diversification," said

Katharine Armstrong, a TWA Director and South Texas landowner, ICF Board member, and former Chairperson of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission.

The application process for professional photographers and landowners is

underway. The 2008 Pro-Tour of Nature Photography seeks landowners with a minimum of 1,000 acres of wildlife habitat partially or wholly in any of the following 18 counties: Duval, McMullen, Jim Wells, Live Oak, Kleberg, Nueces, San Patricio, Bee, Refugio, Goliad, Calhoun, Victoria, Dewitt, Jackson, Lavaca, Matagorda, Wharton and Colorado.

Each team will submit a 60-image portfolio, and each landowner will receive a copy of the team's portfolio. Winning portfolios and images will receive cash awards to be shared by the teammates. A collection of outstanding images will be featured in a commemorative coffee-table book and a traveling exhibit for special venues and major sponsors.

"There are approximately 23 million Americans who photograph wildlife every year," said TWA Member John F. Martin, chairman and founder of ICF. "Through the Pro-Tour of Nature Photography, ICF intends to help create a booming industry where private landowners lease top-quality wildlife photo settings on their land. Lack of ways to create income from land ownership is one of the major reasons family lands are being divided and sold, which in turn is the primary reason for habitat loss."

For applications or more information, call Diane Smith, Executive Director, Images for Conservation Fund (210) 212-5660 or visit the ICF website www.imagesforconservation.org. 🦌



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Photographer Sean Fitzgerald of Dallas, Texas (l), with TWA Member Bob Petersen, a landowner in Kendall County (r). Photo courtesy Larry Jones

Important ICF Dates

August 31, 2007

Landowner and Photographer
 Applications Due

November 15, 2007

Landowner and Photographer
 Participants Announced

March 28, 2008

Launch Party
 Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Center,
 Tio and Janell Kleberg Wildlife Research
 Park, TAMU Kingsville

March 28-30, 2008

Symposium Pro-Am Photographer Work-
 shops Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research
 Center, Tio and Janell Kleberg Wildlife
 Research Park, TAMU Kingsville

April 1-30, 2008

The 2008 Pro-Tour Competition Period

June 25-29, 2008

Judging

June 28, 2008

Meet the Judges Party at Twin Oaks
 Ranch, hosted by Burke Enterprises
 September 2008 Awards Ceremony

Spring 2009

Book Dedication Party