

Published November 25th, 2020

Miramonte student strives to 'create curiosity' through the lens

By Diane Claytor



It's often said that a picture is worth a thousand words. If someone wanted to use words to describe photographs taken by Miramonte High School junior Thomas Edwardson, "breathtaking," "beautiful," "awesome," and "unbelievable" would likely be the ones most frequently uttered.

The 17-year-old, who has only been a serious nature and wildlife photographer for approximately four years, has an incredible eye and true gift for capturing the ordinary in a unique and creative way.

Edwardson credits the movie "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" as the catalyst for his interest in photography. "There's this one scene in the movie," he remembers, "where there's a photographer waiting and waiting to get a shot of a snow leopard. He has all this amazing gear. But surprisingly, once the animal appeared, he didn't

take the picture, saying that he just enjoyed the moment he shared in the presence of the beautiful animal." This resonated with Edwardson, who has long had a fascination for wildlife, nature and conservation. This may have started from the many nature shows he watched as a boy, or perhaps the weekends spent going to different zoos.

Borrowing his mother's camera one day, Edwardson went for a walk and took his first nature photo: a picture of moss. That was the beginning of his journey. Photos of flowers, leaves, bugs, birds, plants and animals followed. He put together his first book of beautiful photos, "Fragile Beauty," filled with pictures of living things found in nature.

He studied on his own, learning about the camera, techniques, lighting and the surrounding ecosystem. He took classes and workshops. "I really want to give credit to one man in particular," Edwardson states, "National Geographic photographer Frans Lanting," who served as the publication's photographer-in-residence and whose incredible nature photos have been featured in numerous publications. Lanting, based in Santa Cruz, holds regular workshops for small groups of photographers, most of whom are professionals. Edwardson, who calls Lanting his mentor, says "getting to work with him has been amazing. He has been my inspiration."

Edwardson likes to take pictures from different, but revealing, perspectives. "I want to create curiosity. I like to get up close to something to show its true beauty because I don't think most people typically look hard enough for that," he explains. "I strive to create dialog and encourage others to preserve, appreciate and take care of our natural world.

"During these challenging times of climate change and habitat loss," Edwardson continues, "I hope to create curiosity about our wild and natural spaces. I hope to be able to capture what I can of the beauty of our delicate ecosystem and share my appreciation for the special place in which we live."

A serious photographer must have a considerable amount of patience because so much time is spent waiting for that perfect photo opportunity. Edwardson does. "One time in the Truckee area," his mother, Antonia, recalls, "Thomas stood in the middle of Webber Lake, chest deep, for two hours, waiting for the ospreys to come down and pick up the fish. He got the picture but I just kept thinking, 'Is that camera insured?'"

And like that photographer in "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," Edwardson admits to having had times when he's waited to take a picture, only to let the opportunity go by as he simply appreciated the beauty of his subject.

A trip to the Santa Cruz area to see the forests that were burned by the recent fires resulted in incredible photographs showing both the devastating effects of wildfires and the resilience of nature. "I got a picture of green shoots peeking through the burnt out plants and trees," Edwardson says. "In the contrast of the green against the blackened trees, you can see how nature is resilient and how life always finds a way."

Edwardson and his brother, Will, a Miramonte freshman (and, according to Edwardson, an insect fanatic), both volunteer at the Lindsey Wildlife Experience and the Oakland Zoo, sharing their passion for nature, wildlife protection and conservation.

Although still in high school, Edwardson's dream is to one day become a professional nature photographer. It appears he's well on his way!

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA