# Photo Contest Encourages Educators, Students to use Photography

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# Photo Contest Encourages Educators, Students to Use Photography

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**We are excited to formally announce in this issue of** *BioScience* the three winners of the Faces of Biology: Teaching and Learning Photo Contest. This is the second year that the American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS) has sponsored the contest. We received several dozen entries from educators, researchers, and students. The entries featured educators in formal and informal settings and students of all ages learning about and exploring the natural world.

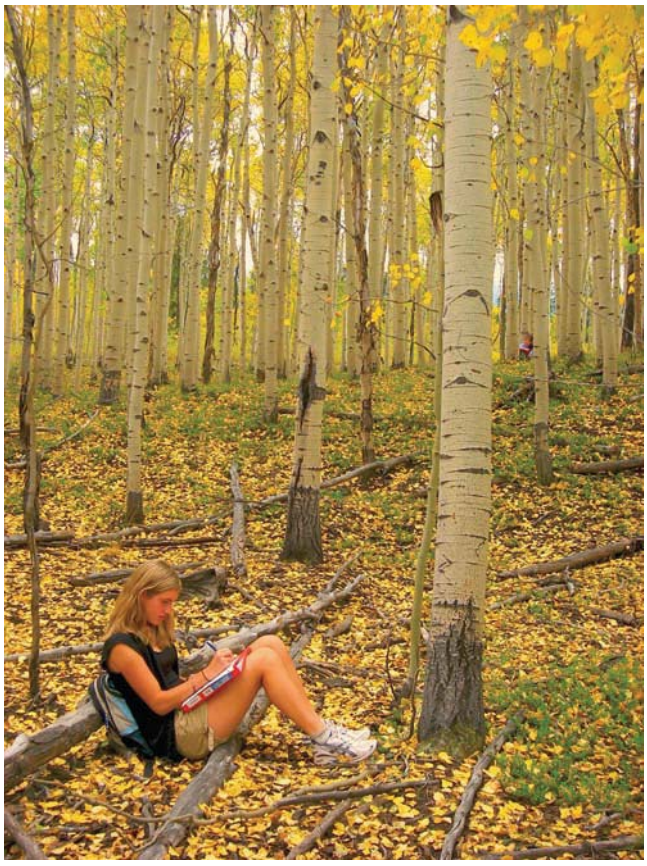
The grand-prize winner of the contest is featured on the cover of this issue of *BioScience*. All winners received a 1-year membership in AIBS, including a subscription to *BioScience*. The grand-prize winner also received $250.

AIBS sees the contest as an opportunity to showcase the varied forms that science education can take. The photos will be used in AIBS's publications and reports to help the public and policymakers to better understand new directions in science education, such as inquiry-based learning.

The contest also serves as a reminder of the value of using photographs to develop students' observation skills, which are essential for engaging in scientific discovery and experimentation. Taking photographs is just one of many ways to help students at all education levels focus on a specific object or setting and then make connections to their research questions. Although some activities and laboratory exercises suggest that students draw what they see, using a camera to capture an image allows the students to record what is truly there in front of them. This permits them to record observations without becoming frustrated by the challenges that they may face in an attempt to sketch an image by hand.

Cameras are becoming ubiquitous, and the presence of cell phones and tablets in the classroom lets students make use of these tools for educational purposes. For some students, the act of taking photographs alone can build their observational skills; however, most students will require guidance from their teachers to frame images and to explore more than the surface features of the resulting photo. Students can learn to describe, compare, measure, tag, catalog, and share the images they take in order to explore and use the data that they have collected to test hypotheses.

For students who have visual impairments, there is a growing suite of technological tools that allow photographs to be "seen" through tactile graphics. High-quality braille printers and software can even create representations of color distinctions and other aspects of the image. These tools can make the images accessible by changing the height



***Audrey Kruse, a graduate student at Northern Arizona University, won first place in the Faces of Biology: Teaching and Learning Photo Contest. The image shows students observing an aspen grove near Turquoise Lake, in Colorado. Kruse took the photograph when she was a science teacher at the High Mountain Institute. Photograph: Audrey Kruse.***

***Brittany Barker's grand-prize-winning photo appears on the cover of this issue. The photo shows students from Belen Middle School measuring a Texas horned lizard found near the Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge, in New Mexico.***

***Evan Eifler, an undergraduate student at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, won second place in the photo contest. The photo was taken at the De Hoop Nature Reserve, in South Africa, where Eifler was studying abroad. In the photo, his classmates are surveying the plant and animal communities of the intertidal zone. Photograph: Evan Eifler.***

> "The virtue of the camera is not the power it has to transform the photographer into an artist, but the impulse it gives him to keep on looking."
>
> **Brooks Atkinson, *Once Around the Sun***
>
> "While there is perhaps a province in which the photograph can tell us nothing more than what we see with our own eyes, there is another in which it proves to us how little our eyes permit us to see."
>
> **Dorothea Lange**

of the dot on the basis of the color in the photograph or by using sound to describe what is present.

Incorporating photography into the science curriculum can open the opportunity for students to engage in citizen science. Students can share photographs tagged with spatial and temporal data to monitor phenology on local or regional levels. Projects such as the Encyclopedia of Life invite students, researchers, and the public to engage in the curation of biodiversity information by sharing photos, videos, and data about the millions of species on Earth. The Lost Ladybug Project (*www.lostladybug.org*) is another citizen science effort, which seeks help from the general public to determine how the species distribution of American ladybugs is changing. Researchers at Cornell University review photos of ladybugs submitted by individuals around the country to locate rare species.

Photography is just one of many tools that can be used to make observations about the natural world. We hope that you are inspired by the Faces of Biology contest winners and consider using photographs yourself to explore the world around you!

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