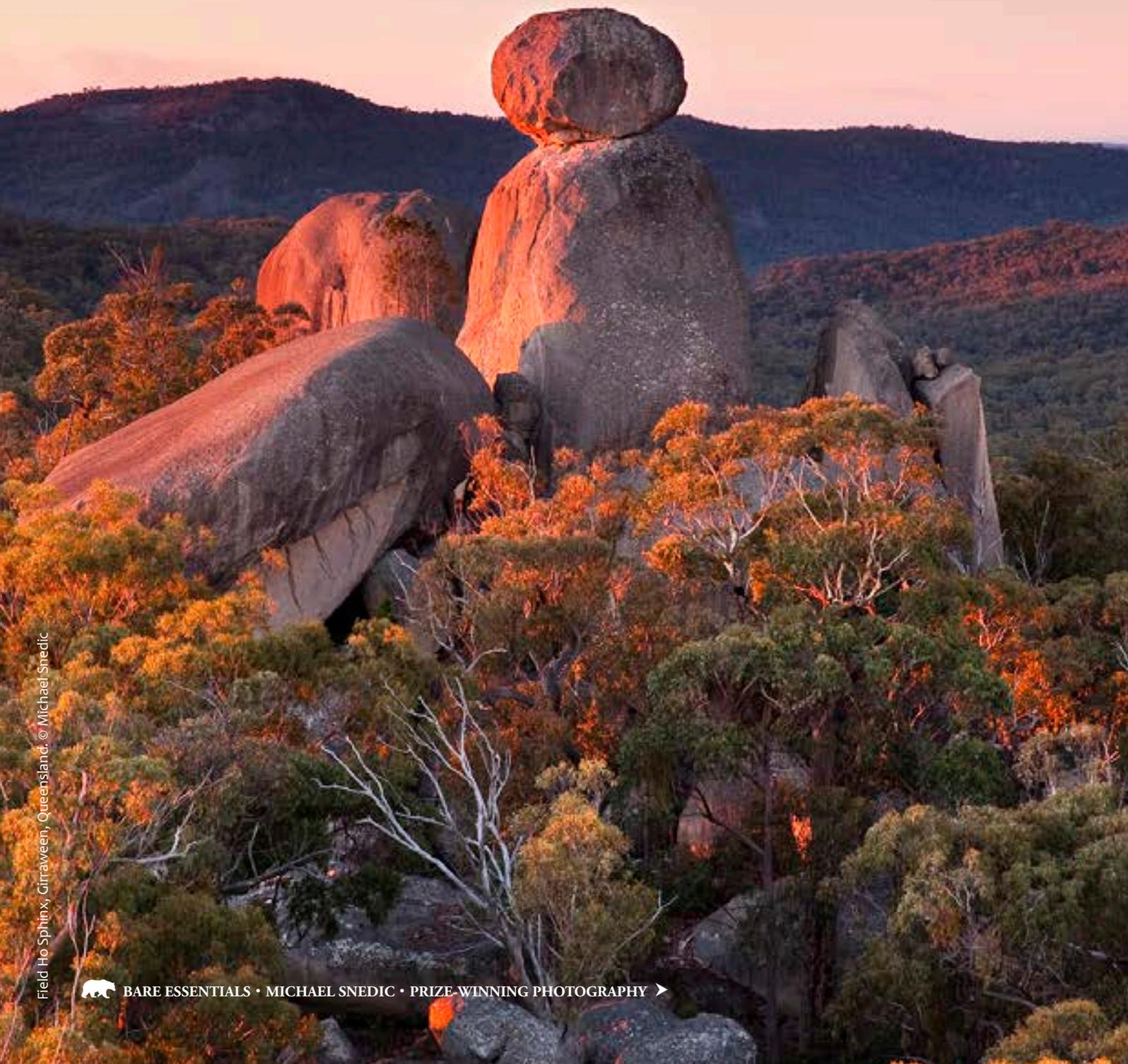


# Wildnature

PHOTO EXPEDITIONS

For *creative explorers* nature is the ultimate inspiration. A rich world of colour and fascinating characters which stoke the imagination—but the skill then lies in capturing an image that tells a story. To master the skill you need to *practice*, to share the story you need a *platform*.





*Focus on the eyes* if you have an animal looking into the camera, focusing on the eyes is very important.

TL: Red-eyed Green Tree Frogs. TR: Rainforest fungi. B: Green Tree Python, Australia. © Michael Snedic



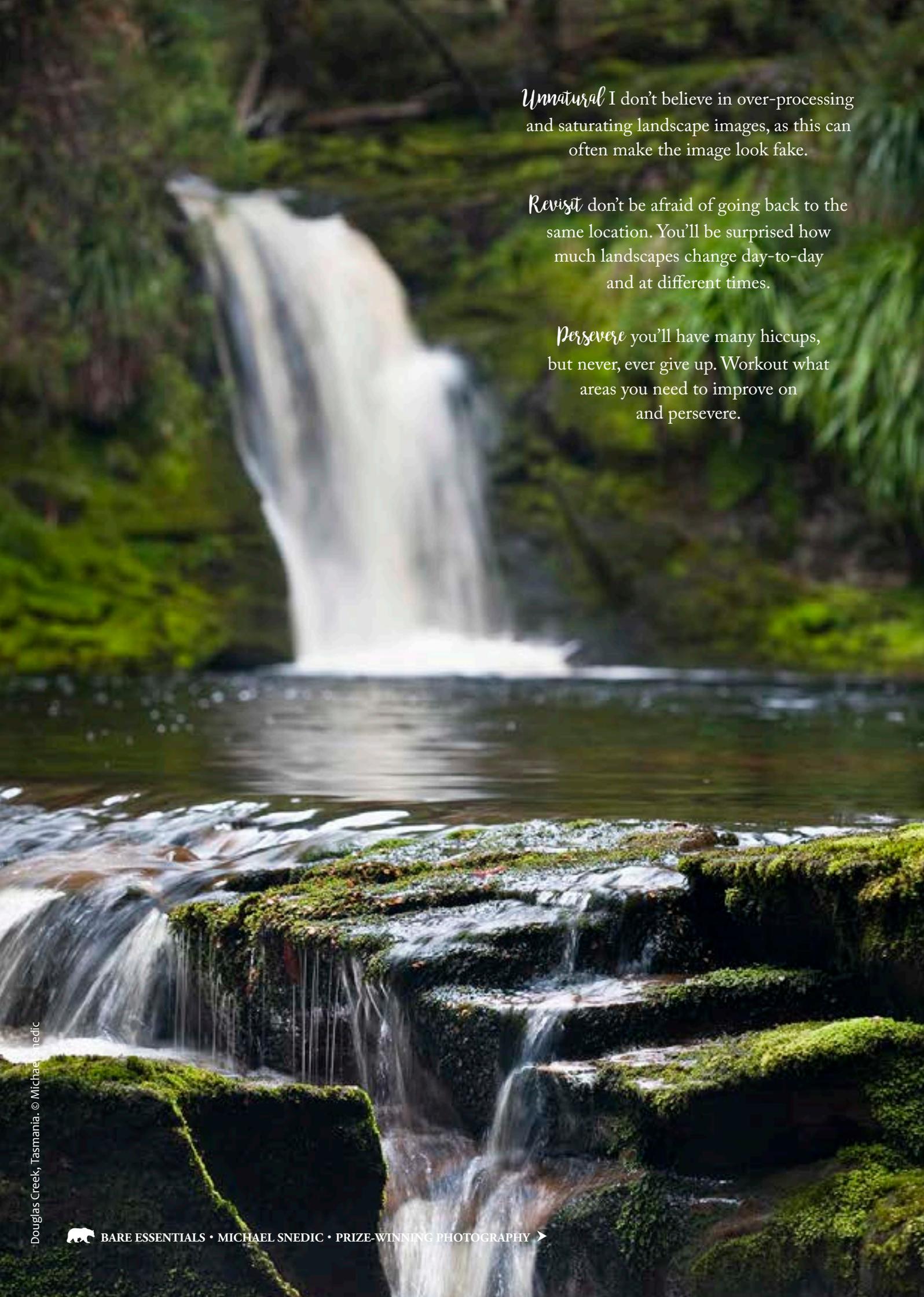
*Background* make sure there's nothing to distract from the actual image.

**TL:** Aurora Australis, Freycinet Coast, Tasmania. **TR:** Uluru, Australia. **B:** Eastern Pygmy Possum, Queensland. © Michael Snedic



*Behaviour* you need to spend time and observe wildlife, to see if there's a repetitive pattern happening. Then you will be ready to capture the image when this behaviour appears.

**TL:** Polar bear, Arctic. **TR:** Humpback whale. **B:** Osprey. © Michael Snedic



*Unnatural* I don't believe in over-processing and saturating landscape images, as this can often make the image look fake.

*Revisit* don't be afraid of going back to the same location. You'll be surprised how much landscapes change day-to-day and at different times.

*Persevere* you'll have many hiccups, but never, ever give up. Workout what areas you need to improve on and persevere.



A prize-winning photo needs that 'something special', so when you look at it, you instantly feel that 'wow' factor. It's a special moment that's been captured forever. This is what I regularly tell my photo workshop participants when they crave the answer to the perfect photo.

For the next generation of Australian photographers, getting their work out there and recognised in a mainstream space is often the end goal—a great way to achieve this is to land your first magazine cover photo.

This year I'm pleased to be on the judging panel once again for the **Nature Conservancy Australia** Photo Competition—an excellent platform for the fortunate winner to get their first big break in the industry.

I have been a photographer for more than 20 years and teaching photography and running workshops for 14 years. My company is called **WildNature Photo Expeditions** and I present short and extended photo workshops and tours, both here and overseas. I have seen a lot of photographic work over this time, including judging many photo competitions and have gained a lot of knowledge and experience from this. It has made it a lot easier for me to identify elements that make a photo unique.

Wildlife and nature photography is particularly tricky to get all the pieces aligned. You need to choose the best orientation (whether it be landscape or portrait), try and capture the perfect lighting, and make sure the image is clear and sharp. For a cover shot, you usually need to have room at the top of the image for the name of the magazine, as well as room for text in the lower spaces. Photographers often forget that all of this needs to be considered at the time when you are taking the shot, and not in post-production. If you've got an image that completely fills the cover from top to bottom, that's not necessarily going to work. You don't want it to look cramped.

When you've landed that potential cover shot, there's no way to explain it, but you just *know*. For a landscape image, it could be the sublime lighting created by mist, an incredible ray of light in a rainforest, or an Aurora in full colour. There's so much competition out there that an image needs to have that x factor and it needs to be striking.

An example of photographing that special once-in-a-lifetime behaviour is last year's winning shot from The Nature Conservancy Australia's Photo Competition. It was a split-second moment captured of an egret having just caught a fish. Lots of preparation, patience and the correct camera settings helped Roy Arthur get the perfect shot.

Great shots don't happen overnight. I took a photo a while ago of an osprey flying straight towards the camera, with a fish in its talons. That image took years for me to capture and it was an extremely special moment that I will never forget. The best shots are often captured in split-second moments that no matter how hard you try, you would have no luck replicating. Knowing your photographic settings and camera inside and out, is also important. It all needs to fall into place to capture that defining moment.

I travel across Australia and the world with my company, **WildNature Photo Expeditions**, presenting professional photography workshops and tours. In Australia, I have three favourite locations to photograph and present photo tours—Tasmania, Norfolk Island and Lord Howe Island. I love the natural beauty of these places and it gives people the chance to get away from the city and unwind. They are all extremely photogenic with lots of birds and wildlife, as well as stunning land and seascapes.

Overseas, I present photo expeditions to places such as Antarctica, the Sub Antarctic, the Russian Far East, India, Galápagos, Peru/Amazon, Africa and more. I have only just recently returned from an incredible photo expedition to Svalbard, in the Arctic Circle. There were so many highlights, with one of the best moments seeing polar bears leaping across the ice, close to the ship.

Last year it was very rewarding seeing so many entries in The Nature Conservancy Australia's Photo Competition, especially the quality of work from around the country. I enjoyed working closely with an organisation that focuses so heavily on conservation – something very close to my heart. It was a lot of work, but a very rewarding experience. The Nature Conservancy is such a wonderful organisation, and using photography is a great way to spread the message of environmental protection far and wide.

The connection between photography, conservation and environmental appreciation is found in the simplicity of enjoying the great outdoors, while capturing great imagery. Being able to photograph places across Australia and share these with the public, allows us to show why our natural beauty is worth saving and protecting. Parks and bushland should be for people to enjoy—we should take the time to appreciate the tranquillity, the birds and fresh air.

Every year the images are of a higher standard of quality, meaning each year the bar is set higher. I'm looking forward to judging, as well as working with the other judges and talented photographers, Ben Goode and Esther Beaton.

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Professional wildlife and nature photographer and tutor, **Michael Snedic** has over 20 years experience snapping the wonderful natural world around us, and he's been teaching and running photography workshops and tours in Australia and overseas for the last 14 years. [wildnaturephotoexpeditions.com](http://wildnaturephotoexpeditions.com) Founded in 1951, the **Nature Conservancy** is the world's leading conservation organization. View images from the 2016 Photo Contest at: [nature.org](http://nature.org)