For our fall photo contest, we made your job easier, and ours harder.

We asked for photographs of babies and pets for this year's contest, and we received 166 entries.

The volume of photographs was challenging enough. But the subject matter made our decisions all the more difficult. Who could possibly vote to ax that adorable little tyke? (Well, aside from mean ol' Jeff Ignatius ... .)

It must be noted that the cuteness of the photo subject did not factor into our judging. If you entered and are not among the winners, rest assured: Your child, dog, cat, snake, or monkey is absolutely precious.

But that alone wasn't enough. We were looking instead for strong composition, emphasis on telling detail, appropriate and/or interesting lighting, and above all expressiveness. All of these photographs share one thing: They distill and reveal character and personality.

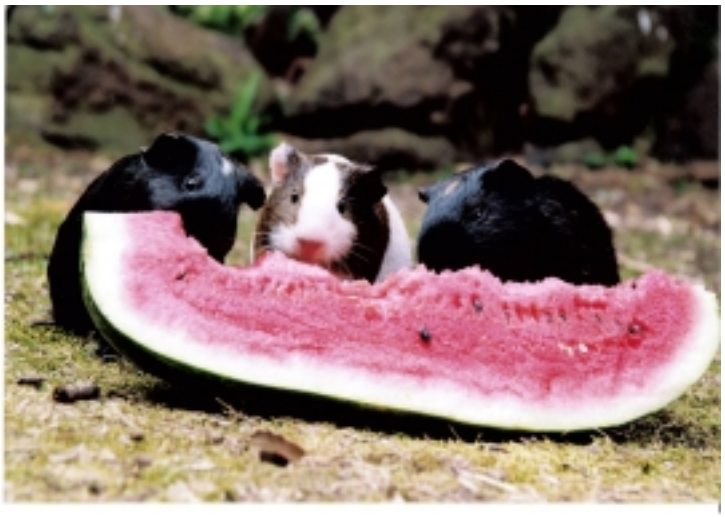
A selection of the 13 winners can be found in these pages. All the winning photos can be found at RCReader.com.

We decided not to award first, second, and third prizes or honorable mentions with this contest. Seriously: They're kids and pets; who can choose a favorite?

(Cover photo by Susan Mohr Krupke)

Teresa Ousley

I shot this photograph of newborn Preston Tennant - son of Aaron and Erin Tennant of Orion, Illinois. Preston was born six weeks premature and was photographed on his actual due date.

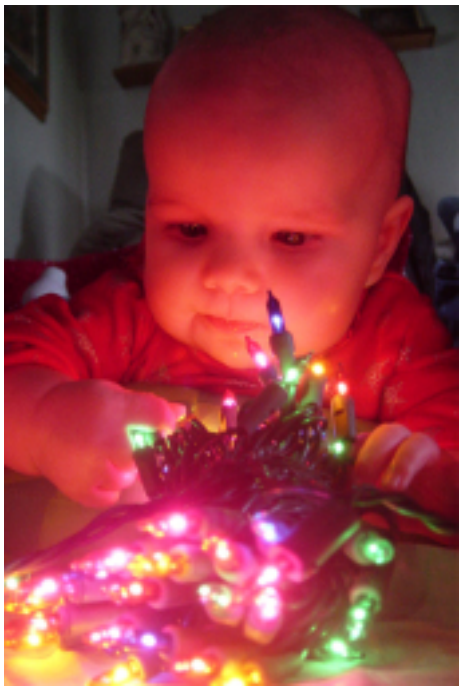


Suzanne Kiss von Soly

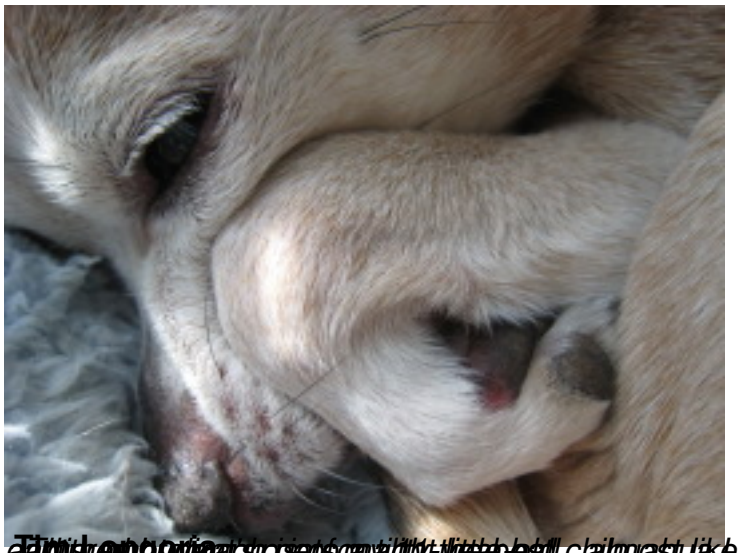
They were my guinea pigs Oakey, Doakey, and Piglet (in middle) - dad, mum, and baby - who lived to old ages and loved eating watermelon in the summertime.

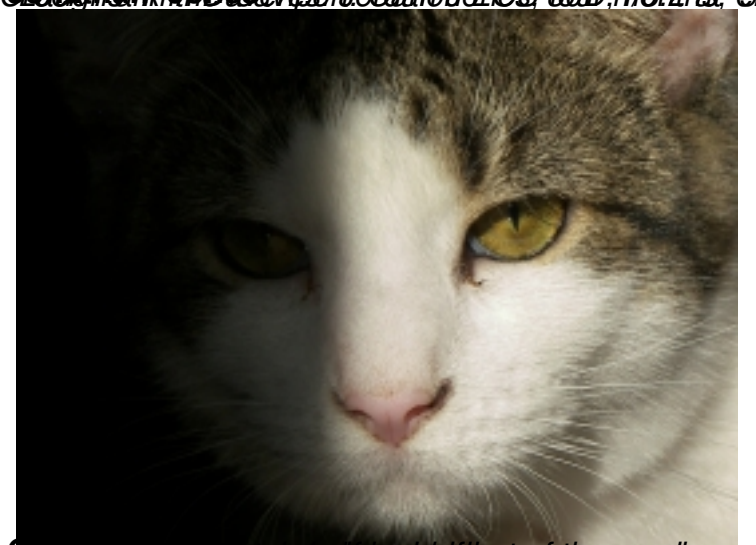
Brandy Ramsey

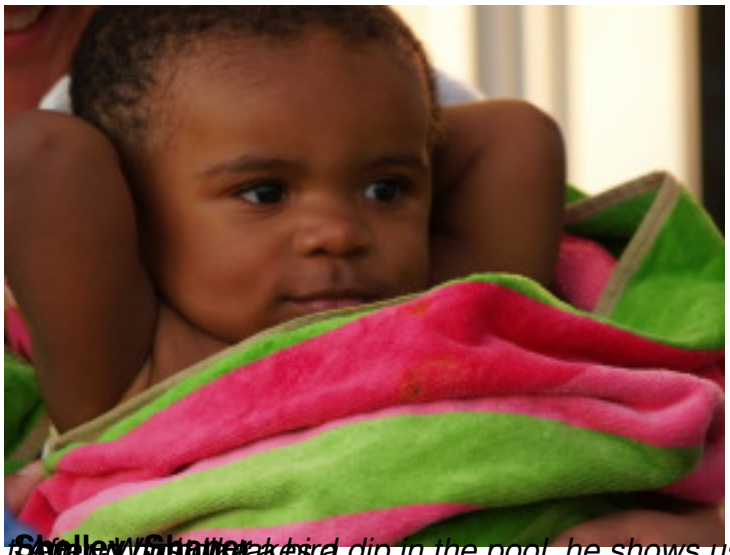
I took this picture of Imhotep using just a disposable camera in natural light. Sadly, Imhotep passed away earlier this year. We're happy to have him memorialized in this manner.



Melissa Ware





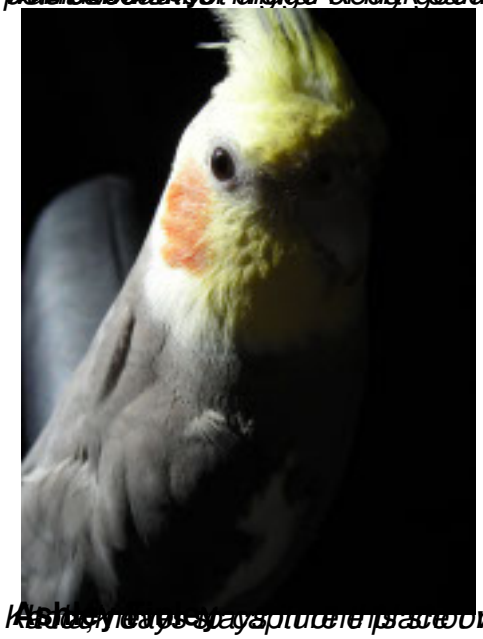


Shelley Shatter

Shelley Shatter takes a bird dip in the pool, he shows us his muscles in his own cool way: He flaps their wings like a bird.

Tita Hanh

Tita Hanh used a Kodak camera. The baby (Ashley) was captured with simple, no flash photo taken in a dark room.



Ashley Hayes

Ashley says she took the photo in a low lighting. The subject, my male cockatiel Kiwi, loves to pose for the camera.

Tiffanie Weaver

Tony Logan