

People's Choice

WINNER – Mauro de Bettio, Italy



The People's Choice public vote is your chance to be a judge. The online vote is open to everyone. The winner – depicting an endangered pangolin, rescued from the illegal wildlife trade in Nigeria, with its devoted protector, was chosen by you and this year we received:

19,895 votes

Mauro De Bettio is an internationally recognized photographer and storyteller whose work captures the heart and soul of some of the most remote and complex corners of the world. Driven by passion and guided by an unwavering commitment to telling the stories of those who often go unheard, Mauro's journey has taken him to places of breathtaking beauty, raw reality, and intense emotion.

Among his most significant works are his powerful documentation of acid attack survivors in Bangladesh, the brutal reality inside Manila's prisons, the stark contrasts of life in Afghanistan, the dreams of ballerinas in Africa's largest slum, the struggles of sex workers in Asia's biggest slum.

Mauro describes his winning image: *In the bustling markets of Lagos, Nigeria, a man stands as a beacon of hope, courage, and compassion, proudly balancing a pangolin atop his head—a poignant symbol of resilience. This pangolin was rescued from the illegal wildlife trade, an industry that has made Nigeria a hub for trafficking. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) highlights Nigeria as a key exporter of pangolin scales, fueling a multimillion-dollar black market. Locally hunted for food and trafficked internationally for traditional medicine and fashion, pangolins face grave threats. This man's act underscores the urgent need to protect these gentle creatures, whose survival is increasingly endangered by human greed and exploitation.*

This is the only category in which the TPOTY judges do not select the winner. Instead, some 200 finalist images appeared on the TPOTY website and were voted for by the general public.

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