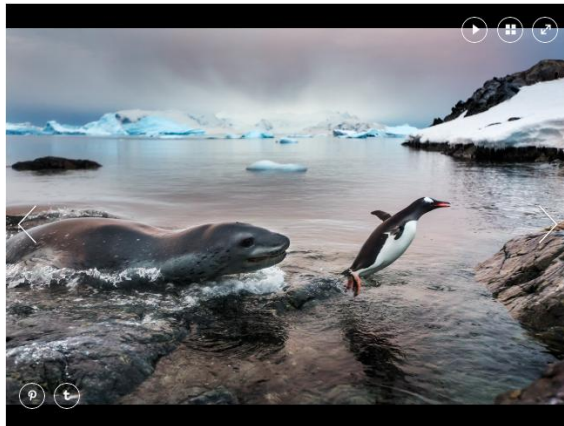




15 Incredible Photos That'll Remind You to Be Awed by Planet Earth

By Nadia Drake

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Grand Prize Winner: "The Luckiest Penguin"

Gentoo penguin (*Pygoscelis papua*) and leopard seal (*Hydrurga leptonyx*)

Location: Cuverville Island, Antarctica

Photographer: [Paul Souders](#) (Seattle, Washington)

Late last month, a northern white rhinoceros died in Kenya. Now, there are just [six of these animals left on Earth](#). One of the photos in the gallery above documents the measures being taken to protect these nearly extinct animals.

Another photo captures the astonishing moment before a wildebeest plunges into a stream in Kenya's Maasai Mara National Park. And another image chronicles the unlikely escape of a penguin from the looming jaws of a leopard seal. From the ethereal colors of a ghostly aurora to the undersea adventures of a young kid in the Philippines, these photos – and the others in this gallery – are some of the winners of the [California Academy of Sciences'](#) annual BigPicture competition.

[The contest](#) challenges photographers to capture the complexities and the beauty of life on planet Earth. Nine judges evaluated more than 6,300 entries before selecting the final 45 winners. The submission period for next year's contest will run from January 1 through March 15.

From orangutans to foxes to a minuscule figure in an enormous cave, [see all the 2014 winners here](#).

<http://www.wired.com/2014/11/calacademy-bigpicture-photos-planet-earth/>