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Shark shot snaps top spot in the wild show

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Wildlife Photographer of the Year at the Natural History Museum

JUST beneath the surface of the ocean, off the eastern coast of South Africa, two vast whaler sharks burst through a tight, defensive ball formation of sardines, the scene illuminated with rays of water filtered sunlight. Capturing the violence of the hunting act, it is a worthy winner for Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2004, Doug Perrine. The 90 images in this annual exhibition were whittled down from 18,500 entries, from both amateurs and professionals. They record everything from raw animal power to the most delicate behaviour. Particularly disturbing is an image of an Asian black bear trapped in a tiny cage in Hanoi, Vietnam, so its bile can be harvested for local medicinal treatments. Pushed up against the bars of the cage, its look intimates a terrible knowingness.

Until 17 April 2005 (020 7942 5011). The full version of this review appeared in main editions of yesterday's Evening Standard.