

City life

Edited by Isabelle Aron
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The secret life of mice

How much do you know about tube mice? We chat to Sam Rowley, winner of the Wildlife Photographer of the Year Lumix People's Choice award, about documenting squeakers scrapping on the Underground

IF YOU HAVE mice in your kitchen, chances are, you'll know about it. But the mice that scuttle across London's tube platforms can go largely unnoticed. Photographer Sam Rowley was inspired to document the underground world of rodents after a text from a pal. 'My friend drunkenly sent me a picture of some mice by her feet on the platform,' he explains. 'I was like, Nicole, you've hit on something here.'

Rowley visited multiple locations every night for a week in search of the perfect shot. At first, he wanted to leave his camera on the platform to capture the critters but quickly realised that leaving expensive equipment on the floor attracted a lot of baffled stares from commuters.

Instead, he opted for a handheld camera, which he used to get on the mice's level, literally. 'I decided that lying down was the most intimate way of getting shots of the mice because you see the world from their level, which adds a lot of intrigue and depth to the photo,' says Rowley.

One night, he saw two circling a pile of crumbs. They fought it out in a dust-up that only lasted a few seconds before they scurried away. The resulting image, 'Station Squabble' (above), won the Wildlife Photographer of the Year Lumix People's Choice award last week and is currently on display at the Natural History Museum. Rowley wanted people to consider the wildlife that's on their doorstep and present it in

a different light, exposing the daily challenges that mice face. 'I guess most people when they're on the tube just see them as pests, but I think it's interesting to see the turmoil and desperation that's down there,' Rowley says.

His affinity with the world of underground rodents didn't end with the photograph. Rowley still looks out for mice on the tube platforms every day. 'I'll always go to the end of the platform and peer into all the little crevices,' he says. 'Once you spend that much time with an animal it's hard to visit their home and revert to the way you were before.' ■ *Stephanie Phillips*

→ 'Wildlife Photographer of the Year'. Natural History Museum.
⊖ South Kensington. Until 31 May. £13.95.