



MCC COMPETITION

GUIDELINE TO THE RULES

Please read these Competition Guidelines before submitting your entry.

PICTORIAL COMPETITION

There are four Pictorial competitions held each year, two in the fall and two in the winter/spring.

At the end of the season, an Image of the Year Competition is held for the General, Creative, and Photojournalism/Street categories.

Creative Category (CR)

The Creative category, designated as (CR), has been combined. It includes both Altered Reality and Enhanced Reality images. If you combine multiple images, you can add (Composite) to end of title to clarify that the image is a creative composite.

Please note: a single (that is, not composite) abstract image will be classified as a Pictorial General category, not Creative.

Photojournalism/Street Category (PJ)

Photojournalism consists of an image that tells a story or documents people affected by an event or a situation. The image should clearly make one point or convey a message. Good composition would significantly enhance the conveying of the story.

Unlike Street Photography, Photojournalism is **not** about a **non-newsworthy** event.

Street Photography captures subjects in natural, unposed moments, often without their awareness. It focuses on spontaneous interactions and genuine expressions, rather than staged poses or directed actions. It does not necessitate the presence of a street or even the urban environment.

Though people usually feature directly, Street Photography might be absent of people and can be of an object or environment where the image projects a decidedly human character in facsimile or aesthetic.

Unlike Photojournalism, Street Photography is **not** about a newsworthy event.

Post-Processing Restrictions for PJ

For both Photojournalistic and Street photography only **global** post-processing techniques are permitted, such as tone, exposure, or colour adjustments. You CANNOT make any *selective* adjustments.

For example, if the exposure of the image hides detail because it is too dark in one area then it is permitted to raise the exposure level *of the entire image*. It is not permitted to select just the darkest area and apply the tool to that area alone.

You are not allowed to add, remove, or clone anything in the image.

Cropping is permitted.

General Category (PG)

All images which do not fall into the Creative or Photojournalism/Street categories may be submitted in General. Images using HDR alone, infrared, portraits, abstracts, etc. are acceptable in the General category.

NATURE COMPETITION

There are four Nature competitions each year, one in the fall and three in the winter/spring.

At the end of the season, an Image of the Year Competition is held for the Botany, General, Ornithology, and Zoology categories.

While Nature images should be technically and compositionally strong, the **nature value** is very important. Images which show behaviour (e.g. feeding, grooming), adaptation (e.g. camouflage), clear geological formations or strata, star/galaxy position in the sky above a landscape) and so on, will be appreciated by competition judges and score higher.

Botany Category (B)

This category includes wildflowers, trees, plants, and fungi. Images can feature them growing in the wild or cultivated in botanical gardens (as long as cultivated plants are presented in their natural, botanical form).

General Category (NG)

This category covers natural phenomena that don't fit into the other three categories such as landscapes or seascapes, rocks, fossils, astronomy, etc.

Ornithology Category (O)

This category is restricted to birds. Images may feature undomesticated birds in their natural habitat, or in places such as a zoo, game farm, refuge, or aquarium as long as no hand-of-man is present (see below).

Zoology Category (Z)

This category is for images of mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and insects. These can be photographed in their natural environment, in refuges, or in zoos as long as no hand-of-man is present (see below).

Important Rules for Nature Images

In the Nature Competitions, images showing any trace of 'hand-of-man' will be disqualified. Specifically:

- **NO** roads, houses, fences, electrical wires, mown grass, tool-cut wood, or humans
- **NO** horticultural varieties of plants (cultivated plants) such as tulips or daffodils, or still life studies (not found in nature)
- **NO** cage bars, concrete walls, mown grass, zoo straw, animal feed, bedding, etc.
- **NO** domestic animals (dogs, cats, livestock), feral animals, or mounted/museum specimens in the Zoology category.

Exceptions:

An exception is made for species that are commonly associated with man-made features, such as pelicans on pier posts, storks on tall man-made structures and barn owls in barns. Scientific bands on birds are permitted but not jesses.

Plants that are typically found in the wild, but which are photographed in, for example, a botanical garden, are acceptable as long as no hand-of-man is present.

Please note that MCC will be using the CAPA rules for the hand-of-man, but only for the Ornithology and Zoology categories. CAPA Nature competitions may have a 10% hand-of-man allowance.

Image Titles

Titles should be informative and concise. Where possible, the title should name the subject and tell a story or provide valuable nature information. You can include the scientific Latin name of the plant or animal in parentheses after the common name, but this is not required. Only include what you have observed, not what you imagine might be happening. A pictorial title is not acceptable. For example: "Heliconius Butterfly Drinking Nectar.jpg" or "Tiger Longwing Butterfly Drinking Nectar.jpg," or "Longwing Butterfly on Flower.jpg" and not "Butterfly.jpg."

Baiting

The MCC prohibits the baiting of birds or animals for the purpose of creating a photo opportunity. Images made using baiting are ineligible for competition. If your image's subject appears to have been baited, you must include a note confirming that neither you nor anyone else present used baiting.

IMAGE SUBMISSION RULES

Each photographer may enter a maximum of three (3) images per competition.

Images previously entered in a judged Montreal Camera Club competition are NOT eligible.

A theme may be announced for one or more competitions (excluding Competition 4). An Adaptive Theme means that a certain percentage of hand-of-man would be allowed.

Image submission sizing:

Images must be .jpg format in sRGB color space.

- **Landscape WxH:** Max 3840 x 2160 px
- **Portrait / Vertical WxH:** (Less then 2160) x Max 2160 px
- **Square WxH:** 2160 x 2160 px
- **Size:** 8 MB maximum

Digital images must be submitted by the deadlines established—see [calendar](#) or the [Image Submission Schedule](#) page for details.

EDITING CRITERIA – MCC follows the CAPA Guidelines

Photo Editing Rules for Submissions

To maintain the integrity and fairness of the competition, submissions must strictly adhere to the following editing guidelines.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Photo Competitions

It is important to understand that there are two kinds of AI. One type is permitted, and the other is not.

The coding for many of the tools we use in Adobe Photoshop, Lightroom, and many other editing software programs is actually AI coding. These tools use pixels from your own photograph to make changes. This type of AI is permitted. Examples of these tools are: masking, sharpening, de-noise, enlarging, content-aware fill, etc. You must be careful that any 'fill' uses pixels from your own image. Replacing a sky is permitted as long as the image of the sky was shot by you.

The second type of AI is capable of generating an image from scratch using just a text prompt. 'Generative Fill' or another software tool that uses content generated by software from written prompts or which uses the work of others (whether sourced from the internet, or located on the local computer, and used with or without permission) is not permitted.

The Chair may require the photographer to provide a support images for their submission.

Permitted Editing Techniques for Pictorial General and Pictorial Creative

You are allowed to use standard post-processing techniques that enhance the quality of your photo without altering its content. These include:

- **Cropping and Straightening:** You can adjust the composition, correct perspective, or straighten the image.
- **HDR and Focus Stacking:** Combining multiple exposures to extend dynamic range or merging images with different focus points to increase depth of field are permitted.
- **Dodging and Burning:** You may lighten or darken specific areas to improve the final image.
- **Cleaning up:** It is acceptable to remove minor imperfections like dust spots, digital noise, or film scratches that occurred during the capture process.

Permitted Editing Techniques for Pictorial Photojournalism/Street & Nature

- **Global post-processing techniques** are permitted, such as tone, exposure, or colour adjustments. You CANNOT make any *selective* adjustments (i.e. you can't edit only a portion of the image).
- **Cropping**

Prohibited Editing Techniques for Pictorial Photojournalism/Street & Nature

To keep the images true to the original scene, you **cannot** use the following methods:

- **Content Manipulation:** You are not allowed to add, remove, or move elements within the photo (e.g., objects or backgrounds).
- **Generative AI:** Any use of AI to create or alter an image is strictly forbidden.
- **Non-Photographic Images:** All submissions must be photographs. Submissions created without the use of a camera are not allowed.
- **Misleading Filters:** You may not use filters that drastically change the mood, colour, or perception of the original scene.
- **Selective adjustments** (i.e. you can't edit only a portion of the image).
- **Decorative Add-ons:** Adding frames, borders, or mats is not permitted. The only exception is for structural elements like a window or doorway that were naturally captured in the original photo.

Image Origin and Metadata

- **Copyright:** You must have taken the photo yourself and own the full copyright to all elements in your submission.
- **Metadata:** Except for images shot on non-digital cameras and cell phones, all images must include their original **EXIF metadata**, and all submissions must include complete metadata from any post-processing software. Screenshots are not accepted.
- **Verification:** If you are a finalist, you will be required to provide the original, unedited JPG or RAW files for verification. Failure to do so will result in disqualification.

SELECTING AND PREPARING IMAGES:

You are encouraged to take your time in selecting and preparing images for the competitions. Look at some of the excellent images submitted in past years or in other clubs and ask yourself "am I submitting a good image?" Have a checklist nearby and consider the following points:

Check basic composition, simplicity, balance, framing, background, use of lines and the Rule of Thirds. Does the image have impact? Will the judges say "Wow"?

Check the subject's position and focus. If you intend the subject to be in focus, then it should be sharp. You may have intentionally softened the subject for a romantic effect or blurred the subject to show action and that may be perfectly fine.

Is the viewer's eye drawn to the main subject or are there distractions such as over-exposed highlights or undesirable elements that can easily be eliminated using processing software? If your image is abstract or creative, then different considerations may apply.

Is the image correctly adjusted - appropriate sharpening, white balance, and dimensions?

Zoom into your image at least 100% to ensure there are no weird artifacts or sensor dust spots you might want to eliminate (clone out). Removal of sensor spots is permitted in Nature images.

Do not add frames around the image and do not include your name or watermark on the image.

Images that are substantially modified in image editing software such as Photoshop, Lightroom, Corel Painter, etc., may do better in the Creative category.

If your camera is set to shoot in the RGB colour space, please be sure to export your image in sRGB.

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