

2023 CAPA Survey - Suggested Improvement To Competitions

Nature/Wildlife Competition

2023 survey suggestions received:

- **current individual CAPA member survey (478 responses received):**
 - A. nature rules too many/too restrictive/too detailed (4 respondents)
 - B. competition rules and categories are too confusing, ill-defined, categories are not well understood or considered, e.g. CAPA's nature is limited to birds & wildlife, does not include flora & fauna. Competition rules too detailed and restrictive (3 respondents)

separate the nature, landscape & wildlife ones/have categories more specific to practice, e.g. wildlife photos not mixed with landscape (5 respondents)
 - C. I disagree with not accepting DNG files as originals – I always convert to DNG when downloading files (3 respondents)
- **past individual CAPA member survey (138 responses received):** no responses received for this topic.
- **current CAPA Camera Club survey (48 responses received):** no responses received for this topic.
- **past CAPA Camera Club survey (8 responses received):** no responses received for this topic.

My Response – Thanks for these suggestions, and we appreciate the opportunity to address each which are included in my responses below:

A. Nature/Wildlife Competition Too Restrictive

The reason behind the seemingly restrictive requirements in CAPA's nature/wildlife competitions has been a topic of discussion for many years.

It's important to understand that CAPA has traditionally followed the guidelines set forth by the International Federation of Photographic Art (FIAP) for these specific competitions. FIAP serves as an umbrella organization, comprising of 94 diverse photographic societies and associations worldwide, and CAPA is a proud member of this esteemed network.

FIAP plays a crucial role in providing essential guidelines to photographic societies and associations concerning competitions management and transparency.

In their comprehensive FIAP Booklet (pages 14 & 15), they define and outline specific criteria for nature, wildlife and monochrome categories.

By adhering to these well-defined definitions for nature and wildlife, CAPA enables various societies associations to engage in fair regional and international competitions. For instance, to participate in the prestigious international Four Nations competitions, CAPA's submitted nature images must align with FIAP's established definition for nature.

In essence, these guidelines serve to create a level playing field and foster healthy competition, not just within CAPA but also across the broader global photographic community. Embracing these standards ensure consistency and credibility, allowing photographers to showcase their skills and creativity on an international stage.

Below, you will find the 2023 FIAP definitions for both nature and wildlife:

Definition of Nature Photography

Nature photography is restricted to the use of the photographic process to depict all branches of natural history, except anthropology and archaeology, in such a fashion that a well-informed person will be able to identify the subject material and certify its honest presentation. The story telling value of a photograph must be weight more than the pictorial quality while maintaining high technical quality. Human elements shall not be present, except where those human elements are integral parts of the nature story such as nature subjects, like barn owls or storks, adapted to an environment modified by humans, or where those human elements are in situations depicting natural forces, like hurricane or tidal waves. Scientific bands, scientific tags or radio collars on wild animals are permissible. Photographers of human created hybrid plants, cultivated plants, feral animals, domestic animals, or mounted specimens are ineligible, as is any form of manipulation that alters the truth of the photographic statement.

No techniques that add, relocate, replace, or remove pictorial elements except by cropping are permitted. Techniques that enhance the presentation of the photograph without changing the nature story or the pictorial content, or without altering the content of the original scene, are permitted including HDR, focus stacking and dodging/burning are allowed. Stitched images are not permitted. All allowed adjustments must appear natural. Colour images can be converted to greyscale monochrome. Infrared images, either direct-captures or derivations, are not allowed.

Images used in Nature Photography competitions may be divided into two classes: Nature and Wildlife.

Images entered in Nature sections meeting the Nature Definition above can have landscapes, geologic formations, weather phenomena, and extant organisms as the primary subject matter. This includes images taken with the subjects in controlled conditions, such as zoos, game farms botanical gardens aquariums and enclosure where the subjects are totally dependent on man for food.

Definition of Wildlife Photography

Images entered in Wildlife sections meeting the Nature Photography Definition above are further defined as one or more extant zoological or botanical organism free and unrestrained in a natural or adopted habitat. Landscape, geologic formations, photographs of zoo or game farm animals, or of any extant zoological or botanical species taken under controlled conditions are not eligible in the Wildlife section. Wildlife is not limited to mammals, birds, and insects. Marine subject and botanical subjects (including fungi and algae) taken in the wild are suitable wildlife subjects, as are carcasses of extant species.

Wildlife images may enter in Nature section of Exhibitions.

As part of our commitment to provide clarity and fairness, we also found it necessary to address certain vague aspects of the FIAP Nature/Wildlife definitions.

- **Adaptive Environment** – This should constitute 10% or less of the total image and refers to instances where living organisms use man-made structures for nesting, feeding their young, attracting a mate, or consuming a cultivated plant or flower. Additionally, it includes cases where a human-created structure is utilized for another purpose, such as consuming their prey or food on a human-associated element like a sawed log, fence post, or telephone pole.
- **Hand-of-Man** – This should be portrayed as a scene that is completely free of any human elements. The following examples provide instances that align with the hand-of-man definition:
 1. **Human** – no human body or any portion thereof should be visible in the image.
 2. **Sky** – no human-made elements such as cables, aircraft, light pollution, artificial lights, etc...
 3. **Land** – any man-made structures, paths, buildings, concrete, man-made stone, telephone poles, fence posts, sidewalks, domesticated or cultivated plants/food, cut grass, or organized and systematic layouts of planted trees should be absent from the image.

4. **Elements** – no cut trees, stems, branches, tree stumps, posts, man-made food, objects, or any man-made background should be included.
5. **Sea** – no boats, ships piers, docks, posts in the water, or any human-made elements should be visible in the image.

With these two points of clarification, we provide guidance to both entrants and the judging panel members.

B. Separate Nature, Landscape & Wildlife Categories – Not Mixed With Landscape

In response to concerns raised prior to 2018 regarding the dominance of birds and wild animals in the CAPA Nature/Wildlife awards, we made significant changes to the competition format in 2019.

To ensure fairness and diversity, we introduced five distinct themes: botanical, insect/reptile/amphibians, landscape, nature and wildlife. These changes aimed to provide equal opportunities for all submitted images within the FIAP nature/wildlife definition.

Under the new format, merit awards were presented for the top three images in each theme, resulting in a more balanced distribution of awards across all themes. Additionally, entrants were required to submit at least one image in a theme other than their primary choice.

Over the past four years, these adjustments have proven successful in achieving our goals. Notably, the dominance of birds and wildlife was mitigated, and awards were distributed more equitably amongst these themes. Furthermore, participation in the competition saw a significant increase, with submissions growing from 743 images submitted by 165 entrants in 2018 to 988 images submitted by 237 entrants in 2022.

Based on these positive outcomes, we are pleased to announce that we will continue with the five-theme format for our upcoming nature/wildlife competitions.

C. Why CAPA Only Expects DNG Original Formats In Exceptional Cases

According to FIAP Booklet's selection entitled "**Sanctions For Breaching FIAP Regulations and "Red Lists, - General Rules"**" it states:

1.3 Participants must store and preserve intact, with no alternations, the metadata, the RAW file(s) or the original unretouched JPG file(s) of the submitted images (and those taken immediately before and after the submitted images(s)) for possible future motivated inspection, with no expiry, prescription or limitation of FIAP action.

1.4 it is absolutely forbidden for any entrant or his/her agent(s), acting on the behalf of the entrant, to tamper with the EXIF or original data in the files submitted to salons/exhibitions.

1.2 Each author whose image shows any suspicions relating to compliance with FIAP regulations or definitions can be required by the organizer or FIAP Ethics Service, to submit the original un-retouched JUG_ plus the files of the images immediately before and immediately following the questionable image.

In CAPA, the native RAW format of most camera manufacturers is recognized as the original RAW file, with exception of the following brands:

Leica, Pentax, Ricoh, Samsung, Hasselblad, Phase One and Sigma.

For these specific camera manufacturers, their RAW files come in the DNG format. Rest assured that in our nature/wildlife competition, these DNG files will be accepted as valid RAW files.

We are committed to accommodating photographers using various equipment while ensuring the integrity of the competition remains intact. Capture the wonders of nature and wildlife in their truest form with confidence, regardless of your camera's RAW file format.

The Royal Photographic Society re-affirms CAPA's RAW requirements by stating in their documentation as follows:

Authors of accepted images may be asked to supply evidence with respect to the veracity of their images: raw files (e.g. CR2, NEF, ORF, PEF), original untouched JPEGs, original transparencies or original negatives may be required for authentication. DNG files are only permitted if this is the native raw format of the camera.” (https://rps.org/media/dytixaup/naturegroup_enews8.pdf)

Why is a DNG or PSD not considered by CAPA as an original RAW file?

The decision not to accept DNG and PSD files as original files is based on the following factors:

- **Preventing Manipulation** – DNG and PSD files, like other RAW formats, can contain various metadata and setting that might have been adjusted or modified by the photographer. Accepting only JPG or camera RAW files ensures a more stringent control over any potential image manipulation, promoting the authenticity of the competition.

- **Verification Process** – it is more straightforward and efficient for the competition team to verify the authenticity of submitted images when the files are limited to standard formats like JPG and camera RAW. This can help streamline the judging process and maintain the integrity of the competition.
- **Level Playing Field** - enforcing a consistent file format requirement helps level the playing field for all participants, regardless of their equipment or software preferences. This ensures that all photographers follow the same guidelines and have equal opportunities to showcase their skills.

While accepting a DNG or PSD files as un-retouched original might seem reasonable, the decision not to do so is based on practical considerations to maintain consistency, fairness, and the integrity of the competition.