



AUSTRALIAN PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

INTERPRETATION OF THE

FIAP/PSA/RPS

NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY DEFINITION

1st January 2015

FIAP/PSA/RPS NATURE DEFINITION CHECKLIST

The new Nature definition will be used from 1st January, 2015, and some competitions will have both a Nature and a Wildlife section. While it is permissible to enter Wildlife images in the Nature section, there are additional requirements for images entered in the Wildlife section. When deciding whether or not a particular image meets the requirements of the Nature and/or Wildlife definitions you need to consider the following factors.

GENERAL SUBJECT MATTER		
	ALLOWED	NOT ALLOWED
NATURE	Anything to do with natural history (the study and description of organisms and natural objects), except anthropology or archaeology. Subject matter must be identifiable.	Anything that is classified as anthropology (the study of humans) or archaeology (the study of historic or prehistoric peoples and their cultures)
WILDLIFE	Same as Nature.	Same as Nature.
SPECIFIC SUBJECT MATTER		
	ALLOWED	NOT ALLOWED
NATURE	All extant (not extinct) organisms (plants, animals, etc); landscapes, geological formations, and weather phenomena.	Human created hybrid plants, cultivated plants, feral animals, domestic animals, mounted specimens of plants and animals.
WILDLIFE	Animals, birds, insects that are free and unrestrained in a natural or adopted environment. Carcasses of extant species.	Landscapes and geological formations. Animals, birds, insects, etc that are in captivity or under controlled conditions. Botanical species under controlled conditions (such as plants growing in a hothouse).
HUMAN ELEMENTS		
	ALLOWED	NOT ALLOWED
NATURE	Human elements that are an integral part of the nature story (such as birds nesting on a man-made structure). Scientific bands, tags or collars.	Human elements (such as buildings) that are not part of the nature story being told by the image.
WILDLIFE	Same as Nature.	Same as Nature.
IMAGE ALTERATIONS		
	ALLOWED	NOT ALLOWED
NATURE	Cropping. HDR techniques. Focus stacking. Removal of dust spots, digital noise or scratches on film.	Anything (such as cloning) that alters the content of the original scene by adding, moving or removing image elements. Stitching

	Subject must be presented honestly.	together multiple images (e.g. to create a panorama)
WILDLIFE	Same as Nature.	Same as Nature.
IMAGE ADJUSTMENTS		
	ALLOWED	NOT ALLOWED
NATURE	Techniques (such as contrast adjustment) that enhance the image without changing the nature story, or altering the pictorial content of the original scene. Grey-scale monochrome images.	Adjustments that change the nature story, such as turning a daylight scene into a night scene. Toned monochrome images. Infrared images.
WILDLIFE	Same as Nature.	Same as Nature.

NOTES:

Images are expected to be of high technical quality.

The story telling value of a photograph must be weighed more than the pictorial quality.

AUSTRALIAN PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY INTERPRETATION OF THE FIAP/PSA/RPS NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY DEFINITION

(July 2014)

Nature images in all APS approved national and international competitions are required to comply with the FIAP Nature Photography definition. From 1 January 2015 the International Federation of Photographic Art (FIAP), The Photographic Society of America (PSA) and the Royal Photographic Society (RPS) will use a common definition of Nature Photography. That definition is:

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 weighed 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 hurricanes or tidal waves. Scientific bands, scientific tags or radio collars on wild animals are permissible. Photographs 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. Techniques that remove elements added by the camera, such as dust spots, digital noise, and film scratches, are allowed. Stitched images are not permitted. All allowed adjustments must appear natural. Color images can be converted to grey-scale monochrome. Infrared images, either direct-captures or derivations, are not allowed.

Images used in Nature Photography competitions may be divided in two classes: Nature and Wildlife. Images entered in Nature sections meeting the Nature Photography 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 any enclosure where the subjects are totally dependent on man for food.

Images entered in Wildlife sections meeting the Nature Photography Definition above are further defined as one or more extant zoological or botanical organisms free and unrestrained in a natural or adopted habitat. Landscapes, 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 Wildlife sections. Wildlife is not limited to animals, birds and insects. Marine subjects and botanical subjects (including fungi and algae) taken in the wild are suitable

wildlife subjects, as are carcasses of extant species. Wildlife images may be entered in Nature sections of Exhibitions.

One of the most significant differences between the new definition and the previous FIAP Nature definition is that the Nature sections of exhibitions may now have two classes – Nature and Wildlife. Images that satisfy the Nature criteria do not necessarily satisfy the Wildlife criteria. Wildlife images may be entered in Nature sections of exhibitions. In this document, when the term Nature is used it refers to both Nature and Wildlife unless indicated otherwise.

Any attempt to define Nature photography will inevitably use terminology that is open to different interpretations. This can lead to misunderstandings by competitors and inconsistent decisions by judges. To minimise these problems, APS has approved the guidelines presented in this document as its official interpretation of the FIAP/PSA/RPS Nature definition.

The FIAP/PSA/RPS Nature definition defines and limits three things:

1. The subject matter that is acceptable in Nature and Wildlife images.
2. The circumstances under which legitimate Nature and Wildlife images can be captured.
3. The extent to which Nature and Wildlife images can be modified after capture.

In order for photographers to comply with the Nature definition they must:

- (a) Interpret the definition in an acceptable way.
- (b) Capture images under acceptable circumstances.
- (c) Process their digital images in acceptable ways.

In relation to all of these issues there can be debate about what is or is not acceptable. The guidelines presented here are designed to provide a common basis for interpreting the Nature definition. Future debate may see changes to these guidelines.

CLARIFICATION OF THE SUBJECT MATTER THAT IS ACCEPTABLE IN NATURE IMAGES.

The “primary subject matter” of acceptable Nature images can be divided into two broad categories—living (such as mammals, birds, reptiles, insects and plants) and inanimate (such as geological features and natural phenomena). Many Nature images will contain both living and inanimate subject matter.

The definition limits the subject matter of Nature images to “natural history”.

There is no universally accepted definition of “natural history”, but it is generally considered to be the study of plants and animals in their natural environment. The definition allows images from “all branches of natural history” but specifically excludes anthropology and archaeology. Anthropology is the study of humankind (including culture, society and difference). Archaeology is the study of human activity in the past.

Therefore:

- Images from most fields of natural history (such as biology, zoology, geology,

astronomy) are acceptable in Nature but not all are acceptable in Wildlife (see later details).

- Any image that is a study of humankind past or present is *not* acceptable.

The definition requires organisms in Nature images to be extant.

Extant means “still existing”. It is a term commonly used in biology to refer to *groups of organisms* (such as species or families) that are still alive as opposed to being extinct. For example, the Tasmanian devil is extant, the Tasmanian tiger is extinct. The definition does *not* require an individual organism in an image to be alive.

Therefore:

- Images of any extant organism are acceptable.
- Images of animal carcasses and dead plants are acceptable.

The definition requires the subject matter to be identifiable.

The way in which an image is captured and presented must render the subject identifiable by a “well-informed” person (for example, someone familiar with the type of plant being photographed). It must also be possible for such a person to verify that the image is an “honest presentation” of the subject matter.

Therefore:

- Any image in which the photographic process has rendered the subject matter unidentifiable is *not* acceptable in Nature.
- Any image in which the photographic process presents the subject matter dishonestly is *not* acceptable in Nature (see later details).
- Images of Nature subjects do not necessarily have to show the complete subject.

The definition excludes certain types of plants and animals.

Broadly speaking, the definition excludes images of animals or plants that were created by humans (for example, hybrids that have not occurred naturally) or which exist in their present form because of humans (cultivated plants, domestic animals or mounted specimens).

Therefore:

- Images of human created hybrid plants are *not* acceptable in Nature.
- Images of cultivated plants (including those that are not hybrid) are *not* acceptable in Nature.
- Images of domestic animals (such as dogs and cats) are *not* acceptable in Nature.
- Images of mounted specimens are *not* acceptable in Nature.

The definition excludes feral animals

A feral animal is one that has escaped from a domestic situation and is living wild, or one that is descended from such animals. For example, in Australia there are feral dogs, cats, horses and goats. Zoologists make a distinction between feral animals and introduced species. Introduced species are those that were never domesticated but which now exist in locations other than where they originated. Examples in Australia are foxes, rabbits and cane toads.

Therefore:

- Images of feral animals are *not* acceptable in Nature.
- Images of introduced species are acceptable in Nature.

The definition excludes cultivated plants.

The essential meaning of the word "cultivate" is to grow and/or improve by labour and attention. The general biological meaning is that cultivated plants are those that exist because their ancestors were taken from the wild and grown under some form of controlled conditions that may have included careful breeding and selection. Most cereal crops (such as wheat and rice) have been grown and developed (cultivated) in this sense, as have ornamental garden plants such as roses and azaleas.

Therefore:

- Any plant that is the principal subject of a Nature image should have germinated and grown without any human assistance.
- Images of plants of a cultivated species (that is, a species that has been modified by human intervention) are *not* permitted in Nature.

The definition allows images of geologic formations.

Geology has many sub-fields of study and there is nothing in the definition to suggest that any areas of geology should be excluded.

Therefore, acceptable subjects include:

- Landscapes and seascapes (that do not contain any human elements unrelated to the nature story).
- Landforms resulting from natural weathering and erosion.
- Rivers, lakes and waterfalls.
- Rock structures.
- Volcanoes, various forms of lava, boiling mud pools and geysers.
- Minerals and naturally formed crystals.

Images of gemstones, crystals, rocks or other geological objects that have been reshaped by humans are *not* acceptable.

The definition allows images of "natural forces".

The definition gives hurricanes and tidal waves as specific examples of natural forces.

Other examples of permitted subject matter include:

- Planets, stars and astronomical events (such as lunar and solar eclipses).
- Atmospheric and weather phenomena (including rainbows, lightning, cloud formations and auroras).
- Extreme weather events such as heavy seas, floods, hail storms, dust storms, cyclones, tornadoes and waterspouts.
- Earthquakes and tsunamis.
- Bubbles and other surface tension phenomena, snowflakes and raindrops.
- Vegetation reclaiming an area previously occupied by humans.

The definition limits the presence of human elements.

The definition permits human elements in Nature images under just three circumstances:

- (a) When the human elements are "integral parts of the nature story".
- (b) When the human elements are present in an image depicting natural forces.

(c) Scientific banding, tagging and radio collars.

Therefore:

- Images that contain human elements unrelated to the nature story are *not* acceptable in Nature.
- Images of natural forces (e.g., a hurricane) should show that natural force in action (not simply show the aftermath of the natural event).
- Images of animals or birds that show scientific bands, tags or radio collars are permitted in Nature.

CLARIFICATION OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH NATURE IMAGES CAN BE CAPTURED.

The Nature definition permits images of captive or restrained zoological organisms.

This is an important departure from the previous FIAP Nature definition. However, it does *not* apply to Wildlife images.

Therefore:

- Images of animals or birds in zoos, game farms or other similar enclosed areas are permitted in Nature. This includes situations in which the animal or bird is totally dependent on man for food.
- Images of plants in botanical gardens are permitted provided they are *not* hybrid plants or plants that have been cultivated (in the sense described earlier).
- Images of marine species in aquariums and similar enclosures are permitted.

The Wildlife definition requires subjects to be “free and unrestrained in a natural or adopted habitat”.

A *natural habitat* is any place where the subject of the image (zoological or botanical organism) lives or grows without being forced to do so by humans. The habitat does not have to be a place where animals or plants of the species photographed usually live or grow. It may be an unusual environment to which the particular animal or plant in the image has adapted of its own free will. This environment may show human influences, subject to the “integral part of the nature story” requirement.

To be *living free* the organism must not be under any direct control of humans, nor should it be dependent upon humans for food. Natural influences must determine its life, behaviour and death.

Therefore:

- Environments such as aquariums, traditional zoos, open-range zoos, game farms or other areas in which animals are enclosed or confined are not considered natural environments for the purpose of Wildlife photography. However, images taken in these environments are acceptable as Nature images.
- Animals in Wildlife images should be free to come and go from the location in which they are photographed.
- It is unacceptable to temporarily relocate or restrict the freedom of animals (including insects and reptiles) for the purpose of Wildlife photography.
- National parks are considered natural environments because the plants and animals there are not considered to be in “controlled conditions”.

- Areas such as regenerated forests or parks in urban areas are considered natural environments for the animals and plants that occur in them without human intervention.
- It is unacceptable to relocate plants for the purpose of Wildlife photography.
- It is unacceptable to use techniques such as cooling or the application of chemicals to temporarily restrict the movement of animals (including reptiles and insects) for Nature or Wildlife photography.

The Nature definition makes no reference to the country of origin of the organism being photographed.

It is recognised that animals and plants are frequently photographed in places other than the country of origin of the individual specimen or its ancestors.

Therefore:

- There is no requirement that the animal or plant being photographed is indigenous to the country in which the image is captured.
- Images of exotic plants (plants that do not naturally grow in the area where they are photographed) are acceptable provided they are not hybrid or cultivated.
- Images of exotic animals are acceptable provided they are not feral animals and, in the case of Wildlife images, that they are free and unrestrained.

CLARIFICATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH NATURE IMAGES ARE ALLOWED TO BE MODIFIED AFTER CAPTURE.

Developments in digital technology are continually expanding the ways in which images can be manipulated. However the Nature definition places clear limits on what modifications to Nature images are acceptable.

Alterations to images can be grouped under two headings:

- (a) adjustments that optimise image quality, and
- (b) modifications that alter the content of the original scene.

Broadly speaking, modification of type (a) are permitted and modifications of type (b) are not.

Therefore the following techniques are permitted:

- Cropping of images is permitted since this does not alter the content of the section of the original scene that is presented as the final image.
- Adjustments that improve image quality without altering the content of the original scene are permitted. This includes, but is not limited to, adjustments such as exposure, contrast, saturation, sharpening and noise reduction.
- Dodging and burning are permitted.
- Focus stacking is permitted.
- High dynamic range (HDR) techniques, including those that combine multiple images, are permitted.
- Editing that removes small elements that were not part of the original scene (such as spots caused by dust on a digital sensor or scratches on a scanned image) is permitted.

The following alternations to images are NOT permitted.

- Any technique that removes, moves, adds or replaces pictorial elements in an image. For example, cloning, filling, patching or blending of images with different content.
- Combining images by stitching.

The definition requires adjustments to appear natural.

The permitted adjustments to Nature images must leave the image looking “natural” rather than manipulated.

Therefore:

- Adjustments such as contrast, saturation and sharpening must *not* be excessive.
- The application of filters that produce images that appear unnatural is *not* permitted.
- The final nature image must appear realistic.

The definition allows the use of capture and processing techniques that do not alter “the content of the original scene”.

This aspect of the definition allows the use of techniques that overcome some of the limitations of current camera technologies. Imperfections of optical and digital technology can result, for example, in extremely shallow depth of field in a macro image, or distortion when a wide-angle lens is used, or limited dynamic range. The definition allows modifications that reduce such problems in order to produce a final image that renders the “original scene” as closely as possible to what was seen by the photographer.

Therefore:

- Focus stacking as a means of increasing depth of field is permitted.
- HDR processing as a means of increasing dynamic range is permitted.
- Adjustments that reduce distortion caused by the lens are permitted.
- Stitching as a means of increasing the subject matter covered by the image is *not* permitted.
- Techniques that combine different images (such as replacing the sky in an image) are *not* permitted.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS.

The definition emphasises the story telling value of images.

The definition specifies that the “story telling value of a photograph must be weighed more than the pictorial quality while maintaining high technical quality”. The term ‘pictorial quality’ usually refers to the result of the photographer using techniques (of capture or processing) that transform an image from a straight documentary record to something more expressive.

Therefore:

- The extent to which a Nature image tells a story is more important than its pictorial or artistic qualities.
- There is an expectation that Nature images should be of high technical quality.

The definition allows only certain types of monochrome images.

The FIAP monochrome definition allows images of any single tone (not just those with various shades of grey) and this definition previously applied to Nature images under the FIAP Nature definition. However, the new FIAP/PSA/RPS Nature definition does not use this liberal definition of monochrome.

Therefore:

- Grey-scale monochrome images are permitted in Nature.
- Toned monochrome images (e.g. sepia toned images) are *not* permitted in Nature.
- Infrared images, either direct captures or conversions, are *not* permitted in Nature.

The definition places no restrictions on capture techniques.

The definition makes no mention of camera techniques or techniques such as the use of remotely or automatically triggered cameras.

Therefore:

- It is acceptable to use any in-camera technique to capture a Nature image; for example, slow shutter speed that blurs movement is acceptable.
- It is acceptable to use flash or other forms of artificial lighting to assist in the capture of Nature images.
- It is acceptable to capture Nature images with remotely or automatically triggered cameras.

Report prepared by Roy Killen EFIAP MPSA MAPS
for the Australian Photographic Society Inc.