

Sierra Camera Club

Division Definitions and Image Guidelines - 2024

Overview and Multi-Division Guidelines

Overview

This document summarizes the definitions for images to be entered in competitions in the four SCC Divisions and their Categories. In addition, it summarizes the evaluation criteria guidance that the SCC provides to judges, focused on the attributes expected to justify the maximum score of 12, so that entrants may take that guidance into account in selecting and presenting their images. However, judges will typically apply their own perspectives and preferences in addition to the SCC-provided guidance.

Image Scoring

Images assessed by the judges as warranting the maximum score receive 12 points. Images falling short in lesser or greater degree in the judges' opinion will receive reduced scores of 11, 10, or 9. After all images in a category have been judged, the judge will select the best among those scoring 12 as the "Image of the Night" and that image's score is upgraded to 13.

Occasionally, an image may be judged to be inappropriate for the category in which it is entered and will receive a score of 8. The entrant can submit a replacement image in a subsequent competition for that year unless the problem occurs in the 4th competition. Generally, the Division Director will try to spot any such situations prior to the deadline for the competition and notify the entrant so that this problem will typically be prevented.

Honors Images

Images receiving a score of 12 or 13 are Honors Images. Images entered in annual End-of-Year competitions that are awarded 1st, 2nd or 3rd place or receive Honorable Mentions are also considered Honors Images. Honors Images may not be re-entered in any other competitions with the following exceptions:

1. Honors Images in Divisions other than Print may be re-entered in subsequent Print competitions in the appropriate category.
2. Images receiving Honors in Print competitions may be re-entered in subsequent Division competitions other than Print.
3. Honors images in categories other than Travel Sequences may be re-entered as part of a Travel Sequence.
4. Images that are part of a Travel Sequence receiving an Honor may be re-entered in competitions other than Travel Sequences.

General Division

Open Definition

There are no limitations on subject matter except that it should not be offensive to the average adult audience. There are no limits on techniques used for image capture or post processing. Images can be color or monochrome. Extensively manipulated images should be entered in the Creative category.

Open Image Evaluation

Judges are provided with Sierra Camera Club scoring guidance, but will typically apply that guidance within the framework of their own experience, perspectives and preferences. So that entrants can take that guidance in account in selecting and presenting **Open** images, the following summarizes the criteria that should typically be met to achieve the maximum score of 12 points:

- The image has great impact and stands out immediately.
- It has strong presentation that evokes the imagination and holds the viewer's attention.
- It shows excellence in composition, visual elements and subject matter.
- It shows technical excellence in exposure, lighting, focus, color balance, processing and sharpness.

Reduced scores of 11 to 9 are assigned depending on the extent of shortfalls and flaws against these criteria.

Creative Definition

- Other names for Creative are Abstract, Altered Reality, Surreal and Conceptual.
- The image must obviously display a change in natural color, form, shape, or any combination of these three.
- Creative images are often montages or composites (a blending of multiple images). Content can be rearranged, replaced or added to the original image.
- Artwork or computer graphics generated by the entrant may be incorporated; however, the original photographic content should predominate.
- All images must be original and may not incorporate elements produced by anyone else.
- In-Camera Motion (ICM) techniques are acceptable.
- High Dynamic Range (HDR) without further changes are NOT considered "altered reality".
- Images may not be constructed entirely within a computer.

Creative Image Evaluation

Judges are provided with Sierra Camera Club scoring guidance, but will typically apply that guidance within the framework of their own experience, perspectives and preferences. So that entrants can take that guidance in account in selecting and presenting **Creative** images, the following summarizes the criteria that should typically be met to achieve the maximum score of 12 points:

- The image obviously displays a change in natural color, form, shape, or any combination of these three.
- The image has great impact and stands out immediately.
- It has a strong presentation that evokes the imagination and holds the viewer's attention.
- It shows excellence in composition, visual elements and subject matter.
- The creative treatment exhibits strength of vision, concept, originality, and technical skill.

Reduced scores of 11 to 9 are assigned depending on the extent of shortfalls and flaws against these criteria.

Nature and Landscape Division

Nature Definition

- Depicts all branches of natural history, except anthropology and archeology, in such a way that the viewer will be able to identify the subject material and certify its honest representation.
- The story-telling value of the photograph is most important while maintaining high technical and pictorial quality.
- Titles are part of the nature story but should be brief, serious and accurate descriptions of the subject.
- If the depicted species is identified in the title, it must be done correctly. Feel free to reach out to club members if you need help in identifying a species.
- No techniques are permitted that add, relocate, replace or remove pictorial elements, except by cropping. Stitched images are not permitted.
- Techniques that enhance the presentation of the photograph without changing the nature story, pictorial content, or altering the content of the original scene are permitted. These include 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.
- All allowed adjustments must appear natural. Color images can be converted to grayscale monochrome; however, infrared images whether direct capture or derivations are not allowed.
- Images of insects on any plant regardless of whether the plant is native, hybridized or from another area will be considered eligible as long as the insect is the primary subject rather than the plant.

Human-created elements are allowed when:

- They are in situations depicting natural forces such as hurricanes or tidal waves.
- They are integral parts of the nature story with subjects such as barn owls or storks, which have adapted to an environment modified by humans. The subject, however, must be the wild species. Crops or fields may appear in photos depicting birds which inhabit or use this land as part of their habitat.
- They are scientific bands, scientific tags or radio collars on wild animals.

The following are not allowed:

- All images of horses.
- Photographs of human-created hybrid plants, cultivated plants, feral animals, domestic animals, or mounted specimens.
- Any form of manipulation that alters the truth of the photographic statement.

Nature Image Evaluation

Judges are provided with Sierra Camera Club scoring guidance, but will typically apply that guidance within the framework of their own experience, perspectives and preferences. So that entrants can take that guidance in account in selecting and presenting **Nature** images, the following summarizes the criteria that should typically be met to achieve the maximum score of 12 points:

- The image strongly suggests a story regarding the behavior of the nature subject(s).
- The image has great impact, stands out immediately, and holds the viewer's attention.
- Strong presentation that delivers a message, evokes the imagination.
- Excellence in composition, visual elements and subject matter.
- Technical excellence in exposure, lighting, focus, color balance, processing and sharpness.

Reduced scores of 11 to 9 are assigned depending on the extent of shortfalls and flaws against these criteria.

Landscape Definition

- These images depict an expanse of scenery, with the subject being the scenery and not individual elements of the scene.
- These images include landscapes, seascapes, cityscapes, sunsets, farms, etc. Closeups of objects, people or wildlife should not be the primary subject.
- No techniques are permitted that add, relocate, replace or remove pictorial elements, except by cropping.
- Techniques that enhance the presentation of the photograph without changing the pictorial content, or altering the content of the original scene are permitted. These include HDR, focus stacking, image stitching and dodging/burning.
- Techniques that remove elements added by the camera such as dust spots, digital noise and film scratches are allowed.
- Removal of unnatural intrusions such as airplane contrails, signs or vehicles is allowed. Artificial lighting and flash are also permitted.

Landscape Image Evaluation

Judges are provided with Sierra Camera Club scoring guidance, but will typically apply that guidance within the framework of their own experience, perspectives and preferences. So that entrants can take that guidance in account in selecting and presenting **Landscape** images, the following summarizes the criteria that should typically be met to achieve the maximum score of 12 points:

- The image has great impact and stands out immediately.
- Strong presentation that delivers evokes the imagination and holds the viewer's attention.
- Excellence in composition, visual elements and subject matter.
- Technical excellence in exposure, lighting, focus, color balance, processing and sharpness.

Reduced scores of 11 to 9 are assigned depending on the extent of shortfalls and flaws against these criteria.

Travel Division

Travel Singles Definition

- Images should portray a foreign or domestic land, people, or culture in its natural state.
- No studio-type model pictures, staged set-up shots, or ultra-close-ups that lose the travel context.
- No creative effects or manipulation, except for judicious use of HDR to enhance exposure and dodging/burning.
- Removing artifacts added by the camera is allowed, such as dust spots, digital noise and film scratches.
- Adding, relocating, replacing or removing any element of the original image, except by cropping, is not permitted.
- Titles are part of the travel story but should be brief, serious and accurate descriptions of the subject.

Travel Sequence Definition

- Must contain 4 to 7 travel images, each following the Travel Singles definition, that portray a travel experience.
- The first or title image must include a descriptive title.
- If the background of the title image is a photograph, it will be judged as part of the sequence; if it is not, it will not be judged.

Travel Image Evaluation

Judges are provided with Sierra Camera Club scoring guidance, but will typically apply that guidance within the framework of their own experience, perspectives and preferences. So that entrants can take that guidance in account in selecting and presenting travel images, the following summarizes the criteria that should typically be met to achieve the maximum score of 12 points for **Travel Singles**:

- The image has great impact, stands out immediately, and suggests a story.
- Strong presentation that delivers a message, evokes the imagination and holds the viewer's attention.
- Excellence in composition, visual elements and subject matter.
- Technical excellence in exposure, lighting, focus, color balance, processing and sharpness.

Reduced scores of 11 to 9 are assigned depending on the extent of shortfalls and flaws against these criteria.

The four criteria above are also used for **Travel Sequences**, but the first two are applied across the multi-image presentation as a whole, considering the story-telling, continuity and cohesiveness qualities of the sequence.

Print Division

Print Image Definition

- Print competitions have no limitations as to subject matter, except that it should not be offensive to the average adult audience.
- Prints must be the entrant's work but may be printed by an outside source.
- Images may be printed on any type of substrate, may be matted but not framed.
- Minimum image size is 5"x5" and maximum size including mount or mat is 24"x18".
- Prints must be labeled on the reverse side in the upper left-hand corner with title, entrant's name, category, and competition date.

Print Category Definitions

- Print competitions are conducted in three categories: Monochrome, Creative and Color.
- **Monochrome Prints** can be black & white or in gradations of any single color other than black; black & white with spot color is not acceptable.
- **Creative Prints** (such as Abstract, Altered Reality, Surreal, Conceptual)
 - The image must obviously display a change in natural color, form, shape, or any combination of these three.
 - Artwork or computer graphics generated by the entrant may be incorporated.
 - Creative images may be montages or composites, content can be rearranged, replaced or added to the original image, but all content must be created by the entrant.
 - In-Camera Motion (ICM) techniques are acceptable.
 - The original photographic content should predominate.
- **Color Prints** include everything else.
- Creative treatments are permitted in the Color and Monochrome categories but highly manipulated images should be entered in the Creative category.

Print Image Evaluation

Judges are provided with Sierra Camera Club scoring guidance, but will typically apply that guidance within the framework of their own experience, perspectives and preferences. So that entrants can take that guidance in account in selecting and presenting Print images, the following summarizes the criteria* that should typically be met to achieve the maximum score of 12 points:

- The image has great impact and stands out immediately.
- Strong presentation that evokes the imagination and holds the viewer's attention.
- Excellence in composition, visual elements and subject matter.
- Technical excellence in exposure, lighting, focus, color balance, processing and sharpness.
- Printing quality shows no flaws and does not detract from the image.

Reduced scores of 11 to 9 are assigned depending on the extent of shortfalls and flaws against these criteria.

* In scoring **Creative** images, judges are free to apply discretion well beyond the above scoring guidance in order to consider the vision, concept, originality, technical skill, and overall impression and execution represented in the image and its printed form.