

GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN®

2020 Nature Photography Weekend Photo Contest Rules and Requirements

PART 1: IMAGE TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

- **File Format:** JPEG (with minimum compression — highest quality setting)
- **Image size:** Images must be of resolution sufficient for an 8 x 10 or 8 x 12 print. Suggested minimum resolution for an 8 x 10 is 2400 x 3000 pixels (~7 megapixels). For an 8 x 12, it would be 2400 x 3600 pixels (~8.4 megapixels). Larger sizes are, of course, acceptable. Images may be cropped as long as the result meets the above size requirements and fits a standard aspect ratio of 4:5, 3:4 or 2:3. (35mm SLRs have a 2:3 aspect ratio.)
- **Media:** Each photographer will be provided with a flash drive at the beginning of the weekend to be returned with your three contest entry images by 5 p.m. Saturday.
- **Subject Matter:** The basic categories are “Animals in Nature” (in the wild), “Animals in Habitats” (in captivity in the habitats located next to the Nature Museum), “Wildflowers” (self-explanatory) and “Scenics” (generally landscapes). There is some overlap: A shot of rhododendrons with the mountain in the background may be a Scenic or Wildflower photo. A butterfly on a flower may be a Wildflower or Animals in Nature shot. Use your own judgment.
- **Location:** All photos must be taken on Grandfather Mountain, with one exception: Shots of Grandfather Mountain itself may be taken from off park property. “Grandfather Mountain” includes the attraction (Swinging Bridge, Animal Habitats, etc.) and Grandfather Mountain State Park (backcountry trails).
- **File Names:** Do not submit photos with the file names generated by your camera! Each digital photo file must be renamed using the following system:
 1. First character: Either “A” for advanced class or “B” for beginner class
 2. Next two characters (Photo Category):
 - “AN” for animals in nature
 - “HA” for animals in Grandfather Mountain habitats
 - “SC” for scenic
 - “WF” for wildflower
 3. If you are entering more than one image in any category, add a “1”, “2” or “3” after the two-letter category code.
 4. Next character: Underscore (“_”)

5. Last three characters: Photographer's ID number (Each photographer will be assigned an ID number at registration at the beginning of the weekend.)

For example: Beginner photographer James Bond, assigned ID number 007 (of course), submitting three images in the "Scenic" category would name them "bsc1_007", "bsc2_007" and "bsc3_007". This system allows the judges to evaluate the images impartially, without any knowledge of who took the photo. If you have trouble renaming files, ask a Team Member for help.

- Beginner or Advanced? You may decide for yourself whether you're in the Beginner or Advanced category, but if you've had a winning, runner-up or Honorable Mention photo during previous Nature Photography Weekends, you should consider yourself Advanced.

PART 2: IMAGE MODIFICATION/MANIPULATION

Yes, you can touch up images on your computer. Be warned that the judges will not look kindly on photos that were not taken during the weekend (e.g., a flower blooming in April), contrived images or images that have been manipulated to the degree that they violate the spirit of the contest. Buildings and man-made structures (like the Swinging Bridge) may be included in photographs but shouldn't be the central subject. Given that this a low-key contest with no prizes, we don't expect any "cheating"; this information is provided as much to put everyone on equal footing as anything else. We also want to encourage you to spend as much time as possible out on the mountain and as little as possible hunched over a computer! This is a nature photography weekend, and photos that look natural are the goal. Below is a list of techniques and tools that are permitted and some that are forbidden. If in doubt, or if there is something that is not mentioned here, you should assume that it is not permitted.

Basic Rules:

Each image entered must be taken during the 2020 Nature Photography Weekend.

Immediate family members of NPW team members are ineligible for contest participation.

You may not add graphics (including borders) or text, clip art, computer-generated images or elements from other photographs (even those taken during Nature Photography Weekend).

Some modifications may be made to your image in a photo editing program, as long as the modification is applied to the whole image. Details below:

- **Cropping:** As mentioned earlier, images may be cropped as long as the resulting image meets the contest size requirements (listed in section 1 above) and fits a standard aspect ratio of 4:5, 3:4 or 2:3. (35mm digital SLR's make images with a 2:3 aspect ratio.)
- **Brightness & Contrast:** These adjustments are permitted, provided they are applied to the entire image. This also applies to the levels and curves tools and similar.
- **Rotation:** Rotating the image (to level a horizon, for example) is permitted.
- **Spot Retouching:** Clone tools may be used to remove spots caused by dust on the sensor but not to remove features actually in the scene or to add features that were not there.

- **Sharpening:** The use of unsharp masking and other sharpening tools is strongly discouraged, but permitted, provided it is applied to the entire image.
- **Blurring:** No blurring of any part of the image is permitted.
- **Black & White Conversion:** Converting a color image to black and white is permitted, provided you convert the whole image and not just part of it.
- **Filters:** The use of Photoshop (or equivalent) filters is permitted (if applied to the entire image) for noise reduction, color balance and correction of lens distortion.
- **HDR:** We do permit HDR (High Dynamic Range) photographs. Be aware, however, that many HDR photos look very unnatural: You won't do well in this nature photography contest if you produce the photographic equivalent of a Thomas Kinkade painting! If someone can tell your photo is HDR by looking, it's probably not worth entering.

General Tips:

Most of the permitted techniques are easy to do — and easy to overdo. The judges are experienced digital photography experts who have the technical experience to detect excessive processing and the aesthetic inclination to frown upon it. Keep in mind that this is a nature photography weekend and that its main purpose is learning and fun. Just capture the beauty of nature in the least artificial way you can, and you'll be more likely to achieve both goals.

PART 3: CONTEST TIMELINE

- Check in and registration Friday, 10 a.m. to 5:45 p.m. Friday check-in is at MacRae Meadows (gate 3), about 10 yards on the Linville side of the driveway to the Grandfather Mountain Office and 30 yards on the Linville side of the attraction Entrance Gate. In the case of torrential rain, the registration will move to the Nature Museum. Late registration will be held in the Nature Museum restaurant on Saturday morning between 8 and 9 a.m. When you check in, you will receive a registration packet, which will include your photographer ID number and a flash drive for your contest entries.
- Contest turn-in deadline, in the Nature Museum restaurant: Saturday, 5 p.m.
- Presentation of winning images: Sunday, approx. 12 p.m.

PART 4: THE DON NELSON AWARD

For the second year, Grandfather Mountain is offering a new contest award — the Don Nelson Award, named after the late Don Nelson, a Nature Photography Weekend luminary and legend, without whom the weekend would not be possible.

The crux of this new category is that for the Don Nelson Award, photos may have been taken at any time between from June 2018 through May 2020 — not just during Nature Photography Weekend.

The rules are as follows:

- Contestants may only submit **one** entry for this category in JPEG format — high quality, with a minimum size of 3,000 pixels along the short edge or around 8 megapixels total.
- All photos must be taken on Grandfather Mountain, with one exception: Shots of Grandfather Mountain itself may be taken from off park property. “Grandfather Mountain” includes the privately owned nature park (Swinging Bridge, Animal Habitats, etc.) and Grandfather Mountain State Park (backcountry trails). Photo subject matter can include animals (in nature and habitats), wildflowers and scenics.
- Immediate family members of NPW team members are ineligible for contest participation
- You may not add graphics (including borders) or text, clip art, computer-generated images or elements from other photographs. Some modifications may be made to your image in a photo-editing program, **as long as the modification is applied to the entire image**, e.g., cropping, brightness and contrast, rotation, sharpening, black-and-white conversion, filters and HDR. Spot retouching is permitted to remove spots caused by dust on the sensor, but not to remove features actually in the scene or to add features that were not there.
- Entries should be labeled accordingly: DNA20_photosubject.
- To submit your entry, please email it to npw@grandfather.com. The deadline for photo submission is 5 p.m. Thursday, May 28.

Thanks again for joining us for the 2020 Nature Photography Weekend, and best of luck!

If you have any questions, consult with a member of the Nature Photography Weekend team before turning in your flash drive with your three images! We will have a team member stationed near the restaurant on Saturday afternoon.