

What Makes a Winning Photo by Dawn Dingee

Recently, club members have requested more transparency of the club competitions we participate in – PSA and NECCC. Lazlo includes the photos in the Newsletter but we don't really see the score based on our internal voting unless we log into the website and go through each photo. We also have not done a great job at sharing the results with all club members and we rarely have discussions regarding the results. We hope to change that going forward.

Photo Selection

The keys to a winning photo can be summed up to the following:

- **Subject** - a great photo should tell a story. It's helpful to have a focal point.
- **Composition** – the way you compose a photo can 'make or break' it. Rule of thirds is a great way to create an interesting, well-balanced photo
- **Exposure** – experiment with different light sources; try creating a mood
- **Technique** – technical skill is important. Try to select a photo that masters focus and depth of field; and avoid photos with spots caused by a dirty sensor.

When selecting photos for our PSA and NECCC competitions, we should keep these points in mind. When voting, we should also keep these things in mind! And remember, our members do not need to submit photos in order to be eligible to vote so even if you haven't had time to submit entries, please consider voting.

Scoring

Our club members are encouraged to vote on photos even if they haven't submitted photos into the competition. We typically have less than 12 member votes on photos even though our membership is 40+. Hopefully with a better understanding of the process and more transparency of results, we can get more members involved.

When our submitted photos are voted on by the host group, the viewer has *seconds* to make a decision on your photo. **That is why it is so important to make your photos stand out.** Remembering the keys to a winning photo above are important to selecting a photo that can score high, resulting in an Award or Merit recognition for you and the club.

For PSA, each club submits 6 photos for each category. Each photo is scored by 3 judges. Images shall be scored from 1 to 5, with the maximum total score of 15 possible. 20% of the scores will be eligible for awards (Merit and HM), based on high scores and judges' discussion. The top scoring images should form an eligible score group and images in excess of the needed number of 20% shall be dropped using the standard "IN" and "OUT" voting method based on points and discussion. Once approximately 20% have been selected, judges will select one-half for Honorable Mention Awards and one-half for Merit Awards.

For NECCC, a similar method is used but each club submits 4 photos per category.

Results

Bert sends the results out to all members. However, it may be beneficial to see the internal voting vs. the competition scores. For the PSA color competition, we are currently in last place. For the PSA Monochrome competition, we are 14th out of 24. Hopefully providing more transparency to scores and competition results will help us going forward. The first step in improving our position is to select the right photo. The second step is to submit our best photos to the competition so our internal voting is very important. Lastly, discussing the results should also help us understand why we did well or why we didn't do well. So, going forward, we will try to incorporate these discussions into our meetings.

Below is a comparison of the internal club voting for the some of our photos sent to PSA and NECCC for the Color and Monochrome division and the results from the judges.

Internal score: **8.1**

Competition score: **11** (range was 9 to 15)



Keystone Archway by Bert Schmitz

Internal score: **7.9**

Competition score: **11** (range was 9 to 15)



Sunset over Mudge Pond by Brian Wilcox

Internal score: **7.5**

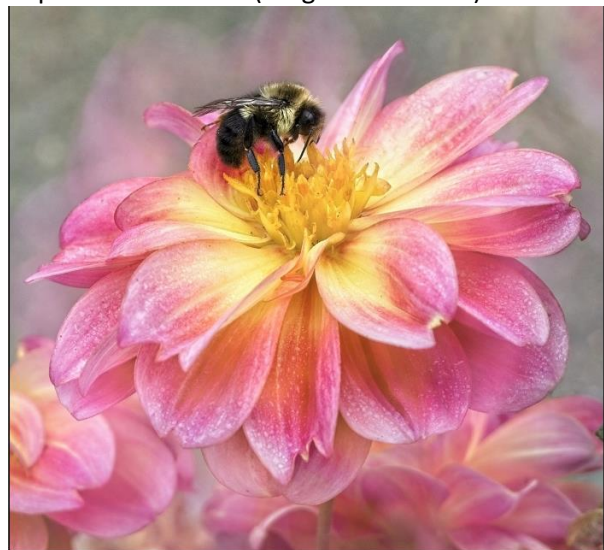
Competition score: **12 HM** (range was 7 to 15)



Yosemite, El Capitan by Dawn Dingee

Internal score: **8.9**

Competition score: **11** (range was 9 to 15)



Bee on Dahlia by Karen McMahan

Internal score: **7.9**

Competition score: **11** (range was 7 to 15)



Surprised Soggy Squirrel by Ian Peters

Internal score: **7.6**

Competition score: **12** (range was 7 to 15)



Cape Cod Sunrise by Lazlo Gyorsok

Internal score: **8.2**

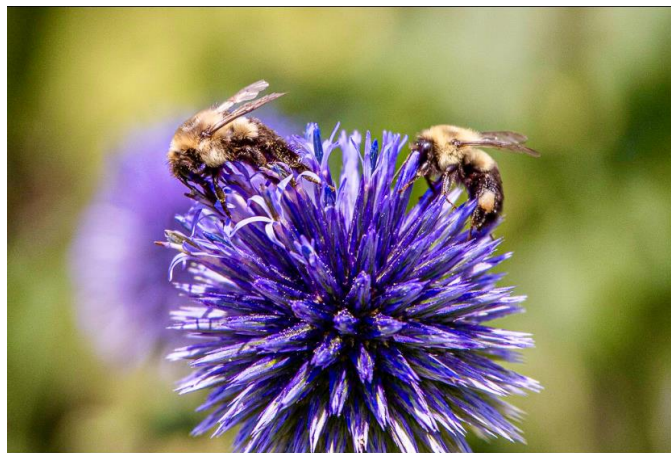
Competition score: **10** (range was 9 to 15)



Sunday Morning View by Paul Serbaniewicz

Internal score: **8.1**

Competition score: **9** (range was 9 to 15)



Clover Buzz by Heidi Hoeller

Internal score: **7.6**

Competition score: **8** (range was 7 to 15)



Boats on the Beach by Bert Schmitz

Internal score: **7.2**

Competition score: **10** (range was 7 to 15)



Gate for the Future by Pamela Peeters

Internal score: **7.3**

Competition score: **9** (range was 7 to 15)



Now This Is A Crab Dinner by Karen McMahon

Internal score: **7**

Competition score: **9** (range was 7 to 15)



WW Barn by Brian Wilcox

Internal score: **7.2**

Competition score: **12 HM** (range was 7 to 15)



Playing the Drums by Dawn Dingee

Internal score: **7.4**

Competition score: **9** (range was 7 to 15)



Falling Water by Bert Schmitz

Internal score: **7.4**

Competition score: **8** (range was 7 to 15)



Stroud at the stroke of Midnight by Ian Peters

Internal score: **7.5**

Competition score: **9** (range was 7 to 15)



Abu Dhabi Falcon by Pamela Peeters

Conclusion

In conclusion, your subject should be clear and your photos must be interesting. If the subject is not appealing in some way, it will likely be overlooked, especially given there are only a mere few seconds to capture the viewer's attention. It's okay to select simple subjects, but make sure there is a point of interest of something in the photo that makes it stand out so that it is not simply ordinary. The first impression is what you're after and an interesting subject will help that. When it comes down to the final round and the field is narrowed down to just a handful of photographs, it's the little details that matter. Avoid over-sharpening your photos or applying too much saturation.

Participating in the competitions is not meant to be stressful. The main goal is to receive feedback and confirmation on our photos. When voting, try to leave comments – leave good comments explaining what you find great about the photo ... and constructive criticism so that if you score a photo low, the

photographer understands why and will know how to improve going forward. And remember, if a photo scores low, it does NOT mean it's not a good photo.

To view past winners for PSA, go here: <https://psa-photo.org/page/competition-results> (we are group D)

To view past winners for NECCC, go here: www.neccc.org/p/interclub-competition.html (we are group A)

At our February meeting, we had a presentation by Sharon Prislpsky which was titled **Capture and Beyond: The Making of a Winning Image**. If you missed the meeting, you can view the video recording here:

www.housatoniccameraclub.com/meeting_videos.html