



THE NATURE PHOTOGRAPHERS' CODE OF PRACTICE

INTRODUCTION

The Nature Division of the Photographic Society of America has adopted a Code of Practice as a guide for all photographers to follow in order to help protect all nature subjects and the environment.

GENERAL

Always be considerate of your subjects, be they animal, vegetable or mineral. Killing or injuring any living thing is not a proper part of our nature photography. The ethical nature photographer should not participate in, nor endorse, the practice of sacrificing a living animal for the purpose of photographing a predator actually killing live prey under controlled conditions.

Be courteous to your fellow photographers.

For the good of nature photography, observe normal courtesies. Permission should be obtained before trespassing on land on which there is not customarily free access.

Be familiar with the life history and geographic or geologic setting of your subject. The more complex the life form and more rare the species, the greater your knowledge, care and respect should be. This same knowledge will help you tell better stories with your nature images.

Abide by all requests of rangers and wardens in National and State Parks and wildlife refuges.

BIRDS AND OTHER SMALL ANIMALS

Try to observe birds and other small animals so they are unaware of your presence. Thus you are provided an opportunity to learn their interesting everyday habits.

When photographing a nest, don't keep it unduly exposed to the sun, cold, rain or snow, which may cause death to the eggs or young and/or desertion by the parents. This protocol also applies to the burrows or dens of small animals, reptiles and lower life forms as well.

Instead of cutting off branches or grasses near a nest or den, tie the branches back or lay the grass down with rocks or sticks. Before tying back branches, provide temporary shade, if needed. When you have finished photographing place everything back properly, the way you found it, as a protection for the inhabitants.

Generally, do not keep a blind set up on a nest or burrow if the parents do not return within a half hour - especially on extremely hot or cold days.

Do not frighten birds from a nest to get a picture of them returning. You may cause the eggs or young to die. The normal intervals on the nest will not be too long. It is preferable not to take longer than 15 minutes to set up a blind at a nest or burrow. It will be that much longer before the parents return. It is better to set up your blind at the car and carry it in.

Do not approach a blind by car or foot if it is occupied. You may frighten the animal subject from the other photographer's spot and spoil his/her picture.

Beware of approaching a nest, den or burrow too closely. This could cause abandonment of the young by some parents and expose the area to predation. Careful judgment is necessary.

Do not handle young birds or other small animals. The parents may abandon them.

Tracks to and from a nest, den or burrow should be inconspicuous. The area should be restored to its natural state before you leave.

Blinds should not be positioned along a regularly used approach to the nest, den or burrow and should not be allowed to flap in the wind.

For cold-blooded animals and invertebrates, temporary removal from the wild to a studio or aquarium for photography should be undertaken with caution, as some states and countries have laws against this practice without permit. Subsequent release, in any case, should be to the original habitat as soon as possible.

BOTANY

A competent photographer never needs to pick wildflowers. In many states and all National Parks and Monuments it is illegal to pick flowers. A true nature photographer should be the first to protect them.

If rocks or logs or other objects natural to the area are brought in to provide scientifically correct but more photogenic background, these should be returned to their original place.

While "gardening" is often desirable to simplify the immediate environment, this should not include pulling up, cutting off or otherwise destroying other plants in the picture area. Knee-holes, heel or toe scuffing, etc., should be prevented.

Avoid trampling fragile habitats, especially grasslands, marshes and wildflower patches. Remember, damage to the habitat affects all species in the ecosystem.

INSECTS

Insects or spiders captured for photographic purposes should be released at the point of capture within a reasonably short time.

Day flying insects, particularly butterflies and wasps, are best controlled by working in a darkened room at night, focusing by means of a weak flashlight.

Chilling is suitable for such insects as beetles and grasshoppers only. Butterflies, most moths and almost all insect larvae may be irreparably damaged by such treatment.

Freezing should never be attempted. The photographer should not endanger the lives of the insects. Bear in mind that they also play a part in the balance of nature.

Photographing insects and arachnids in the field would probably tell a more accurate story.

TIDEPOOL SUBJECTS

Tidepool animals have a definite ecological niche. Animals that live on the top of rocks, and those that live underneath, will die if rocks turned over for photographic purposes are not replaced the way they are found. All marine life moved for any purpose should be returned to the original location. Certain tidepool creatures such as Brittle Stars are extremely fragile. Handle them with great care.

Marine animals require large amounts of frequently replaced oxygen and may die rather quickly if placed in aquaria without artificial oxygenation and temperature control.

NEWTS, SALAMANDERS & OTHER AMPHIBIANS

While this group of animals makes delightful aquaria subjects, they should not be held for more than a few hours while being photographed unless they are provided with proper food and kept in well-simulated nature conditions.

If chilling is used for partial control it should be used carefully and for brief periods only. This practice applies to all animal subjects.

REPTILES

It is preferable that lizards and snakes be held for no more than very brief periods since artificial feeding is usually not successful with a number of these species. If held overnight for photography next morning they should be given protection roughly equivalent to that which they would find for themselves in the wild.

In spite of what you see on television, snakes should never be picked up by the neck alone as this may permanently injure their spinal column. Similarly, they should never be controlled by lifting them from their tail end.

GEOLOGY

Pictographs and petroglyphs should never be altered for photographic reasons by applying any substance. NOTE: Pictographs and petroglyphs are not eligible in PSA recognized NATURE exhibitions.

When photographing fragile cave formations or crystals, or similar material, do not move or break these features. Others may follow and want to see them. Remember, a damaged plant may well recover in a few days but a damaged crystal or cave formation took tens of thousands of years to grow. Present geologic conditions may make their repair impossible on any time scale. Delicate erosion features must also be left untouched. Let Nature do the rearranging.

MISCELLENEOUS

It is unethical to throw rocks at an animal to cause it to change position or area. Thoughtless conduct could force a creature to leave its accustomed surroundings because it finds the photographer an unbearable nuisance. If the animal in question is forced to move into territory occupied by another animal friction is bound to arise. The dislodged animal may find unfavorable conditions in regard to food and water.

Nature programs or articles that suggest or describe methods of nature photography contrary to this Code are unacceptable for presentation at PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY OF AMERICA National or Regional Conventions or for use in the PSA Journal. Program directors should send copies of this Code to makers of programs being considered, emphasizing this fact. PSA affiliated Clubs, Councils and Chapters should also adopt this practice.

DIGITAL

Digital images used in PSA Nature Division approved competitions is subject to the same PSA definition of Nature Photography as nature slides and prints. In addition, the images should be considered "Digital Realism", where a photographer may perform any enhancements and modifications that improve the presentation of the image so that it more accurately matches the original scene that was photographed but that does not change the truth of the original nature story. Cropping and horizontal flipping (equivalent to reversing a slide) are acceptable modifications. Adding elements to your images, removing elements from your image other than by cropping, combining separate images or rearranging and/or cloning elements in your image are not acceptable and can lead to disqualification of your image in the competition.

DEFINITION

This definition applies for images used in PSA Nature Division approved competitions, be they Exhibitions, Interclub Competitions or Individual Competitions:

Nature photography is restricted to the use of the photographic process to depict observations from all branches of natural history, except anthropology and archeology, in such a fashion that a well informed person will be able to identify the subject material and to certify as to its honest presentation. The **story telling** value of a photograph **must** be weighed more than the pictorial quality while maintaining the highest technical quality. Human elements shall not be present, except where those human elements enhance the nature story. The presence of scientific bands, scientific tags or radio collars on wild animals is permissible. Photographs of artificially produced hybrid plants or animals, mounted specimens, or obviously set arrangements, are ineligible, as is any form of manipulation that alters the truth of the photographic statement. **No techniques that add to, 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 are permitted. All adjustments must appear natural.**

The following additional definition applies in competitions restricted to wildlife:

Authentic **Wildlife** is defined as one or more organisms, living free and unrestrained in a natural or adopted habitat. Therefore landscapes, photographs of zoo animals, game farm animals, or **any living subject taken under controlled conditions** are **not** eligible for entry in Wildlife competitions.

Published by the Nature Division of the Photographic Society of America as a guide-line to assist the photographer in obtaining a true nature picture without injuring the subject or destroying the environment.

THE WELL BEING OF YOUR SUBJECT IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOUR PHOTOGRAPH. PLEASE ACT ACCORDINGLY.