



Photo Contest Rules & Submission Instructions

Wildlife in Focus.org

2026 Texas Wildlife & Nature Photographer of the Year

Wildlife in Focus is proud to present the inaugural **Texas Wildlife & Nature Photographer of the Year** competition. This statewide honor celebrates outstanding photography that tells the story of Texas wildlife, wild places, and natural processes through artistic excellence, conservation storytelling, and ethical field practices.

One overall image will be selected to earn the title **Texas Wildlife & Nature Photographer of the Year**. **The winner will be** chosen from the four Adult Category winners. In addition, judges will select approximately 10 or more images in each Adult category will be recognized as **Highly Commended**.

The youth entries will be judged separately from the adult entries, and the top Youth image will earn the title **Texas Youth Wildlife & Nature Photographer of the Year**, with approximately twenty Youth images recognized as Highly Commended.

Submission Period

Opens: April 1, 2026

Closes: June 7, 2026, at 11:59 PM (Central Time)

All images must have been taken in Texas between **January 1, 2022 and June 7, 2026**. Submissions are to be made online at **www.wildlifeinfocus.org** No pre-registration is required.

Entry Fees & Eligibility

Adult Division (18 and older as of January 1, 2026)

- \$10 per image
- Unlimited entries

Youth Division (17 and under as of January 1, 2026)

- Free
- Maximum of 5 entries

Categories

Adult Categories

1. **Birds of Texas** – All wild bird species photographed in Texas.
2. **Mammals of Texas** – All wild mammal species photographed in Texas.
3. **Animal Behavior** – All Texas wildlife (including birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, insects and other invertebrates) captured in meaningful behavioral moments. Playing, resting, feeding, mating, fighting, running/flying etc.
4. **Texas Wildscapes (Landscapes, Night Skies & Native Plants)** – Natural landscapes, ecosystems, native plants, night skies, and scenic environments. Wildlife may be small in the frame. Man-made elements may be present but must not dominate.

Youth Category

Youth may submit any Texas wildlife or scenic images eligible for the Adult categories.

Prizes: \$3000 prize purse

Adult Awards

- Category Winners (4): \$500 each (or equivalent value) + Wildlife in Focus book
- Overall Photographer of the Year: \$500 (or equivalent value) + Wildlife in Focus book
- Highly Commended: Recognition and publication

Youth Awards

- Highest rated image that meet criteria for each adult category (4): \$100 each (or equivalent value) + Wildlife in Focus book
- Overall Youth Winner: \$100
- Highly Commended: Recognition and publication

(Total prize purse approximately \$3,000; subject to adjustment based on entry numbers.)

OWNERSHIP and USE OF IMAGES and VIDEO

- Images & Video remain the property of the Photographer/Videographer who retains all rights. WIF will have limited rights to use submitted images and edited versions of all submitted images and video indefinitely for WIF education and promotion purposes. This includes production of brochures, advertising promotions, educational materials, exhibits, books, and social media, including promotions of WIF through WIF promotional partners. WIF will provide photographer credit in a manner that is feasible.

Image Requirements & Authenticity

- a. All images must be photographed within the state of Texas between January 1, 2022, and June 7, 2026.
- b. By submitting a photo taken on private land the photographer states they had permission from the landowner to be on the property and submit images.
- c. Subjects must be wild, free-ranging, and native or naturalized species photographed in natural conditions. Preference will be given to species known to be native to Texas. Domestic animals, captive wildlife, and purely urban scenes are not eligible.
- d. **File name requirements:** File name should be named with photographer full name, species common name, public or private land, county for private land, and name of public land unit/park, calendar year taken. Use hyphen to separate items

File name format:

“photographer last name-first name- species common name-public or private land - county/name of public land park etc-year”

Examples:

1- Private Land example of a jpg image of private land photo taken in webb county, of Mockingbird, in 2025

- Smith-jane-Northern Mockingbird-private-webb county-2025.jpg

2- Public Land example of a jpg image of public land photo taken in Lake Casa Blanca International State Park, of Mockingbird, in 2025

- Example file name 2:
- Smith-jane-Northern Mockingbird- public-Lake Casa Blanca International State Park -2025.jpg

- a. FYI The common name of species helps us do further sorting and identification but is not judged and if incorrect there is no penalty.
- b. The county helps us showcase geographical diversity of entries and better work with partners.
- c. FYI Images taken on/in the ocean, beach or public waterways should be labeled “public”
- d. FYI In the submission form the Creator is you, name of photographer.

Submission Form Information: The photo submission form has 4 text entry spaces in addition to file name, which should be named according to rules above.

The **File name** should look like: Smith-jane-Northern Mockingbird-private-webb county-2025.jpg

The additional information is;

Title: This can be a copy of the file name, or if you choose a short creative title

Subtitle: Optional-should be very short but can provide additional information to the title

Creator: Photographer Name, normal format (First Name Last Name)

Description: Optional more detailed description, see below

- a. Description: In the description box please add scientific name if known. Include a short description/caption of behavior or situation. Example: “Evening photo of armadillo out foraging”, You may also include story of getting the image or other information you feel is interesting and important for viewers to know.
- b. In description box, please state if image was not taken in person by stating “image captured with trail camera/camera trap”

Additional Information:


- 1) The Jury will give preference to **fresh original imagery**.
- 2) Photographers should not submit images that have previously received major awards (winner, runner-up, or honorable mention) in similar national or international competitions.
- 3) Images must be truthful representations of natural behavior and environments. Ethical field practices are required, no harassment, nest disturbance.
- 4) All entries must be submitted with no borders, watermarks, logos, signatures, or identifying marks. Minimum pixel dimensions Of 2000 pixels on short side. Minimum and maximum file size in megabytes will be specified in the online submission portal. NOTE: As a reminder, pixel dimensions i.e megapixels is different than file size in bytes, i.e. megabytes. Bytes refer to computer memory. Resolution is how many pixels per inch.
 - a. Minor digital adjustments are permitted provided they do not misrepresent reality. Acceptable adjustments include tone and contrast, dodging and burning, cropping, sharpening, noise reduction, removal of sensor dust or scratches, chromatic aberration correction, lens distortion correction, HDR, stitched panoramas, and stacking for focus, exposure blending, or noise reduction when taken at the same location and time. AI-assisted noise reduction, sharpening etc. that does not add content is permitted. AI upsizing, object creation or removal, or any generation of pixels is not permitted.
 - b. The following are **not permitted**: adding, moving, or removing animals, plants, people, or objects; composites that alter reality; removal of natural elements such as debris or backscatter; painting in or out areas; or any form of AI-generated or AI-assisted content that creates new visual information.


- 5) All judging is anonymous.
- 6) Each image must be entirely the work of the submitting photographer.
- 7) Wildlife in Focus will require the original unedited version of image files for all images shortlisted for awards. This may include the original RAW files (or native DNG where applicable), or the unedited original file in whichever format is taken by camera.
- 8) Any image that cannot be authenticated, or is found to violate ethical, technical, or authenticity standards, will be disqualified without refund.
- 9) By entering, photographers affirm that all information provided is accurate, that all images were created in compliance with local, state, federal, and FAA regulations, and that Wildlife in Focus may use winning images (including highly commended or honorable mention) for exhibition, publication, education, and promotion with full credit to the photographer.

This contest establishes the premier statewide honor celebrating the photographers who tell the story of Texas wildlife and wild places with integrity, skill, and conservation purpose.



Wildlife in Focus

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