

# UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES CAN A NATURE IMAGE BE CAPTURED?

THIS DEPENDS ON WHETHER THE IMAGE IS BEING ENTERED IN A **NATURE** OR **WILDLIFE** COMPETITION.

**The Nature definition permits images taken with the subjects in “controlled conditions”.**

Such conditions include zoos, game farms, botanical gardens, aquariums and any enclosure where the subjects are totally dependent on man for food.



This image is acceptable in Nature even though the birds are in an aviary. It is not an acceptable Wildlife image.

Some photographers take this idea of “controlled conditions” to the extreme and set up situations (sometimes in a studio) to photograph ‘nature’ subjects such as reptiles. Such images are likely to be banned by PSA and FIAP for 2024 exhibitions.

**The Wildlife definition requires subjects to be “free and unrestrained in a natural or adopted habitat”.**

A **natural habitat** is any place where the subject of the image (zoological or botanical organism) lives or grows without being forced to do so by humans.

To be **living free** the organism must not be under the control of humans, nor should it be dependent upon humans for food. Natural influences must determine its life, behaviour and death.

This distinction between Nature and Wildlife photography is important, it means that:

- Environments such as aquariums, traditional zoos, open-range zoos, game farms or other areas in which animals are enclosed or confined are not considered natural environments for the purpose of Wildlife photography.

However, images taken in these environments are acceptable as Nature images.

- Animals in Wildlife images should be free to come and go from the location in which they are photographed.
- National parks are considered natural environments because the plants and animals there are not considered to be in “controlled conditions”.
- Areas such as regenerated forests or parks in urban areas are considered natural environments for the animals and plants that occur in them without human intervention.
- It is unacceptable to temporarily relocate or restrict the freedom of animals (including insects and reptiles) for the purpose of Wildlife photography.
- It is unacceptable to relocate plants for the purpose of Wildlife photography as the relocation would mean they were no longer in their natural habitat.
- It is unacceptable to use techniques such as cooling or the application of chemicals to temporarily restrict the movement of animals (including reptiles and insects) for Nature or Wildlife photography

Of course, it may be difficult to tell whether or not an image has been taken in “controlled conditions” as illustrated with these two images:



One of these images qualifies as a Wildlife image, the other does not. Which is it? The photographer will know and should be honest about it.

It is likely that the PSA/FIAP Wildlife definition will be revised for 2024 exhibitions to prohibit the use of food or sound for attracting wildlife for the purpose of photography.

**The Nature definition places no restrictions on image capture techniques.**

The definition makes no mention of camera techniques (such as the deliberate use of slow shutter speed to blur movement) or the use of

remotely or automatically triggered cameras. Therefore, it can be assumed that it is acceptable to use such techniques.

The definition makes no mention of the use of artificial lighting, such as flash. However, the overall requirement that nature images should appear “natural” means that artificial lighting should be subtle and should not alter the natural colours of the scene.

An image taken with flash is acceptable, but ethical practice limits the use of flash to situations where it is unlikely to cause any harm to the organism being photographed.

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