

Flagpole Photographers



*A Club To
Learn, Create & Share*

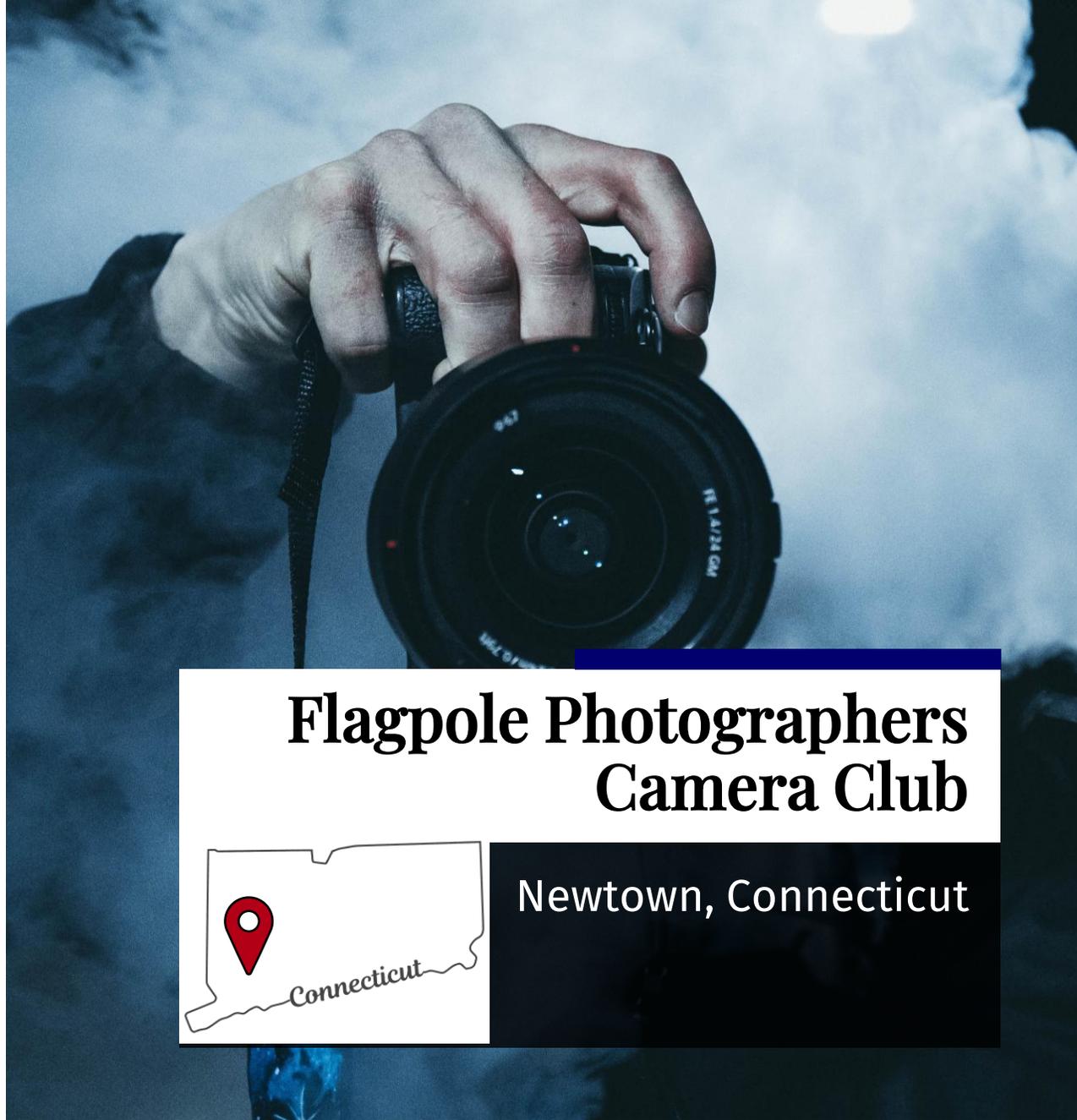
FlagpolePhotographers.com

Judging Info Session

Chane Cullens, Info@FlagpolePhotographers.com or Chane@CCullens.com, 203 512 8057

Who We Are

- Founded in 1985 in Newtown, CT the Flagpole Photographers Camera Club is dedicated to fostering a community of photographers of all skill levels who are passionate about learning, growing, and sharing their expertise. We are a club where members connect, collaborate, and challenge themselves through monthly meetings, workshops, and events.
- We believe that photography is a powerful tool for capturing the beauty and wonder of the world around us, and we are committed to helping our members develop their skills and vision to create stunning and meaningful photos.



Flagpole Photographers Camera Club



Newtown, Connecticut

The Judging Process

1. The Judge's Timeline
2. Task 1: Scoring Photos Online
3. Task 2: Participating on Competition Night
4. Competition Night Category Flow

The Judge's Timeline



One week before
competition night.

Thursday

Judges' info session
using Zoom.



Monday 9 am

Judge scoring starts.

Use the remote judging
browser app to enter
your scores.
Combined judge scores
ranks each photo.



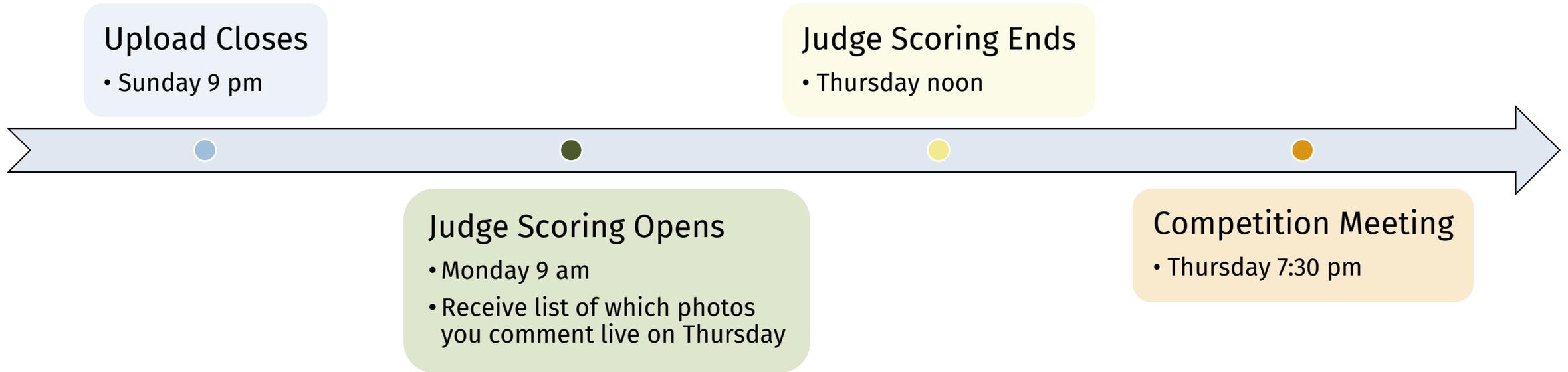
Thursday

Finish scoring by noon.

**Join Online competition
meeting
by 7:20 pm.**

1. Ties are broken in a live discussion.
2. We'll rotate which judge starts the tie-breaking discussion.

Task 1: Scoring Photos Online



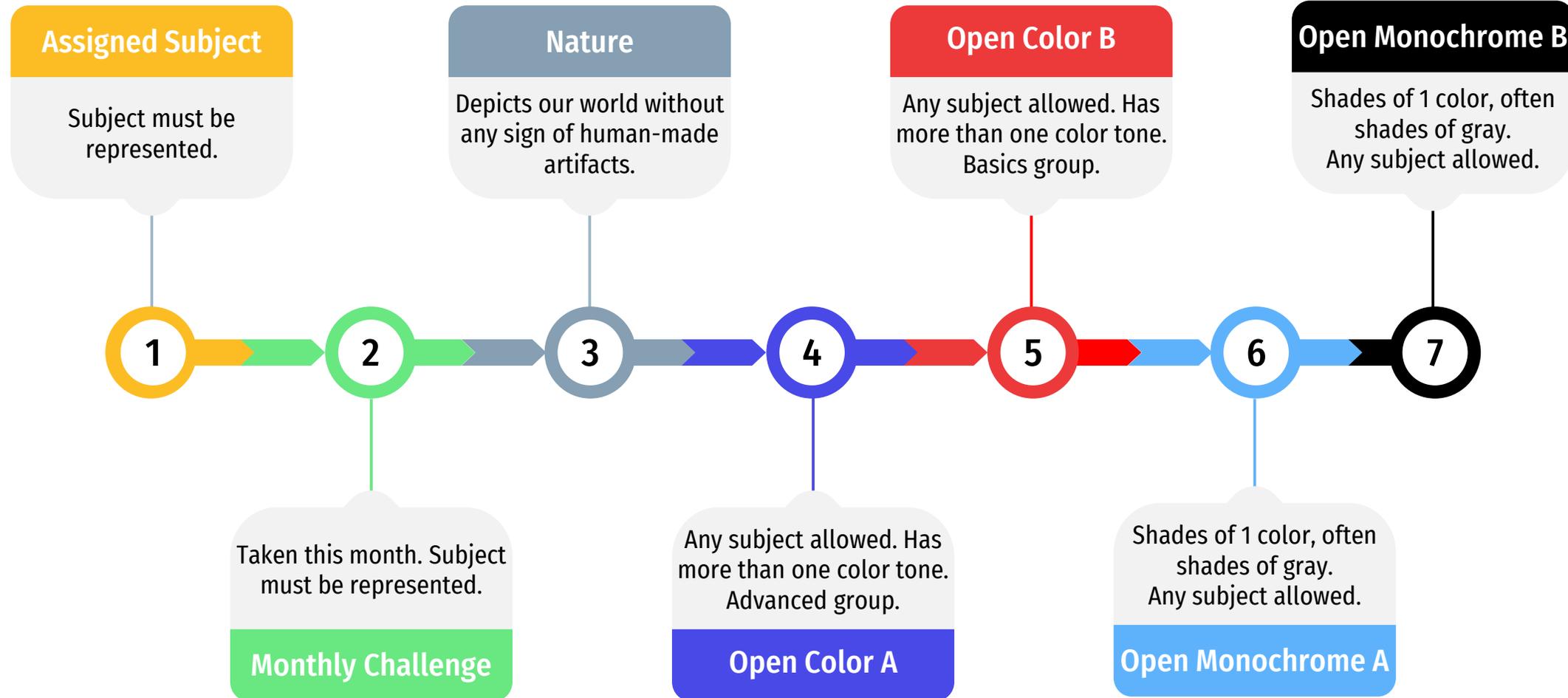
1. Sign in with provided username and password for either Judge 1, Judge 2 or Judge 3
 - <https://flagpolephotographers.com/wp-login.php>
 - After signing in the [Remote Judge](#) app automatically opens
2. Start scoring every photo in every category
 - Use the [Blue Help Button](#) in upper right corner to learn more
 - **Questions – Chane Cullens: call or text 203 512 8057 or email: Chane@CCullens.com**

Task 2: Participating on Competition Night

Timeline



Photo Categories



Competition Night Category Flow

1. View Photos

a) Show Photo b) Flagpole says Title & Score c) Judge Comments



2. Run-Through

No Run-Through

3. Score Photos

No Scoring (already scored)

4. Assign Awards

Break Any Ties – 1st, 2nd & 3rd

5. Show Winners

Winner's Discuss Their Photo

Our Judging Philosophy

1. The Foundations of Evaluation
2. Guiding Principle: Judge the Photo, Not the Effort
3. The Scoring Rubric
4. The Art of Constructive Commenting
5. Praise - Analyze – Suggest
6. Providing Meaningful Feedback
7. PSA: Evaluating Storytelling in Nature Photography

The Foundations of Evaluation

Impact

Impactful photos evoke laughter, sadness, anger, pride, wonder or another intense emotion.



Think of **Impact** as a stool supported by these four legs.

With 4 legs: Hard to knock over
With 3 legs: Still very strong.
With 2 legs: Hard to stand up.
With 1 leg: Easily falls over.
With 0 legs: It's a snapshot.

[Click for more info](#)

Storytelling

The photo's ability to evoke imagination in the viewer's mind

Creativity

A fresh expression of a scene conveying an idea or message.

Composition

Bringing all the visual elements together to express the purpose

Technical Excellence

The quality of the photo itself as it is presented for viewing

Guiding Principle: Judge the Photo, Not the Effort



It is a slippery slope to include effort when evaluating a photo because *assumptions* must be made.

There is no way to know the actual capture effort

- Effort is highly dependent on photographer, technique & luck
- Maybe it's a composite
- Maybe it's a controlled environment (photo ops, zoo)

Plus, effort also happens outside of photo capture

- Hiking all night uphill to capture the sunrise?
- Using Photoshop for 20 hours?
- Planning and learning for three weeks?



Was this a lot of effort? What effort?

- Two weeks of wondering what is a great 'bricks' photo?
- Reading the camera manual to learn what is possible?
- Waiting for afternoon shade?

How did I capture this?

- Using video mode on my camera.
- One take, one brick destroyed, one video frame used.
- Effort was a lot less than you think!

The best choice is to evaluate on the photographic principles that you see.

The Scoring Rubric (experimental)

Score	Descriptor	Detailed Definition and Key Characteristics
10.0	Exceptional / Flawless	A photo of the highest possible caliber, demonstrating complete mastery of the medium. It is technically flawless, powerfully composed, and possesses a profound and unforgettable impact. It feels unique, definitive, and sets a new standard for excellence within the competition. This score is reserved for a truly rare photo that is virtually perfect in every respect.
9.5	Superior / Near-Flawless	A photo of superior quality, craftsmanship, and artistic impact that approaches perfection. Any perceived weakness is negligible and does not detract from its power. It has a significant "WOW" factor and is immediately memorable. This score is reserved for the truly elite photos in the competition.
9.0	Outstanding	An outstanding photo demonstrating clear intent and mastery. It is technically excellent, with strong composition and significant impact. It successfully conveys a compelling story or mood and would be a clear candidate for an award in any competition.
8.5	Excellent	A very strong photo that goes beyond technical proficiency to exhibit notable creativity, emotional resonance, or a unique vision. It is well-crafted and commands the viewer's attention, with only minor or subjective areas for improvement. It is a clear step above a proficient photo.
8.0	Proficient / Very Good	A proficient, well-executed photo that meets all competition standards. It is technically sound (sharp, well-exposed) with good composition and clear subject matter. It is a solid, quality photo that lacks the extra spark of creativity or impact needed for a higher score.
7.5	Good / Competent Plus	A competent photo that is technically correct but may have minor weaknesses in composition or impact. It is a step above a simple record shot and shows clear photographic intent, but could be strengthened with refinement in framing, lighting, or subject presentation.
7.0	Competent	A generally competent competition photo where the technical and compositional aspects have been handled appropriately. It meets the basic requirements but does not stand out. It may feel like a familiar subject treated in a conventional way, lacking significant impact or originality.
6.5	Acceptable / Minor Flaws	A photo that shows potential but is held back by one or more noticeable flaws. These might be minor technical issues (e.g., slightly soft focus, distracting background elements) or compositional weaknesses that lessen the photo's overall effectiveness.
6.0	Needs Improvement	A competition photo with several obvious problems or a single serious flaw in technique, composition, or concept. While an attempt has been made, the photo is not yet a strong competition entry and would benefit from significant refinement.

The Art of Constructive Commenting



Comments should be offered in a constructive, respectful, and encouraging manner.



The goal of comment is to help all fellow photographers learn and grow.



Comments should be directed at the photograph, not the photographer.

Praise - Analyze - Suggest

Start with a positive comment

“I like the photo” needs a “Why” linked to photographic principles



Suggest an improvement for before the shutter was clicked
The subject, composition, exposure, perspective, story ...



If needed, suggest a simple improvement done in post processing
Crop, brightness, contrast, shadow, color, remove ...



Improvement ideas are suggestions, not rules
Use words like Maybe, Might, Consider ...



Aligned to Score

If it's in the bottom half of the scoring range, please don't say it's great or you love it ...

Providing Meaningful Feedback



Imagine a photo where the snow is 100% white

Poor – *“It’s all blown out in the snow!”*

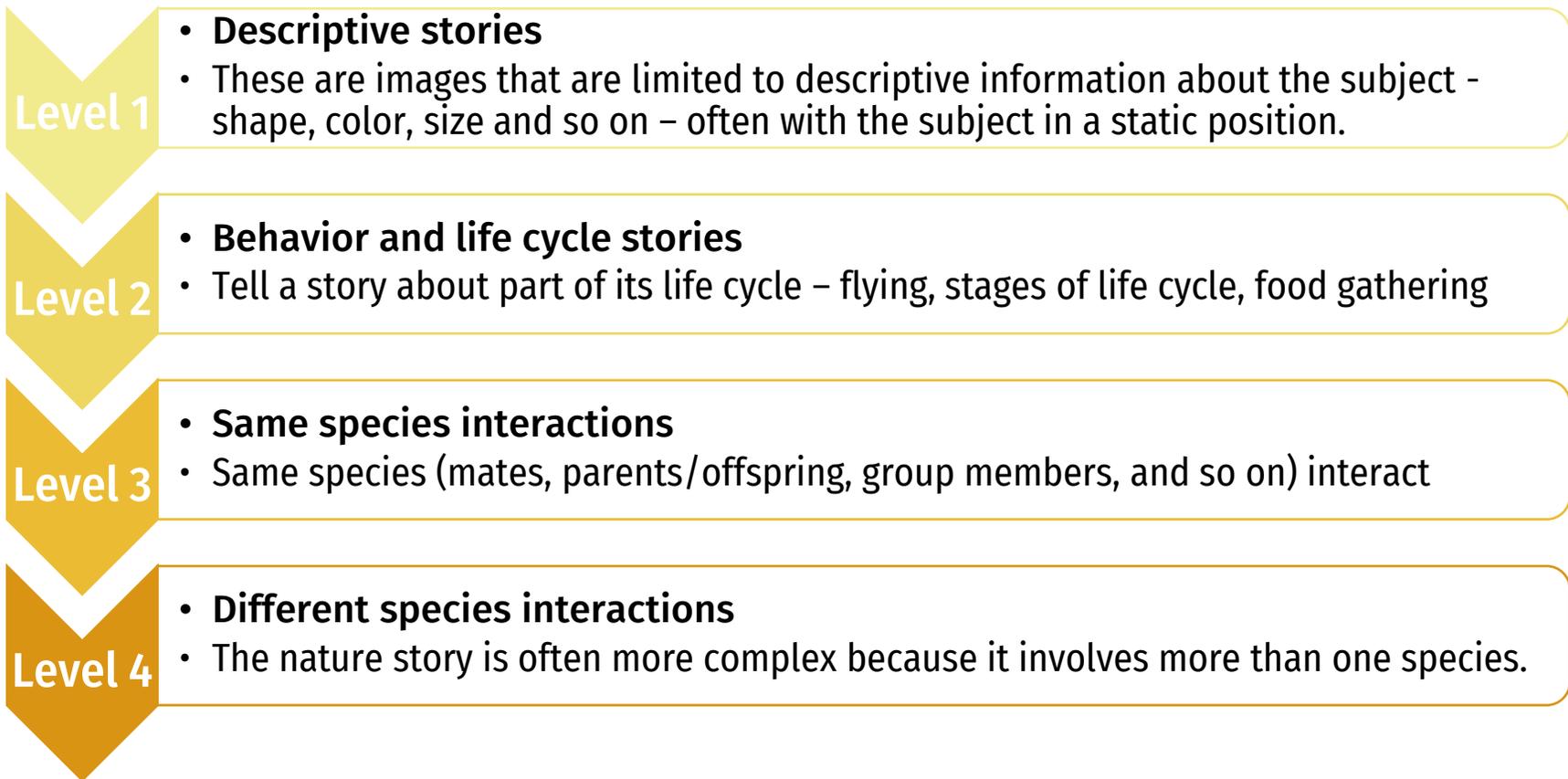
The audience can already see this and not much advice on how to improve or why an issue.

Better – *“To make the snow look more natural, you might want to adjust the exposure to capture more detail...”*

PSA Evaluating Storytelling in Nature Photography

Nature Images Must Tell a Story

The Levels of storytelling described below are intended only as a guide to help judges distinguish between weak and strong nature stories



High technical standards are expected at all levels.

Reference Materials

Competition Category Definitions



Assigned Subject

The subject must be represented in the photo in some way.

The photo may be in color or monochrome.



Monthly Challenge

The subject must be represented in the photo in some way.

The photo may be in color or monochrome.

The photo must be taken in the last month.



Nature

Depicts our world without any sign of human-made artifacts.

Editing must maintain a natural look, and adding elements is not allowed. Also, borders are not allowed.

Banded or tagged animals are allowed. However, tame or wild domesticated animals are not allowed.

Entries may be color or monochrome.



Open Color – Class A & B

Any subject is allowed.

The photo must contain more than one color tone.



Open Monochrome – Class A & B

Any subject is allowed.

Must be grayscale or toned in a single color throughout.

No partial or spot coloring.

Annual Competition Categories



Landscape, Cityscape, Waterscapes

Focuses on capturing the natural beauty of the world around us. The photos frequently capture sweeping vistas. The photo may be in color or monochrome.



Creative

A fresh expression of a scene is a new and unique way of seeing and capturing a moment. It can convey an idea or message in a way that is both visually striking and thought-provoking. The photo may be in color or monochrome.



Nature

Depicts our world without any sign of human-made artifacts. Editing must maintain a natural look, and adding elements is not allowed. Also, borders are not allowed. Banded or tagged animals are allowed. However, tame or wild domesticated animals are not allowed. Entries may be color or monochrome shades of gray.



Open Color

Any subject is allowed. The photo must contain more than one color tone.



Open Monochrome

Any subject is allowed. A photo is considered monochrome if it is either grayscale or has been toned in one color throughout. A photo is not considered monochrome if it has been modified by partial toning, multi-toning, or spot coloring.