Flagpole Photographers

A Club To
Learn, Create & Share

FlagpolePhotographers.com

Judging Info Session

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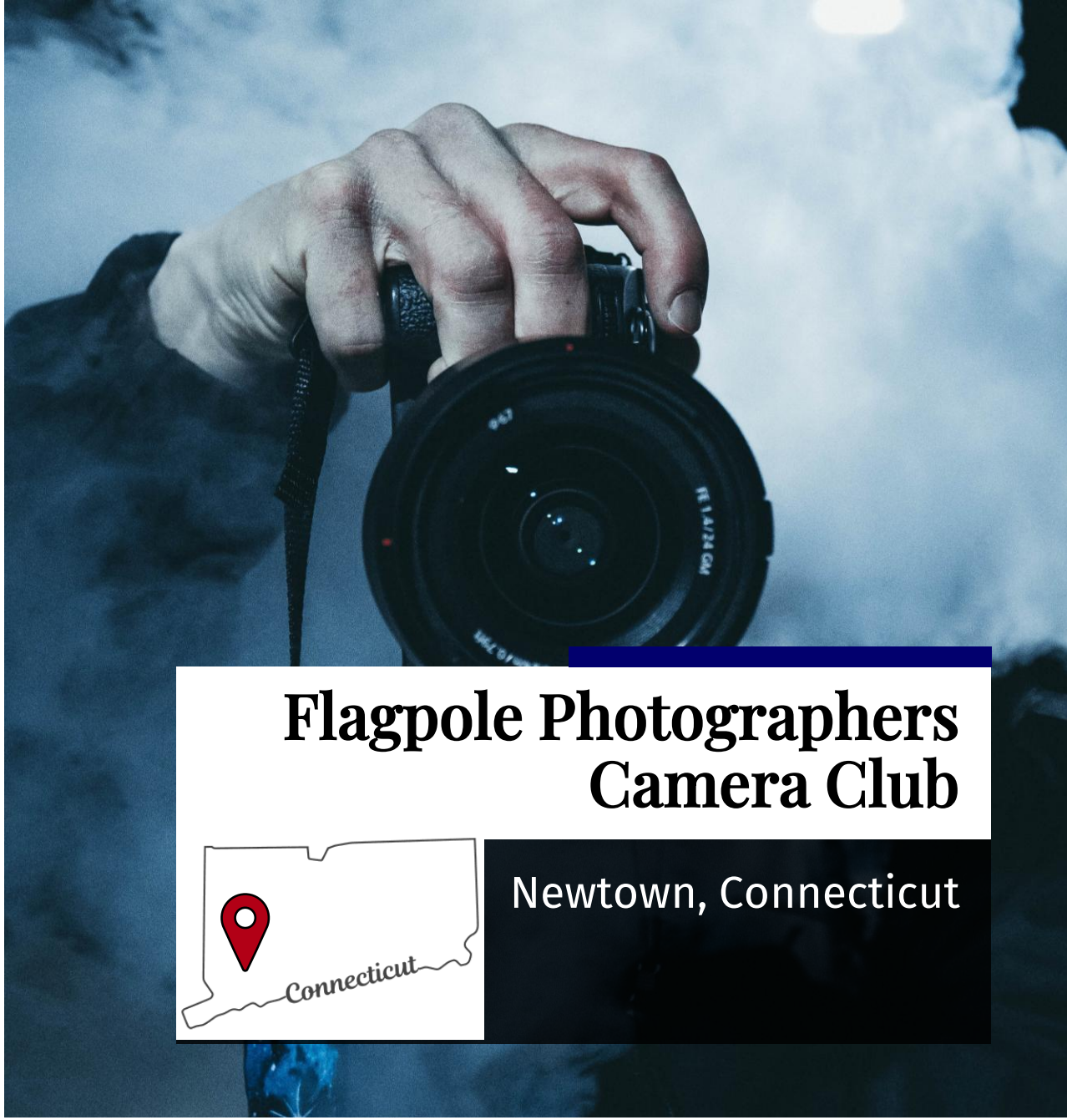
Who We Are

- 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.



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 Roadmap

The Setup (1 Week Prior)

Thursday or Friday:
Attend Judges' Info Session via Zoom.

FYI: Upload Closes Sunday at 9:00 pm.

The Scoring (Mon–Thu)

Monday 9:00 am:
Scoring Opens

- **Action:** Sign in to the Remote Judge App and enter scores for all photos.
- **Heads Up:** Look for the email list of specific photos you will comment on live

The Competition Event (Thursday)

12:00 pm:
Scoring Deadline
(Must be finished).

7:20 pm:
Join the Zoom meeting.

During Meeting:

- **Participate** in live tie-breaking discussions.
- **Offer comments** on assigned photos.

Task 1: Scoring Photos Online

Sign in

- Sign in with provided username and password for your judge number
  - Sign in: https://flagpolephotographers.com/fppsignin
  - Open Remote Judge app: https://flagpolephotographers.com/remote-judge

Score

- 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 Chane@CCullens.com

Task 2: Participating on Competition Night

Timeline

7:00 Social "Half-Hour"

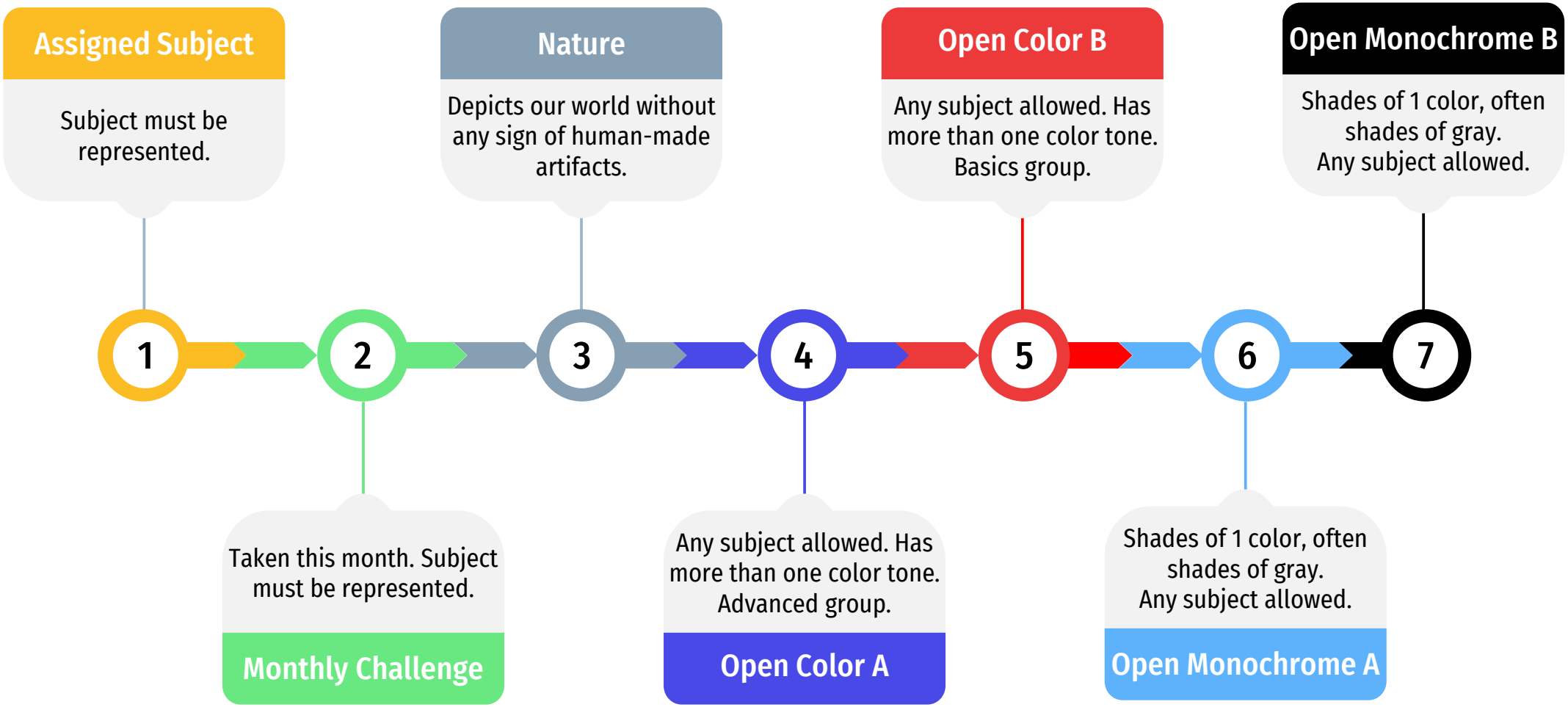
7:20 Judges Join

7:30 Club Business

7:40 Introduce Judges

Around 9:00 Finish

Photo Categories



The meeting will be recorded and posted on FlagpolePhotographers.com

Competition Night Category Flow

1. View Photos
2. Run-Through
3. Score Photos
4. Assign Awards
5. Show Winners

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

No Run-Through

No Scoring (already scored)

Break Any Ties – 1st, 2nd & 3rd

Winners Discuss Their Photo

Our Judging Philosophy

1. Evaluate the Photos Impact
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 Four Legs of Impact

Impactful photos evoke laughter, sadness, anger, pride, or wonder.

Think of
IMPACT
as a stool supported by these four legs:

Photo Structural Integrity

- 4 legs — **Solid**: Hard to knock over
- 3 legs — **Stable**: Still very strong
- 2 legs — **Weak**: Hard to stand up
- 1 leg — **Critical**: Easily falls over
- 0 legs — It's a snapshot

Storytelling
Evokes emotion

Creativity
Offers a fresh view

Composition
Guides the eye

Technical
Skillfully crafted

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 Anchor (experimental)

(9.0 – 10.0) THE ART: Impactful & Flawless

- **10.0:** Absolute mastery. Unique. Rare.
- **9.5:** The "WOW" factor. Near-perfection.
- **9.0:** Award quality. Strong storytelling & composition.

(8.5) THE BRIDGE: Excellent

- **8.5:** Notable creativity or emotion. Only subjective tweaks needed.

(8.0) THE BASELINE: Proficient / Very Good

- **8.0:** Technically sound (sharp, well-exposed). A solid photo but lacks a "spark."

(7.0 – 7.5) THE MECHANICS: Competent but Conventional

- **7.5:** Clear intent but needs refinement (lighting/composition).
- **7.0:** "Record shot." Meets requirements but lacks originality.

(6.0 – 6.5) THE ISSUES: Needs Improvement

- **6.5: Minor Flaws:** Soft focus, distracting background.
- **6.0: Obvious Errors:** Serious technical or compositional issues.

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..."*

The 4 Levels of Storytelling by PSA

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.

Level 1

- **Descriptive stories**
- These are images that are limited to descriptive information about the subject - shape, color, size and so on – often with the subject in a static position.

Level 2

- **Behavior and life cycle stories**
- Tell a story about part of its life cycle – flying, stages of life cycle, food gathering

Level 3

- **Same species interactions**
- Same species (mates, parents/offspring, group members, and so on) interact

Level 4

- **Different species interactions**
- The nature story is often more complex because it involves more than one species.

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.

FYI – Photos must be taken in the last 3 years.

https://flagpolephotographers.com/competition-info

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.

FYI – Photos must be taken in the last 3 years.

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