

2026 Winter Wildlife Festival Photography Contest

Complete Rules & Regulations

ELIGIBILITY:

The Winter Wildlife Festival Photo Contest ("Photo Contest") is open to the public. All photos submitted must be taken between January 1 and February 2, 2026 ("Entry Period") in Coastal Virginia. Coastal Virginia is defined as the cities of Chesapeake, Franklin, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Virginia Beach and Williamsburg; and the counties of Accomack, Isle of Wight, James City, Northampton, Southampton and York. Festival in Action category must be taken during participation in a 2026 Winter Wildlife Festival activity. To enter the Youth Category, registrant must be under 16 years old during the Entry Period.

SPONSOR:

The Photo Contest is sponsored by the City of Virginia Beach, through its Department of Parks and Recreation; 2154 Landstown Road Virginia Beach, Virginia 23456 ("Sponsor").

ENTRY PERIOD:

The Photo Contest entry period begins at 12:00am on Thursday, January 1, 2026, and ends at 11:59pm on Monday, February 2, 2026 ("Entry Period"). Entries submitted before or after the Entry Period will be ineligible.

WHAT TO ENTER:

The categories for submission include the following:

- ***Wildlife***
 - ***Portrait*** – must show wildlife in Coastal Virginia taken during *Entry Period*; animal(s) must be still. (e.g. a perched bird) Excludes captive animals including those in a zoo or museum or similar.
 - ***Action*** - must show wildlife in Coastal Virginia taken during *Entry Period*; animal(s) in motion, displaying a behavior, etc. (e.g. a bird in flight, a whale breaching) Excludes captive animals including those in a zoo or museum or similar.
- ***Festival in Action*** - must show festival participants during any 2026 Winter Wildlife Festival activity. Submission should capture the "spirit" of the festival.
- ***Landscape/Scenic*** – must show scenic landscape and/or native flowers, trees, shrubs or plants in Coastal Virginia taken during *Entry Period*.
- ***Youth*** - subject may be of wildlife, nature, or people participating in nature-based recreation taken in Coastal Virginia taken during *Entry Period*; must be under 16 years old to qualify.
- ***People's Choice*** - subject may be of wildlife, nature, landscape/scenic or people participating in nature-based recreation taken in Coastal Virginia during *Entry Period*.

Please **do not** include the following:

- Photos of pets or domestic animals; this includes animals residing in a zoo, aquarium or other wildlife facility.
- Photos that violate another person's rights, including but not limited to copyright.
- Photos that contain sexually explicit, nude, obscene, violent or other objectionable or inappropriate content.
- Photos taken outside of Coastal Virginia.
- Photos taken outside of *Entry Period*.
- Images that involve the willful harassment of wildlife or the environment by the photographer.
- Images that violate any local, state or national wildlife law or regulation.
- Images that involve putting any individual or animal in danger.

HOW TO ENTER: All participants must fill out a Photo Contest Entry Form and enter the required fields including name, email, location photo was taken, date photo was taken and photo submission information. The terms of the Photo Release must be read and accepted to participate in the Photo Contest.

Photo should be uploaded directly to the submission form. You may submit up to one (1) photo per eligible category. Only one entry category can be submitted per submission form. If you wish to enter multiple categories, you must submit a form for each category. Maximum file size is 16 MB.

Name file using the following convention: Last name of participant, first initial, category, name of wildlife/location/etc. for consideration. (e.g. SmithJ_WildlifeActionRaccoon.jpg or DoeJ_PeoplesChoiceScreechOwl.jpg). **Photos that do not follow this convention may not be considered for any awards.**

If multiple photos are submitted for the same category, only the first one received will be considered.

JUDGING:

Photo submissions in the following categories: ***Wildlife-Portrait, Wildlife-Action, Festival in Action, Landscape/Scenic, and Youth*** will be judged on the following criteria: technical quality, composition, artistic merit and overall impact.

Black and white and color photos will be accepted. All black and white and color photos entered in the same category will be judged together.

Photo submissions in the **People's Choice** category will be placed on the Sponsor's Facebook Page. Winner will be determined by the greatest number of "likes" on a picture during the specified timeframe, which will be posted on Facebook page when album is uploaded.

Winners will be notified via the contact information provided at time of entry.

POTENTIAL WINNER REQUIREMENTS:

All entries must be accompanied by completed forms, which include the Liability Release Form. Entries submitted by individuals under the age of 18 must have a parent or legal guardian complete and accept

the terms of Liability Release Form. Winners may be asked to submit a higher resolution file of their photograph before accepting their prize.

AWARDS:

The following prizes will be awarded:

Best In Show

- One (1) Photo selected from all category submissions as the overall Best in Show

Wildlife - Portrait:

- One (1) Overall Category Winner
- One (1) Honorable Mention

Wildlife - Action:

- One (1) Overall Category Winner
- One (1) Honorable Mention

Landscape/Scenic

- One (1) Overall Category Winner
- One (1) Honorable Mention

Festival in Action:

- One (1) Overall Category Winner
- One (1) Honorable Mention

Youth:

- One (1) Overall Category Winner
- One (1) Honorable Mention

People's Choice:

- One (1) Overall Category Winner

Ownership Interest in Photographs Entered in Photo Contest:

If you submit a photograph to enter in the Photo Contest, you grant the Sponsor, a royalty-free, nonexclusive right, in perpetuity, to:

- Display the photograph on the Internet, on Sponsor's website (www.winterwildlifevb.com) and on Sponsor's Facebook page in support of the Winter Wildlife Festival; and
- Allow photography to be printed and displayed in the gallery at MEO Central Library during the month of March 2026 as part of the Winter Wildlife Festival exhibit; and
- Allow photograph(s) to be printed in local publications as a photo contest category winner, if selected, along with your name and photo location; and
- Use the photograph on future promotions for the Winter Wildlife Festival including, but not limited to, posters, registration booklets, advertisements (print and digital) and electronic newsletters; and

- Use, in connection with the Photo Contest, your name, city and state of residence in promotions and publications. Only first name and last initial will be used for those in the **Youth** category; and
- Retain a digital copy of the photograph to be archived by Sponsor to be used for future marketing purposes as detailed above; and
- Allow Sponsor's partner organizations to use the photograph for future Winter Wildlife Festival promotion; and
- Allow third parties to share the photograph on the following social media platforms: Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and Flickr.

GENERAL CONDITIONS:

In the event that the operation, security, or administration of the Photo Contest is impaired in any way, Sponsor may, in its sole discretion, either: (a) suspend the Photo Contest to address the impairment and then resume the Photo Contest; or (b) award the prize(s) from among the eligible entries received up to the time of the impairment. Sponsor reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to disqualify and seek damages from any individual who tampers with the operation of the Photo Contest, violates these Official Rules, or acts in a disruptive or unsportsmanlike manner. Sponsor's failure to enforce any term of these Official Rules shall not constitute a waiver of that provision. Proof of sending any communication to Sponsor by mail shall not be deemed proof of receipt of that communication by Sponsor. In the event of a dispute as to the owner of an online entry, the authorized account holder of the e-mail address used to enter will be deemed to be the owner. The Photo Contest is subject to federal, state, and local laws and regulations and is void where prohibited.

RELEASE AND LIMITATIONS OF LIABILITY:

By entering, you agree to release and hold harmless the Sponsor and its agents, volunteers, servants, employees and officials (the "Released Parties") from and against any and all claims or causes of action arising out of participation in the Photo Contest or receipt or use of any prize, including, but not limited to: (a) unauthorized human intervention in the Photo Contest; (b) technical errors; (c) late or undelivered email; (d) errors in the administration of the Photo Contest; or (e) injury or damage to persons or property. You waive the right to claim any attorney fees and any damages whatsoever, including, but not limited to, punitive, consequential, direct or indirect damages.

PRIVACY AND PUBLICITY:

Any information you submit as part of the Photo Contest will be used in accordance with Sponsor's Privacy Policy, if applicable. Except where prohibited, you consent to the Sponsor's use of your name in any list of winners (if applicable) and for promotional purposes in any media with further payment or consideration.

DISPUTES:

You agree that any and all disputes, claims and causes of action arising out of, or connected with, the Photo Contest or any prize awarded shall be resolved individually, without resort to any form of class action, and exclusively by the appropriate court of competent jurisdiction in the City of Virginia Beach or the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Norfolk Division. All issues and questions concerning the construction, validity, interpretation and enforceability of these Official Rules, your rights and obligations, or the rights and obligations of Sponsor in connection with the Photo Contest, shall be

governed by, and construed in accordance with, the laws of Virginia, without giving effect to any choice of law or conflict of law rules (whether of Virginia or any other jurisdiction), which would cause the application of the laws of any jurisdiction other than Virginia.

RESULTS: Results will be posted on the festival website, www.winterwildlifevb.com, and Facebook Group by Friday, February 27, 2026. Winners will be notified by phone and/or email. All winning photographs will be on display at MEO Central Library Gallery during the month of March 2026.

QUESTIONS: Questions and inquiries about contest rules can be emailed to outdoors@vbgov.com