

2025 Official Contest Rules – Amateur Burrowing Owl Photo Contest

Entry Period

Cape Coral Friends of Wildlife (CCFW) 2025 Amateur Burrowing Owl Photo Contest begins on Thursday, May 1st, 2025 at 12 pm (noon) Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) and ends on Saturday, May 17th, 2025 at 11:59 pm EDT. Entry into this contest constitutes your acceptance of these Official Rules.

Sponsor

CCFW, PO Box 152761, Cape Coral, FL 33915-2761

Ascendium Education Group

General Conditions

All entrants must print and sign a "Permission to Use Photo" and submit it along with their photograph to bophotocontest1@gmail.com.

Who May Enter:

CCFW 2025 Photography Awards Contest is open to all legal residents of the 50 United States and the District of Colombia who are 7 years of age or older as of the date of submission. CCFW Board Members, Officers, and immediate family members are not permitted to enter the contest.

Division Categories

Eligible individuals may submit one photograph. Please, no professional photographers.

Amateur Youth: You must be 7 years to 17 years of age as of the date of submission.

Amateur Adult: 18 years old and up.

You may submit **one** photograph to only **one** of the two divisions.

Eligible Photographs

To be eligible to win a prize, all submitted photographs must depict a Cape Coral Burrowing Owl(s).

Normal processing of the original file is acceptable and that includes:

- a. Cropping
- b. Minor adjustments to color, white balance, lighting levels and curves, shadows and highlights, saturation, contrast, sharpness
- c. Moderate dodging and burning
- d. Removal of dust spots and moderate reduction of image noise

Photographs that have been digitally or otherwise altered beyond standard optimization will be disqualified.

That includes:

- a. HDR frame stacking
- b. Stitched panoramas
- c. Images that have been manipulated by the addition, removal, or alteration (painting over, cloning, or blurring) of anything in the original subject and scene that were photographed
- d. Borders, signatures, or watermarks
- e. Changes in the color so significant that the processed colors are widely different from the original colors
- f. Changes in the density, contrast, color and/or saturation levels and dodging and burning that significantly alter content by obscuring or eliminating information in the picture
- g. AI and machine-learning based software used for upscaling, sharpening, and significant noise reduction

You may be required to provide CCFW with original image files (RAW, jpg, etc.) in the timeframe provided upon request, generally within 7 days. Judges will determine whether changes to an image are significant enough to disqualify an entry. Failure to provide original files may result in disqualification of the photograph at CCFW's sole discretion. Any entrant that contacts a judge (not the general photo contest email account) while the competition is open or during the judging phase may be disqualified. The decision of the sponsor to disqualify any submission is final.

Ethical Bird Photography

CCFW encourages every photographer to practice responsible bird photography. Prior to submitting any photograph, you are strongly encouraged to read **Audubon's Guide to Ethical Bird Photography and Videography**. (<https://www.audubon.org/get-outside/audubons-guide-ethical-bird-photography>). A photograph that appears to the sponsor or judges to reflect one of the following situations is not eligible for submission, and if submitted, will be disqualified at CCFW's sole discretion.

That includes:

- a. Birds (including chicks) that appear to be stressed or harassed by the photographer
- b. Birds at nests taken with wide angle or macro lens
- c. Burrow nesting birds, including but not limited to solitary flightless chicks and adults brooding, feeding, or incubating chicks, where the photographer's distance appears to be closer than approximately 25 yards.
- d. Birds lured with bait. Bait includes live animals (crickets, mice, worms, bugs) dead animals or parts of animals, processed meat, and decoys.
- e. Owls at night whose photograph was taken with a flash
- f. Owls photographed with drones
- g. Owls photographed with a remotely triggered camera that uses a direct flash and or for which bait or another lure has been supplied to attract the animal. Setting a camera trap around a fresh kill or cache is generally acceptable, as is the use of a flash with a filter that only lets through infrared light.

Judges will consider focal length, crop factor, species, and other variables to decide whether a shot was ethically obtained. Judges' decisions are final.

How to Enter

Online: To enter online, you must:

- a. Log onto the CCFW website at www.ccfriendsofwildlife.org
- b. Read all contest rules.
- c. Print the "Permission to Use Photo" waiver
- d. Fill in the required information and sign the waiver.
- e. Take a photo of the completed form. Make sure all info is clear and legible.
- f. Submit your burrowing owl photograph and the picture of your signed "Permission to Use Photo" waiver by attaching them to an email sent to bophotocontest1@gmail.com

Photographs submitted online MUST meet the following requirements:

- a. Depict a Cape Coral Burrowing Owl(s)
- b. Be no larger than 35 megabytes
- c. Be close to 3000 pixels wide (for horizontal photographs) or 3000 pixels tall (for vertical photographs) at 72 dpi
- d. Be saved in RGB mode
- e. Be saved in the JPG format

You must also fill in all information boxes, including where the photograph was shot and any additional caption information. Note that additional information you provide at entry, such as the camera, equipment, location of the photograph, and the story behind the shot, while interesting, will have no effect on a photograph's score.

Judging

Judging will be conducted by a panel of judges, appointed by CCFW, including expert photographers. Judges will score eligible photographs using the following criteria:

- a. Technical quality (30%)
- b. Originality (30%)
- c. Artistic merit (40%)

Prizes will be awarded as follows:

One Grand Prize to the highest-scoring photograph across both divisions

First Place (Adult Division) – awarded to the highest-scoring photograph in the Adult division

Second Place (Adult Division)

Third Place (Adult Division)

First Place (Youth Division) – awarded to the highest-scoring photograph in the Youth division

Second Place (Youth Division)

Third Place (Youth Division)

No entrant may win more than one prize. In the event of a tie for any prize, the judges will use Artistic Merit of each tied photograph. The photograph with the highest Artistic Merit score will be the winner of that prize. The decisions of the judges and the sponsor will be final. Winners will be contacted and confirmed by email and/or telephone on or about May 23rd, 2025. The winners will be announced at a special awards ceremony on May 31st at 12:00PM at Rotary Park in Cape Coral. WFTX Community Correspondent **Bella Line** will join us to MC the event and help present the awards. Esteemed judges include Cape Coral City Manager **Michael Ilczyszyn**, NBC-2 Meteorologist **Rob Duns**, and last year's grand prize winner **Darlayne Coughlin**.