

## 2026 Official Contest Rules – Amateur Burrowing Owl Photo Contest

### **Entry Period**

Cape Coral Friends of Wildlife (CCFW) 2026 Amateur Burrowing Owl Photo Contest begins on Friday, May 1st, 2026 at 12 pm (noon) Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) and ends on Sunday, May 17th, 2026 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 [CCFWphotocontest@gmail.com](mailto:CCFWphotocontest@gmail.com).

### **Who May Enter:**

CCFW 2026 Photography Awards Contest is open to all legal residents of the 50 United States and the District of Columbia 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.

The photo contest is open to amateur photographers only. We rely on an honor system in which all entrants self-identify as amateurs, helping ensure fairness and maintain the integrity of the event.

### **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 of anything in the original subject and scene
- d. Borders, signatures, or watermarks
- e. Extreme color changes
- f. Significant alteration of image content
- g. AI-based enhancement tools

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 <https://ccfriendsofwildlife.org/events/2026/burrowing-owl-photo-contest>
- b. Read all contest rules
- c. Print the Permission to Use Photo waiver
- d. Fill in and sign the waiver
- e. Take a photo of the completed form
- f. Submit your photograph and waiver via email to [CCFWphotocontest@gmail.com](mailto:CCFWphotocontest@gmail.com)

Photographs submitted online MUST meet the following requirements:

- a. Must depict a Cape Coral Burrowing Owl(s)
- b. No larger than 35MB
- c. Around 3000 pixels
- d. RGB mode
- e. 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**

The 2026 judging panel includes:

Rob Duns, Meteorologist, Gulf Coast News

Honey Phillips, Recreation Program Supervisor, Cape Coral Parks and Recreation, Environmental Recreation

Conrad Peloquin, 2025 Burrowing Owl Photo Contest Winner

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)

### **Winner Details**

No entrant may win more than one prize. In the event of a tie, Artistic Merit will determine the winner.

Winners will be contacted and confirmed by email and/or telephone.

The winners will be announced at a special awards ceremony on May 30th, 2026 at 12:00 PM at Rotary Park in Cape Coral.