

Nature Photography Society of New Zealand Honours

Rules and Guidelines

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Introduction

The Nature Photography Society of New Zealand (NPSNZ) awards Honours as a way of recognising members photographic abilities. Sets of photos are evaluated once a year by the Honours Board.

The aim of nature photography is to sensitise the viewer to the natural world, to be thought provoking and to elicit an emotional response from the viewer. Nature photography should reveal and champion the diversity of life on earth. NPSNZ challenges its Honours applicants to produce a set of images that meets these goals.

NPSNZ Honours are awarded at three levels (Licentiate, Associate, Fellow), in three categories (Natural Environment and Wildlife, Open, Impact of humans on Nature)

The Honours Board is established by the Management Committee of NPSNZ, under the Constitution of NPSNZ. The Board recommends to the Management Committee of the NPSNZ the awarding of Honours which the Management Committee may award in the name of the Society.

Honours levels

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| • The Licentiateship | LNPSNZ |
| • The Associateship | ANPSNZ |
| • The Fellowship | FNPSNZ |
| • The Honorary Fellowship | FNPSNZ (Honorary) |

Licentiateship (LNPSNZ)

Recognises a high degree of competency in the field of nature photography. A successful set at this level will demonstrate sound ability across camera skills, compositional awareness and subject familiarity.

- The applicant must be a financial member of the Society.
- The applicant shall submit ten (10) images, either digital images or prints.
- The images must show a diversity of subject matter and/or technical variety – see guidance and clarifications.
- The set must not be based around a theme, excepting applications under Category 2 (Impact of Humans on Nature)

Associateship (ANPSNZ)

Recognises a higher level of proficiency in the field of nature photography. A successful set at this level will show superior photographic skills, artistic ability and an in-depth understanding of their subjects.

- The applicant must be a financial member of the Society.

- b. The applicant **does not** need to be a Licentiate of the Society.
- c. The applicant shall submit twelve (12) images, either digital images or prints.
- d. The images must show a diversity of subject matter or technical variety – see guidance and clarifications
- e. The set may be based around a theme providing clause (d) – diversity – is met.

Fellowship (FNPSNZ)

Recognises outstanding ability in the field of nature photography. A successful fellowship set represents mastery of the subject with exceptional photographic skills.

- a. The applicant must be a financial member of the Society.
- b. The applicant must be an Associate of the Society.
- c. The applicant shall submit eighteen (18) images, either digital images or prints.
- d. The images **must** have a specific theme.
- e. All applicants must submit a brief (maximum of 150 words) description of the concept or story (theme) behind the set of images.

The Honorary Fellowship (FNPSNZ – Honorary)

This allows the Society where appropriate to recognise an individual who has, in the view of the Honours Board and the Management Committee of the Society, made a substantial contribution to Nature Photography.

Their contribution can be either nationally and internationally, or by having made a distinguished contribution to NPSNZ over an extended period.

This individual does not need to be a member of the NPSNZ.

Honours Categories

The subject boundaries in each category are guided by the purpose of the NPSNZ, in particular to promote the advancement of nature photography in New Zealand and overseas. Nature photography is here defined to include photography of all aspects of the natural environment including landscapes, flora and fauna, and close-up (macro) photography

General rules (all categories)

- a) The NPSNZ Code of Ethics must be followed.
- b) Images created in whole or in part by image creation software (frequently called 'AI' images) are not allowed. (See Appendix 2 regarding AI images).
- c) Original files (RAW or JPEG) of images may be requested by the Honours Judges
- d) The work must be solely that of the applicant.
- e) Watermarks are not allowed.
- f) Titles are limited to 35 characters.

Category 1: Natural Environment and Wildlife (Natural History)

Images must represent nature, or a natural process or activity. Animals must be self-sustaining and free living.

- a) The image conveys the truth of the scene that was photographed. The image tells the nature story.
- b) Subjects may include wild flora (plants) and/or fauna (animals) in their natural (but not necessarily native) environment, inanimate natural subjects such as rocks and shells, natural landscapes and seascapes including geological features or processes and weather phenomenon.
- c) Landscape images must highlight a natural feature as the main subject of the image (see guidance and clarifications) and titled accordingly.
- d) Cultivated plants and domestic or captive animals are not acceptable. (see guidance and clarifications).
- e) Images must avoid evidence of humans.
- f) Image manipulations are restricted – see guidance and clarifications.
- g) Images must be titled with scientific or common names of the plant, animal or geographic feature.
- h) Landscapes of cultivated plants, such as vineyards and gardens are not acceptable.

At the discretion of the Honours Board they may award a Nature Open if they feel it does not meet Natural history, unless the applicant has already been successful with an Open set at this level.

Category 2: Impact of Humans on Nature

Images must represent the influence of humans on nature or a natural process or activity. At the Licentiate or Associate level the set may have a theme.

This category is intended to promote photojournalism as it relates to natural subjects.

- a) Images and sets should tell a story that describes the impacts of humans on nature or natural processes.
- b) The inclusion of human elements is expected and a strong interaction with nature or a natural process must be demonstrated.
- c) Image manipulations are restricted – see guidance and clarifications.

Category 3: Nature Open

Images must represent nature, or a natural process or activity. This category is intended to make Nature photography accessible to a wider range of photographers, including constructed natural-looking scenes, wildlife parks and zoos, allowing learning and creative opportunities.

The intention of this category is to show a wider interpretation of nature, it may be creative and/or artistic.

The standard of photography is equivalent to any other category, however the restrictions on subjects and processing techniques are more broad.

- a) Subjects may include wild flora (plants) and/or fauna (animals) in a natural (but not necessarily native) environment, inanimate natural subjects such as rocks and shells, natural landscapes and seascapes including geological features or processes and weather phenomenon.
- b) Images must portray natural subjects accurately, however creative interpretation and image editing is allowed – see guidance and clarifications
- c) Composites are permitted, however depictions of fictional flora and fauna are not allowed.
- d) Images in this category should avoid evidence of humans.
- e) Cropping and manipulations both in and out of camera are acceptable.
- f) Creative titles are acceptable

Privileges and Limitations of Honours

Those awarded the following Honours may append to their names the following indications of their status.

- Licentiatehip LNPSNZ
- Associateship ANPSNZ
- Fellowship FNPSNZ

Those awarded Honorary Fellowship may append “FNPSNZ (Honorary)” to their names, to reflect their status, whether they are members of the Society or not.

If you already have honours, it is possible to submit a set at the same level you currently hold but in a different category. In this case you will receive a certificate but not additional letters.

Individuals may only use the honorifics whilst they are full members of the society. They may use the honours immediately upon rejoining the Society after an absence.

Removal of honours

Should a member bring the society into disrepute their honours may be removed.

Removal of honours is a serious matter. The current committee of NPSNZ will write to the member detailing the offence and allow a period of 1 month after contact for the member to appeal their decision.

Guidance and Clarifications

All submissions are in the form of image sets - 10, 12 and 18 images for Licentiate, Associate and Fellow, respectively.

Digital sets will be projected onto a large screen in front of the board members using a calibrated computer/projector. The images will be run through several times and the board will have the opportunity to review each image individually, in sequence.

Print sets will be displayed as per the diagram supplied by the applicant. The honours board members will be able to view the images as a complete set, and each image individually.

The emphasis is on the set, rather than on the individual images, so it may be better to leave out an excellent image if it does not fit well with other images in the set.

A set of digital images must flow well from one to the next, with a clear start and end. As the images will be displayed sequentially, a perceived flow of 'left-to-right' occurs so it may feel more natural to have images weighted to the right, especially at the start of the set.

A set of prints must be arranged in a pleasing way so that the eye moves smoothly from one to the next, both vertically and horizontally. Images around the perimeter of the layout generally appear more consistent if they face *in*, to keep the viewer's eye looking towards the centre of the set (i.e. images on the left should face right, and images on the right should face to the left).

Balance across the set is important, for example:

- look at the visual weight of each image, and try to ensure that the centre of focus on each carries to the next.
- Symmetry (both vertically and horizontally) can help create balance within the set.
- For images with a horizon (or implied horizon line), placing this at a similar position in adjacent images may help flow.

The completed set must provide a pleasing demonstration of the photographer's abilities.

Diversity, as required in Licentiate and Associate submissions, is to show the applicant's range of skills. There is often confusion between the idea of a 'theme' and 'diversity':

- A set may consist of a range of subject matter – birds, plants, mammals. This shows diversity through an understanding of different subject behaviours
- A set may contain many bird images, however different images might show (for example) a bird in flight, mating rituals, feather details, a wider view showing

the bird's location in its environment. This shows diversity of technique and equipment

- A set of apparently similar focal lengths of a similar subject (for example entirely insects, birds in flight, or fungi) may be excellent, however does not show the applicant's skills in a range of situations, hence is unlikely to be successful at Licentiate or Associate level.

Images may be captured in any country

'Plants' includes algae, fungi etc, and 'animals' includes birds, reptiles, insects, worms, arachnids etc.

'Landscapes' include earth, geological features and weather phenomena, sea/water and sky (including the night sky/astrophotography).

It is expected that natural landscapes, whether distant or near, will engender in the viewer a sense of wildness or awe. Landscapes should represent the scene as they existed – stitching to create wider fields of view is allowed.

Examples of natural processes might include erosion, fire, landslips, avalanche.

Images must originate as photographs made by the entrant. They may not incorporate identifiable images produced by anyone else (for example: clip art, stock images or AI-generative editing).

Category-specific Guidance: “Natural Environment and Wildlife” and “Impact of Humans on Nature”

Manipulations either in or out of camera are limited to those that enhance the original capture to make it more accurately reflect what the photographer saw at the time.

Allowed editing techniques:

- Cropping, straightening and perspective correction.
- Removal or correction of elements added by the camera or lens, such as dust spots, noise, chromatic aberration and lens distortion.
- Global and selective adjustments such as darkening or lightening, hue, saturation and contrast to restore the appearance of the original scene.
- Complete conversion of colour images to grayscale monochrome.
- Blending of multiple Images of the same subject and combining them in camera or with software (exposure blending or focus stacking)
- Image stitching – combining multiple images with overlapping fields of view that are taken consecutively (panoramas)

Examples of editing techniques that are **not** allowed:

- Removing, adding to, moving or changing any part of an image, except for cropping and straightening.
- Adding a vignette during processing.
- Blurring parts of the image during processing to hide elements in the original scene.
- Darkening or lightening parts of the image during processing to hide elements in the original scene.
- All conversions other than to complete grayscale monochrome.
- Conversion of parts of an image to monochrome, or partial toning, desaturation
- Blending of multiple focal lengths is not acceptable.

Plants must not have been planted (except as part of a restoration project) by humans and should be self-sustaining/self-sown. (e.g. lupins or poppies in riverbeds, bluebells in Hagley Park, gardens that have gone wild in Christchurch's red zone are allowed).

Banding on birds is acceptable.

Plants and animals need not be in their native habitat. For example, in New Zealand, rowan trees and deer, which have been naturalised, are acceptable if growing/living wild.

Animals must be free living, and self-sustaining; i.e. not being artificially fed or housed. Predator fencing is acceptable, as are some wildlife parks (in Africa for example, where fencing is to prevent poaching).

Landscapes must prominently show a geological, flora or fauna feature – it must be the main subject of the image – the image title should corroborate this prominent feature. Weather phenomena (e.g. lenticular clouds, lightning) are acceptable; however, the image title should reflect this; A pretty sunset is not sufficient on its own.

Subjects must be photographed out-of-doors, with the sole exception of microscopic photography.

Use of lighting, reflectors, shade screens (e.g. for fungi photography) is acceptable, within the limits of the NPSNZ Code of Ethics

Category-specific Guidance: Open

Still life images are not acceptable, however created scenes, studio lighting etc may be used where appropriate (e.g. macro). The NPSNZ Code of Ethics must be followed.

Landscapes that do not highlight specific geological or nature features may be included in the submission.

Scenes should avoid evidence of human activity – for instance,

- Landscapes should avoid buildings/fences etc.
- Flora and fauna should not include a fence, fenceposts, ropes etc.

Images made in zoos can be used, but care should be taken to avoid structures (in Open, it is allowable to clone them out using non-AI processes)

The use of Photoshop or other similar software to create images is allowed. All parts of the image must originate from the photographer's own work. The use of Generative AI is not allowed (See AI notes below).

Application process

Applications close with the Honours Board Secretary on 31 January for both print and digital sets. Applications should be made on the Honours Application Form available on the NPSNZ website.

Payment of \$80 is required. Please pay into the NPSNZ account 38-9012-0153099-07 using Reference: Honours and Code- your name. Send email confirmation to the Honours Board Secretary.

Digital Submissions

Digital sets should be emailed to the Honourssecretary@naturephotography.nz. The email should include the application form, a JPEG file for each image and a diagram (film strip) showing the running order you wish the Honours Board to view the set. The film strip must match the order as listed on the application form.

Label each digital image as follows:

(Image number) (Title) eg: **01 Clouds.JPEG**

Label the film strip image (thumbnails in sequence): **00 Film Strip.JPEG**

Ensure there are no watermarks etc that would identify you.

Images must be JPEGs, using sRGB colour space.

- Images with landscape orientation to have a maximum of 1620 pixels on the horizontal (long side) and a maximum of 1080 pixels on the vertical side (height).
- Images with a portrait orientation to have a maximum of 1080 pixels on the vertical side (height).
- Images with a square orientation to have a maximum of 1080 pixels on all sides.

Print Submissions

Print set should be hand delivered or couriered with the application form, a mounted copy of each photo and a diagram sheet showing the layout you wish the images to be

viewed by the Honours Board. Email the Honours Secretary (Honourssecretary@naturephotography.nz) for address details.

Prints must be labelled on the top-left corner of the print (for orientation) and must include:

- Full image title
- Row number (top to bottom)
- Sequence in row (left-to-right)

e.g. for the top row, first image, titled 'clouds', the label reads: **1-1 Clouds**

Image titles may be included on the front of the print (or incorporated into the mount) so long as it cannot be used to identify the photographer

The layout may consist of up to four rows. The diagram sheet must match the order as listed on the application form (top row images left-to-right, next row left-to-right etc)

Prints may be home or commercially printed. The maximum size is 500mm x 400mm including any matting.

If successful, digital copies will be requested for display on the Society website.

Appendix 1: NPSNZ Code of Ethics

Nature photographers pursue their interest, because they appreciate the value of the natural world. They will, through their actions, encourage all who participate in the enjoyment of nature, to do so in a way that best promotes good stewardship of the natural resources.

This includes not interfering with wildlife and respecting their space.

You are requested to consider your lens choice to minimise disruption to their lives.

Avoid damaging or interfering with fragile environments and resist imposing at vulnerable times like breeding season.

Appendix 2: Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The Nature Photography Society of New Zealand acknowledges the advent and incorporation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies in photography. This policy attempts to define various elements of treatment given to an image through the use of technology alongside what NPSNZ determines to represent acceptable and unacceptable uses of AI.

The aim is to ensure fairness, uphold the authenticity and originality of the artwork, and promote the skilful use of technology to enhance, not replace or supplement, the photographer's vision in what are primarily photographic images.

This policy was originally created by the Photographic Society of New Zealand (PSNZ). NPSNZ has adapted these definitions and rules and we are grateful to PSNZ for allowing their use.

Definitions

- "Artificial Intelligence (AI)": Refers to technologies that exhibit intelligence through algorithms and can perform tasks that typically require human intelligence.
- "Optical Capture": Refers to the process of recording visual images of the real world using film, a camera or phone sensor, embodying the original image or photograph captured by the photographer through traditional or digital photography techniques. We recognize that photographers may capture their initial image on film and use a digital technique to convert the image to a format suitable for working in an editing programme. Where the intention is for simple conversion to digital form, this step is not intended to be considered exempt.
- "AI-Assisted Capture": Refers to the use of AI technologies to aid the photographer during the optical capture process, without generating new imagery not present in the real world scene. Examples include autofocus assistance, exposure adjustment, scene recognition, and image stabilisation facilitated by AI.
- "Non-Generative AI Post-Processing": Involves the use of AI technologies to process and enhance the original optical capture(s) without creating new content not directly based on the original capture(s). Examples include colour correction, AI-assisted masking, and denoise or sharpening.
- "Generative AI Techniques": Pertains to AI algorithms capable of creating new content, replacing or removing content, during the capture process or in post-processing that is not present in the real-world scene or not based on manipulation of the original optical capture(s). This includes, but is not limited to, techniques using deep neural networks. Examples include real-time filters adding elements not present in the real world scene, the creation of new imagery through text prompt or through isolation of areas of an image and letting a computer determine what will fill that space. The essence here is the role of the computer or connected networks rather than a manual action of the

photographer to copy and paste parts of the image from one area to another. The key is that new pixels are created and they are not directed by the editor – it is an automated process.

Usage Rules

- All image entries must be based solely on original optical capture(s) made by the submitting photographer.
- AI systems can be employed to assist in the capture of images, provided they only aid in the capture process, without adding, removing, or altering elements that were present in the real world scene.
- AI technologies may be used for non-generative post-processing to manipulate only the pixels from the original optical capture(s).
- The use of Generative AI Techniques either during the capture process or in post-processing is strictly prohibited. Entries found to have used Generative AI Techniques to generate visual content not present in the original optical capture(s) of the original real world scene(s) will be disqualified.
- NPSNZ reserves the right to request original, unedited files for any image submitted, to verify an image adheres to the rules above.
- This policy may be amended from time to time to reflect the evolving nature of AI technologies in photography.