

ACCC Competition Rules (revised 2026-08)

1 Introduction

Historically, competition has been an important element in ACCC Roundup meetings. A principal goal of the Roundups is to provide club members a broader base for competition than can be provided by individual clubs. Each Roundup includes both individual competitions and special awards made by the member clubs. For some members, this may be the only opportunity for competition. Participants in this competition not only have an opportunity to win awards, but also an opportunity to see their own work displayed with a variety of others. Such a comparison, coupled with the views of the judges involved, may provide guidance toward future growth in a member's photographic work. Submitted images may also be used:

- a) In Roundup Competition slideshows
- b) On ACCC web sites including social media sites
- c) In slide shows distributed to ACCC member clubs
- d) Otherwise for educational purposes, and to promote ACCC activities

In all cases, credit and copyright will be given to the image maker. Participation by all club members is encouraged.

Competition is open to all members of ACCC member clubs, and to individual members of ACCC who do not belong to an ACCC member club. As explained below, entries in the Projected Images Division are submitted online, and entries in the Print Division are made through the Club Representative for each ACCC member club.

2 ACCC Divisions and Categories

ACCC competition takes place in two Divisions: Print and Projected Images. Each Division is further divided into multiple Categories. If not specified in the Category name, both color and monochrome images may be entered into a Category. Following are the definitions of the two Divisions.

2.1 Print Division Categories

Entries are limited to **2 entries per Category**. The Categories are:

- Color Open
- Monochrome Open
- Nature
- Rotating
- Creative
- Photo Travel

2.2 Projected Image Division Categories

Entries are limited to **2 entries per Category**. The Categories are:

- Color Open
- Monochrome Open
- Nature

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- Rotating
- Creative
- Photo Travel

2.3 Categories

All photos entered shall adhere to the following category definitions. For all categories except Nature and Photo Travel, composite images are allowed, such as sky replacement or combining elements from multiple images, provided that every element is taken from the entrant's own photographs.

The following statements were adapted from the PSA Division Definitions as of 2026-08 located here <https://psaphotoworldwide.org/page/division-definitions> and apply to all ACCC competition categories:

- **Statement on Artificial Intelligence (AI), Image Creation and Authorship**

In all ACCC competition categories, images must be entirely the entrant's own original work, including post-processing, with every pictorial element captured by the entrant. Images may not incorporate or present another person's work as the entrant's own, in whole or in part (for example: clip art, stock images, replacement skies, photographs of someone else's artwork, or AI-generated content). An entrant may own the rights to use purchased content, but authorship requires that all visual elements in the submitted photograph be personally created by the entrant. Entrants must retain copyright ownership of all visual elements contained within any submitted image, including composites.

Artificial Intelligence (AI):

Permitted AI-enhanced editing includes editing tools that perform transformations, enhancements, or corrections based exclusively on the existing pixel data captured in the entrant's original photograph, without introducing externally sourced content.

Prohibited AI editing includes any AI-assisted process for synthetic image generation that incorporates external image data, visual elements, textures, objects, or scenes not originally present in the entrant's photograph.

Editing or alteration of images is otherwise permitted within the limits specified in the category definitions below.

Any person submitting or attempting to submit an image that violates the prohibition on AI editing stated above shall be prohibited from entering ACCC competitions for a period of two years, or more for repeat offenders.

- **Statement on Subject Matter - applicable to all categories**

ACCC's fundamental rule prioritizes animal welfare over photography, prohibiting baiting with live creatures, nest disturbance, endangering subjects, or depicting feeding of live prey to captive animals. Aerial photography must not disturb individuals or animals and must comply with local regulations. The images must comply with the ACCC Category definitions; images that do not comply - in the sole

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opinion of the judges or the Competition Chairs - will be disqualified. Participation in ACCC Roundups is conditional on entrants accepting these policies.

Color Open Category

Can be any subject, and any treatment of the subject. Any image that is allowed in the Monochrome Open category may not be submitted in Color Open. Attention is drawn to the Statements on Artificial Intelligence and Subject Matter, above, which apply to all categories.

Monochrome Open Category

The ACCC definition for this category is based on the PSA Monochrome definition as of 2026-08. Where differences exist, the following ACCC definition shall be used:

An image is considered to be Monochrome only if it gives the impression of having no color (i.e. contains only shades of grey which can include pure black and pure white) OR it gives the impression of being a greyscale image that has been toned in one color across the entire image. (For example, by sepia, red, gold, etc.) A greyscale or multi-colored image modified or giving the impression of having been modified by partial toning, multi-toning or by the inclusion of spot coloring does not meet the definition of monochrome and shall be classified as a Color Work.

Within ACCC competition an image is either monochrome or color; there is no third option. A Color image is defined by the presence of more than a single color or hue. If an image is treated with two or more colors in any manner or any amount (spot coloring, duotone, etc.), it is a color image.

A monochrome image is defined by the presence of exactly one color or hue; it can display unlimited variations in that single color's intensity, tints, and shades but may not include additional colors (partial toning, split-toning, spot coloring, etc.). Black and white images (also referred to as grayscale) are considered monochrome.

Attention is drawn to the Statements on Artificial Intelligence and Subject Matter, above, which apply to all categories.

Nature Category

The ACCC definition for the Nature Category is based on the PSA/FIAP Nature Division definition as of 2026-08. Where differences exist, the following ACCC definition shall be used:

Content Guidelines

Nature photography records all branches of natural history except anthropology and archaeology. This includes all aspects of the physical world, both over water and underwater, that have no human elements in the image.

- Nature images must convey the truth of the scene that was photographed. A well-informed person should be able to identify the subject of the image and be satisfied that it has been presented honestly and that no unethical practices have been used to control the subject or capture the image. **Images that directly or indirectly show any human elements are not allowed.**

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- The most important part of a Nature image is the nature story it tells. High technical standards are expected, and the image must look natural.
- Photographs of human-created hybrid plants, cultivated plants, feral animals, domesticated animals, human-created hybrid animals and mounted or preserved zoological specimens are not allowed. The Salt River horses are considered feral animals under this rule and are therefore not allowed.
- Photographs made where the scene is natural and the animal is unharmed in a carefully managed environment, such as a zoo, rescue center, or ethically managed natural-environment farm, are permitted. When photographing at a zoo, sanctuary, or rehabilitation center, the entrant is expected to have satisfied themselves that the facility is properly accredited and conforms to best practices. Photographing in a managed environment does not by itself disqualify an image; the restriction on human-made elements applies to what is visible in the photograph, which must appear natural.
- Controlling live subjects by chilling, anesthetic or any other method of restricting natural movement for the purpose of a photograph is not allowed.
- Attracting or controlling subjects through the use of food or sound for the purpose of photographing them is not allowed. Maintained situations, such as supplemental food provided because of hardship caused by weather or other conditions beyond the animals' control, where photography is incidental to the feeding of the animal, do not fall under this provision.
- Scientific tags, collars, and bands are specifically allowed.

Editing Guidelines

Processing or editing must be limited to making the image look as close to the original scene as possible, except that conversion to grayscale monochrome is allowed.

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 brightness, hue, saturation and contrast to restore the appearance of the original scene
- Complete conversion of color 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)

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

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- Darkening 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 or over-saturation of color

Attention is drawn to the Statements on Artificial Intelligence and Subject Matter, above, which apply to all categories.

Rotating Category

ACCC establishes a Rotating theme for each Roundup. Images entered into the Rotating Category should strongly reflect the theme. Attention is drawn to the Statements on Artificial Intelligence and Subject Matter, above, which apply to all categories.

Rotating themes for upcoming Roundups are as follows:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Spring Roundup</i>	<i>Fall Roundup</i>
<i>2026</i>	Sunrise/Sunset	Arches
<i>2027</i>	Silhouette	Eyes
<i>2028</i>	Patterns in Nature	Doors & Windows
<i>2029</i>	Street Art	Still Life
<i>2030</i>	Children	Architecture

Creative Category

All elements of a Creative image must be derived from the photographic images of the maker. The maker must, through their own efforts, accomplish obvious creative modifications of the original photo or photos. Attention is drawn to the Statements on Artificial Intelligence and Subject Matter, above, which apply to all categories.

Photo Travel Category

The ACCC definition for the Photo Travel category is based on the PSA Photo Travel Division Documentary (PTDD) definition as of 2026-08. ACCC retains a single Photo Travel Category and does not adopt the separate PSA Photo Travel Division World in Focus (PTDW) path. Where differences exist, the following ACCC definition shall be used:

A Photo Travel image is a portrayal of the real world we live in, as it is found naturally. There are no geographic limitations.

Content Guidelines

- Images that predominantly or exclusively depict people and their activities must illustrate a distinctive culture of a country, region, or continent.
- If the image predominantly or exclusively depicts a place, such as a land-, sea- or cityscape, or a physical structure such as a building or monument, it must

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include characteristic and distinctive physical features. It is not necessary that the image identify the exact location.

- Images that predominately or exclusively depict animal populations are allowed, if the animals are in their native environment and are characteristic of that country, region, or continent.
- Portraits or other close-ups of people or objects, in addition to meeting the above paragraphs as applicable, must include elements depicting some of the surrounding environment to make it obvious that the image was not taken in a studio setting.
- Images from events or activities arranged exclusively for photography, or of subjects directed or hired for photography, are NOT allowed. Images from public events such as festivals or historic re-enactments are allowed.
- Long exposures are allowed if the image looks natural. If the long exposure produces a dominating and unnatural special effect on the image, then it is NOT allowed (examples are star trails and long light trails).
- Highly distorted images such as those produced by fisheye lenses are **NOT** allowed.

Editing Guidance:

Processing or editing must be limited to making the image look as close to the original scene as possible, except that conversion to grayscale monochrome is allowed.

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 brightness, hue, saturation and contrast to restore the appearance of the original scene
- Complete conversion of color 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)

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 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 or over-saturation of color

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Attention is drawn to the Statements on Artificial Intelligence and Subject Matter, above, which apply to all categories.

Editing Guidelines (2026) — Summary by Category

Editing technique	Color Open	Monochrome Open	Rotating	Creative	Nature	Photo Travel
AI-enhanced editing based exclusively on the entrant's own captured pixel data	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
AI synthetic generation incorporating externally sourced content	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Cropping, straightening and perspective correction	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Removal or correction of elements added by the camera or lens (dust spots, noise, chromatic aberration, lens distortion)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Global and selective adjustments to brightness, hue, saturation and contrast †	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Complete conversion of a color image to grayscale monochrome ¶	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Blending of multiple images of the same subject, in camera or with software (e.g. exposure blending, focus stacking)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Image stitching – combining overlapping consecutive frames (panoramas)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Removing, adding to, moving or changing any part of an image, beyond cropping and straightening	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Composite images assembled from the entrant's own photographs (e.g. sky replacement) ‡	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Adding a vignette during processing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Blurring or darkening parts of the image to hide elements in the original scene	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Partial toning, multi-toning, spot coloring, desaturation or over-saturation of color	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗
Toning in a single color across the entire image	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗

✓ = Allowed ✗ = Not allowed

† In the Nature and Photo Travel Categories these adjustments are limited to restoring the appearance of the original scene.

‡ Composite images are permitted only where every element is taken from the entrant's own photographs, as stated at the beginning of this Section.

¶ An image that qualifies as monochrome may not be entered in Color Open, so a complete conversion to grayscale disqualifies an entry in that Category.

The Statements on Artificial Intelligence and Subject Matter, above, apply to all Categories. Where this summary and a Category definition differ, the Category definition governs.

3 Preparing Your Photos

3.1 General

- **Own Work**

All elements of an image must be derived from the photographic images of the maker. The use of generative AI to create image content is strictly forbidden; see the Statement on Artificial Intelligence (AI), Image Creation and Authorship in Section 2.3.

- **Repeat Entry Disqualification**

Any image that has received an award of **Honorable Mention (HM)** or higher in ACCC competition shall not be submitted again in the same Division.

Any image that differs only slightly in minor detail from any image for which that entrant has previously received an award of **HM** or higher shall not be submitted in the same Division. This includes a monochrome rendering of a color image.

Any image that is identical to, or that differs only slightly in minor detail from another image shall not be submitted to the same Roundup competition, regardless of Division. This includes a monochrome rendering of a color image.

If 2 or more duplicate images are submitted, all will be disqualified.

- **Entry via One Club**

If someone belongs to multiple clubs, they can participate in the Print Division with one club and the Projected Images Division with another but must keep those choices for the whole year. If they leave (are no longer affiliated with) a club, they're allowed to submit images through a different club during that same year.

- **Adherence to ACCC Competition Rules**

To help assure fair and friendly competition, ACCC has adapted the following from the PSA conditions of entry.

ACCC retains the right to investigate in any way all complaints of breaches of the ACCC Competition Rules and void the acceptances and awards of any image found to be in violation of these rules. Such investigations may include, but are not limited to, discussions with any entrant and requiring the submission of RAW files or other digital files representing the original capture of the submitted image(s). Entries that are still questionable after the entrant has presented evidence may be considered in breach of the ACCC Competition Rules.

Entrants acknowledge that the decision of the Competition Chair or the judges is final, and automatically agree to these terms by the act of entering the Exhibition and agree to cooperate with any investigation.

3.2 Print Division

All prints shall adhere to the following specifications. At the discretion of the judges or Print Chair, any image that does not adhere to these rules may be disqualified, or have its score reduced.

- **Strokes & Borders**

Any image, in any category, can include a thin line called a “stroke”, or a “border” which would be wider, to separate the image from the background. If, in the judge’s opinion, the stroke or border detracts from the image, the score could be affected.

- **Name or Identifying Marks**

The photographer’s name, signature, watermark, or other identifying mark shall not be visible.

- **Media**

All prints shall be made on paper media. No other media is permitted.

- **Print Sizes and Mounting**

- Prints can be any size up to 16”x20”.
- Each print shall be securely mounted on a single 16”x20” mounting board from 1/16th to 1/8” in thickness (e.g. 4-ply mat board).
- Over-matting is permitted, and only a single 4-ply mat may be used.
- Allowable mounting combinations are:
 - 16 x 20 mounting board + print
 - 16 x 20 mounting board + print + over-mat
- No other mounting combination may be used.
- Foam Core may **not** be used for mounting.
- Prints and labels shall be firmly attached (e.g. no masking tape, Post-It notes, etc.) and can be disqualified if they do not stay securely attached to the mounting board.

- **Print Preparation**

All prints shall carry an **ACCC Print Label** on the back, near the upper left-hand corner. Labels shall use the most recently published ACCC Print Label template, which can be downloaded from the ACCC web site:

<http://www.arizonacameraclubcouncil.org/>

3.3 Projected Image Division

All Projected Images shall adhere to the following specifications. At the discretion of the judges or Projected Image Chair, any image that does not adhere to these rules may be disqualified, or have its score reduced.

- **File Format**

- Must be formatted as JPEG (.jpg) files.
- Must be sized to a maximum of 1920 pixels wide by 1080 pixels high.

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- Must be sized to a maximum file size of 3MB.
- It is recommended that images be converted to sRGB.

- **Strokes & Borders**

Any image, in any category, can include a thin line called a “stroke”, or a “border” which would be wider, to separate the image from the background. If, in the judge’s opinion, the stroke or border detracts from the image, the score could be affected.

- **Name or Identifying Marks**

The photographer’s name, signature, watermark, or other identifying mark shall not be visible.

4 Submitting Your Photos

4.1 Print Division

- **Entry Deadline**

All entries shall be submitted via the online Digital Entry Form approximately one month prior to each Roundup. Specific deadline dates are published in advance on the ACCC web site. Late submissions shall not be accepted. The prints themselves shall be delivered by Club Representatives at the ACCC board meeting held approximately one month prior to each Roundup. Each club determines their own deadline for members submitting prints to the Club Representative.

- **Fees**

The fee for entries in the Print Division is \$3 per category. Entry fees for Prints shall be paid online as part of the submission process.

- **Return of Print Entries**

Prints shall be picked up at the conclusion of the Roundup by the maker or Club Representative. ACCC is not responsible for Print entries that are not picked up by the maker or Club Representative.

4.2 Projected Images Division

- **Entry Deadline**

All entries shall be submitted via the online Digital Entry Form approximately one month prior to each Roundup. Specific deadline dates are published in advance on the ACCC web site. Late submissions shall not be accepted. The Digital Entry Form can be found on the ACCC web site:

<http://www.arizonacameraclubcouncil.org/>

- **Fees**

The fee for entries in the Projected Images Division is \$3 per category. Entry fees for Projected Images shall be paid online as part of the submission process.

5 Awards and Honors

5.1 Individual Competition Awards and Recognition

A variety of awards are made at each competition. The following awards are made for each Category in both Print and Projected Images Divisions:

- Best of Show, chosen by the judges from the first place winners in each Division, will receive a rosette.
- First Place will receive a ribbon and an ACCC Medal.
- Second Place, Third Place, Honorable Mention, and Acceptance will receive ribbons.

Print entries will be displayed during the Roundup with the **First Place** and **Best of Show** award prints displayed separately and prominently. In rare situations where space is limited, some non-accepted prints might not be displayed.

Entries in the Projected Images Division will be projected as part of the program during the Roundup. Award winning images are projected separately and given special attention.

5.2 Special Awards

At each Roundup, ACCC member clubs can recognize individual members' special accomplishments. These awards, which can be made to color and monochrome entries unless otherwise stated, are listed in the table below. For each award, if it is deemed that no image meets the award criteria established by the ACCC member club, then an award will not be given. Special awards will be presented to the individual recipients during the ACCC Roundup.

“Bob Metz Distinguished Monochrome” sponsored by Camera Guild of Sun City

This award is given to the print displaying the best Interpretation of a “landscape” in “monochrome”. This image shall show a high degree of technical excellence, use of tonal value and have great visual impact. This image is considered to be monochrome only if it gives the impression of having no color, containing black, white and shades of grey only. A single toned image of a grey scale is permissible (ex: sepia tone), a multi-tone is not. This award is given in the print division, only.

“Best Nature Story” sponsored by Photography West

This award applies to both the Projected Images Division and Print Division and will be presented to one individual in each Division from any Category. The concept of “Story” must be clearly recognized in the submission and be consistent with the definition of “Nature” by PSA/FIAP. The depiction can be of an interactive, emotional or unusual situation. Judging will be based on the image telling, depicting or illustrating a story while maintaining high technical quality. The image must make a significant impact on the viewer. No modifications may be made in the editing/processing that are not allowed by

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the “Nature” definition. The selection will be made from all Acceptances and above, from any contest category.

“Night Skies” sponsored by Sun City Festival

This award, which applies only in the Projected Images Division, will be given to the best digital image portraying the subject matter with its main content focusing on the night skies in an artistic and technically competent photographic manner. Night Skies are defined as images taken from civil twilight – that is after sunset through darkness to civil twilight before dawn. Qualifying images may include Astrophotography, atmospheric conditions e.g. lightning storms, stars, star trails, comets, and/or natural phenomenon e.g. the Aurora borealis. Landscape elements can be included to enhance the image but are not the main subject of the image.

“The Great Southwest” sponsored by the Trilogy Photography Club

This award, which applies only in the Projected Images Division, is presented to a Projected Image in any category. Most importantly, the image must communicate to the viewer “This is great photo of the American Southwest.” The subject matter may be the amazing geography of the arid desert to the deciduous woodlands and evergreens, or the wide variety of flora such as saguaro cacti, Joshua trees, cottonwoods to name just a few, or the many critters and creatures in our midst like rattlesnakes, scorpions, roadrunners, wild horses and the like, or the Southwestern people such as Native Americans, ranch hands, agricultural workers and others. In addition, the image must be well-composed and tack sharp, and have good lighting, appropriate exposure, and strong impact.

“Human Interest” sponsored by Grand Photos

This award, which applies only in the Projected Images Division, will be awarded to the best digital image depicting a person or persons in an interactive, emotional, or unusual situation. The image may be color or monochrome. Judging will be based on the image telling, depicting or illustrating a story while maintaining high technical quality. The image must have a significant impact on the viewer. Sports action, as the main subject, (recreational or organized sport activity) is not allowed. Setups (posed, staged or otherwise contrived images) are not allowed. Images eligible for this award must meet all of the qualifications of the category in which it was originally submitted. The selection will be made from all acceptances and above in categories in keeping with the human interest definition.

<i>Award</i>	Presented By	Print	Projected
Bob Metz Distinguished Monochrome Award	Camera Guild of Sun City	X	--
Creative Expression	East Valley Photo Club	X	X
Best Nature Story	Photography West	X	X
Excellence in Landscape Photography	Phoenix Camera Club	X	X
Night Skies	Sun City Festival	--	X

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The Great Southwest	Trilogy Photography Club	--	X
Human Interest	Grand Photos	--	X

5.3 Cumulative Awards (Star and Galaxy Awards)

In order to recognize quality photographic work over a period of time, a system of awards based on ranking in competition over multiple ACCC Roundups is in use. It is also hoped that these “Star” and “Galaxy” awards, which are given at the Fall Roundup, will encourage members to continue participating in the Roundup competitions.

Points toward “Star” and “Galaxy” awards are accumulated separately for the Print Division and Projected Images Division as follows:

2 points for each First or Second place

1 point for each Third Place or Honorable Mention

- **Star Awards are awarded based on point accumulations as follows:**

1 Star = 4 Points

2 Stars = 6 Points

3 Stars = 8 Points

4 Stars = 10 Points

5 Stars = 12 Points

- **Galaxy Awards are based on the following criteria:**

1 Galaxy = 16 Points

2 Galaxies = 20 Points

3 Galaxies = 2 First or Second Places after receiving two Galaxies

4 Galaxies = 2 First or Second Places after receiving three Galaxies

5 Galaxies = 2 First or Second Places after receiving four Galaxies

6 Galaxies = 3 First Places after receiving five Galaxies

7 Galaxies = 5 First Places after receiving six Galaxies

8 Galaxies = 5 First Places after receiving seven Galaxies

- **Cumulative Awards for Clubs**

Club Plaques for Prints and Projected Images are presented annually at the Fall Roundup to recognize club achievement. The winning club in each Division is determined using each club's top 13 scores in the Print Division and the top 13 scores in the Projected Images Division. Scores are calculated separately for each Roundup, and then added for the overall annual score.