

Photography Contests in Northern Virginia and Nearby Regions

Virginia Contests

a. Virginia Wildlife Photo Showcase (dwr.virginia.gov)

The Virginia Wildlife Photo Showcase is an annual photography contest organized by the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources. Photographers are encouraged to review the *Virginia Wildlife Magazine* section on the department's website for the latest guidelines and submission deadlines.

For 2026, submissions were due by February 9. Winning photographs will be published in the July/August issue of *Virginia Wildlife Magazine*, and one exceptional image will be featured on the cover of the Department of Wildlife Resources' annual wildlife calendar.

Participants may submit images in the categories of "Virginia Fauna," "Textures and Patterns," and "Explore the Wild." These categories will remain for the 2026 contest, and photographers are encouraged to keep them in mind throughout the year to prepare for the 2027 competition.

b. Virginia Conservation Network – Virginia's Annual Conservation Photo Contest (vcnva.org)

The Virginia Conservation Network (vcnva.org) hosts an annual contest for conservation-themed photographs that highlight the beauty and importance of conservation efforts across Virginia. In 2025, participants could submit an unlimited number of entries between June 2 and July 18. Winners were chosen by public vote and the winning photo could be featured on the cover of the 2026 "Common Agenda Briefing Book."

As of May 5, 2026, there is no information available for the 2026 contest. Interested photographers should check the *Land Conservation and Outdoor Recreation* section of the Virginia Conservation Network's website for updates. Search for "*Virginia's Annual Conservation Photo Contest*."

c. Chesapeake Bay Foundation Save the Bay Photo Contest (cbf.org)

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation organizes the Save the Bay Photo Contest each year, inviting submissions that celebrate the beauty and significance of the Chesapeake Bay. Contest rules, guidelines, and past winners' galleries are available on the foundation's website, with cash prizes up to \$500 awarded to winning entries.

The 2026 contest runs from March 9 to March 27, 2026. All requirements and further details can be found on the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's website by searching for "photo contest."

d. Scenic Virginia – Virginia Vistas Photo Contest (scenicvirginia.org)

The Virginia Vistas Photo Contest, held by Scenic Virginia (scenicvirginia.org), celebrates the scenic landscapes of Virginia. The 2025 contest ran from April 1 to May 15. The contest for 2026 will be held from March 9 to March 27. For the most current information, participants are encouraged to contact Scenic Virginia directly at email@scenicvirginia.org.

e. Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (VASWCD) Photo Contest (vaswcd.org)

The ASWCD organizes an annual photo contest. For 2026, the contest titled “Stewardship in Sight” accepts submissions from February through August 1, 2026. Each participant may submit up to ten photographs, and all images must be taken within Virginia. A gallery of winning entries can be found on the organization’s website under the photo contest section, including the 2025 winners.

f. Virginia Tech Global Education Office (www.globaleducation.vt.edu)

This contest is likely limited to Virginia Tech-sponsored study abroad students. For 2025, submissions for the GEO Photo Contest 2024-2025 were accepted from March 10 to March 11, 2025.

g. Northern Virginia Conservation Trust (www.nvct.org)

The 2026 Contest was held March 22 to April 22, 2026 Earth Day). It was announced after this PW Photo Club contest list was published in February 2026. The lesson here is to be prepared for the next (2027) contest as it will likely take place in March-April 2027 but formal announcement and call for photos may not be announced until March 2027. Prizes were awarded in 2026 for first place in each of the following categories: *People in the Outdoors*; *Spring Renewal*; *Streams, Creeks, and Water*; *Smartphone Snaps*. Prizes and publication in organizational magazine/newsletters is also possible.

h. Virginia Forestry Association (www.veforestry.org) – Virginia Forests Magazine Photo Contest

The Virginia Forests Magazine Photo Contest submission deadline for 2025 was December 31, 2025. Only one entry is allowed per person. For guidelines and categories, visit the main page and search for “photo contest.” Categories include *Working Forests and Industry*, *Virginia Flora*, *Virginia Fauna*, *Virginia Landscapes*, *Forest Recreation*, and *New Forests*. For further information, contact vfa@veforestry.org. No information about the 2026 contest has been posted as of May 5, 2026, but we can anticipate that the submission dates for 2026 will be like the 2025 date; i.e., December 31, 2026.

i. Mid-Atlantic Photo Visions (midatlanticphotovisions.org)

The entry deadlines for the Nature and Photo Art competitions are usually in September. These competitions are open to members of MAPV-affiliated photo clubs. Details for 2026 competitions have been posted. Competition for Nature and Photo Art opens August 5th, 2026. Categories for Nature include birds, wildlife, macro/close-up, water, grand landscapes, and intimate landscapes. PhotoArt categories are Architecture/Agriculture/Industry, Abstracts/Altered Reality, People (including documentary and portraits), Studio Photography, Sports/Action, Other. See the website for rules and information.

j. Northern Virginia Bird Alliance (nvbirdalliance.org) – 2026 Calendar Photo Contest

The Northern Virginia Bird Alliance held its first annual calendar photo contest and fundraiser in 2025. Participants submitted photos of birds, insects, and native plants taken in Northern Virginia. The 13 best bird photos will be featured in the 2026 calendar. The submission fee is \$10 per photo, and each \$1 donation counts as one vote. Photos submitted by November 14, 2025, at 8:00 PM were considered. Please check the web site for future (2026) contests.

k. Prince William County (PWC) Parks Summer Photo Contest (pwcva.gov) or (pwcparcs.org)

The Parks and Recreation organization sponsors a photo contest annually. They county advises it has not been planned for 2026, but will probably be scheduled for July/August.

Maryland Contests

a. Maryland Natural Resource Photo Contests (dnr.maryland.gov)

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources runs several photo contests each year. Winners of the 2025 Natural Resources Photo Contest were announced in September 2025 from more than 1,800 submissions. The 2026 contest opened in late April 2026, and winning entries will appear in the 2027 Maryland DNR nature calendar. Categories include Birds, Insects, Flora, Recreation, Landscapes, Weather and Wonder, and Wildlife. The entry fee is \$10 for up to three images, with additional entries costing \$3 each. See the website for complete rules.

The DNR "Waterfowl Photo Contest" for 2025 replaced the Maryland Migratory Game Bird Stamp Design contest, which ended in 2023. This new annual contest is hosted as part of the overall DNR Photo contest. The winner's image will be featured on one of DNR's new hunting and fishing licensing hard cards, which debuted in 2025. Check the DNR website for information about the 2026 contest.

Washington DC Contests

**a. Smithsonian Magazine Annual Photo Contest
(photocontest.smithsonianmag.com)**

The Smithsonian Magazine Annual Photo Contest includes categories such as Wildlife, Travel, People, Drone/Aerial, The American Experience, and Artistic. The 2025 contest ran from September to December 1, 2025, at 5:00 PM. Contestants must be 18 years or older, and photographs must have been taken after January 1, 2023. Full rules are available on the contest website.