



## OPEN LETTER TO WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHERS

What does the word “photography” mean? Literally, it stands for “writing with light”, but for wildlife photographers it also holds another meaning - a moment of absolute realism.

The beginning of the digital era has allowed an increasing number of people to get closer to photography, as good results are easier to achieve, and minor mistakes that film would not forgive can now be corrected on the computer. This is the problem actually - to decide whether these easy-to-achieve corrections actually change the image in its genuineness, and to set a limit beyond which processing a picture distorts the original context in which it was taken. This task is not easy at all.

Unfortunately, a look at pictures recently appeared in national and international photography contests or on websites (showcases of this kind of photography) clearly shows that we are facing a real escalation of digital manipulation. By now, the technology standards of post-production programs are so high that detecting any change to the original image or assess the genuinity of attached metadata is just impossible. Just like every competition, photography contests should be subject to rules that allow anyone who wants to participate to start from the same level, to compete on equal terms even with the most renowned photographers. Yet, unfortunately, regulations are incomplete, whether for negligence or for self-interest, and many juries do not have the necessary technical abilities to detect such falsifications, thus allowing “photo-graphic designers” to submit false, virtual images. Therefore, wildlife photography runs the risk of being considered as a manipulated reality, where wildlife images are not seen as a true representation of a real thing but rather as a gateway to an imaginary world, surely fascinating, but not real.

Therefore,

### WE ASK

that all wildlife photography contests require participants to submit original RAW (not JPEG or TIFF) files or the slides to the jury upon request, together with the files for the contest, so as to allow a check of such files. Who fails to do so shall have their picture left out of the contest list.

### IN CONCLUSION

We wish that these words impress our colleagues whose ability is appreciated by people, friends, and anyone who looks at our work with the naïve eyes of someone who discovers the wonders of Nature also through the photographer’s pictures. This letter is especially for them.

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