



Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (RASC), Halifax Centre

Dedicated to the Advancement of Astronomy and Allied Sciences

G8: RASC Halifax Centre Astroimaging Contest Criteria

(Adopted May 4, 2019; Revised September 3, 2024)

Background:

Previous to 2019, an astroimaging contest was held only within the purview of the Nova East Star Party. All photos submitted were judged with an eye to one overall winner. The Nova East (NE) Planning Committee in 2019 felt the contest should have higher visibility and be promoted more broadly. There had been concerns about:

- the few entries in the contest each year, despite the growing astroimaging community in Nova Scotia
- photos from RASC members who did not attend Nova East were being excluded despite the quality of their photos, and
- the challenge of comparing deep-sky, solar system and wide-field photos in one category.

At the April 6, 2019 RASC Halifax Centre meeting of the Board of Directors, it was agreed the astroimaging contest would be considered a Halifax Centre contest, thereby opening it to more than Nova East registrants. Subsequent to the approval for expanding the contest, a Task Team was struck, comprising members Judy Black (Team Lead), Blair MacDonald and Jerry Black. The recommended guidelines for the contest were first approved at the May 4, 2019, Board of Directors meeting.

Rationale:

The astroimaging contest was in part responsible for the growing number of RASC members interested in astroimaging. However, a contest reflecting the structure of the national RASC astroimaging certificate program would provide clear criteria for submissions and for adjudication.

Submission of Photos

a) Deadline for Submission:

Submissions will be accepted during a 4-week submission period as posted on the Halifax Centre Astroimaging Contest site. The start date for submissions will be at least 4 weeks before the date established for the deadline for submissions.

b) Who Can Submit:

Submissions will be accepted from any member of the RASC Halifax Centre, or from any person currently residing in Nova Scotia. ***The winner of any of the 3 adjudicated categories cannot submit to that category for the following year's contest.***

c) Important Note:

By submitting a photo to the Halifax Centre Astroimaging Contest, the photographer has given permission for use on the RASC Halifax Centre website, the RASC Halifax Centre publication *Nova Notes*, and display at Halifax Members' Meetings, and on the prize sponsor's website and social media. If the photo is to be used for any other purpose, the photographer's permission will be requested specifically for that purpose.

Posting on RASC Halifax Centre Websites

Each year's contest submissions will be posted on the RASC Halifax Centre website as they arrive during the submission period. Copyright privileges will be noted. The Contest sponsor's website(s) could link to RASC Halifax Centre contest website.

Categories

The Halifax Centre Astroimaging Contest has three adjudicated categories:

1. Wide-Field (WF)
2. Solar System (SS)
3. Deep-Sky/Prime Focus (DS)

The People's Choice Award is given to the photographer whose photo has been voted the best of all photos submitted. No direct submission to this category can be made.

Submission Requirements

a) Image Description

Those submitting photos must provide a single text file with the image description(s) separate from the images. The information provided will be used when posting the photos. Each description should be a single text block with:

- Photographer's name
- Image Title
- What the object is
- Pertinent details
- Capture details: location, time, camera make, camera settings, lens, mount, total exposure time, focal ratio, processing steps, etc.

b) Image Submission

The photo submitted may be in colour or black and white. No composite photos are allowed; however, stacked photographs are allowed. Each person may submit two entries per category. However, each person may win only once per category for which they submitted photos, i.e., they cannot win both 1st and 2nd prize in a category.

Images must be in JPEG format, 2,400 pixels wide, and should not have text (such as labels, copyright notices or other information) imprinted on them. Images should not be embedded in a presentation format.

Some composites (for example, those with foregrounds shot from a different location and/or date than the sky portion) are not eligible, however, nightscape images and photos consisting of stitched mosaics and panoramas are allowed.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) generated images in part or in whole are not eligible for entry, but AI based image enhancement tools such as Blur Exterminator, Noise Exterminator and other AI based tools used for image processing are allowable and encouraged.

All images must be captured using equipment you personally set up and operated.

The File Name format: category + image Title + file extension. Please do not include your name or initials in the naming of the file. For example:

- WF Yarmouth Milky Way.jpg
- SS Moon crater Plato.jpg
- DS M101.jpg

Images are to be emailed with the submitter's full name and address in their email with the JPEG of your photo. Use the naming format and the image description cited above.

Adjudicator Criteria:

A number will be assigned to each photo submitted to avoid confusion with any duplication of naming of files and to ensure anonymity of the photographer for the adjudicators.

The criteria as cited below will be used by the adjudicators to rank the submissions in each category. All submissions in each category will also be judged for composition, visual interest, and artistic merit.

a) RASC Halifax Centre Astroimaging – Wide-Field**The criteria are:**

- Proper calibration
- Properly stretched
- Well focused
- No black point clipping and limited white point clipping
- Good control of background noise
- Sharpened, when required
- If stars are in the photo:
 - Show good star colour, i.e. not all white (unless a B/W image)
 - Should be good to the corners; cropping is allowed
 - Star bloat is controlled
- If an untracked photo is submitted, the additional criteria include:
 - Proper exposure to prevent star trails, unless it is a star trail photo
 - Use of foreground elements (will involve artistic impression)

b) RASC Halifax Centre Astroimaging - Solar System**The criteria are:**

- Image must be resolved to distinguish the object from the adjacent stars
- Well focused
- Sharp image
- Low Noise
- Good contrast
- Exposed with no white point clipping
- Well tracked
- Good colour (if not B/W)

c) RASC Halifax Centre Astroimaging – Deep-Sky**The criteria are:**

- Well focused
- Properly calibrated
- Properly stretched
- Use flats, if necessary
- No black point clipping and limited white point clipping
- Low noise
- Image sharpened, when required
- Good star colour, if not B/W
- No star bloat
- Stars should be good to the corners, cropping is allowed

Winners and Prizes**a) Prizes:**

These will be determined each year in conjunction with the contest sponsors.

b) Announcement of Winners

Winners will be announced each year on a date approved by the Board of Directors, e.g., at a member's meeting or at Nova East. Those winners not in attendance will be notified by phone or email regarding their win. Once all winners have been notified, the winners will be announced on the RASC Halifax Centre website, through the RASC Halifax Centre Announce List, and on the sponsor's website and social media. If a framed print is one of the prizes provided by a sponsor, it will be ordered afterwards by the winner in consultation with the sponsor to ensure it is printed to the winner's specifications.