

BCRA Photographic Competition

...at the National Caving Conference, Hidden Earth



The British Cave Research Association invites photographers from the UK and overseas to enter its annual Photographic 'Salon' and Competition.

The event will be part of the annual caving conference – Hidden Earth. The purpose of the competition is to encourage both new and experienced cave photographers. The photographs will be judged on their technical, artistic and aesthetic qualities, and BCRA hopes that photographs covering all aspects of caving will be submitted.

Competition Categories

The competition categories and a list of other prizes awarded at the conference are shown in the table to the right.

Newcomer Award

We encourage newcomers to enter the competition and we offer a special prize for the best British Isles newcomer. We encourage you to treat the term 'newcomer' inventively – are you a newcomer specifically to underwater photography, or 3D, perhaps?

Digital Showcase

We want the Photo Salon to live up to its description of being a 'salon' where you can display your work. Consequently, the photo salon features a 'digital showcase' section. Your images will be displayed in sequence on a monitor in the exhibition area. The work will not be included in the competition, but images entered into the usual competition categories can also be submitted to the showcase. Please see the guidelines on p2.

Online Entry Form

We hope to offer online entry this year – it saves time at the check-in desk, and it means we do not have to decipher your handwriting. If available, this facility will open a few weeks before the conference. Check [hidden-earth.org.uk / competitions](http://hidden-earth.org.uk/competitions) or the forums at [ukcaving.com / board](http://ukcaving.com/board) and [british-caving.org.uk / phpBB2](http://british-caving.org.uk/phpBB2) for announcements.

Competition Rules

Eligibility

Anyone may enter the competition, whether or not they are a member of BCRA. Winning entries from previous BCRA photographic competitions may not be entered. Entries cannot be released for lectures.

Judging

Judging will be a panel of three judges, independent of BCRA, whose decisions are final. BCRA reserves the right not to award a prize if, in the opinion of the judges, the entries in any particular category are too few to constitute a proper competition.

Borders and Frame Size

The maximum dimensions of the mount/frame that we can accept without prior arrangement are

400mm × 500mm. Because of space restrictions, we cannot guarantee to accept work that exceeds those dimensions and, if you wish to submit oversized work, it is a condition of entry that you contact us in advance to enquire about its acceptability.

File Formats

Digital files must be submitted in JPG or TIF formats on a PC-compatible CD-ROM and should ideally be less than 2MB in size. File names and media must adequately identify the entrant. (See guidelines below). We cannot accept any responsibility for media that are unlabelled or unreadable by our computer for reason of formatting, excessive file size or any other problem.

Copyright & Reproduction

The copyright of all entries will remain with the authors. Entries may be copied for display at the closing ceremony; and digital files may be copied for display during the weekend. No further use will be made of any copies without permission, although BCRA encourages entrants to allow their photos to be published in *Speleology*.

No rights will be conceded to sponsors or other parties without permission of the entrants.

Loss, Damage & Insurance

Every care will be taken of the entries, but BCRA cannot accept responsibility for any damage or loss. The organisers will not be insuring the photographs and, if required, entrants should make their own arrangements.

How to Enter

You can enter in advance or on the day. If entering in advance, entry forms – accompanied by your work – should be sent to the Photo Salon coordinator, at the address shown on the web site at [hidden-earth.org.uk / competitions / forms.html](http://hidden-earth.org.uk/competitions/forms.html), to arrive at least **15 days before the start of the conference**. Entries on the day should be delivered to the exhibition area **by midday on the Saturday** of the conference. They will be available for collection after completion of the awards ceremony on the Sunday afternoon. If you are not attending the conference you may send your work by post at your own risk and cost. If you want your work to be returned by post you must provide sufficient postage, packing material and customs charges

Premier Trophy

A portfolio of five prints in colour or black & white. One entry per person. One prize. All non-winning entries in this category will be entered in the appropriate print category below

Colour Print

Monochrome Print

Digital Files

Up to **eight** entries per person in each of these three categories, (including any entries transferred from the Premier Trophy above).

One 'first prize' in each category, plus a number of 'distinction' and 'merit' prizes.

Monochrome Prints: Sepia and other toned monochrome prints are acceptable in this category.

Digital Files: Photo from digital files that will be judged on a computer monitor and displayed as part of the 'digital showcase' (see left).

Special Prizes: The following prizes are also awarded at the caving conference.

Other Prizes may be awarded too; the judges will consider all work that is submitted.

British Newcomer

Awarded to a British Isles 'newcomer'.

Winner chosen from the entries in the above-listed competition categories. One prize.

Cave Life

See guidelines on next page

Each cave life picture should be accompanied by a written description of its location and the environmental conditions where the specimen was found, together with the name of the species and any behaviour being exhibited. This documentation will form part of the entry.

*Up to **three** entries per person selected by the entrant from entries made in the above-listed competition categories.*

Fun Shot

A single or short sequence of digital files (see 'file formats' – no prints) with caption(s). Judged by the 'laughometer' at the conference closing ceremony!

*Up to **three** entries per person in addition to entries made in the above-listed competition categories.*

Moore Books Prize

See guidelines on next page

Sponsored by Moore Books; prizes of £100 and £20 vouchers for Moore books, awarded for the best **colour or monochrome print** with a mining or man-made underground theme. As well as mining in the strictest sense, this includes quarrying and other man-made tunnelling activities.

*Up to **three** entries per person selected by the entrant from entries made in the above-listed competition categories.*

Giles Barker Award

This annual award is given jointly by Morgannwg CC and Red Rose CPC in recognition of excellence in any aspect of cave photography.

Before completing an **Entry Form** (p3), you may like to read the **Guidelines** on p2.

Guidelines and Further Information

How to Present and Label Your Entries

Mounting

You will almost certainly improve the presentation of your print by mounting it. But do make sure that the mount will not curl or come unglued in the heat of the lights.

Print Size

We no longer specify the minimum print size in the rules, but you are advised that prints should have one dimension (excluding any border or frame) that is at least 200mm. For the Premier Trophy, 250mm is advised.

Hanging Heavy Prints

We aim to provide Velcro boards and stickers to hang your photos but if you wish to use another method, or if your photos are in heavy frames, then the responsibility rests with you to check in advance that you can display your work adequately, given our constraints. Pins are not allowed.

Display

For the benefit of viewers, you may wish to label your prints with a note explaining where the photo was taken.

Digital Files

File Size

This year, digital files will be judged on a computer monitor. For operational reasons, we state that files must be submitted in JPG or TIF formats on a PC-compatible CD-ROM and should ideally be less than 2MB size.

As a general point of advice, the screen will be about 1.3 mega-pixels, which is an uncompressed file size of about 4MB. JPG files of this resolution, with a low compression, should be under 1MB.

Please note, though, that files of this size will not reproduce well, in a magazine, at a width more than about 100mm so, if you would like to see your photo in Speleology, it may need to be a bit larger.

Projected Images

The category for digital files replaces the category for projected images. There is no projected images category this year – if you have a 35mm transparency that you want to enter, you must scan it and enter it as a digital file (or print it and enter it as a print).

Labelling of Entries

Prints

The name of the entrant and the title of the photo should be visible on the back of all prints. Labels will be available at the check-in desk.

Digital Files

Digital files must be named so that the judges can identify the entrant and the photograph (e.g. **smith001.jpg** or **smith-matienzo001.jpg**). Please do not use excessively long file names. Files that are not named in an appropriate

style may, at the discretion of the judges, be disqualified. Discs must also be adequately labelled.

Aspects of the Judging

How the Categories are Judged

Firstly, the Premier Trophy will be judged. All the *non-winning* photos from this competition will be transferred to the Colour Print or Monochrome Print competitions. However, this must not result in your having more than **eight** entries in either of these categories.

Secondly, *all* the entries on display (other than the winning Premier Trophy entry) will be judged in the Colour Print, and Monochrome Print categories. As well as outright winners, the judges will be awarding merits and distinctions as appropriate.

Lastly, the images that are marked as entered in one of the 'special prizes' categories will be judged in those categories, where they may win additional merit and distinction awards in respect of the particular 'special prize' category of the entry.

How Many Entries?

You may enter up to **eight** photos in each of the three categories Colour, Monochrome and Digital Files. You can group **five** of your print entries into a portfolio for the Premier Trophy. You may offer up to **three** of your eight entries for each of the various "special prizes" – Cave Life, Fun Shot, Mike Moore, etc but the **total** number of photos that you enter must not exceed **eight** in each of the three categories Colour, Monochrome and Digital.

Colour v. Monochrome

Colour and monochrome photographs can convey different artistic moods and the judges will consider this as part of their deliberations. The judges will look unfavourably on near-identical images that are submitted in colour and monochrome versions.

Special Effects, Digital and Composite Work

These are not barred from the competition but, as with all entries, you must demonstrate to the judges that your entry has sufficient technical, artistic and aesthetic qualities. Digital photographs need not be declared; but they must be all your own work, from photographic source material.

Guidelines for Digital Showcase

Guidelines for Digital Showcase

Images in the slideshow will be shown in alpha-numeric order of file name so you can take advantage of this to provide a title image. The title file-name just needs to come before the picture file-names, and all files should use a common prefix to avoid other photographers' files coming in between (e.g. call your files

smith001.jpg, smith002.jpg, with the title image as, say, smith000.jpg).

We recommend compressed JPG files (max 1280 × 1024 and 2MB) for your photos. However, the application that we will be using supports all common image formats, so your title slides could be GIF, TIFF or BMP format if needed. It you want your name or any other information to be shown with individual images then please make it part of the image itself. We'd rather not display a separate title slide for each image or the slideshow would get rather tedious.

Guidelines for Cave Life

The Cave Life award was introduced to encourage cave photographers to look further at their environment than just at formations and other more obvious close-up subjects. To that end, the rules require that accompanying written material is submitted in order to add scientific value to the photograph. The description should record the name of the organism (common/Latin) as well as details of its behaviour, location (e.g. cave entrance or deep within a cave), conditions (e.g. wet/dry/stream/draught) and so on. This documentation will form part of the entry, and will be taken into account by the judges.

When judging this category the usual team of three judges will be headed by a fourth, who is a specialist in cave biology (at least to the extent that they are a caver and a biologist) and can, therefore, place a photograph of a mundane fungus into context alongside a photograph of a rare beetle exhibiting some behaviour.

The Cave Life category is intended to go beyond photography: it will be awarded to fine photography of course, but also to a photograph which records an aspect of cave life and is documented as such.

The Premier Trophy

This is described in the rules as a 'portfolio'. A portfolio is more than just your five best shots, but there is no requirement that the photos follow a theme. It is up to you to decide the content (and you might decide on a theme if you wish, or to explore some other aspect of presentation). It is up to the judges to judge the photos as a whole, deciding if the prints work well as a set, but that does not mean 'to a theme'. Because presentation is important, you should ask if you wish your photos to be displayed to a particular layout. This is especially important if you will not be present to hang the pictures yourself.

Aesthetics means, in essence, *was the image worth looking at?* Was it beautiful, inspiring, shocking, or thought-provoking? Did it appeal to the senses? Will the people who saw it remember it, or did they just stare blankly at it and move on to the next one.

In the Video Media salon, a rousing presentation with good music and humorous images could be enjoyed by the audience, even if it did not demonstrate a great deal of artistic or technical merit. For the first prize, the judges will be looking for a good balance of all three qualities of the work. But, with our new system of merit awards we hope to be able to recognise *all* merit.

The Moore Books Prize

Additional Rules: The pictures must be from an *abandoned* mine or a *former* industrial underground site (this includes sewers and drains). In all cases the site must *not* have been in use at the time the photo was taken; the emphasis of the competition is on *historical sites*. The location of the photo can be anywhere in the world.

The competition will be judged by a team of judges selected by Moore Books.

Guidelines: The photograph should provide a simple understanding of a particular site; it can show the unique features, such as stopping, mining methods, mining machinery or equipment, mineralisation or some other particular feature. It should not, however, depict wildlife.

Artistic, Technical and Aesthetic Qualities

The **Artistic** quality of your work will depend on its composition, lighting and subject matter. For a photograph this may mean that instead of a simple 'point and shoot' approach, you consider how the different elements of your picture fit together. For a video the term would encompass the storyboard and the skill in editing. An AV work has its own special artistic features – it is not simply a series of still images. The judges will be looking for originality and innovation – has this particular type of photo been seen before? Has a video camera been used this way before?

For a photograph, the **Technical Qualities** show themselves in how the image is presented, and they demonstrate whether you know how to use your equipment. Is the picture in focus? Has the photo been printed to a high quality? For conventional printing, was the negative free from dust, hairs and scratches? For a digital print, are there any 'tram-lines' visible on the print. (In recent years, this has been a major problem with many of the photos on display). Are the colour-depth and image-resolution satisfactory? Has the image been over-sharpened or similarly abused? Are there any compression artefacts visible at a normal viewing distance. Is the photo well-mounted or does it curl up at the edges? For videos and AVs, have you demonstrated compliance with music copyright laws (e.g. by displaying your licence)?

