



© Marvin Kuhn

Fascinating Bird Photography

We at the Swiss Ornithological Institute in Sempach hope to inspire public interest in birds and raise awareness for their protection. Widespread understanding and appreciation of our native birdlife are key factors to the success of our efforts. The more people care about birds and enjoy watching them, the better our chances of implementing effective conservation measures for threatened species.

Stunning photographs perfectly convey the fascination that birds evoke in us: images that display the striking colours of a bird's plumage, introduce us to a wide range of behaviours, showcase the many shapes and sizes of birds from the Swan to the tiny Firecrest, and allow us to witness their aerobatic feats.

The photo competition is organized by the Swiss Ornithological Institute Sempach with the support of our main partner Canon (Switzerland) AG, the category partners Nikon Europe B.V., OM Digital Solutions GmbH and Sony Europe B.V. as well as other partners.

We also extend our warmest thanks to all our other partners who support the competition by sponsoring the prizes.



Photo Competition 2026 of the Swiss Ornithological Institute in Sempach

Organiser

The photo competition is organized by the Swiss Ornithological Institute Sempach with the support of our main partner Canon (Switzerland) AG, the category partners Nikon Europe B.V., OM Digital Solutions GmbH and Sony Europe B.V. as well as other partners.

Goal

The goal of the competition is to showcase the beauty and fascination of our native birdlife and encourage involvement in nature and bird conservation by means of unique images.

Procedure

Participants can submit in each category a maximum of 10 photos online in a preview format during the month of May 2026. In June, the expert panel will make a preselection and request the selected images in RAW format or as the original JPG files. Based on this shortlist, the panel will choose the overall winner as well as three winning images per category in September 2026.

Categories

- » Category 1 «General»
This category is open to bird photos of all kinds.
- » Category 2 «Emotion»
Photos that highlight the beauty of birds. Photos that evoke emotions through a focus on mood.
- » Category 3 «Action»
Photos that display impressive bird behaviour or that show birds in motion.
- » Category 4 «Youth»
Photographers aged 20 or under on 31st May 2026 can choose whether they wish to participate in the category «Youth» and/or in the three main categories.

Image File Requirements

- » Preview images: At least 1400 pixels on the longest side
- » High-resolution images: The chosen section of the original file must be at least 4000 pixels on the longest side, or at least 3000 pixels for square images. This is without recalculating the data.
- » Image processing: Image processing is allowed in accordance with the conditions of entry.

Dates

- » 1st to 31st May 2026: Online submission of preview images at: <https://photo.vogelwarte.ch>
- » 15th July 2026: Request for RAW files or original JPG files (only preselected images)
- » 10th August 2026: Submission deadline for RAW files or original JPG files (only preselected images)
- » October 2026: Notification of the winners

Intellectual Property Rights

The author must hold the copyright of the submitted images. By entering the competition, participants confirm that they are the sole author of the images and that no rights of third parties are involved.

Expert Panel

- » Marcel Burkhardt, ornithologist and project manager, Swiss Ornithological Institute in Sempach
- » Nicolas Stettler, Biologist and nature photographer
- » Irene Sieber, board member of Naturfotografen Schweiz
- » Johannes Loreck, Canon (Schweiz) AG
- » Jacques Bibinet, board member of Association suisse des photographes et cinéastes naturalistes



Prizes

Overall winner, main partner: Canon (Switzerland) AG

Canon EOS R5 Mark II and RF 200-800 mm F6.3-9 IS USM worth CHF 5798.– (Sponsor: Canon (Switzerland) AG)

Category «General», category partner: OM Digital Solutions GmbH

1st Prize OM-1 II with M.Zuiko Digital ED 100-400 F5.0-6.3 IS II and EE-1 Dot Sight worth CHF 3467.–
(Sponsor: OM Digital Solutions GmbH)

2nd Prize Shopping voucher P&M PHOTO MEDIA Luzern worth CHF 400.– (Sponsor: P&M PHOTO MEDIA)

3rd Prize Shopping voucher Foto Video Zumstein Bern worth CHF 200.– (Sponsor: Foto Video Zumstein)

Category «Emotion», category partner: Canon (Switzerland) AG

1st Prize Canon EOS R7 with RF 100-400 mm F5.6-8 IS USM and Canon 10 x 30 IS Binoculars worth CHF 2311.–
(Sponsor: Canon (Switzerland) AG)

2nd Prize Shopping voucher Foto Video Zumstein Bern worth CHF 400.– (Sponsor: Foto Video Zumstein)

3rd Prize Shopping voucher GraphicArt AG Ittigen worth CHF 200.– (Sponsor: GraphicArt)

Category «Action», category partner: Sony Europe B.V.

1st Prize Sony A7 V worth CHF 2599.– and SanDisk Extreme Portable SSD 1TB worth CHF 329.–
(Sponsor: Sony Europe B.V. / SanDisk)

2nd Prize Shopping voucher GraphicArt AG Ittigen worth CHF 400.– (Sponsor: GraphicArt)

3rd Prize Shopping voucher P&M PHOTO MEDIA Luzern worth CHF 200.– (Sponsor: P&M PHOTO MEDIA)

Category «Youth», category partner: Nikon Europe B.V.

1st Prize Nikon Spektiv Monarch 82ED-A with 20-60x Ocular worth 1988.– (Sponsor: Nikon Europe B.V.)

2nd Prize Binoculars Nikon Monarch HG 10x42 worth CHF 992.– (Sponsor: Nikon Europe B.V.)

3rd Prize Binoculars Nikon Stabilized 12 x 25 S worth CHF 819.– (Sponsor: Nikon Europe B.V.)

Prizes as of March 2026. We reserve the right to substitute models and prizes.

Contact

- » Please send any enquiries by email to: photo@vogelwarte.ch. Participants will also be contacted via this address. Participants are responsible for ensuring that the address is not blocked by security barriers or spam filters.
- » We are unable to receive queries by telephone.



Conditions of Entry

Participation

- » Participants can enter the competition via <https://photo.vogelwarte.ch>. Pictures must be submitted online using a personal account.
- » The Ornithological Institute's photo competition is open to European residents. Amateur enthusiasts will have the chance to compete with professional photographers. Employees of the Swiss Ornithological Institute in Sempach, Canon Switzerland and other sponsors are excluded from the competition.

Entries

- » We only accept images from digital cameras.
- » Photos must be submitted online via <https://photo.vogelwarte.ch>.
- » Entrants can upload a maximum of 10 photos per category.
- » Each image may be entered only once in any vogelwarte contest.
- » The original image may be cropped. The resulting image file must be at least 4000 pixels on the longest side, or at least 3000 pixels if it is a square image. This is without recalculating the data.
- » Minimum size for preview images: at least 1400 pixels on the longest side
- » The aspect ratio may not deviate from the usual 3:2, 4:3, 1:1 or 16:9 formats.
- » File format for preview images: Files must be submitted as JPEGs, saved at the highest quality setting and Adobe RGB or sRGB colour space.
- » Photos of birds in captivity (pets, farm animals, zoo animals) are not permitted.
- » Images must feature species that occur as wild birds in Switzerland. The list of species at <http://photo.vogelwarte.ch> is final.
- » Participants pledge to adhere to any applicable conservation laws for the respective areas and the animals living in them. The protection of birds and their habitats has absolute priority. Special care must be taken not to disturb breeding or feeding birds. The directions given on the fact sheet «Responsible Bird Photography» are part of the conditions of entry. Photos taken with obvious disregard of these rules will be disqualified. The Swiss Ornithological Institute reserves the right to exclude fallible photographers from the competition.
- » The IPTC data (in Adobe Photoshop: File – File Information) must contain at least first name, surname and e-mail address.
- » The files must be marked with a category number (K1, K2, K3 or K4) and labelled as follows:
categorynumber_lastname_firstname_species_country in which the picture was taken
Example: K1_Smith_John_Housesparrow_Switzerland
- » For proof of authenticity, we request the processed data in full resolution as well as the unprocessed original files of all images preselected by the expert panel. For these images, we also request a short paragraph detailing the shooting conditions.
- » If the requested data is not provided on time, the photo in question will be disqualified.

Image Processing

The jury looks forward to authentic photographs that are as natural as possible. Heavily edited images are discouraged. Images generated by artificial intelligence are excluded from the competition.

- » Moderate adjustments of tonal value, contrast, sharpness, colour temperature, white balance and colour balance as well as removal of image noise and dust spotting are permitted as long as they do not alter the overall message of the image.
- » Black and white conversion is permitted.
- » Adding and removing elements from the picture and the use of colour filters or artistic filters is not permitted.
- » HDR photography, panoramic photos, focus stacking, multiple exposure and photomontage are not permitted.



Intellectual Property Rights and Rights of Use

The photographer must hold the intellectual property rights of the submitted images. By entering the competition, participants confirm that they are the sole author of the images and that there is no third-party copyright infringement. Participants are liable for any damages incurred through copyright infringement or the failure to obtain rights of use.

The award-winning images and the images of the preselection may be used free of charge by the Swiss Ornithological Institute in Sempach for any activity related to the Institute's photo competitions. In particular, these rights include the publication of the photos on the Internet, in print publications, exhibitions, media coverage of the competition as well as promotional activities. The Swiss Ornithological Institute may transfer these rights of use to third parties.

Data Privacy

When entering the photo competition and when registering or confirming your user account («account»), the following data privacy provisions apply in addition to the Privacy Policy.

Sign-up/registration

- » When you register to enter the photo competition, you must provide truthful information as required in the registration form. You will receive a link by e-mail in order to activate your account: please confirm your competition entry by clicking on this link.
- » You are responsible for keeping your account login details confidential. Sharing your login details with third parties is not permitted. Any misuse must be reported to the Swiss Ornithological Institute without delay. The Swiss Ornithological Institute accepts no liability.
- » Your data is stored with our provider «Hostpoint». Hostpoint is a Swiss provider that operates its servers in Switzerland: www.hostpoint.ch
- » Before each round of the photo competition (usually held annually), you will receive a newsletter asking you to confirm your registration, acknowledge the Privacy Policy, and accept the terms and Conditions of Entry as well as the guidelines for «Responsible Bird Photography». We may also send you additional useful information via newsletter such as event updates or invitations, publications, etc.
- » Newsletters are sent via our software partner Intuit Mailchimp, which is located in the USA. Mailchimp is a US company that operates its servers in the United States: <https://mailchimp.com>. By registering to enter the photo competition, you agree to us transferring your data (specifically your name and e-mail address) to Mailchimp and tracking your open and click rates. If you no longer wish to receive such communications from us, you may unsubscribe at any time using the link provided in the newsletter. Please note that if you do so, we will no longer be able to provide you with information about the photo competition. Unsubscribing from the newsletter does not deactivate your account or delete your data stored with our provider.

Communication and data processing

- » If you enter the competition, you will be asked via newsletter to upload a maximum of 10 images per category in low resolution («preview images») to your account on our website. These images and your personal details (first name, last name, e-mail, telephone number, address, postcode, town/city) will be stored with our provider. If any of your personal data is contained in the metadata of the images (also referred to as EXIF or IPTC data), this will also be stored.
- » All further enquiries will be handled via the e-mail address photo@vogelwarte.ch. Any direct contact with competition entrants will also take place via this e-mail address. Entrants are responsible for ensuring that this e-mail address is not blocked by security filters or spam protection. Digital communication may be partially unencrypted and unsecured. Responsibility for any risk rests with you.
- » If your images are shortlisted, the preview images and your data will be stored on the servers of our provider «Metanet». Metanet is a Swiss company that operates its servers in Switzerland: www.metanet.ch If your personal data is contained in the metadata of the preview images, this will also be stored on Metanet's servers.
- » If your images are shortlisted, the Swiss Ornithological Institute will ask you to upload the relevant highest-resolution images (RAW or original JPG files) to Dropbox. Dropbox is an Irish company that operates its servers in the United States: www.dropbox.com If your personal data is contained in the metadata of these images, it will also be stored on these servers. These images (RAW or original JPG files), including any metadata, will then be saved on our local server and deleted from Dropbox.



Purpose

- » The data is processed by the Swiss Ornithological Institute, including the jury, for the purpose of organising the photo competition, including communication with you and the dispatch of prizes.
- » The Swiss Ornithological Institute may pass on your data to the main sponsor and the category sponsors, who will process it independently for their own purposes.
- » The use of prizewinning images and those submitted by finalists is governed by the provisions on copyright and usage rights in these Conditions of Entry.
- » The Swiss Ornithological Institute may use your data to offer you the option of providing additional information, such as the URL of a website where you make your images available for viewing or purchase by others. With your consent, the Swiss Ornithological Institute will publish this information online or in print in connection with your images.

Final provisions

Images that do not comply with the Conditions of Entry will be excluded. In case of doubt, the jury's decision is final.

The invalidity or ineffectiveness of individual provisions in these Conditions of Entry does not affect the validity or effectiveness of the remaining provisions.

By entering the competition, you accept these Conditions of Entry and waive the right to legal recourse. These Conditions of Entry are governed exclusively by substantive Swiss law, excluding conflict-of-law rules (PILA). The jury's decisions are not subject to appeal. There will be no correspondence concerning the decisions.

Main partner and category partner:



Category partners:



Partners:



Media partners:

