

Guidelines for Ethical Nature Photography*

Southern Appalachian Nature Photographers

Southern Appalachian Nature Photographers (SANP) believes in the responsible practices of nature photography that promote the well-being of the subject, location, and photographer. Every place, plant, and animal is unique, and photography of them has a cumulative impact over time. Therefore, SANP members must always exercise good individual judgment while pursuing nature photography. The following guidelines are meant to encourage SANP members to practice good stewardship of the natural resources made available to them and to enhance the enjoyment and preservation of nature for everyone.

Environmental: Knowledge of subject and place

- Learn about your subject's behavior and the ecology of the area.
Know when not to interfere with an animal's or plant's life cycles.
- Respect the needs of your subject and minimize interference.
Others will attempt to photograph the same subjects, and interference is cumulative.
- Use appropriate lenses, equipment, and techniques that minimize stress.
At signs of stress—in behavior or environment—choose different techniques or leave.
- Be knowledgeable of the ecosystems you visit and of their fragility.
Choose established paths or activities that lessen impact.

Social: Knowledge of rules and laws

- When appropriate, notify land owners, managers, or other authorities of your presence and purpose.
Cooperation with requirements will help minimize impacts and maintain safety.
- Learn the rules and laws for use of a location, and follow them.
- When there is no management authority, treat places, wildlife, and plants with respect.
Act as if you were a guest in every place you photograph.
- Consider reporting inappropriate behavior to proper authorities.
Avoid confrontation and don't follow those who misbehave.

Individual: Expertise and Responsibilities

- Treat others courteously.
Ask before joining people already using or photographing an area.
- Be a good role model, both as a photographer and a citizen.
Educate others by your good example, and enhance their understanding of nature.
- Tactfully inform others if you observe them engaging in inappropriate or harmful behavior.
People can unknowingly endanger themselves along with wildlife and plants.
- Prepare yourself (mentally and physically) and your equipment for unexpected events.
Avoid preventable mishaps that could endanger you or others.

*These guidelines are based on the North American Nature Photography Association's "Principles of Ethical Field Practices," used with permission of NANPA.