

## Image Rating Criteria Used by BirdLife Photography Moderators

Our images are viewed and enjoyed by members and visitors, and are downloaded by many different users for various purposes, including bird conservation and in online and printed publications. In order to be a 'go-to' site for Australian bird images, we need to ensure the images in our database are of good quality.

Images submitted to our website are moderated, both for data accuracy purposes (the correct species, sex etc), and for quality purposes.

Our preference is that images uploaded to our New Images/Main Gallery should be reasonably accurate representations of nature, and present birds in the situations in which they were photographed.

Of course, there will be times when it is appropriate, for artistic reasons, to deviate from this approach. We recognise that members have powerful creative tools that allow editing and enhancement of out-of-camera files, and that different photographers have different creative and artistic visions in the way they portray Australian birds.

However, 'near misses', obvious photographic errors of technique or clumsy post-processing will not be accepted by moderators as 'being creative'. Inevitably, judgements by moderators will be involved, and at times not everyone will agree with the decisions taken.

A moderator may decide to publish a photo for only a limited period of time because of significant technical or compositional deficiencies and/or poor visual impact. Photos may not be accepted if there is a breach of our publication policies as outlined in our [ethical photography policy](#) or because the species is not on the [Australian Bird List](#). It can also happen if a photo has particularly serious technical or compositional issues.

Moderators endeavour to provide help to members where appropriate. Where an image is not accepted, the member will be sent an email with reasons for the decision. At their discretion, moderators may contact members directly about issues with images, to provide advice and offer assistance.

## Technical

*NOTE: Technical assessment is not required for images marked 'Creative'; however, a moderator may choose to assess if they wish. Some comments on this are included in the table below.*

	<p><b>Poor</b></p> <p><i>One or more of the problems below should result in 'poor' rating.</i></p>	<p><b>Average</b></p> <p><i>All criteria should be met or bettered for 'average' rating</i></p>	<p><b>Good</b></p> <p><i>ALL criteria should be met for 'good' rating</i></p>
<p><b>Sharpness, focus and depth of field</b></p>	<p>Lacks focus on subject or key parts of subject (usually head and eyes). Blur due to subject or camera movement without obvious creative intent. Excessive sharpening resulting in harsh halos and 'crunchy' look.</p>	<p>Sharply focused main subject, particularly head and eyes and feather detail clear where expected. Motion blur minor or not apparent, unless evidently part of the creative intent. Software sharpening is well controlled; minor sharpening artefacts such as unobtrusive edge halos may be visible but image should not appear heavily over-sharpened.</p>	<p>Sharply focused subject and effective use of depth considering the subject, foreground and background. Motion blur not apparent or used artistically. No sharpening halos or harshness noticeable.</p>
<p><b>Post-processing and downsizing</b></p>	<p>One or more of the following clearly visible: smudging of detail or splotchy in parts (e.g., due to excessive noise reduction); detail breaking up or missing (e.g., due to excessive cropping); speckling/flecking; cloning, dodging or burning artefacts clearly visible</p>	<p>Excessive, poorly managed post-processing artefacts should not be present (e.g., inaccurate local adjustments which leave odd effects in the image). Where cloning, dodging, burning or like alterations made, their use should not leave obvious lines, halos or mark. Artefacts such as reticulation, detail smudging, or image banding should be absent or minor. Downsized image appropriately sharpened.</p>	<p>No issues visible and downsized image effectively but subtly sharpened.</p>

<b>Exposure and lighting</b>	Overly dark or light. Excessive contrast, lacking in contrast or poor light direction (e.g., deep shadows falling on key parts of subject)	Generally well exposed and presented. Overall lighting and contrast is well managed, appropriate for the subject and the creative intent of the photo. Blown highlights and clipped blacks are minor or not apparent unless clearly relevant to the creative intent (e.g., a high-contrast monochrome image).	Well exposed with good tonal range and local contrast across subject and background. Good visual appeal and contrast. May involve unusual or dramatic lighting consistent with artistic intent and good visual impact.
<b>Noise</b>	Noise obvious on subject and/or background unless there has been clear artistic intent to use these effects in a way that creates a visually appealing image.	Noise may be present but not obvious and not affecting subject unless clearly part of creative intent. Grain for creative purposes (such as in monochrome images) is acceptable..	Noise/grain not apparent on subject and background or used with effective artistic intent.
<b>Colour and white balance [Allow for 'golden hour' shots or other unusual lighting]</b>	Significant colour cast or unnatural looking colour on subject, sky or surrounds. Over- or under-saturated colour without obvious artistic merit.	Colours should be appropriate for the style and nature of the photo. As a starting point, colours should be natural, and accurate with good white balance and accurate sky, taking into account the time of day, weather conditions etc. Use of excessive saturation should be avoided. Minor deviations acceptable for 'Average' rating or where it is clearly part of the creative intent.	As for Average rating but with no 'minor deviations' unless used effectively with creative/artistic intent.
<b>Image size (pixel dimensions)</b>	Not applicable	Less than 1600 pixels on longest side	At least 1600 pixels on longest side

## **Pose, composition and visual impact**

*NOTE: Applies to all images and is the primary criterion on which 'Creative' images are assessed.*

**Rating of 'Good'** should be reserved for stand-out, high quality shots. They must be well composed and have great visual impact. Showing an interesting behavior won't be enough alone – effective composition and visual impact are key.

**For a rating of 'Poor'**, the photo will show one significant or several less significant deficiencies such a partial obscuration of the subject (without any obvious artistic intent), poor size or placement of subject in the frame; or inclusion of significantly distracting visual elements and background.

Anything in between the above will be '**Average**'.