



**For Immediate Release**  
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### **Altered and Misrepresented Refuge Photo Contest Images Withdrawn**

**Washington DC-** The National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) has withdrawn “Semi-finalist” recognition from five images in the 2009 Refuge Photo contest after a close review raised questions about the integrity of several images submitted by photographer Maxis Gamez of Sarasota, Florida.

“The NWRA appreciates the hard work and artistry of the many photographers who submitted accurately-represented photographs taken on national wildlife refuges, and will be vigilant to protect the integrity of its contest,” said Evan Hirsche, President of NWRA. “Photos submitted by Mr. Maxis Gamez were confirmed to have been in violation of contest rules and have been removed as a result.”

Five images submitted by Mr. Gamez received “semi-finalist” recognition by contest judges, and were placed in the “Winning Image Gallery” on NWRA’s website. Shortly afterward, contest staff became concerned that several images were potentially in violation of contest rules regarding significant digital alterations as well as the stated location of the images. NWRA promptly investigated the matter, and Mr. Gamez admitted to digitally altering one image and misrepresenting the location where another was taken. The photographer declined NWRA’s request to provide the original photographs as evidence in support of his claims, and asked that his images be withdrawn from the contest.

Contest rules stipulate that photos “must be taken at a refuge in the National Wildlife Refuge System or at a refuge-associated Waterfowl Production Area,” and prohibits digital alterations that “add any elements or objects that do not exist in the original scene.”

The winning images from this years contest can be seen here:

<http://refugeassociation.org/contest/ContestHome.html>

Submission requirements for the 2009 Refuge Photo Contest can be viewed here:

<http://refugeassociation.org/contest/2009ContestRules2.html>

*The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge Association is to conserve America’s wildlife heritage for future generations through strategic programs that protect, enhance, and expand the National Wildlife Refuge System and the landscapes beyond its boundaries that secure its ecological integrity.*

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