



National Taxidermists Association

Competition Rules (Updated: May 10, 2022)

To be eligible, all competitors must be NTA members in good standing, registered for the full convention, be present at the convention, attend the convention banquet, be photographed & recognized in order to win any awards.

The NTA offers a huge lineup of AWARDS & HONORS – it is the responsibility of the competitor to read the competition rules & award criteria requirements.

The NTA Competition Committee will resolve any questions arising from and concerning the NTA competition and their decision will be final. The following rules are a general overview of the competition rules – the NTA reserves the right to review and amend these rules at any time deemed necessary.

All entries will be photographed and then placed in the room by a board or committee member. If you accompany them with placement, please be respectful of the process and the judges who may already be working in the room. The competition committee will determine if & when the doors will be open during times other than those already on the schedule.

Anything judged “Fatal Flaw” will be given a scoresheet but no ribbons or awards will be given. Any mounts with offensive odors will be removed from the competition area and not judged. The NTA Competition Committee reserves the right to refuse any entry that does not comply with NTA Competition Rules or is deemed to be inappropriate or detrimental to the image of taxidermy.

Any infraction of an NTA competition rules will result in disqualification of the entry and forfeiture of any awards won by that entry. Registration and entry fees will not be refunded.

All competitors must sign a form releasing the NTA from any liability for mounts entered in competition. While the NTA tries to provide security, everyone knows that accidents are possible and that competitors should purchase insurance on their competition entries through their local insurance agent. The NTA, its Officers, Directors or Competition Committee shall not be responsible for any mounts entered in competition under any circumstances.

Multiple ribbons are awarded in most categories. Any entry receiving 90% of a perfect score is awarded a first place, 80% of a perfect score is second place and 70% of a perfect score is a third place. There is no honorable mention.

Half-life size entries will be assigned and compete in the Gamehead category.

Any young or partially grown species, coyote size or smaller, will be judged in the small mammal category.

If any entry contains more than one specimen (Example: a pair of wood ducks), an entry fee must be paid for each mount that will be judged. When judging a piece with multiple entries each individual mount may win its own award. If only one entry fee is paid the competitor must designate which of the individual mounts they wish to have judged. This rule does not apply to entries in the Collective Artists or Challenge of the Art Divisions where an entry containing multiple specimens may be entered as a single piece and judged in its entirety.

At the time of entry each competitor must identify the species of their mount and state whether it is a commercial mannikin, an altered commercial mannikin or an original sculpture, and whether any reproductions, cast, artificial or freeze dry parts (heads, bills, feet, mouths and noses) were commercially purchased, made by the competitor, or a combination of both. The competitor must also specify if the entry is competing for any other special entry awards.

Entries in the name of a company are not allowed except in the Challenge of the Art, Sculpture, Original Art, & Collective Artist Divisions.

Protected species need proper permits to place with their entry. In some cases, special permits are also required to cross into the U.S. or to cross state lines. The competitor is responsible for knowing and following all such laws pertaining to protected species.

All floor mounts must have rollers. Entries in cases must have removable top and sides for judging and must be removed by competitor before judging begins.

Competitors can bring their own reference material for the judges to examine. Photographs may be placed in an envelope next to the mount and marked "For Judges Reference." The mount number should also be written on the envelope.

Any names or logos that may reveal the identity of the competitor must be omitted or covered securely.

Entries may be made only at the posted times and **NO** entries will be removed from the competition area before the posted times. Any entry not picked up by the posted deadline will be left unsecured and unattended.

The number of entries per category is unlimited.

No mount that has previously been entered in an NTA Competition can be entered in an NTA Competition again.

Any entry may be ineligible if in the opinion of the Competition Committee, too many of the judging criteria are hidden from view or are not included in the mount, and it is not in conjunction with another mount that is judgeable. Example: Single wood duck head coming out of a hole in tree.

There will be one NTA judge for each category. Their decision is final, and they alone decide upon the score an entry receives. Each judge will score each entry separately on an approved WTC score sheet. All scores will be recorded on the NTA Competition Computer with the WTC paper copy going to the participant. An electronic record of scores will remain with the NTAHQ's for one year.

Any conduct by the competitor that is deemed unsportsmanlike could result in disqualification and forfeiture of any and all NTA awards. Unruly or disruptive behavior towards judges or show officials will not be tolerated and the individual will be asked to leave without refund and will be barred from future competitions.

There will be no Competitor Score Sheet PROTESTS or CHALLENGES!

The competition committee will be responsible for resolving any problems related to the competition and judging. If a competition or judging problem occurs that cannot be resolved by a consensus of the competition committee, the problem will be evaluated and resolved by a majority vote of the NTA Board of Directors. Any such action taken by the Board shall be publicly disclosed and fully explained to the competitor.

Touching or moving of any mount without express permission of the competitor by anyone other than a Judge and/or the Competition Committee/Staff is expressly forbidden and grounds for disqualification and removal from the NTA Convention.

DIVISION OF EXCELLENCE

ELIGIBILITY: Open to all NTA members that are registered for the convention. Any use of reproduction parts in whole or part is forbidden unless done completely by the competitor. Commercial mannikins, eyes and earliners are allowed in this division. Possible exceptions can be presented to the NTA Board of Directors for approval. Judges will score the Division of Excellence entries harder than the Open Division.

CATEGORIES: Selected by which specimen constitutes the major portion of the entry.

Birds

Waterfowl

Coldwater Fish - Skin Mount – Ex: Trout, Salmon & Char

Coldwater Fish – Reproduction – Ex: Trout, Salmon & Char

Warmwater Fish - Skin Mount – Ex: Panfish, Bass, Pike & Saltwater

Warmwater Fish – Reproduction – Ex: Panfish, Bass, Pike & Saltwater

Reptile - (Amphibian/Arachnid) Skin Mount

Reptile - (Amphibian/Arachnid) Reproduction

Small Mammals - Coyote or smaller

Large Mammals - Larger than a coyote

Small Gameheads – Coyote or smaller

Large Gameheads – Larger than a coyote

Whitetail - Closed Mouth – (Exposed lower lip & teeth are allowable – no inner mouth detail visible)

Whitetail – Open Mouth – (Inner mouth detail visible – upper palate, teeth & tongue)

Turkey

Re-Creations (see subcategories & additional rules)

AWARDS: In each of the sixteen (16) major awards categories, the Highest Numerical Score with a first-place ribbon shall earn the title “North American Champion.” Entries in the re-creation category will have one North American Champion chosen from the highest score of the re-creation subcategories. All entrants in this division will compete for the title “Taxidermist of the Year.”

DIVISION OF EXCELLENCE RE-CREATIONS - for the purpose of this category, mounts are defined as renderings, which include NO natural parts of the animal portrayed. A re-creation can use natural parts, provided the parts are not from the species portrayed. For instance, a re-creation eagle could be constructed using turkey feathers, or a cowhide could be used to simulate African game. Re-creations entries must have been scientifically named, now extinct, or currently inhabiting the earth. Mythical creatures will not be allowed to compete in this division.

RE-CREATION SUBCATEGORIES:

Mammals

Birds

Fish

Reptiles, Amphibians, other

Re-Creation Group

RE-CREATION AWARDS: One North American Champion will be selected based on the highest scoring entry in the re-creation subcategories. Multiple first, second and third place ribbons will be awarded in accordance with the division rules.

DIVISION OF EXCELLENCE FREEZE-DRY: The Freeze-Dry Subcategories have been set aside for all mounts employing freeze dry technology. If a freeze dryer is used to preserve the flesh of any part of the entry (without skinning) it must be entered in one of the Freeze-Dry Subcategories. Exception: Freeze dried velvet antlers on a conventionally mounted head may be entered in the open competition. Also freeze-dried turkey heads or other that have been skinned, mounted, and freeze dried to prevent shrinkage. Any use of reproduction or freeze dry in whole or part is forbidden unless done completely by the competitor. The competitor must do all preparation, set-up, and finish work on freeze dried parts.

FREEZE-DRY SUBCATEGORIES:

Lifesize Mammals

Birds

Fish

Reptiles - Amphibians

FREEZE DRY AWARDS: Multiple first, second and third place ribbons will be awarded in accordance with the division rules. Freeze-Dry entries are not eligible for North American Champion.

OPEN DIVISION

ELIGIBILITY: Open to all NTA members that are registered for the convention

CATEGORIES: Selected by which specimen constitutes the major portion of the entry.

Birds

Waterfowl

Coldwater Fish - Skin Mount – Ex: Trout, Salmon & Char

Coldwater Fish – Reproduction – Ex: Trout, Salmon & Char

Warmwater Fish - Skin Mount – Ex: Panfish, Bass, Pike & Saltwater

Warmwater Fish – Reproduction – Ex: Panfish, Bass, Pike & Saltwater

Reptile - (Amphibian/Arachnid) Skin Mount

Reptile - (Amphibian/Arachnid) Reproduction

Small Mammals - Coyote or smaller

Large Mammals - Larger than a coyote

Small Gameheads – Coyote or smaller

Large Gameheads – Larger than a coyote

Whitetail - Closed Mouth – (Exposed lower lip & teeth are allowable – no inner mouth detail visible)

Whitetail – Open Mouth – (Inner mouth detail visible – upper palate, teeth & tongue)

Turkey

Re-Creation (see subcategories & additional rules)

AWARDS: In each of the sixteen (16) major categories, the Highest Numerical Score with a first-place ribbon shall earn the title “National Champion”. Entries in the re-creation category will have one National Champion chosen from the highest score of the re-creation subcategories.

OPEN DIVISION RE-CREATIONS - for the purpose of this category, mounts are defined as renderings, which include NO natural parts of the animal portrayed. A re-creation can use natural parts, provided the parts are not from the species portrayed. For instance, a re-creation eagle could be constructed using turkey feathers, or a cowhide could be used to simulate African game. Re-creations entries must have been scientifically named, now extinct, or currently inhabiting the earth. Mythical creatures will not be allowed to compete in this division.

RE-CREATION SUBCATEGORIES:

Mammals

Birds

Fish

Reptiles, Amphibians, other

Re-Creation Group

RE-CREATION AWARDS: One National Champion will be selected based on the highest scoring entry in the re-creation subcategories. Multiple first, second and third place ribbons will be awarded in accordance with the division rules.

OPEN DIVISION FREEZE-DRY: This division is for all mounts using freeze dry technology. If a freeze dryer is used to preserve the flesh of any part of the entry (without skinning) it must be entered in this division. Exception: Freeze dried velvet antlers on a conventionally mounted head may be entered in the open competition. Also, freeze-dried turkey heads that have been skinned, mounted, and freeze dried to prevent shrinkage. Any use of reproduction or freeze dry in whole or part is forbidden unless done completely by the competitor. The competitor must do all preparation, set-up, and finish work on freeze dried parts.

FREEZE-DRY SUBCATEGORIES:

Lifesize Mammals

Birds

Fish

Reptiles - Amphibians

FREEZE DRY AWARDS: Multiple first, second and third place ribbons will be awarded in accordance with the division rules. Freeze dry entries are not eligible for National Champion.

HABITAT DIVISION

ELIGIBILITY: Open to all NTA members that are registered for the convention.

CATEGORIES: The following categories are available in the Habitat Division.

Natural/Realistic: Any visually realistic portrayal of naturally occurring material. A presentation that represents the specimen in its natural environment. Habitat materials may be made from any material but will be judged on realistic appearance.

Abstract/Unconventional: Any supportive base or complimentary composition which does not attempt to represent an accurate depiction of visual reality. A presentation that incorporates natural and/or man-made materials in a manner that is purposefully unrealistic, but complimentary to the subject.

AWARDS: Multiple first, second and third place ribbons will be awarded in accordance with the division rules. Each category will also have one (1) overall winner. Habitat entries are not eligible for North American or National Champion.

NOVICE DIVISION

This division is for beginning taxidermists who feel their skills have not developed enough to compete in the Open Division. Judges will be more lenient in this division, with the primary emphasis on teaching competitors.

Multiple first, second and third place ribbons will be awarded. Persons entering this level should be more interested in learning than in winning awards.

CATEGORIES: Selected by which specimen constitutes the major portion of the entry.

Birds, Waterfowl and Turkey

Fish

Reptiles - Amphibians

Lifesize Mammals

Deer and Gamehead

Other

COLLECTIVE ARTISTS DIVISION

ELIGIBILITY: This division is for competition entries worked on by more than one NTA taxidermist; all competitors must be identified and registered and attending the convention.

CATEGORIES: The following categories are available in the Collective Artists Division.

Birds

Waterfowl

Turkey

Fish

Reptiles - Amphibians

Lifesize Mammals

Deer and Gameheads

Mixed Group

AWARDS: A maximum of one first, second, and third place ribbon will be awarded in each Collective Artist Category based upon the highest numerical score in each category. The Judge's Best of Show, Collective Artist Award winner will be selected by the judges collectively from among the first-place ribbon winners in each category based on the overall merit of the eligible entries.

Collective Artists entries are not eligible for National or North American Champion titles or Award of Excellence.

Novelties and Crustaceans will be judged on a comment sheet not a detailed score sheet.

COMMERCIAL DIVISION

ELIGIBILITY: Open to all NTA members attending the Convention.

CATEGORIES: Selected by which specimen constitutes the major portion of the entry.

Birds, Waterfowl and Turkey

Fish

Reptiles - Amphibians

Lifesize Mammals

Deer and Gamehead

JUDGING: This is a judge's interpretation division open to all species. It will be judged for aesthetics, not mechanics. Competitors should strive to present life-like entries. Any species of a bird, fish, reptile or mammal or combination can be mounted in a display and entered to be viewed and interpreted by the judges **without the use of a flashlight**. Judges will write a brief comment and overall first, second, or third, not a detailed score sheet. **There will be no critiques.**

AWARDS: Multiple first, second and third place ribbons will be awarded in accordance with the division rules.

Commercial Division does not offer the following titles "National Champion", "North American Champion or Best of Categories".

Entries in this division are not eligible for any other major awards.

CHILDREN & YOUTH DIVISIONS

ELIGIBILITY – Children: Limited to NTA family member's **children present at the Convention** 14 years of age and under. The parents/guardian must be registered members of the convention. There is no entry fee.

ELIGIBILITY–Youth: Limited to NTA family member's **youth present at the Convention** 15-17 years of age. There is no entry fee.

CATEGORIES: Selected by which specimen constitutes the major portion of the entry.

Birds, Waterfowl and Turkey

Fish

Reptiles - Amphibians

Lifesize Mammals

Deer and Gamehead

Other

JUDGING – Children & Youth: Judging will be done on an approved WTC score sheet and consideration will be taken into account for the experience of those entering.

AWARDS: Multiple ribbons are awarded. The entry selected by the judges collectively as the best mount in the Children's Division will earn the title "Children's Horizon Award" winner. The entry selected by the judges collectively as the best mount in the Youth Division will earn the title "Youth Horizon Award" winner. All entries in these two divisions are eligible for People's Choice Awards. Since scoring is more lenient, entries in these divisions are not eligible for other major awards.

SCULPTURE AND ORIGINAL ART DIVISIONS

ELIGIBILITY: Open to all NTA members that are registered for the convention.

JUDGING: Two judges will examine each category.

AWARDS: Judges may award a maximum of one first place, one second place, one third place in each category.

TAXIDERMY SCULPTURE CATEGORIES: Limited to manikins or sculptures made specifically for use in taxidermy. The Sculptures may be in the form of clay, paper, foam or some other medium.

Whitetail

Gamehead

Mammal

Bird

Fish

Reptile

Other

Winners of first place in the seven taxidermy sculpture categories will compete for “Judges Best of Show, Taxidermy Sculptures.” All entries in these categories will be eligible for a “People’s Choice, Taxidermy Sculptures” award.

ORIGINAL ART CATEGORIES:

Bronzes or Castings - Limited to sculptures which have been casted in bronze or some other medium to create a finished piece of art. These items could be bust, miniatures or lifesize.

Carvings - Limited to birds, fish, mammals and reptiles, which have been carved from wood or some other medium and finished. These could be busts, miniatures or life size.

Paintings – Limited to flat art only - pencils, pastels, charcoal, etc.

Reproductions - Parts of mammals, fish, birds and reptiles, which have been molded directly from the actual species and reproduced in some type casting material. The above reproductions can be either designed to be incorporated as part of a mount or finished as a completed piece representing a specific species. **Reproductions, such as antlers, should be entered in this division.**

Skeletons – Limited to osteological specimens and art.

Other – Anything that doesn’t fit into the above categories.

Winners of first place in the six original art categories will compete for a “Judges Best of Show, Original Art”. All entries in these categories will be eligible for a “People’s Choice, Original Art” award.

MASTERS CHOICE DIVISION

ELIGIBILITY: This division is for Judges, Judges Assistants and Past North American Champions

CATEGORIES: There are no category assignments.

JUDGING: Selected by the voting of the registered convention members.

AWARDS: A maximum of one first place, one-second place, one third place

NTA DISTINGUISHED TAXIDERMIST DIVISION

ELIGIBILITY: Limited to competitors whose entry has previously won a “Judges Best of Show” at a State, Regional or WTC event where only one “Judges Best of Show” is awarded. The competitor will be required to sign a verification form for eligibility. Entries are limited to the same entry that won the Best of Show. Competitors are also eligible to enter and compete with the same piece in other divisions provided all appropriate entry fees are paid and the other division’s rules are followed.

CATEGORIES: There are no category assignments.

JUDGING: Judges select the winner collectively and numerical score does not bind them. Selection will be based on the mounts overall merit.

AWARDS: One Winner

CHALLENGE OF THE ART DIVISION

ELIGIBILITY: This is a judge’s interpretation division open to all species collectively. It will be judged for aesthetics, not mechanics. Any species of a bird, fish, reptile, mammal, or a combination or parts thereof can be entered to be viewed and interpreted by the judges without the use of a flashlight. This division is considered a very creative division that allows all work to be judged equally. It is open to all NTA members. Entries may be executed by a single or multiple individuals. Company entries are allowed as long as these same rules are followed. Competitors are also eligible to enter and compete with the same piece in other divisions provided all appropriate entry fees are paid and the other division’s rules are followed.

CATEGORIES: There are no category assignments in this division.

JUDGING: Judges will select the winners based upon the overall merit of the entries. Judges will write a brief comment sheet but not a detailed score sheet.

AWARDS: A maximum of one first, second, third place ribbon will be awarded.