

NYSOWA Membership News

Entry Deadline Extended Through Feb. 15

YOU MUST RENEW MEMBERSHIP TO ENTER

NYSOWA Excellence in Craft Writing, Janice M. Keesler Memorial Photo Award Guidelines & Rules

We are making entry to the awards program easier than ever. At least, we hope you will find that to be the case as we have now converted the entry process exclusively to a digital format. No more dealing with snail mail and the costs and time that entails. No more entry forms for each entry; instead, you'll list your entries on one form. As for your entry fee of \$25, (covers all EIC entries; a separate \$25 fee covers all photo award entries), you can still send in a check or money order, or you can go to <https://app.joinit.com/o/nysowa/g349rGbhYT2M4dERX> and pay by credit card.

So, if you've never entered your work in our awards program, this is the year to start. Review your work from 2025 (2024 and 2025 for the Book category) and begin to prepare entries for the writing and photo awards recognition program. Of course, photos could have been taken at any time, not just in 2025.

All you need for each entry is a file of the original article as a PDF or JPG and a file of that article that deletes or blocks out your byline, the name of the publication and any other identifying information, including photos with your image. The entry form below requires a listing of all of your entries

Because the awards presentation will take place at our banquet scheduled for the spring, **entries must be received by the administrators of the writing and photo recognition programs by Jan. 15, 2026**

Deb Brosen is chair of the Janice M. Keesler Memorial photo awards. I co-administer the Excellence in Craft writing awards program with Chris Paparo, and he looks forward to processing your submissions.

—Glenn Sapir

Deadline for receipt of entries for both writing and photo award entries is **Jan. 15, 2026**.

EIC & Photo Contest Rules & Entry Form

EIC CATEGORIES

The categories for 2025 work are: Magazine Column, Magazine Feature, Newspaper Column, Newspaper Feature and Online Publication; and Book (published in 2024 and 2025). Those categories are defined as such:

Newspaper Column: A regularly appearing article, typically shorter than a feature, that has a reappearing name, slug, etc., such as “On the Trail,” “Fishing,” “Hunting,” etc.

Newspaper Feature: A newspaper feature does not regularly appear with a slug or name, is typically longer than a column, usually includes graphics and may have a sidebar(s).

Magazine Column: A regularly appearing article, typically shorter than a feature, that has a reappearing name, slug, etc., such as “On the Trail,” “Fishing,” “Hunting,” etc.

Magazine Feature: A magazine feature does not regularly appear with a slug or name, is typically longer than a column, usually includes graphics and may have a sidebar(s).

Online Publication: Online publication may be a feature, column, blog post or other electronic communication that was paid for—and was first posted online before it might have otherwise been published.

Book: Books or E-books with outdoor-related topics/formats, including but not limited to contract/self-published, hard-cover/soft-cover, printed/E-book, photo/fiction/nonfiction/cookbook.

SUBMISSIONS

All entries should be sent to nysowaEIC@gmail.com. Chris Paparo will review your entry to be sure you’ve met all of the requirements and will acknowledge your entry. **You may submit entries in different emails and on different dates without having to pay an additional entry fee. Of course, you must be a member in good standing, that is, your dues for 2026 must have been paid for your entries to be eligible.**

Each submission should include:

–one file of the work as published

–one file of the same article, with the name and date of publication and any mentions of the author’s name, in the byline, photo credits, captions and body text, as well as any images of the author, blocked out or deleted

–a single, all-inclusive completed entry form for all EIC submissions.

--Proof of payment of \$25

–Note: Book entries require an additional \$10 fee for each title, in addition to the all-inclusive one-time \$25 entry fee for all writing (not photo) entries. Authors must submit two copies of their book, unmarked. These will not be returned to the author. Book entries should be submitted to Chris Paparo, NYSOWA EIC, 153 South River Rd., Calverton, NY 11933.

captivated by all the Facebook posts of anglers in CNY and WNY posting ice fishing photos while I was away.

Oneida Lake, a well-known hotspot each year for ice fishing in CNY, froze over early this year (Dec. 15). It opened up again following a warm stretch, but refroze on Dec. 26, according to Lars Rudstam, a Cornell professor in fisheries and aquatic sciences and the director of the Cornell Biological Field Station Cornell Biological Field Station in Constantia.

"Both dates are early for this century," Rustam said. "Dec. 15 is the third earliest freeze day since 2000. The lake has stayed frozen since Dec. 26 and I expect it will stay frozen to the middle of March, maybe even into early April, but who knows. Better be careful out there. We'll get some swings between warm and cold spells."

Meanwhile, area bait shops are striving to be fully stocked on the usual spread of fatheads, buckeyes, shiners, grubs, wax worms, and spikes, according to Steve Featherstone, outdoors writer for The Post-Standard.

With more anglers fishing for longer stretches of time, it's a good idea to check in regularly with your favorite bait shop to ensure they've got what you need.

In past years, wholesale distributors cut back on carrying a lot of tackle because they were getting stuck with it due to sub-par ice fishing seasons. Not so this winter. Tackle is being bought at a much faster rate, Featherstone said.

Recently, Oneida Lake was named the second-best ice fishing destination in America by FishingBooker, an online travel agency that connects anglers with fishing guides and charter boats. Only one spot bested Oneida Lake in the 2026 ranking of prime ice fishing spots: Brainerd, Minn., a community surrounded by lakes.

Meanwhile, in Western NY.: "The fishing should be excellent as soon as we can catch a break from the brutal winter weather. It's the most ice on local waterways I can remember in a long time," said Capt. Frank Campbell, veteran charter boat captain and outdoors promotions director for Niagara Falls USA.

"There has not been a lot of fishing activity but that just means undisturbed fish that are going to be easy to fool due to lack of fishing pressure," he said. "The local winter fishing opportunities are going to explode. The Lower Niagara River is going to be the place to be real soon."

2026 NYS Winter Classic

This state-wide, winter fishing tournament, which includes all waterways in the state (ice, open water, stream and rivers), kicked off Jan. 1 and ends Feb. 28.

Ice anglers continue to dominate the leaderboards this year as cold air keeps most waterways locked up across the state, said Tim Thomas, the tournament director.

The tournament features weekly prizes and seven fish categories (northern pike, walleye, pickerel, trout, crappie, yellow perch, panfish) and is hosted on the Fish Donkey online platform. The entry fee is \$25, youth included.

The awards ceremony is set for March 14 at the Batavia Downs Casino Resort in Genesee County and includes door prizes, raffles and other giveaways.

For more information, contact tournament director Tim Thomas at 585-330-0494, info@fk-sportfishing.com or on Facebook (FindersKeepers22).

The Greater Niagara Fishing Exp & Catching Dreams Charters

This winter outdoors show, which ranks as one of the best in the state each winter, is returning to the Niagara Falls Convention Center from Feb. 19-22.

This year's show will have a meaningful partnership with Catching Dreams Charters, a non-profit organization dedicated to giving children battling pediatric cancer and their families the opportunity to escape the challenges of treatment and enjoy a therapeutic day on the water.

"Through the "Fishing Fights Pediatric Cancer" fundraising campaign, Expo attendees, vendors, and participants will have the opportunity to support this lifechanging cause," said Capt. Frank Campbell.

Money will be raised through vendor raffles, raffles held during educational classes, and direct donations throughout the four-day event. Every dollar raised will go directly toward providing cost-free charter fishing experiences for families affected by pediatric cancer, Campbell said.

"Our hope is to fund more than 50 charter trips through the Greater Niagara Fishing Expo

alone this year," said Ned Librock, Founder of Catching Dreams Charters.

Since its inception, Catching Dreams Charters has grown from just three families participating in its first year to connecting with more than 125 families in 2025.

Working closely with hospitals in Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and Albany—and with plans to expand to Long Island—the organization continues to make a profound difference for children and families across New York State, Librock said.

To learn more about Catching Dreams Charters or to make a contribution, visit catching-dreamscharters.org.

The Greater Niagara Fishing Expo, often referred to as the "Teaching Fishing Show," brings together anglers, educators, and industry professionals from across the region for four days of learning, networking, and community engagement.

For more information about the Expo, including schedules and ticket purchases, visit niagara-fishingexpo.com.

Fur trappers auction

Want to get in touch with the CNY/WNY fur trapping scene? Wondering how much a beaver, coyote, mink, fisher or even a skunk pelt is worth these days?

Try attending a local fur auction. If nothing else, it makes for a great story and great contacts. Upcoming fur auctions include:

- Feb. 8: Genesee Valley Trapper's Association Fur Auction, Honeoye. See www.evtrappers.com
- March 7: Independent Fur Harvesters of CNY Fur Auction, Pompey Rod and Gun Club, Fabius. See <https://pompeyrodandgun.com>
- March 14: Cattaraugus County Trappers Association, Hindsdale, NY. Call 716-474-7251

Upcoming NYSOWA Fall Safari on Oneida Lake: Clarence ("Peanut) Chamberlain and myself are putting together this year's fall safari, which will held Oct. 1-4 at Three Pines Lodging and Marina on the northeastern shore of Oneida Lake in Oneida County.

Mark your calendars and stay tuned for more details.

You may make payment here:

<https://app.joinit.com/o/nysowa/g349rGbhYT2M4dERX>

EIC entries should be sent to nysowaaic@gmail.com. Checks or money orders sent for entry fees should be payable to NYSOWA and sent to Chris Paparo, NYSOWA EIC, 153 South River Rd., Calverton, NY 11933. All entries must be received by Chris by Jan. 15, 2026, to be eligible for entry in the EIC Awards Program. Pay your entry fees online at <https://app.joinit.com/o/nysowa/g349rGbhYT2M4dERX>

Important Information:

–Writers may submit a maximum of two entries in each category.

–The author must have been paid for the work entered.

–Work must have been published between Jan. 1, 2025, and Dec. 31, 2025 (Book, must have been published in 2024 or 2025).

–All entries must be the author’s original work.

--THIS IS BEING HIGHLIGHTED FOR EMPHASIS: Each entry must have an original version of the work and one redacted as described above. Each file should be labeled as:

(Last name)_category_(original or redacted)_(and if entering more than one in this category, number it). For example, if entering TWO entries in the magazine feature category, label the files as:

**Your last name_magazine feature_original_1
Your last name_magazine feature_redacted_1**

**Your last name_magazine feature_original_2
Your last name_magazine feature_redacted_2**

--Submission in the Book category must be of two copies of the book, which will not be returned to the author.

–Awards will not be given in any category that receives entries from less than three members.

–If entries are from fewer than three members in either the Magazine Column or Newspaper Column category, the entries for those two categories will be combined into a Column category.

-If entries are from fewer than three members in either the Magazine Feature or Newspaper Feature category, the entries for those two categories will be combined into a Feature category.

--Members entering must be in good standing, that is, have paid their dues for 2026.

-Failure to follow the guidelines and rules above can lead to disqualification of entries. This is left to the discretion of the EIC chairman.

-By entering your submission, you are allowing NYSOWA to reprint your entry for promotional purposes.

Excellence in Craft Entry Form

NOTE: THIS FORM MUST ACCOMPANY YOUR SUBMISSION

Name _____

Street _____

City, State, Zip _____ Phone Number _____

Email Address

EIC Category

Title or Headline of Entry (and URL for online publication entries)

Publication Name and Date.

EIC Category

Title or Headline of Entry (and URL for online publication entries)

Publication Name and Date.

EIC Category

Title or Headline of Entry (and URL for online publication entries)

Publication Name and Date.

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Publication Name and Date.

EIC Category

Title or Headline of Entry (and URL for online publication entries)

Publication Name and Date.

All entries and payment must be received by Jan. 15, 2026. Send entries to nysowaEIC.com.

DON'T FORGET:

A \$25 fee must be paid at the time of submission. **One \$25 fee covers all EIC writing contest** submissions. Book entries require an additional \$10 per entry.

Janice M. Keesler Memorial Photo Awards Program Rules

Prints are no longer accepted as entries.

NOTE: YOU MUST LABEL DIGITAL PHOTO ENTRIES WITH YOUR NAME, CATEGORY AND, IF ENTERING TWO IN THE SAME CATEGORY, WITH "1" FOR THE FIRST AND "2" FOR THE SECOND. E.G., JOHNDOE HUNTINGFISHING1. ENTRIES NOT PROPERLY LABELED WILL BE RETURNED FOR PROPER LABELING BY THE PHOTO AWARDS ADMINISTRATOR!

ENTRIES NOT PROPERLY LABELED WILL BE RETURNED FOR PROPER LABELING. ALSO, NOTE THE NEW EMAIL FOR SUBMITTING ENTRIES IS eicphotoentries@gmail.com.

1. Only members in good standing (dues paid for 2026) are eligible.

2. A maximum of two photos per category may be entered. Submissions must be received by Jan. 15, 2026. A one-time submission fee of \$25 must be paid at time of submission. Late entries will be disqualified. No title or caption should be provided. Chairperson will assign a number to each photo and keep a record of photographer and photo number separate from the photos.

3. Each photo can only be submitted to one category. Photos from previous contests may be resubmitted if they did not place (1st, 2nd or 3rd).

4. All categories will be judged prior to the Annual Conference, and awards will be made at the Conference.

5. The following are the categories for the contest:

a. Hunting/Fishing—Hunting/fishing photographs, including hero shots, action, hunting or fishing equipment.

b. Outdoor Action—Outdoor-oriented action photographs, **excluding hunting and fishing** but including boating, camping, RVs, shooting sports, hiking, skiing, windsurfing, etc.

c. Outdoor Scenic—Scenic photographs of either flora or fauna, landscapes, close-ups, panoramic. These may include people, though the people should be part of the scene, not the subject of the photo.

d. Wildlife—Though the judges may take into consideration unusual aspects of the wildlife subject, such as size of antlers, length of beard and length and girth of fish, primary consideration should be given to the technical photographic aspects and general appeal of the image.

e. People—As the category suggests, the focus is on “people” in the outdoors.

6. Categories “A” through “E” do not exclude photos taken in black-and-white.

7. Photo enhancement is limited to standard editing, such as: color correction, contrast control, filter use and image cropping. Digitally produced photos should not be substantially manipulated. Photos may not be manipulated with the use of AI.

8. All entries must be the member’s original work. If a dispute leads to a challenge, the member must defend that image and prove it is original work. Use of royalty-free photo images of clipart is prohibited. Their use is subject to disciplinary action by the NYSOWA Board of Directors.

9. Judges shall be recruited who preferably are associated with the outdoor industry and have a professional appreciation of the specific challenges of outdoor and wildlife photography. In the absence of judges meeting the criterion, judges with an expertise as photographers or photo editors will be recruited. At least two people must participate as judges, and three is preferable to minimize the possibility of ties. No minimum number of entries must be submitted in a category to validate the judging of that category. First, second and third place prizes must be awarded if at least three entries have been submitted. No honorable mentions will be made.

10. By entering photographs in the competition, the owners agree that NYSOWA has the right to print and publish any award-winning image in New York Outdoors, or an

NYSOWA awards publication or other form of promotion unless the member objects in writing when submitting the entries. Unless the copyright owner of a photograph specifically objects in writing, NYSOWA has the right to reproduce winning images for display purposes, including display at venues selected by contest sponsor(s), subject to the approval of the NYSOWA board of directors.

11. Entries should be submitted to Deb Brosen at eicphotoentries@gmail.com.

Janice M. Keesler Memorial Photo Awards Entry Form

NOTE: THIS ALL-INCLUSIVE FORM MUST ACCOMPANY THE PHOTO SUBMISSION

Name:

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____ Phone Number _____

Email Address _____

Photo Category _____

Photo Identification: _____

Photo Category _____

Photo Identification: _____

Photo Category _____

Photo Identification: _____

Photo Category _____

Photo Identification: _____

Photo Category _____

Photo Identification: _____

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Photo Category _____

Photo Identification: _____

Submit entries to Deb Brosen: eicphotoentries@gmail.com

DON'T FORGET:

Proof of payment of **your \$25 entry fee** must be submitted to Deb at the time of submission.

Here is the link for the fee: <https://app.joinit.com/o/nysowa/As8opGkcMZccyykYK>

Submissions for both the Janice M. Keesler Memorial Photo Contest and the Excellence in Crafts Awards for writing must be received by the awards administrators **by Jan. 15, 2026.**

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