

QWASI Copyright Rules and the Use of Reference Material

The Qld Wildlife Artists Society has By-Laws that members must adhere to regarding copyright. Copyright can be a complex and confusing area, and we have included some frequently asked questions and examples to clarify.

Please make sure that the reference material for your subject is correct. For example: that a rainforest bird does not have a desert in the background. Or a coastal species is sitting in or eating fruits from a tree that only grows in arid inland areas. Please check distribution maps for the species also and if any recognizable landmarks are in the artwork or title that the species would occur there.

Also please make sure that your composition is something you would see in nature. For example, it might be cute and colourful to put 8 singing adult male fairy-wrens on one branch, but you are very unlikely to see this in nature, as they are highly territorial in breeding season, when they are in full colour. By studying your subject in its natural habitat, you will get a good understanding of normal behaviour and what is best for realistic wildlife art works.

We have many expert scientists, keen birders and wildlife ecologists visiting our exhibitions and they will comment to the organizers if things are wrong, as has happened, and that does not reflect well on the Artist and the Society. The organizing committee may not be able to display your work at our Exhibitions if it is not correct.

Please watch this amazing video of William T Cooper and his wonderful work. He explains how to best draw and paint wildlife by studying them in their natural habitat.

<https://vimeo.com/41330485>

Please check carefully for the theme and subject restrictions for each exhibition in the Conditions of entry forms. Some of our exhibitions are Australian Fauna and Flora only for example.

More information on Australian Copyright laws can be accessed from <https://www.copyright.org.au/>

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

QUESTION: Can I use reference photos provided on internet sites such as Pixabay.com, www.wildlifereferencephotos.com, or other similar sites offering free or paid photographic reference material?

ANSWER: NO. These sources are not exclusive use and can result in artwork easily recognisable from an open source, as well as two artists having similar artworks that can be easily recognisable as coming from the same source. (This has happened in the past and resulted in disappointment on behalf of the artists whose work could not be hung in our exhibition.)

QUESTION: Can I approach a photographer/videographer and make arrangements with them to use their photographs or videos, either for free or for a payment.

ANSWER: If the reference photograph/video is by anyone other than yourself, the artist is to put an essence of themselves into the artwork through their style and change the image by a minimum of 50%. On request the artist will need to provide the reference image(s) or videos to the QWASI committee for verification. If the reference photograph/video is by anyone other than yourself, written permission by the photographer/videographer is to be obtained to use said images and is to be included with the entry form.

QUESTION: Can I use books?

ANSWER: Only in relation to clarifying the finer details of an animal/plant structure. Copying photographs and illustrations from printed materials is a breach of copyright.

COPYRIGHT COMPLIANCE EXAMPLE: A QWASI member was engaged for a commission and was sent a photo to paint that she was told was free stock. She contacted the photographer herself. It was not free stock, but she received permission from the photographer to paint it. This highlights the importance of checking all source material thoroughly before investing your time and resources into your artwork.

Whenever possible, we highly recommend each member takes their own reference photos, studies their subject in its natural habitat, studies museum specimens and makes field sketches to familiarize themselves with their subjects, rather than using another person's reference material. It really shows in the artwork when an artist knows their subject well.