

Press Release

Six photographers from four countries win the first Saal Digital European Photo Awards

Jury selects winning works from more than 15,000 entries across six categories – 3,000 trees planted in Germany

Röttenbach, 18th December 2025 – The winners of the first Saal Digital European Photo Awards have been announced. From more than 15,000 submissions from across Europe, an expert jury selected six outstanding winning images. The awards go to photographers from Germany, Austria, Spain, and Italy. Each winner receives a €2,000 voucher.

Winners at a glance:

- **Nature:** Josef Ruspeckhofer (Austria) – "Successful Catch"
- **Macro:** Pedro Luís Ajuriaguerra Saiz (Spain) – "Buzzer midge christmas tree"
- **People:** Julia Lechner (Austria) – "The Light That Moves Us"
- **Architecture:** Stefan Wilmshöver (Germany) – "Cobh in the morning light"
- **Long Exposure:** Thomas Oser (Germany) – "Uttakleiv at Night"
- **Sustainability:** Emiliano Cerluini (Italy) – "SCRAP"

Precision at the decisive moment

The jury highlighted two works in particular that exemplify the overall quality of the competition. Josef Ruspeckhofer's image "Successful Catch" captures a kingfisher at the exact moment of the hunt. The jury was impressed not only by the difficulty of capturing such a precise instant with such a small subject, but also by the deliberate choice not to completely freeze the scene. Subtle motion remains visible in the wings, lending the image a sense of dynamism and organic presence.

"For this image, I observed a kingfisher in its hunting area over several weeks," Ruspeckhofer explains. "The decisive moment lasts only milliseconds – you need patience, precise timing, and a bit of luck. I worked with a shutter speed of 1/2000 second, deliberately not faster, to preserve the movement in the wings."

Pedro Luís Ajuriaguerra Saiz's macro photograph "Buzzer midge christmas tree" stands out for its immaculate composition. The high level of macro detail and the harmonious color palette create a striking contrast with the main subject. Water droplets give the image a dreamlike quality and add an extra sense of luminosity to the scene.

"Macro photography demands absolute precision," says Ajuriaguerra Saiz. "I use a 25 mm macro lens at 5× magnification and work with focus stacking – a technique that combines multiple images taken at different focus points into a single photograph with extended, consistently sharp depth of field. The natural backlight early in the morning makes the water droplets glow. That's the moment you have to wait for."

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“The diversity and overall quality of the submissions truly impressed us,” says Robin Saal, Managing Director of Saal Digital and a member of the jury. “From technically flawless macro photography to emotionally powerful long exposures, the range of work shows just how vibrant the European photography scene is. In our evaluation, we placed particular emphasis on the balance between technical excellence and artistic vision.”

3,000 trees planted for the future

For every photograph submitted, Saal Digital plants one deciduous tree in Germany, up to a predefined maximum of 3,000 trees. With over 15,000 entries, this target was clearly exceeded. In addition, proceeds from the sale of the Photo Awards Photo Book 2025, which features all winning and finalist images, will be donated to a charitable cause.

“With the European Photo Awards, we aim not only to celebrate photographic excellence, but also to take responsibility,” says Robin Saal. “Every submitted photo contributed to reaching our goal of planting 3,000 trees. In this way, we combine a passion for photography with a sustainable contribution for future generations.”

All winning and finalist images are featured in the Photo Awards Photo Book 2025, available to view and order at:

<https://www.saal-digital.eu/photo-awards/>

Image material:



Caption: “Successful Catch” – Winner, Nature category, Saal Digital European Photo Awards 2025
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About Saal Digital

Saal Digital is one of Europe's leading platforms for high-quality photographic products. Founded in 1981 by Reinhard Saal, the company has evolved from a traditional photo laboratory into a digital innovation leader. Headquartered in Röttenbach, Germany, with more than 150 employees, Saal Digital offers professional photographers, ambitious hobbyists, and creatives a complete solution – from intuitive design software to premium products such as photo books and large-format wall art.

Saal Digital's photo books in particular are known for their exceptional quality. Images are printed on genuine photographic paper, ensuring brilliant colors, razor-sharp detail, and impressive longevity. The unique lay-flat binding allows pages to open completely flat, enabling seamless panoramic spreads without a disruptive gutter – ideal for showcasing images at their best.

This passion for quality goes hand in hand with a strong commitment to sustainability. An in-house photovoltaic system covers up to 100 percent of the company's energy needs, and resource-efficient production processes have earned Saal Digital TÜV Rheinland certification as a climate-neutral company. With fast delivery times, innovative technology, and a dedicated team, Saal Digital sets benchmarks for anyone who expects the best for their images.

More information: <https://www.saal-digital.eu/press/>

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