



PAGB Standards & Governance sub-committee

Standards, Regulations, Rules.

They facilitate everything, from trade negotiations to photography. PAGB events have rules which enable photographers and entrants to participate, in the knowledge that others will follow the same rules and all will compete equally.

Rules evolve in response to priorities and experience. A current PAGB priority is to encourage print making, and the limited entries to the GB Trophies show how much needs to be done. To this end, the Inter-Federation Projected Nature category has been changed to a Print Nature Category, meaning there will now be three print categories (Monochrome, Colour, Nature) and, in line with frequent suggestions, one PDI category (Open).

This decision, made last October along with other changes decided at that time, had to be drafted in detail before the two summer events of the Inter-Federation Competitions and the Club PDI Championship. The new rules for all events were agreed by the PAGB Executive in February 2020.

There are an estimated forty thousand Club members, each taking photographs of whatever they want and processing them however they want. Entries for PAGB events are gathered by Clubs or by Federations and every photograph should be eligible somewhere. Several events have a Nature category, in which case there will be a corresponding “open” category where Nature is not eligible.

That raises the question of what to do with images which have been processed so that they look like Nature, although they do not comply with the combined FIAP/PSA Nature definition.

PAGB event organisers will always try to resolve problems in advance but, often, they do not have the time to debate the provenance of an image which looks like Nature, to determine whether it is eligible in Nature or in non-Nature. Especially when that debate may be at second or third hand from the photographer or may have to be resolved immediately to allow the competition to proceed.

Images which look like Nature have always counted towards the quota limits in both the Print (Blackburn) and the PDI (Warwick) Club Championships, and, whatever the printed rules may have said, organisers of other events have, out of necessity, had to operate similar policies.

The eligibility of these “looks like Nature” images has therefore been unclear, subject to variable interpretation, which is unsatisfactory for everyone. To manage images where appearance may differ from provenance, the PAGB has now agreed to use only appearance as the eligibility criterion for Nature categories. This brings all events into line and has enabled a definition which is much simpler than before and requires no added guidance.

It is not surprising that this change has provoked some comment but the PAGB has not set out to change the definition of Nature photography. There are well-established definitions, including FIAP/PSA and the RPS Nature Code of Practice.

What we have done is to ensure that all images are eligible somewhere in all PAGB competitions. We have made all the PAGB events consistent, made the task for PAGB event organisers manageable and, hopefully, we have simplified choices for photographers, Clubs and Federations.

No matter how rules are written, there will always be fuzzy boundaries, and organisers have discretion to decide on interpretation in any particular case. The PAGB is clear that the new Nature Definition has been designed only for PAGB events. If others find it useful then they are free to use it, but the new Nature Definition is not mandatory for any other organisation, or even as a condition of PAGB Patronage.