Magazine of the Nature Group of The Royal Photographic Society





No. 75 - Winter 1999



Photo from Richard Revels FRPS 3rd prize panel - "Common Spotted Orchids".

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Contributions on all aspects of Nature Photography are welcomed, including reviews on relevant books. Material should be typed, double spaced, on one side of the paper only. Copy can be accepted on floppy disc (preferably RTF or Microsoft 'Word') accompanied by printed copy. Please send submissions to The Editor. No payment is made for material used and whilst every care is taken neither the Editor, nor the Nature Group, nor Printers accept liability for any damage that may occur to photographic material submitted. The views expressed are solely those of the contributor.

Magazine Distribution:- The IRIS is posted using labels produced by the RPS Membership Dept in Bath. Any Nature Group member who does not receive their copy should contact the Membership Department so that their name appears on a label in the future. However the Editor will be pleased to post single copies to those who have failed to receive them.

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Front Cover Photo from Frank Young ARPS 1st prize panel "Four Spotted Chaser" (*Libellula quadrimaculata*).

Back Cover Photo from Kay Reeve ARPS runners up panel *"Lepiota procera"*.

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Some members expressed surprise at the slip enclosed with the last issue regarding the quality of colour printing. Well it depends on the copy you received. Briefly *our previous printers* had problems with their press and agreed to reprint the magazine at their own cost. Inconceivably they did so before the fault had been rectified

resulting in a huge variation of colour reproduction of several pictures across the second print run. They either did not check the second print run, or hoped these variations would not be spotted. The problems were most noticeable on pages 19, 32 and the back cover. My apologies again to all those whose pictures were affected.

We are now using a new company and we shall be paying more per issue. As a result we will need to restrict ourselves to the usual 36 pages, only using 40 pages if there is a drastic requirement. A side effect will be greater use of the editorial red pen to ensure that space can be found for as many contributions as possible! In this issue, as a trial, I have asked that text pages are printed on a matt paper to reduce the 'shine' which occurs in certain lighting thus making it easier to read. Photographs will continue on glossy paper which gives better reproduction. Please let me know what you think.

Many thanks to all those of you who have written (even from as far afield as New Zealand) complementing me on The Iris. Others continue to dislike the gold frame on the front page, wavy picture edges and drop shadows. To those I say be patient, some of your dislikes will disappear in the issues for 2000. In this issue competition pictures are presented 'straight'.

Anomalies:- I am extremely surprised that, to date, there has been no response to the last paragraph of Tony Wharton's letter (Issue No. 74, page 28). *What do you think?*

It would be interesting to read your brief views (without reference to any individual photographer) as to whether you think there is any anomaly in the following, or in any other examples you may think of.

1/ Is it acceptable to introduce in the field either:- i) an artificial background? or ii) a background provided by say, a Dock leaf, plucked from a plant and held behind the subject? How should the resultant photograph be considered? Would you class it as "straight" or should it be "controlled conditions"?

2/ Why is an artificial background introduced at the taking stage, either in the field, or controlled conditions, apparently more acceptable than introduced later in a computer?

The Iris "Five Slide" Competition:- This issue contains a selection from the three winners and the runner up panels. On page 6 you can read the report from this year's organiser, Kath Bull ARPS. In view of the increased support I thought members may be interested to read of its conception and objects.

A few years ago, walking round the 'In Focus' exhibition at the NEC with Barbara Lawton FRPS and Tony Wharton FRPS I asked them for ideas for something different for our magazine. Tony suggested the five slides and we hammered out the rules. The unwritten, but paramount of which was that it should help to stimulate photography of a diversity of subject matter. Secondary to that was that it should be as informal, and with as little administration, as possible. Whilst we hoped that it would prove popular it was never intended to be run on major exhibition lines. Hence the absence of report cards, catalogues etc.,

You could say it is a competition purely for the enjoyment of taking pictures with the minor enticements of no entry fees and small cash prizes &

FROM THE CHAIR Martin Withers FRPS

Another summer has come and gone and, in many respects, it was very different. In my area, spring was non-existent and summer, good as it was, came quite late. Many of my local birds appeared not to breed at all, butterflies, with the exception of Speckled Woods, seemed very thin on the ground,

while dragonflies in late summer reached almost plague proportions, in particular Migrant Hawkers. So, as in most years, the weather has brought some disappointments but also some unexpected surprises. I just hope that in your own area you managed to find enough subjects to keep you busy and that you have secured a good selection of images. I hope you will take a long hard look at your results and find time to apply for a Distinction or enter at least one or two into the Nature Group Millennium Exhibition next spring. It would be very gratifying for all concerned if we could register a 'bumper' entry into this very special Exhibition, which will be on display at The Octagon from April 14th - 25th Entry forms will be sent to all members, once our newly formed Exhibition Subcommittee, under the Chairmanship of Tony Wharton FRPS, has finalised the arrangements.

The recent 5 Slide Competition was a great success, congratulations to our winners, Frank Young ARPS, Frank Millington ARPS and Richard Revels FRPS. We were very pleased by the increased entry for this competition, up by some 25% on the previous year, the more members that can be encouraged to get involved in any Nature Group activity the better. Special thanks to Kath Bull for organising the whole affair and for agreeing to repeat the exercise next year.

Please do all you can to support the Nature Group - its your group, there to promote your interests \Re

THE IRIS "FIVE SLIDE" Competition 1999

My fellow selectors, Bill Burns-Begg ARPS, John Fairbank ARPS, and I were delighted with this year's response which included entries from as far afield as Finland, Germany, Guernsey and USA. We enjoyed viewing your work immensely. Over 200 slides were projected from 41 entrants, a most encouraging increase on last year's competition. We were impressed with the generally high quality of the work, perhaps a little surprised at the lack of overseas nature subjects, but pleased to see such a wide diversity of images taken in the UK. All forms of nature were represented from Puffins to leaping Frogs, from Jellyfish to Bee Orchids, from Dorset cliffs to Adders. Each of the ten listed Competition categories were represented by your pictures, and many entrants produced quite excellent work across their five chosen categories. Interestingly, but perhaps not surprisingly, the most popular group was Birds with 37 entries, followed closely by Mammals with 31, Insects and Fungi with 26 and Flowers with 23 entries. The final results were very close.

We warmly congratulate :-First Place Frank Young ARPS, EFIAP, DPAGB.

Second place Frank Millington ARPS

Third place Richard Revels FRPS

Runner-up Kay Reeve ARPS

We thank all entrants who took the trouble to 'have a go', and hope that you and many others will enter the next "Five Slide" competition in 2000. We offer our sincere congratulations to you all, especially the three winners. Kath Bull ARPS Organiser.

Dorset Field Weekend 30th April to 3rd May 1999 report by NICHOLAS REUSS. A group of nineteen from the breadth of southern Britain assembled on a sunny, hazy Friday evening at the Burton Cliff Hotel in Burton Bradstock, Dorset which was to be our base for the next two days. Most of us had not previously met the others but by the time we had paused in the bar and had dinner we were all good friends.

This really set the tone for the whole weekend which was convivial, good-humoured, photographically challenging and, most importantly, thoroughly enjoyable.

Four factors made this a not-to-be-forgotten weekend; our photographic mentor, "I am not tutoring this weekend", Colin Varndell; the variety of the flowers and trees and their diverse environments, the instant rapport struck up between the participants and the weather. We were treated to cloudless skies, bright sunshine which felt good after such a soggy winter, and haze that obscured any opportunities of recording the stupendous scenery on film. Plans were adjusted accordingly and we stuck to floral subjects.

After dinner Colin, who works exclusively on British natural history and the landscape, treated us to a slide show of his work. The theme was Dorset through a year even though the images had been shot over a longer period. The intention was to stimulate creative ideas and to urge exploration of the full image potential of the camera's technical capabilities. We retired with thoughts of Moorhens (*Galinula chloropus*) and Coots (*Fulica atra*) on rippling blue and gold backgrounds, crisp flowers surrounded by soft greens that had been taken through a wide open 300 mm lens and multiple exposures. These were unusual containing as they did simultaneously both soft focusing and clear detail. This is achieved by using a large aperture and focusing each exposure on a different part of the image. Colin's preferred films are Fuji Provia 100 for birds, which he may push to 200 to ensure maximum shutter speeds of 1/250, and Fuji Velvia for everything else, but note the comment below.

On Saturday morning we travelled in convoy down country lanes which took us over Eggardon Hill (where we were frustrated by the indistinctness of the scene which prevented us from attempting to imitate Colin's renderings) en route to Dorset Wildlife Trust's 220 acre reserve at Powerstock Common. Colin's oft to be heard cry of "walk this way" got us moving on a fifteen minute stroll down a gravel track that took us to an ancient bank and ditch on which stood venerable Oaks (Quercus robur) all of which were surrounded by a profusion of Bluebells (Hyacinthoides non-scriptus). Not all films can accurately capture these blues and Kodachrome 64 is recommended although Provia and Sensia can give acceptable results. We scattered to find our favourite aspect and spent a couple of hours working the possibilities with Colin giving helpful tips when asked. Wood-sorrel (Oxalis acetosella) perched in the forks of the oaks also offered pictorial opportunities. We were rounded up by Colin's sheepdog whistle and continued, now across open country and before yet more irritatingly sensational views to a wood containing bluebells, primroses (Primula vulgaris) and some very gnarled old oaks.

After a picnic lunch the party divided. Those with energy to spare continued through the wood to photograph a variety of different trees either exceedingly gnarled, or with fresh new foliage. Those with less went directly to a small pond where the main attraction was Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) which was in flower. Here the two parties reunited and returned to the cars.

We had a brief stop at Kingcombe Meadows where Colin explained its suitability of capturing Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) families on film. Some of the Group who extended their stay spent time at these meadows.

The convoy then moved to Hooke Park, a private beech plantation owned by the Parnham Trust. It is important to make an appointment to visit if one doesn't want to run the risk of being mistaken for a deer scheduled for culling! Here we learned the techniques for photographing trees and flowers with both as the main subject. Keep the front tree off centre and don't crop the roots. The landscape of the wood is undulating so there were plenty of slopes, paths and gullies to add form and depth to one's pictures. Here Colin revealed some of his innermost secrets on the techniques he uses for special effects. To learn these secrets you could come along next year!

After dinner Colin gave a slide show entitled "Four Seasons" which had all been taken during 1997. Again this was wonderful entertainment and a great motivator to do better.

In the morning we set off once again in blazing sunshine, this time to Colin's five acre "garden" in Netherbury. Over the past twelve years he and his wife Suzy have worked hard at turning a grass field into a woodland complete with pond, a paddock, lawn and flower beds. Over 2000 native trees have been planted and many have bird-boxes affixed. The garden boasts its own badger (*Meles meles*) set complete with young and 23 species of nesting birds with over 50 nests in all. Throughout this avian paradise are Colin's hides, some on the ground, some in trees and some sunk into the ground. The pictures taken from these subterranean observatories of common birds such as Blackbirds (*Turdus merula*) and Chaffinches (*Fringilla coelebs*) were amongst the most striking with the birds looking down on the viewer against soft backgrounds. We had the opportunity of taking pictures in the garden. Yellow archangel (*Lamiastrum galeobdolon*) and Ramsoms (*Allium ursinum*) were in plentiful supply.

At midday we walked some 500 metres to a Ramsons wood where we spent an hour trying to find that elusive angle that would make the trees compliment the white flowers interspersed with bluebells where the slope fell away in front of us. A tall order indeed. For those who like to get close to mother earth there were plenty of Germander Speedwell (Veronica chamaedrys), Ground Ivy (Glechoma hederacea) and Bugle (Ajuga reptans) to exercise one's macro skill on.

After lunch on Colin's 'please-don't-tread-on-the-thistles' lawn we drove for several miles to Hardington Moor which is an English Nature site in which Cowslips (*Primula veris*) and, more importantly, Green-winged Orchids (*Orchis morio*) proliferate. The upper fields of the moor have not been ploughed in living memory and this together with ten weeks of grazing from the end of July each year onwards has enabled these orchids to reach a population of approximately 11,000! They were present in three varieties, purple, pink and white. The key to successful photographs in such profusion is to search long and hard for the perfect and outstanding specimen or cluster of specimens. A 200 mm lens opened to f2.8 and shot from a low angle will give interesting results but care needs to be taken not to let the stems bleed out of the frame.

On Sunday night Colin gave us his one and only instructional talk with slides. His message again was don't accept the first view but explore all possible angles, infuse light where necessary and be prepared to experiment with the camera, even with multiple images.

Thanks go to Colin Varndell and to Kath Bull without whose efforts the weekend wouldn't have been possible &

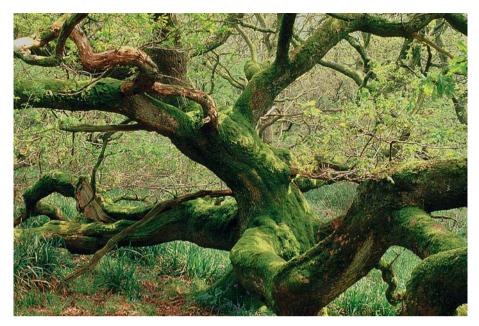
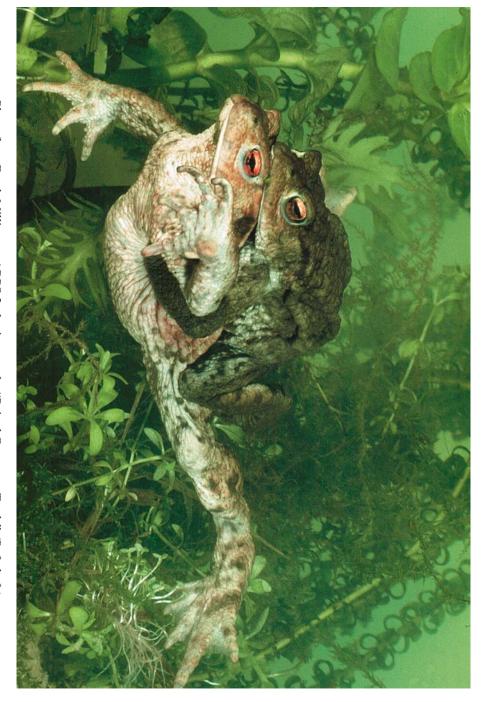


Photo by Nicholas Reuss - "English Oak (Quercus robur)".



Photo by Nicholas Reuss - "Beech Wood with Bluebells."



NATURE GROUP EXHIBITION 2000

The timing of the Nature Group exhibition has been changed from the autumn to the spring. The accepted prints will be on display in The Octagon during the period 14th to 25th of April next year, the official opening taking place as part of the Annual General Meeting on Saturday, 15th April, when a live commentary will be given on the accepted transparencies. At that meeting there will also be an illustrated talk entitled "The Wildlife of Namibia" by Clive Rathband, FRPS. *Make a note in your diary now!*

Partly as a result of a substantial financial loss having been incurred on the 1998/99 exhibition, and partly because the Committee feels that it would be entirely inappropriate to attempt to expand the exhibition to the status of an open international exhibition, entry will be restricted to RPS members.

Entry forms will be sent out to all Nature Group members before the end of this year and *the closing date for entry will be 26th February, 2000.* The minimum print size will be 20 x 25 cms (8" x 10") and ALL prints will need to be mounted on 40 x 50 cms, Antique White or Ivory boards, with a recommended thickness of 2 mm, to facilitate framing at The Octagon. *PLEASE NOTE - it will not be possible to hang prints which are not on mounts of exactly this size.*

In order to obviate the retention of prints for what might easily amount to a period of a year in total, the accepted prints will not be circulated in the travelling exhibition. Instead, after they have been on display in Bath, they will be copied onto reversal material and circulated for projection with duplicates of the accepted slides. This will mean that both prints and original slides can be returned to entrants soon after the end of the exhibition period in Bath. It will also mean, of course, that organisations which book the travelling exhibition will be faced with considerably lower expense in forwarding the travelling exhibition to the next scheduled venue.

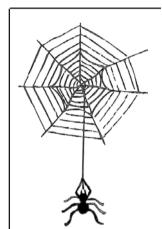
Bookings for the travelling exhibition should be addressed to Tony Wharton, FRPS, 2 Ashfield Grove, Halesowen, West Midlands, B63 4LH.



BOOK REVIEWS

"A Guide to the Dragonflies of Great Britain" by Dan Powell published by Arlequin Press 128pp £15.99 ISBN 190015901(pb)

There has been a marked increase of interest in Dragonflies over the last ten years; this in turn has generated several new publications in this field, which include details of their behaviour, habitat and identification. This book is a significant new contribution to the literature by a respected authority and gifted illustrator. There is a double page for each species with watercolour sketches showing both behaviour and a guide to identification. Particularly impressive is a comprehensive introduction covering life cycle, field craft and conservation techniques. *W.F*



WER SITES

The British Dragonfly Society Web Site http://www.hanslope.demon.co.uk/bds

This site has information on the society including membership details, field trips and a comprehensive checklist of British Dragonfly species with many photographs. There is also a 'hot news' page for sightings and current information. Also there are details of the National Dragonfly Museum and field centre near Oundle Northants.

Editor: - Many thanks to Bill Furse ARPS for the above details. I am certain more members have information on photographic / natural web sites so <u>please</u> send them in.

The Idea Behind the Nature Group - Past, Present & Future

BY KATH BULL ARPS

This was to give members, especially newer members, an insight into the early years of the Nature Group, to consider current nature photography, and to touch briefly on the future of the Nature Group. Two speakers immediately came to mind - Heather Angel Hon FRPS, Founder Chairman of the Nature Group, and early Chairman of the Nature A & F Panel and Martin Withers FRPS the Group's present Chairman, and current Chairman of the Nature Distinction Panel. It is not often that an idea such as this can so easily be put into practice, especially as each of these photographers has a peripatetic lifestyle, resulting in them wandering constantly around the globe. We were indeed lucky to pin them down, and even more pleased when they both agreed to talk at Tonbridge on 25th March 2000.

"Reflections on Nature Photography from 1972-2000"

by Heather Angel Hon FRPS, FBIPP

Surprisingly, Heather Angel never had any ambition to be a photographer yet for more than

a quarter of a century she has been a leading wildlife photographer.

In this special talk Heather will outline the problems the Nature Group faced in the early days, together with its many successes, and will briefly touch on her chairmanship of the A & F panel. More than a decade ago, Heather decided to relinquish all her commitments so she could devote all her time to her photography, writing and teaching. During this time her work has been recognised by several awards and honours both at home and overseas. During her talk Heather will show and explain many new pictures - including her latest digital art images - from her forthcoming book Natural Visions, due to be published early in 2000

THE NATURE GROUP PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

A MAJOR NATURE GROUP MEETING IN THE SOUTH-EAST ON SATURDAY 25TH MARCH 2000

Venue: The Hayesbrook School Brook Street Tonbridge Kent 10 am to 4 pm.

A whole day programme of lectures and talks, with opportunities for socialising and discussing nature photography with other enthusiasts.

Guest speakers: Professor Heather Angel Hon FRPS and Martin Withers FRPS

Recent successful Fellowship panel by Dr Anne Owen FRPS Successful Associateship panels - 15 minute mini-shows by Members Talk by a Kodak representative on their Professional films

Tea and coffee intervals & Finger Buffet Lunch

Morning Lecture "Reflections on Nature Photography from 1972 - 2000" by Prof Heather Angel Hon FRPS.

See above for full details

Afternoon lecture by Martin Withers FRPS.

Martin is the present Chairman of the Nature Group and Chairman of the Nature Distinctions Panel. In his capacity of tour leader for a well known photographic tour company, Martin is fortunate to have visited many of the more exotic locations in the world. Today he will show us a selection of his memorable images.

Members are invited to show their work during the day's programme. We are looking for 15-20 minute Mini-slide shows, details of which should be forwarded with your booking. In the event of oversubscription, a selection will be made from the work offered by members.

This event is supported by Kodak

Cost: £12.00 including Finger Buffet which must be ordered in advance. For reservations please telephone Dr. Bill Burns-Begg ARPS, on 01892 .661335 at St. John's Cottage, School Lane, Crowborough, East Sussex TN6 IRD

Offers of slide talks to Kath Bull ARPS on 01892-663751.

MEMBERS' LETTERS

The views expressed by correspondents are not necessarily those of the Editor nor of The Nature Group Committee

Dear Editor,

Tony Wharton in the Summer 'The Iris' remarks that I have "come in for some stick" and then proceeds to wade in with more.

M. Shirley, in the Winter 1998 'The Iris', made the accusation that in one of my winning competition entries "close examination clearly shows that the sky has been sandwiched in." To reiterate what I said in my reply; my competition entries were all straight shots i.e. they were single transparencies shots and not joiners, collages, sandwiches or computer manipulated images. My pictures were thus completely within the rules of the competition, a point which I discussed with the Editor. Whether they were shot in the wild was not the point; studio shots did not contravene the rules.

Furthermore I should point out to Tony Wharton that also in the Winter '98 edition of 'The Iris', if he cares to read it, appeared the following statement from the editor:- that I, the photographer, had "confirmed that the pictures were taken in controlled conditions". Therefore it would have been pointless for me, in the following 'The Iris', to try to hide the fact that they were (if it needed hiding, which it didn't). Nor do I "concentrate" on studio photography, as he well knows! Perhaps he would like to check his facts. I also feel that if he had a point to make about his dislike of set-up photography, he could have done so without resorting to semantics.

Suddenly "controlled conditions" are frowned upon! Here's 'The Iris' including articles on how to do studio photography e.g. Roger Hance's article in the Winter 1997 issue, and also publishing set-up photographs e.g. Andy Callow's hoverfly in the Spring 99 issue. Why is such photography being actively promoted on the one hand but being slated on the other? Is this an anomaly?

Yours sincerely, David Cantrille ARPS MPAGB (Dorchester)

Editor:- This letter now closes correspondence regarding David's pictures; I feel the matter of his entry has been laboured enough. As I have previously written David entered in good faith and broke no rules. In fairness to Tony Wharton whilst appreciating the reasons behind David's use of the word 'straight' I know that to many nature photographers its use indicates that it was taken in the field.

As regards David's last paragraph as far as I am concerned there is no anomaly. "Controlled conditions" may, on some occasions, be the only way to obtain the photograph. At other times a photograph 'in situ' could be possible, albeit with extreme difficulty and probably not producing the desired result. Which method is 'correct' depends, as always, on the photographer and the context in which he intends using the photograph. **

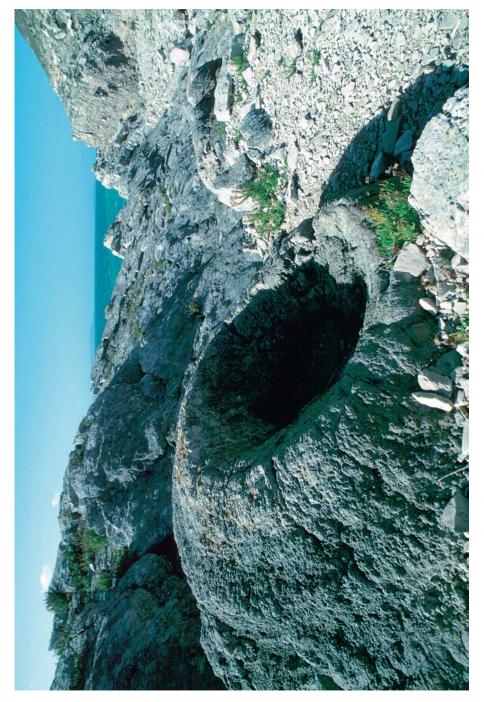


Photo from Kay Reeve ARPS runners-up panel - "Fossil Cycadeoid".



Photo from Frank Young ARPS 1st prize panel - "Shag on Nest".

REPORTS OF FIELD MEETINGS IN 1999.

Monkwood, Worcestershire - 6th June - Leader Tony Wharton, FRPS

Nineteen members met in the car park at Monkwood on Sunday, 6th June, hoping that the heavy showers which had been forecast would not materialise. The night had been a very cold and wet one, so that the moth trap set up in the lovely garden of Dr Chris Betts, adjacent to the wood, had produced very little. This year's catch was limited to a few Buff and White Ermine, a Buff Arches, a Triple Wave and a couple of other, not very photogenic species - a marked contrast to last year, when we had around thirty different species to photograph. Even so, the Buff and White Ermine moths received quite a lot of attention from some members, while everyone in the party enjoyed the refreshments so kindly provided by Chris's wife Cecilia. At one point a brief but heavy downpour sent us all scuttling for cover, but despite this and the dearth of subjects provided by the trap, everyone seemed to enjoy just being there, and we were once again very grateful to Chris and Cecelia for their excellent hospitality.

Monkwood itself was very wet and muddy, but spells of warm sunshine brought out lots of damselflies around the ponds and, as the day wore on, more and more Broad-bodied Chaser dragonflies took to the air-space over the water - but were reluctant to settle within camera range. A number of grass snakes were seen in and around the ponds during the day, but attempts to photograph them seemed to be largely abortive too.

Along some of the more open woodland rides Wood White butterflies were quite common, and were frequently very cooperative, especially when clouds blotted out the sun. Other butterfly species were much less frequently seen, but included Brimstone, Large Skipper and Speckled Wood.

Some of the members who were present had travelled long distances- from places as far apart as York, Cheltenham and Aylesbury - so I hope they weren't too disappointed with the day! Clearly, it's impossible to guarantee ideal conditions which will provide as full a range of subjects as the wood is capable of producing, but perhaps next year's visit will be the one **

Aston Clinton Ragpits and Dancersend - June 12th - Leader Nick Jarvis

Heavy rain in the early morning probably deterred many people from attending this meeting. However by ten o'clock the rain had ceased and throughout the day we had only occasional light drizzle with virtually no wind. In fact, the four people who did turn out found conditions very good for flower photography.

At our first reserve, Aston Clinton Ragpits, we found good examples of Fragrant, Greater Butterfly, Twayblade, Common Spotted and Bee orchids; also Adders-tongue fern and many other more common species. The Fragrant orchids were particularly impressive, there being many hundreds of them within quite a small area. A few Pyramidal orchids were beginning to show, but were not yet at their best.

After lunch we moved on to Dancersend in the hope of finding Duke of Burgundy butterflies. Unfortunately it was still too cool and none were flying, but we did find large numbers of Greater Butterfly orchids and a better example of the Pyramidal. I hope to repeat this venue next year.

Kingsbury Water Park - 20th June - Leader Roy Place FRPS

(report by Robert Hawkesworth ARPS)

Fifteen of us gathered at the Water Park on a blustery but fine Sunday morning under the leadership of Roy Place FRPS. After welcoming the newcomers and the usual banter between the regulars we moved off to a splendid waterside site somewhat off the beaten track, where we were engaged in photographing Bee Orchids (Ophrys apifera), there were plenty to go round so there was minimal queuing. I know that Self-heal (Prunella vulgaris) is one of our commonest plants but it is most attractive, especially in more open conditions such as the one we were in and these too took up much time. On to another site with vet more Bee Orchids as well as Lady's Mantle (Alchemilla vulgaris), Orange Hawkweed (Hieracium aurantiacum) and lots of Birdsfoot Trefoil (Lotus corniculatus) The expected dragonflies, damselflies and butterflies were put off by the cool and rather breezy conditions so flowers were the order of the day with a certain amount of patience waiting for the necessary lull. Yet another site after lunch, this time with many Southern Marsh Orchids (Dactvlorhiza praetermissa) and one or two Common Spotted Orchids (Dactvlorhiza fuchsii) with surprisingly little evidence of hybrids! Despite the weather warming up and the wind lessening we still found little evidence of butterflies, but it had been a grand day. Our grateful thanks to Roy ably assisted by Frank Young ARPS for guiding us round and finding so many subjects for our cameras *

Millers Dale - 3rd July - Leader Dawn Osborn ARPS.

On July 3rd a dozen or more members met for the third Millers Dale meeting. Many of those attending were already acquainted and so there was much conversation about a variety of natural history subjects and locations. Dark clouds looming on the horizon looked ominous but optimistically the group walked to its first location - an old limestone quarry a short distance from the Millers Dale Railway Station.

The limestone quarries are filled with wild flowers and butterflies at this time of year. The display of colour put on by the Fragrant Orchids was quite stunning, and there was an added bonus of a large number of Bee Orchids in prime condition. The wild Strawberry were abundant, also Storksbill, Meadow Cranesbill, Marjoram, Eyebright, etc., so there were plenty of subjects for everyone to photograph. The first half of the day was dry, if a little overcast, but following a break for lunch, the group were rewarded with warm sunshine and blue skies.

The second of the two locations visited was a quarry overlooking Millers Dale. Here the quarry floor was a spectacle of Oxeye Daisies, Selfheal, Thyme, Bee and Fragrant Orchids, plus some fine specimens of Common Twayblade. Again, an abundance of subjects to be enjoyed. Time passed quickly, but later, those members who had not run out of film were able to enjoy photographing some of the other subjects growing around the old Railway Station, Dog Rose, Common Spotted Orchids, Meadow Avens, Dark Mullein, Jacobs Ladder, Dyer's Green-weed, Bloody Cranesbill, to name but a few. Finally, a cup of tea at the Wriggly Tin Cafe was enjoyed before driving home.

Oxwich Nature Reserve - South Gower - 14th July - Leader Margaret Hodge FRPS.

On an exceedingly hot day 20 folks gathered to explore the shore and dunes. To hold this day in July was a one off and hopefully it will go back to a suitable low tide in June 2000.

The shore produced, as ever, a wide range of species. Many people commented on the increased quantity of seaweed, especially green, which made beautiful patterns on the damp sand. Most plentiful Echinoderms were (Asterias rubens), the Common Starfish. Some showed regeneration of lost limbs, also the wide range of colours within the species.

The other star was the Brittle Star, (Ophiocomina nigra).

Of the Porifera (sponges) were the Breadcrumb (Myxilla and Hymeniacidon). Tunicata, or Sea Squirts comprised the Lightbulb squirt (Ascidiella aspera); Botrylloides leachi and the Star Ascidian, Distaplia rosea and Aplidium proliferum. There were some excellent patterns of Sea Mat and Hydroids on the fronds of brown weeds. Three Sand Eels were seen in pools, a female Pipefish worm and a few Chitons. Of crabs there were many Common Shore Crabs, Velvet Swimming Crabs, Edible Crabs, Long-clawed Porcelain, Hairy, and a single Hermit in a periwinkle shell. The Anemones were both red and green Beadlet, Dahlia and Daisy. A very attractive piece of Alyonidum hirsutum was photographed,

Back at the cars for a welcome drink and then to the dune slacks, these very exceedingly dry and very, very hot. However there was a good patch of Marsh Helleborines the other orchids having withered. A vast number of Restharrow, Common Centaury and a few Sea Centaury. Many Yellowworts, Evening Primrose, Common Rockrose, Eyebright, Yellow Bedstraw, Dewberry, Agrimony and Hemp Agrimony. Everywhere the lovely scent of Thyme. Marbled White butterflies were very noticeable for their numbers. Plenty of Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers with a few Grayling, Small Skippers and Small Blues. Many webs of Funnelweb spiders, a few Poplar Beetles and Sulphur Beetles.

On the dune ridge at the far end of the reserve were some fine large clumps of Seastock, Sea Spurge, Portland Spurge, Orache, Sea Bindweed, Glasswort and Sea Holly. The last great thrill was the sighting of a clutch of speckled eggs of a Ringed Plover. Four eggs, one of which had hatched. We were able to briefly watch the marvellous distress display of the adult pretending to have a broken wing.

All in all a goodly and most enjoyable day with friends albeit a very, very hot one. See you next year &

Associateship & Fellowship Nature Assessment Panel

The Nature A & F Distinctions Panel met at The Octagon on Tuesday September 21st 1999. The Panel Members present were; Martin Withers FRPS (Chairman), John Bebbington FRPS, Harold Grenfell FRPS, Margaret Hodge FRPS, Chris Mattison FRPS, Colin Smith FRPS & Tony Wharton FRPS.

Fellowship Print Submissions: - 2 with 2 successes.

Mark Mumford - Horley, Surrey. (Marine life)
Colin Pawson - Poulton-le-Fylde (Geological)

Fellowship Slide Submissions:- 8 with no successes.

Associateship Print Submissions:- 7 with 4 successes.

H.S.K. Tan - Sarawak, Malaysia (Orchids)

John Parr - Chalfont St. Peter, Bucks (African wildlife)

Mervyn Seltzer - East Grinstead, Sussex (Mixture of subjects)

Paul Woolterton - Croydon (African wildlife)

Associateship Slide Submissions:- 7 with 5 successes.

David Tollerton - Wrexham (Birds)

Coralyn Pascall - Camberley, Surrey (Plants)

Karen Clelland - Penicuik (Plants)

Richard Merritt - Ivybridge, Devon (Marine life)

David Elliott - Pucklechurch, Bristol (Mixture of subjects).

ARTHUR'S PHOTOGRAPHIC GLOSSARY

by Arthur Hill ARPS

- ' 1/. Flash Indecent exposure.
 - 2/. Hot shoe Teenager's trainer.
 - 3/. Over-exposure Low neckline.
 - 4/. Over-exposed Even lower neckline.
 - 5/. Over developed Buxom, full figured.
 - 6/. Reciprocity Failure Not buying your round.
 - 7/. Wide-angle Competition Winner's grin.
 - 8/. Winning slide First in a Toboggan race.
 - 9/. Photographers hide His/her skin.
 - 10/. Differential focussingd as a newt.
 - 11/. Slide film Black ice.
 - 12/. Emulsion Scott's revolting potion.
- 13/. Film plane Photographing Concord.
 - 14/. Power wind Gale.
 - 15/. Digitally altered Finger marked.
 - 16/. Single Len's reflex Involuntary reaction of a bachelor.
 - 17/. Camera In which some trials are held.
 - 18/. Matt finish Dying on the carpet.
 - 19/. Lens cap Headgear for No. 16.
 - 20/. Diaphragm Contraceptive device.
 - 21/. Cable release Publishing a telegram.
 - 22/. Motor drive M25.
- 23/. Red-eye Hang-over.
 - 24/. Still-life Council workmen.
 - 25/. Circle of confusion Hemel Hempstead's roundabout.
 - 26/. Colour cast Porgy & Bess.
 - 27/. Multiple exposure *Nudist camp*.
 - 28/. Photoflood Pictures of Bewdley.
 - 29/. Ring flash Action of a newly engaged girl.
 - 30/. Slave unit Someone to carry all your gear.
- 31/. Barrel distortion "Brewers' goitre".
 - 32/. Boom light Exploding illumination.
 - 33/. Density Mental capacity of public whilst one is using a camera.
 - 34/. Enlargement Middle-aged spread.
 - 35/. Framing It wasn't me, Officer, honest!
 - 36/. Bellows extension Nursery warning system.

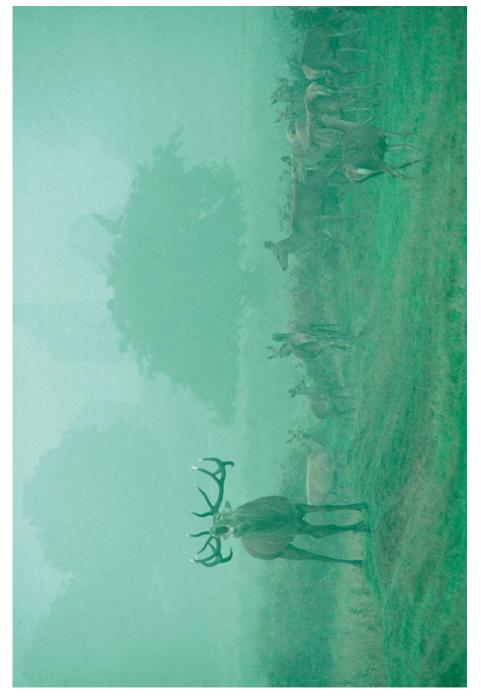


Photo from Frank Millington ARPS 2nd prize panel - "Red Deer Stag & Hinds".



Photo by Roger Hance FRPS - "Female Adder on heathland".



Photo by Roger Hance FRPS - "Male Adder".

PHOTOGRAPHING ADDERS

by Roger Hance FRPS

Attending lectures by well-known and respected Natural History photographers is a very good way of gaining knowledge, both natural history and photographic. One of the earliest talks I saw, and have seen several times since, is entitled the "Four Seasons" by professional George McCarthy.

In this talk George explains the types of subjects a British professional wildlife photographer would tackle throughout the seasons of the year in order to be viable, I would recommend anyone who has not seen this talk to do so, if he is ever lecturing in your area. In one section on snakes he shows some pictures of adders, both male and female full length, mating, close head shots finishing with a sequence of adders "dancing." The pictures are absolutely stunning and what amazed me was how anyone could get so close to what is after all Britain's most dangerous reptile? When the talk had finished and he asked if anyone had 'any questions' my hand went up straight away. What lens did you use and how were you so lucky to have found the adder in such perfect photographic surroundings" George's reply was that normally he will use a 100 mm macro lens, and that, for one of the pictures, be had actually found the adder about 50 yards away, and had placed it on the background that he had chosen. This amazed me, was he joking or was he just a few bricks short of a full load! !!!

Since that occasion I have got to know George well and this spring went on a 'one-to-one' workshop to photograph adders. He explained that the best time was in fact early spring when they were newly emerged from hibernation and usually could be found close to their hibernaculum. (Providing you know where one is - on the day George took me to four and had others up his sleeve)!!

On the prearranged day of our outing the weather was not particularly favourable. The forecast was mild with outbreaks of sun, but the actual morning was overcast and even more worrying, there was a slight wind. This was bad news explained George because adders will only come out of the ground if' they can gain some body heat through basking, not necessarily in the sun. On such a day as this the wind would cool them down Still he seemed optimistic that we would find our prey and we set out 'to do battle'.

I had asked what equipment I should take. I have a 200 mm macro lens, which was all I thought I would need. This was ideal he said but a wide-angle lens is also useful for shots of the adder in its habitat

We drew a blank at the first location, although by way of a bonus George (author of "The Wild Mushroom") showed me a site nearby where I was able to photograph the rare fungus Morchella esculenta. At the second we faired much better. The habitat was heath land surrounded by woods, and George said that at this site he had once found 27 adders on a day.

After walking extremely slowly George eventually spotted two males basking together and called me over to see them. He had explained that adders are deaf and have poor eyesight but can detect an outline on the horizon and movement, so a slow approach was essential, What they lack in eyesight they more than make up for in their sensitivity of vibrations, so we had to tread lightly.

Sure enough we had been spotted and both snakes began to disappear. With lighting speed, which I must confess took me completely by surprise, George moved in and within seconds was holding an equally surprised adder. I must stress that George does know what he is doing, he has worked with snakes for many years and one year raised over 300 grass

snakes in his garden. However, as they say on the television 'DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME'!!

I was amazed how well the adder behaved once George had placed it in a suitable location it quickly curled up into an 'S' shape. He explained that this was in fact a defence posture it assumes when ready to strike, so George made sure I stayed well out of striking range! After a relatively short time, in which I exposed one and a half rolls of film, he placed the adder in an empty camera bag and zipped the lid shut. By doing so it ensured that the snake would be rested and not become stressed. I felt that it was apt that the name of the camera bag used was 'Cobra.'

Next, the search was on for a female and within 10 minutes George returned holding a beautifully coloured female adder The same procedure was used and this time two rolls of film were exposed, using the 200 mm macro lens on full length and close head shots and then the 24 mm lens for some wide angle habitat shots. George made sure that at no time was I ever at risk of being bitten.

The male was then retrieved and I was able to photograph both male and female together. The male adder was smaller and darker marked than the female, which was more of a yellow/golden brown colour. I then photographed George with the male using a wide angle, to use as a possible lecture slide.

When all the pictures were taken George took great care to release both reptiles in the exact locations that they had been found - both none the worse for the experience at the end of a shoot. I had exposed nearly five rolls of film and can honestly say that it was one of the best photographic sessions I had ever had.

George is off to Lesvos for the whole of April and the best part of May but will be running Adder workshops next spring, taking out individuals or small groups photographers for day sessions. I would thoroughly recommend this to anyone in the nature group. Anyone interested should contact George McCarthy (see his advert) **

The Iris Natural History Quiz. No. 5

- 1. What is a monotreme?
- 2. What is the staple diet of glow-worm larvae?
- 3. What is a colony of penguins called?
- 4. What are spraints?
- 5. What is the collective name for a group of moles?
- 6. What is a "destroying angel"?
- 7. And a "naked lady"!
- 8. What is a "finfoot"?
- 9. Which animals can be Hermann's, Spur-thighed, or Marginated?
- 10. Where do halophytic plants grow?

Answers

10/. On salty ground.

1/. An egg-laying mammal. 2/. Snails. 3/. A rookery. 4/. Ofter droppings 5/. A labour 6/. A fungus. 7/. A flower of meadow saffron or cochicum. 8/. An African water-bird. 9/. They are all species of European tortoises.

NATURE GROUP FIELD WEEKEND 2000

Friday 5th May to Monday 8th May 2000 at the Burton Cliff Hotel, Burton Bradstock, Dorset

For this third Dorset weekend we are once again fortunate to have the services of Colin Varndell as our leader, and a venue, under new management, that is ideally suited for a photographic weekend. Colin lives locally, is a highly experienced photographer, naturalist, and writer. The hotel has its own darkroom and projection facilities, is the meeting place for Bridport Camera Club, and has built up a reputation as a venue for sympathetic photography courses. The new owner is anxious to continue with this tradition.

This corner of Dorset is rich in Nature reserves and outstanding landscapes, and in early May the spring flowers and fresh green foliage should be at their best. The programme will include evening slide lectures and two whole days in the field, at the best photographic sites in the area, new ones for members who have been before. It should provide some splendid photography under expert guidance and in congenial company. Transport during the weekend will be in members own cars, so we shall need to share the driving.

The cost for the 3 night stay including full board, two whole day field trips and lectures, will vary between £120 to £150 according to the accommodation. A deposit of £25 (cheques payable to the Nature Group please) will be required on booking, non refundable unless the member's place can be filled.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION & RESERVATIONS FOR EITHER OF THESE EVENTS PLEASE CONTACT KATH BULL ARPS Tel:- 01892-663751

A Week in the Scottish Islands Visit Craigleith, the farnes, bass rock, etc.,for fabulous Bird photography

The trip will be organised by Colin Varndell and is planned as a non-profit making venture and on a job sharing principle, with everyone contributing and sharing in routine daily tasks. Members will be asked to take responsibility for such jobs as loading and packing the vehicle, organising the packed lunches, sharing the driving (at least two drivers will be needed).

The departure date for 8 nights Bed & Breakfast in North Berwick, will be in the period early to mid June 2000. The group will depart on a Saturday and return the following Sunday. The cost will be in the region of £350, including Bed & Breakfast for 8 nights, all transport, boat and landing fees.

Once the trip is confirmed, then a deposit will be requested, non-refundable unless the member can fill his or her place. Your deposit will be returned in full in the event of the trip being cancelled by the organiser.

Accommodation will not be firmly booked until sufficient members have guaranteed their support for the venture.

Members who have already expressed an interest should now confirm their commitment in writing, please.

Other interested members should telephone or write for further details.

A NATURE GROUP ROOKIE

BY SUE GOODY LRPS

Stunning photographs, an infectious enthusiasm, an unchallenged air of authority: I am a member of an attentive audience at Cambridge University, absorbing Heather Angel's illustrat-

ed lecture on the intricacies of nature photography. I am hooked.

The following day I telephoned the RPS and enquired about membership of the Nature Group. A recent past copy of *The Iris* was duly despatched and, having read it from cover to cover sent my membership fee by return. But, what to do next?

Members of my local camera club seemed remarkably cool to my idea of a day in the field searching for wild flowers or birds in February. A local Essex Wildlife Trust site proved to be useful, but the results were somewhat less encouraging –most of the slides ended in the bin! A new approach was clearly needed and help was at hand in the form of the Spring edition of *The Iris*.

Kath Bull's "Chairman's Day" at Tonbridge in March seemed to be just the job. The day could not come soon enough for me –my technique still left a lot to be desired and the bin was brimming. The invited speakers, Bill Wason FRPS and Dr Anne Owen ARPS, gave memorable presentations and, of course, made producing such high quality pictures sound so easy. The supporting "acts" had no difficulty in maintaining the very high standard of photography and the distinction panels displayed were superb. This was nature photography at its best. During the intervals I was able to mingle with the elite who were only too pleased to answer my questions and share their vast experience with me, a novice. The relaxed atmosphere and threads of humour which some of the speakers interwove into their presentations were also lasting memories of a thoroughly enjoyable day.

I left Tonbridge charged with enthusiasm and proceeded to keep the local E6 lab in business - and the bin topped up! Further reference to *The Iris* was called for and the NG Field Weekend at Burton Bradstock seemed the perfect opportunity to live and learn with the experts. "Congenial company" was promised, and so it proved to be.

Arriving early at the hotel, I decided to take a stroll along the beach before dinner and meeting with the other Nature Group members, most of whom I had not previously met. This could have been a daunting experience, but I need not have worried: Dr Bill Burns-Begg ARPS, convivially extended a welcoming hand and introduced himself; the ice was broken. During our conversation other members of the NG arrived and it became apparent that the room full of strangers had metamorphosized into a room full of friends who shared a common interest. Subsequent days in the field saw small working groups form as we were led to various locations by the very knowledgeable Colin Varndell. With his help I began to get some better results. The more experienced members of the group were also keen to guide those new to nature photography and many new friendships were forged. I was also very fortunate that John Fairbank ARPS took me under his wing, sharing his vast experience and keen enthusiasm for orchids when the Group visited Hardington Moor.

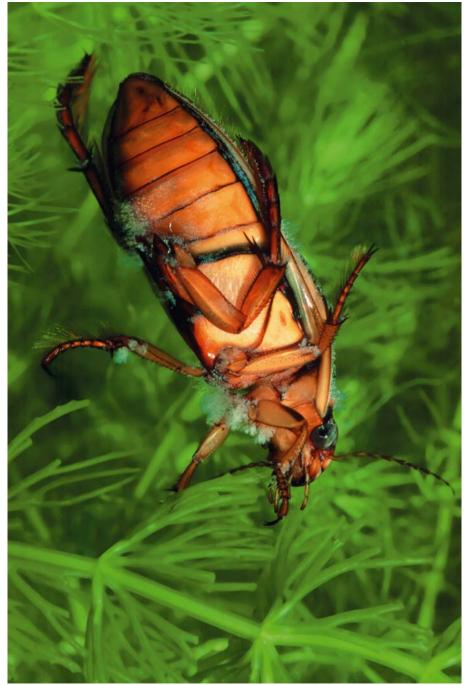
During the weekend I happened to mention to Kath that I was going to Texas on the trail of wild flowers and was duly advised that our Secretary, Robert Hawkesworth ARPS, had just returned from the same area I was planning to visit. True to the tradition of the Nature Group, I was given precise details of the best places to visit, addresses of motels and names of people whom he had found particularly helpful. Without such guidance my adventure to the Texas Hill Country may well have been less memorable, certainly less nature orientated.

continued on page 32



Photo from Frank Young ARPS 1st prize panel - " Amethyst Deceiver Trio" (Laccaria amethystea)





WATER CELL PHOTOGRAPHY

BY MICHAEL SHIRLEY ARPS

Familiarity with the techniques required for the photography of subjects at magnifications in excess of twice or three times life-size enables the photographer to explore and

record the freshwater sub-aqua world with its seeming never ending range of subject matter. Insects, flowering plants, spiders, molluscs, algae to say nothing of the myriad hosts of animalculae, many of which are large enough just to be seen with a good naked eye.

All the devices and techniques one develops for the photography of small land based creatures are applied in the same way to the photography of creatures inhabiting water. However, the additional problem arises of containing the creatures one wishes to work with in a small natural environment in which they will appear to be perfectly happy providing they are not subject to unnatural stress. This can readily be induced by the exhaustion of oxygen and the raising of temperature of the water of their temporary home. It is therefore vital that photographic sessions are not prolonged.

The essential requirement is quite obviously the water cell which is in effect a mini-aquarium. Such cells can be made fairly easily using small pieces of good quality glass. That obtained from slide mounts is ideal. It is thin, clear and may be obtained in a variety of small sizes. Nowadays with the availability of various adhesives suitable for the water-proof adhesion of glass to glass, the construction of small aquaria is not too difficult. I find that a small plastic slide box with 2" sides makes a superb jig, enabling two pieces of glass to be held at right-angles one to the other during adhesion. *Loctite* market a substance called *Glassbond* which has two great advantages, the one that it is obtainable in small tubes the other that it hardens only under the influence of Ultraviolet light. Application of such light will set the adhesive in a matter of seconds. Narrow width cells, very necessary for such creatures as daphnia or mosquito larvae can be quickly made by using such a medium as Blue Tack, sandwiched in a U-section between two pieces of glass and held together with elastic bands. The advantage is that it can be readily dismantled for cleaning.

Large cells can be constructed from 6 cm square glass and their depth varied as required merely by varying the distance between front and back walls. The fact that the side walls and base extend around the front and back walls is an advantage in that they aid stability. A useful variant is to construct a double cell so that the subject can be free-swimming in the front cell and water weed to act as a background, suitably out of focus, in the far back cell.

For free swimming and active creatures flash constitutes the only means of lighting. Many books referring to photography with aquaria stress the need for blacking out all reflective surfaces of the camera. That probably is necessary when the aquarium is much larger than the camera itself. When the converse applies I have found no such necessity. Reflections are best avoided by so angling the light source that none of the reflected light from the front face of the cell can reach the camera lens. It is sometimes an advantage to construct a black paper or card snout to fit the front of the flash unit so as to beam the light where it is wanted. A sophisticated variation can be made by fixing a tiny condenser in the system.

No doubt at this stage someone is mumbling "all well and good but how do we obtain the subject material?" That little problem is solved if you have a pond in your garden. Failing that, a water-butt can be a good source of material, especially mosquito larvae. The best way to obtain these is to look for the egg rafts and transfer them to a separate small clear glass container. It is always exciting to visit other larger bodies of water in your home district or even further afield. A suitable net with collapsible handle may be obtained from Watkins & Doncaster of Hawkhurst in Kent.

On arriving home with your catch transfer the lot with its water to a large, preferably internally white, bowl. Top up with water at the same temperature and leave to stand for 24 hours to settle. Then examine with a lens. You should be amazed at the wealth of material now available to you. There will be Crustacea in the form of Daphnia and Cyclops, Water Lice and Freshwater Shrimp, Mollusca of various kinds possibly including Freshwater Limpets and tiny Cockles, Hydra green and Brown, Rotifers, Mites, Dragonfly larvae and the larvae of Mayflies and Alder Flies, Various species of Mosquito larvae, Worms, Beetles Bugs, Caddis and China Mark moth grubs, and almost certainly Water Spiders. So much material in fact that hours can be spent with a lens just examining all these creatures going about their business. While engaged upon that all-absorbing pursuit you can be working out how you are going to catch your selected subject for photography and transfer it to the glass cell.

Final Tips:- Keep the water in the cell as clean as possible. Intermediate baths in distilled water in watch-glasses may be required for this. Some people recommend the use of distilled water in the small aquarium. Do not be so tempted unless the subject is direct air breathing. Soluble air-breathers will soon be in distress. Look out for bubbles and remove them with the tip of a paintbrush. If you ever suffer from Road, Radio or Computer Rage do not attempt this type of photography. On the other hand it could prove to be effectively therapeutic.!!

SEA TURTLES OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

BY PETER WALSH

There are five types of sea turtles that occur in Southern African waters. Sea turtles are from the suborder Cryptodia, an ancient reptilian order that have fossils dating back 200 million years. Of the five types that are present, the Leatherback (Dermochelys coriacea) and the Loggerhead

(Caretta caretta) are the most easily encountered. Less common are the Green turtle (Chelonia mydas) the Hawksbill turtle (Eretmochelys imbricata) and the Olive Ridley turtle (Lepidochelys olivacea)

The best place to observe these turtles is when the females nest along the Maputaland coast which forms part of the St. Lucia Marine Reserve on the northeastern shores of South Africa. Normally this occurs between October and February of each year in the peak of summer. Snorkeling offshore can also be rewarding in the same area, but due to Indian ocean currents being quite turbulent, underwater visibility is no better than average.

Sea turtles feed in a wide range of conditions, especially offshore. In open sea conditions they feed off pleustonic fauna such as jellyfish, bluebottles etc. However, offshore, the pattern is different, covering the shallow littoral zone for algaes, through the upper and lower sub tidal zones for sponges, molluscs etc., and deeper into the Benthic zone for crabs and Prawns. The Leatherback turtle can feed the deepest, past 1200 metres, and this is probably the reason why it is the most widely adaptable ocean turtle, because it also has the ability to survive the much colder oceans outside the tropical and temperate zones.

Sea turtles all have a similar reproductive cycle. The females nest their eggs well above the high tidal mark in specially dug sand flasks in hot summer conditions, and always at night. The female turtle emerges from the sea and waits for several minutes in the wash zone before it satisfies itself that no danger exists. It proceeds well above the high tidal mark and can be seen 'tasting' the sand. This seems to form some part of identification or suitability stage possibly to gauge temperature or moisture but the real reason for this behaviour remains a mystery. Once satisfied, a body sized hole is quickly made so that the whole turtle is just concealed below the beach sand level. The turtle now starts the slow process of making the sand flask with only the smaller hind flippers. On completion, a

clutch of ± 120 eggs are dropped into the ± 45 cm deep flask hole. Then the sand, which is moist, is systematically compacted to conceal the flask, at first lightly, then finally lifting up her body so that her full body weight is on her hind flippers. The body hole is then destroyed by a circular motion by the turtle using all her flippers to flick dry sand over the entire area, so that there is little evidence of any nest. This nesting process takes at least 45 minutes up to this point. Surprisingly, after quite a lot of these circular movements, the exhausted turtle knows instinctively where the ocean is, even though there is complete darkness! After making several pauses after every 15 metres or so, the turtle disappears back into the sea. What is really interesting about the incubation process of about 55 - 65days, is that the temperature levels determine the gender of the turtle hatchlings. Therefore it is possible to have majorities of males or females, which could cause future problems in population growth. Nature however, has overcome this problem because the same nesting female must return at least 6 times back to the same beaches, within 2-3 week intervals and use randomly different sites during the same season! If the hatchlings are able to move during the night, then the majority will survive making the \pm 70 metre journey across the beach into the sea. However this is a random event, and bad timing, i.e. during daylight. means that between Ghost Crabs, Yellow billed Kites and other predators, such as mongoose, only a small handful would make it. Sadly, the same applies once they are in the sea, except that the type of predator changes.

The Kwazulu - Natal Nature Conservation Services, the government authority, has been tagging Maputaland turtles for more than 35 years, using monel or titanium tags, and in the last few years has managed to find sponsorship for \pm 4 satellite tracked devices annually. What has become clear is that Leatherbacks tend to travel at least 10,000 km annually, and on a random basis, between the various continents! Annual records are kept of sitings of previously tagged turtles, age seems to exceed 30 years for Leatherback turtles. Please contact me if you are interested in the turtles in this area by using my E-mail "peterw@absa.co.za".

The Leatherback Turtle — Dermochelys coriacea

Current estimates show that there are \pm 35 000 nesting females in the world. Hatchlings are 50-60 mm and weigh \pm 50g at birth growing to 2.5 metre x 1.5 metre wide as adults, with a mass of \pm 950 kg. These are the largest of the sea turtles, and the most adaptable, ranging from sub-polar to tropical oceans worldwide. Annual nesting female distributions range from Mexico's Pacific coast \pm 30,000; French Guiana \pm 5,000; Malaysia \pm 1,500 and Maputaland, South Africa. at \pm 400. Females lay \pm 1,000 eggs in \pm 120 egg batches at fortnightly intervals, each nesting season. There can be several years between each nesting season, and a random use of nesting areas in the world.

The Loggerhead Turtle — Caretta caretta

Hatchlings are ± 40 mm at birth and adults reach a size of 120 cm x 75 cm wide, weighing ± 160 kg. They are found only in the tropical and temperate areas of the oceans and feed on echinoderms, sea-urchins, molluscs and hermit crabs. Open sea diet reverts to Ianthina, storm-snails, blue bottles and other pteropods. While they only move "locally" this can involve ± 5,000 km movements and in the Southern African region this means to Madagascar, northwards to Kenyan shores and southwards to Cape Agulhas. Nesting females lay ± 500 eggs in ± 120 egg batches in a nesting season, with 2—3 week intervals. There is no fixed duration between nesting seasons, with intervals between 2 years and 10 years. Nesting Loggerhead turtles are found on the southeast Atlantic coast of the United States, Japan, Burma and Maputaland, South Africa where ± 500 turtles nest annually %

Back home it became apparent that my nature photography skills, although improving, still left something to be desired.

Before my sojourn I had booked a short course at West Dean College, Sussex, under the tutelage of none other than Heather Angel. I mentioned earlier how impressed I was by her enthusiasm and love of nature; this subsequently became abundantly clear. Most tutors started at gone nine o'clock and finished at four. Not HA. We started at 7.00 am sharp and finished around 7.00 pm. For a world-renowned celebrity to be so friendly and genuinely interested in all us students was quite refreshing. Like a true professional, she was able to answer in depth all our questions and was keen to demonstrate more difficult aspects of photography to ensure that everyone grasped the point. By the end of the course I was beginning to feel like a nature photographer, with such an excellent and meticulous tutor even I could not have failed to improve my photographic skills.

Shortly after this course, Nick Jarvis, a veteran of the Burton Bradstock extravaganza, organized an excellent field trip, concentrating particularly on orchids at woods near Wendover. Here was the perfect opportunity to practice my newly acquired skills. Sadly, only three people supported Nick, but we all had a most enjoyable day and, despite the inclement weather, shot some good photographs. It was another memorable Nature Group day and one that gave me the chance to explore the geography and flora of an area which contrasts sharply to my native Essex.

When I first spoke to Kath Bull about the Nature Group, she said that becoming a member was one of the best decisions she has made as a photographer, and, from my brief experience, I can only agree. I have made many new friends, received much help and guidance and look forward to becoming a more proficient member of the Group in the future &

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Please contact the Editor for rates etc.,

A PHOTOGRAPHIC HOLIDAY ON GOWER

WITH ROBERT HAWKESWORTH ARPS (with some help from Margaret Hodge FRPS)

at The Worm's Head Hotel - Rhossili 11th to 16th June 2000

Cost £295 For full details please contact Robert at:-5, Ravensdale Drive, Nottingham, NG8 2SL. Tel: 0115-928-1050.

HOSKING TOURS

Nature Photographic Holidays

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New Brochure and itineraries now available.

For further details please contact:-

David Hosking FRPS
Pages Green House, Wetheringsett, Stowmarket, Suffolk IPI4 5QA
Tel: 01728 861113 Fax: 01728 860222
e-mail:david@flpa-images.co.uk

NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY PRO-TOURS & WORKSHOPS GEORGE McCARTHY

PROFESSIONAL WILDLIFE & NATURE PHOTOGRAPHER LECTURES WORKSHOPS - TOURS - PICTURE LIBRARY - CONSULTANT

Make the Millennium a year to remember by joining professional wildlife photographer George McCarthy on his now celebrated 'photographers only' tours.

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If you need to know more why not have a club lecture on any of the above subjects or simply contact George McCarthy:-

12 SEARLES VIEW HORSHAM WEST SUSSEX RHI2 4FG. Tel: 01403 257917 Fax: 01403 267503 E-mail: George McCarthy@compuserve.com

Bird Photography Workshops with Chris Gomersall

Professional wildlife photographer and former RSPB photographic manager Chris Gomersall will be leading a number of bird photography residential workshops in 2000.

"Red kites in focus" - 2 and 3 day breaks in mid Wales run from l4th-l6th February, 20th-23rd March and 6th-9th November. If interested, please call Kitewatchers Wildlife Breaks for details -Tel: 01597 811169.

Isle of Coll from 6th-13th June - Chris will also be leading a one-week course for the Inversnaid Photography Centre - *Tel*: 01877 386254.

DAVID OSBORN FRPS, EFIAP

Naturalist, Wildlife Photographer & Lecturer
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FALKLAND ISLANDS. Departing 13th November 2000. "A JOURNEY SOUTH" for 17 days amongst the magnificent wilderness areas of the Falklands, visiting Volunteer Point, Pebble, Saunders, Carcass and Sea-Lion Islands. Endless opportunities to photograph Penguin, Elephant Seal and a host of other species in close proximity in a beautiful setting.

CENTRAL NEPAL. Departing 23rd February 2001. Another fabulous Photo-travel Tour of the wildlife and culture "*The Search for the One-horned Rhino*" offers a wonderful opportunity to experience this beautiful and magical country.

Small group tours, designed specifically for Nature Photographers available. Call or write now for further details to:- David Osborn FRPS

5, Crompton Close, Little Haywood, Stafford, ST18 0YS Tel:- 01889-881928.

Barrie Taylor FRPS in association with Avian Adventures

Offers Photographic Tours in 2000 to:-

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Norway & Finland - June for Owls, Birds & Bears

Namibia - July / August.

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Madagascar - October / November for Nature & Travel photography.
Falklands - November / December.

For further information and brochure contact myself on 0121 308 8726 or Gerry Griffiths on 01384 372 013.

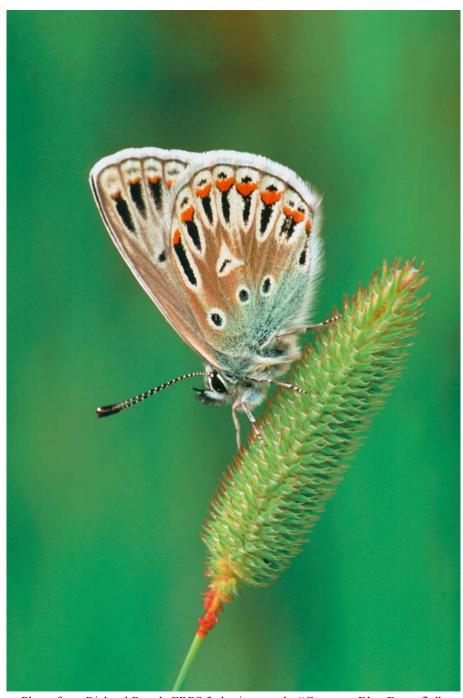


Photo from Richard Revels FRPS 3rd prize panel - "Common Blue Butterfly".

