

# THE IRIS



MAGAZINE OF THE NATURE GROUP OF THE RPS

Issue No. 115  
Spring 2013

ISSN 1757-2991



*Little Owl calling by the late Tony Hamblin FRPS*



The  
Royal  
Photographic  
Society

Patron: Her Majesty The Queen. Incorporated by Royal Charter

# Experience the amazing Falkland Islands

- Departing January 2014
- Small group photo-tour
- Fully escorted
- Experienced leaders
- Experience of a lifetime

Why not join us?

For further details contact:

**David Osborn FRPS:** [www.davidosbornphotography.co.uk](http://www.davidosbornphotography.co.uk)

Email: [poppyland3@btinternet.com](mailto:poppyland3@btinternet.com)

© Dawn Osborn FRPS



**focus4nature**  
wildlife photography tours

Emperors, Admirals  
and Cardinals -  
butterfly and macro  
photography tour to Bulgaria

Sun 23<sup>rd</sup> to Sun 30<sup>th</sup> June 2013

For tour details and full  
program please visit  
[www.focus4nature.co.uk](http://www.focus4nature.co.uk)  
or call 07887994888



## Publication information

'The Iris' is published by the Nature Group of the RPS three times a year. Copy and publication dates are as follows:

Spring Copy deadline 20th December  
Published early March.

Summer Copy deadline 30th April  
Published early July.

Winter Copy deadline 31st August  
Published early November.

All contributions should be submitted to the Editor. Items covering any aspect of nature photography and/or natural history are welcomed, including reviews on equipment and relevant books. The Editor can be contacted at: iris\_editor@btinternet.com

Copy should be sent as .txt or .doc files by email or on CD. Please do not send hand written copy.

Digitally captured photographic images are preferred but scanned transparencies are also acceptable. Images should be supplied on CD as sRGB Tiff files, 6" x 4" at 300 ppi (1800 x 1200 pixels, file size approx 6.17MB). Original transparencies may be submitted, however, the Editor cannot specify how long they may be away from the author.

No payment will be made for material used and whilst every care will be taken, neither the Editor, the Nature Group or the Printers can accept liability for any damage that may occur to photographic material submitted.

The views expressed within The Iris are solely those of the contributor and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Nature Group Committee or the Editor.

### Distribution:

'The Iris' is forwarded to members using address labels produced by the RPS Membership Dept in Bath. Any member not receiving their copy should contact that department so that their name appears on a label in the future. However the Secretary will be pleased to post single copies to members who have failed to receive them.

### Copyright:

© All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means without prior permission of the copyright holder.

© Photographs and articles - individual contributors. All other material the Nature Group of the Royal Photographic Society.

### Printed by

Stanley L Hunt (Printers) Limited  
Midland Road, Rushden.

### Design & layout

by Dawn Osborn FRPS

# Contents

- 2 Editorial**
- 3 From the Chair**
- 4 37th AGM, Spring Meeting & Annual Exhibition of the RPS Nature Group**
- 5 Field Meetings 2013**
- 8 Its not cricket**  
by Tony Bond FRPS
- 10 Alpine Flowers of the Swiss Alps**  
by Mark Monckton ARPS
- 14 The Falkland Islands**  
by Dawn Osborn FRPS
- 18 Costa Rica**  
by Margaret Johnson LRPS
- 21 The Three Thousand Plus Lens reaches subjects other lenses can't!**  
by Russell Edwards
- 24 Obituary - Tony Hamblin FRPS**
- 26 Nature Group Residential Weekend & Nature Photo Day**
- 27 Stay Calm and Carry On**  
by Colin Smale ARPS
- 28 Book Review - British Hoverflies**
- 29 Book Review - Mushrooms**
- 30 2012 Nature Photographers' Joint Convention**  
by Robert Hawkesworth FRPS
- 31 Regions**
- 32 Photographing Hoverflies in flight in the wild**  
by John Bebbington FRPS

Cover Photograph:

'Little Owl calling' by the late Tony Hamblin FRPS

# Committee

## Officers

### **Chairman: John Bebbington FRPS**

Quantock View, Newtown, Langport, Somerset, TA10 9SE  
Tel: 01458 253027 Email: john.bebbingtonfrps@ukonline.co.uk

### **Secretary: Margaret Johnson LRPS**

53 Mapperley Orchard, Arnold, Nottingham, NG5 8AH  
Tel: 01159 265893 E-mail: m.jos@btinternet.com

### **Treasurer: Margery Maskell ARPS**

Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 5DW  
Email: kevin.margery@tesco.net

### **Vice Chairman: Tony Bond FRPS**

Leigh, Lancs WN7 3LJ  
Tel: 01942 674773

### **Immediate Past Chairman: Peter Jones ARPS**

Bilsthorpe, Notts, NG22 8TB  
Tel: 01623 411215 E-mail: pwjonesarps@btinternet.com

## Committee Members

### **Editor of The Iris: Dawn Osborn FRPS**

Dereham, Norfolk, NR20 5LH  
E-mail: iris\_editor@btinternet.com

### **Exhibition Secretary: Kevin Maskell FRPS**

Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 5DW  
Email: kevin.margery@tesco.net

### **NG Rep to Advisory Panel: John Bebbington FRPS**

Langport, Somerset, TA10 9SE  
Tel: 01458 253027 Email: john.bebbingtonfrps@ukonline.co.uk

### **Programme Co-ordinator: Richard Revels FRPS**

Biggleswade, Beds. SG18 8EE  
Tel: 01767 313065 E-mail: richard.revels@talktalk.net

### **Kevin Elsbey ARPS**

Aylsham, Norfolk, NR  
Tel: 01263-732839 Email: wildlife@greenbee.net

### **John Jones ARPS**

Kegworth, Derby, DE74 2FW  
Tel: 01509 672125

### **Sue McGarrigle LRPS**

Charlecote, Warwickshire, CV35 9EL  
E-mail: sue@suemcgarrigle.co.uk

### **Geoff Trinder ARPS**

Belton, Doncaster, DN9 1PG  
Tel: 01427 872051

## Ex officio Committee members

President of the Society;  
Vice-President of the Society;  
Director General of the Society;  
Hon. Treasurer of the Society;  
Chairman of the Nature A & F Distinctions Panel

## Nature Group Exhibitions

CDs/DVDs of Nature Group Exhibitions are available for purchase by camera clubs/photographic societies for use in their programme. CDs/DVDs containing all the accepted images and a commentary are professionally produced and highly recommended.

For more information please contact the Exhibition Secretary, details above or go to our website: [www.rpsnaturegroup.com](http://www.rpsnaturegroup.com)

# Editorial

As I write this there is just one more week of February left. My cameras haven't seen the light of day for several weeks but then, there hasn't been much light in my corner of the world. I don't know about you, but I for one have had enough of gloomy cold damp weather. After a few days respite I was optimistic that Spring was around the corner, the birds seem to have thought so too, but no, the forecast for the next week seems to be more low temperatures and a wind chill that will make it feel much colder. I don't really mind the cold, but its the lack of light that I hate. Hopefully, by the time you read this, Winter will be a fading memory.

Filling the pages of this issue of The Iris was quite a challenge. Some of the committee were able to help out and I even had to write something myself. Therefore I am putting out a plea for articles. I'm sure that many of will have travelled to some fascinating places, both at home and abroad, in search of your images, so I'm hoping that you will open up your word processors and share your experiences and your images with your fellow members through the pages of The Iris. Equally, if you have recently acquired a new piece of kit, a new camera or tripod for example, or a book you have found helpful, we would love to receive a report from you. If you have an idea but are not sure and want to discuss it, drop me an email and I will call you or email a reply. The next issue will feature the award winning images from the group's forthcoming Annual Exhibition, but I need articles to fill at least 16 pages, so please, get writing. I look forward to hearing from you.

There has been a wonderful response to the request for members to host field meetings this year. Please put the dates in your diary and do try to support some of them, especially if they are in your region.

Finally, I look forward to meeting some of you at the Annual Spring Meeting, AGM and Annual Exhibition Opening in April. Do come along if you can. It is an excellent day out with some superb natural history images to view as well as an opportunity to meet other nature photographers.



# From the chair

---

It hardly seems possible that this will be my last 'From the Chair'. Two years have passed incredibly quickly – and fairly smoothly, too, thanks to all members of the Nature Group Committee, to whom I am really grateful for their support, especially towards the end of last year when I was incapacitated. I'd also like to express my thanks to Judith Parry and the volunteers at Smethwick PS who are so accommodating and supportive.

At our delayed Committee meeting last week we discussed the Exhibition – it seems that several entrants didn't read the conditions of entry, but fortunately because Margery and Kevin Maskell are Treasurer and Exhibition Secretary they were able to solve all the problems immediately! However Committee did decide that in future, the conditions of entry would be simplified and rigorously applied – entries not conforming will not be accepted – so next year please, please, read the conditions of entry carefully!

We are looking forward to the Spring Meeting, AGM and Exhibition opening at Smethwick PS on Saturday 6th April, and hope to see as many of you as possible there. It promises to be a great day – a talk from Kevin Elsbey FRPS, and what promises to be a very high standard of selected images and prints (the latter will be on display all day).

Depending on which chair I'm writing from the Somerset landscape looks quite normal (to the East) or totally waterlogged (the levels to the West). In November the River Parrett flooded to a greater extent than for the last 20 years, with water as far as the eye could see, and many fields around Langport are still flooded. The local Nature Reserves at Westhay, Shapwick and West Sedgemoor have been very badly affected and it will be interesting to see how bird and invertebrate populations have fared. The vegetation in many fields where water has recently receded looks completely dead.

We have a good programme of field meetings arranged for this year – details elsewhere in this issue, on the Nature Group website and the events pages of the RPS website. I'm grateful to everyone

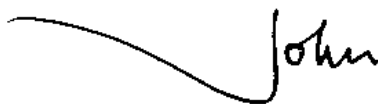
who has organised events. Please support these events especially if there is one in your region. Thanks to our Director General, Dr. Michael Pritchard, for resolving an issue which has gone on for several years – in the Events section of the RPS website, our field meetings formerly came under the heading 'other' but there is now a 'field meetings' category in the events section.

I hope that you have completed the RPS Journal survey; now is your chance to say what you feel about the current content, layout and any other matters. If you do nothing, your voice will remain unheard! Committee will be giving a response through me on the afternoon after the Advisory Board meeting on 23rd March in Bath.

Portfolio Three is due out towards the end of this year, and will include a section representing the Nature Group. After discussions your Committee asked Richard Revels to submit images for consideration and the editorial panel has accepted a selection and text for inclusion in the publication. Many thanks to Richard for all the work which has gone into this.

I'm sure that all of you who are camera club members have sat and inwardly fumed at Judges' comments. During the last few months one colleague's image has been rated "just not sharp enough", "a good try but not quite there", "highly commended", "second but the winner only beat it by a whisker", "certificate of merit". Recently in a natural history competition "never heard of an Elephant Hawk-moth, but that's what the photographer says it is – what does a Giraffe Hawk-moth look like?" If any of you ever find one, please let me know!

Finally I'd like to wish my successor, Tony Bond FRPS, a trouble-free two years in office, and I look forward to seeing you on 6th April at Smethwick.



John Bebbington  
February 2013



# The 37th Annual General Meeting, Spring Meeting and Annual Exhibition Opening of the RPS Nature Group

to be held at:-

**Smethwick Photographic Society**  
**The Old Schoolhouse, Churchbridge, Oldbury, West Midlands, B69 2AS**  
**Saturday 6th April 2013**

## **Timetable**

**10.30hrs** Assemble for 11.00hrs start

**11.00hrs** A presentation 'Wildlife Photography around the world'  
by Kevin Elsby FRPS

**12.30hrs** Break for lunch. Light lunches will be available in the clubhouse (ploughman's or jacket potatoes with cheese, beans, chilli or any combination), but please advise the Secretary at least 10 days before the AGM if you would like to order a lunch.  
There is a dining area available if you wish to bring sandwiches.

## **14.00hrs 33rd Annual General Meeting**

- Agenda**
1. Apologies for absence.
  2. Minutes of the 36th AGM 2012, printed in issue 113 of 'The Iris'.
  3. Matters arising
  4. Chairman's Report
  5. Treasurer's Report.
  6. Secretary's Report
  7. Election of Officers and Committee
  8. Any Other Business
  9. Date and Venue of the 38th AGM 2014

## **14.45hrs Opening of the 2013 Exhibition.**

Presentation of the Awards  
followed by a showing of the accepted projected images.  
Accepted Prints will be on display for the duration of the day.

## **Directions:-**

Leave the M5 at Junction 2 and get into right hand lane. At roundabout (with traffic lights) approximately 200 yards from motorway take A4034 right towards West Bromwich and immediately get into left hand lane of dual carriageway. At first traffic lights (approx 1/3 mile) turn left into Park Street. After a hundred yards or so turn right into Churchbridge (cul-de-sac). The Old Schoolhouse is last but one building on left. SatNav: B69 2AS

# Field Meetings 2013

---

**Date & Time:** Saturday 23rd March 2012 10.00hrs

**Location:** Havergate Island, Orford, Suffolk.

There will be a maximum of 12 on the day, but a second date has been pencilled in for Sunday 24th March if demand is high enough

**Meeting Place:** Orford Quay (Pay and display car park available - Estimated cost £4.50)

First Boat departs at 10:00 am

First Return Boat at 3:00 pm

**Leader:** David O'Neill

**Cost:** RSPB Members £12, others £19

If you are an RSPB member paying a reduced rate you will need to show your card on the day.

**Items to bring:** Stout shoes, waterproofs, packed lunch

**Other information:** Facilities on the island include an unmanned visitor centre with nearby toilet. There are several hides available which offer shelter and opportunities to view and photograph wildfowl in addition to the hares.

**Further information:** <http://www.rspb.org.uk/reserves/guide/h/havergate/index.aspx>

**Contact:** David O'Neill Telephone: 07887 591640

**Date:** Sunday 21st April 2013

**Location:** Paxton Pits, Cambridgeshire

Paxton Pits is five minutes from the A1 (London-Edinburgh) trunk road.

**Time:** 7am for the best chance of hearing & seeing Nightingales. 10.30 am for conducted tour of the reserve by the wardens. The tour needs to be booked asap, so please advise if you would like a tour.

**Meeting Place** Visitor Centre

**Grid Ref:** The Reserve entrance is TL 196 629 (link to Bing maps). Post code PE19 6ET for SatNavs.

**Leader:** Ann Miles FRPS

**Cost:** £2.50 for tour which includes tea/coffee at the visitor centre. Otherwise contribution to the Friends of Paxton Pits appreciated

**Subjects of Interest:** Early morning it should be possible to hear, see and photograph Nightingales – the first generally guaranteed (unless a very late year) but they are difficult to photograph. Paxton Pits is famous for the number of Nightingales it supports with up to 28 singing males recorded. Males return to Paxton during the first or second week of April (the earliest ever arrived on 4 April) and quickly establish territories, from which they sing to attract females. Females, which don't sing, arrive a few days later.

Once mated, singing stops and the pair resume their secretive life. Unmated birds, may sing well into June. Dusk and dawn are the best times to enjoy the amazing song of Nightingales but at Paxton, they can be heard at almost any time of day.

Paxton has a number of other photo opportunities – a large Heronry with lots of Cormorants, a colony of Black-headed gulls, also Otters, Kingfishers and Terns

**More information:** <http://www.paxton-pits.org.uk>

**Contact:** Ann Miles. Tel 01223 262637

Email [ann@pin-sharp.co.uk](mailto:ann@pin-sharp.co.uk)

**Date & Time:** Monday 6th May 2013 at 10.00 hrs.

**Location:** Abbots Wood, Arlington East Sussex

**Meeting Place:** Car Park off Cane Heath

**Grid Ref:** TQ557073

**Leader:** Douglas Neve LRPS

**Cost:** £3. for 4 hrs car parking

**Subjects of Interest:** Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Orange-tip Butterflies

**Items to bring:** Stout shoes, waterproofs, packed lunch.

**Additional information:** Abbots Wood car park is located 1.8 km due east of the village of Arlington. Abbots Wood is a level 3km walk.

**Contact** Douglas Neve - Tel 01323 507015

Email [douggrace@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:douggrace@hotmail.co.uk)

**Date & time:** Sunday 2nd June 2013

**Location:** Monkton Nature Reserve

**Meeting Place:** The Gate or car Park, Monkton Nature Reserve, Monkton, Ramsgate, KENT.

**Grid Ref:** TR283657, Postcode for Sat Nav: CT12 4LH

**Leader:** James Foad

**Cost:** £3 Entry and depending on numbers or £5 Entrance which includes a guided walk of the reserve if enough interest.

**Main subjects of interest:** Orchids incl Bee Orchid (*Ophrys apifera*) and Lizard Orchid (*Himantoglossum hircinum*), Adders tongue (*Ophioglossum vulgatum*) and other flora. Butterflies, Dragon/Damselflies, Grass Snakes (*Natrix natrix*) and Common Lizard (*Lacerta vivipara*) Birds and Wasp Spider

**Items to bring:** Stout shoes, waterproofs, drink and packed lunch. Tripods, etc.

**Additional information:** Parts of the reserve suitable for disabled/wheelchairs. After lunch possibly a visit to East Blean Woods for the rare Heath Fritillary.

# Field Meetings 2013 continued:

---

## **Monkton Nature Reserve, Sunday 2nd June 2013, continued ...**

**Directions:** Follow signs for M2 and Ramsgate. From M2 take the A299 Thanet way. At first roundabout take 3rd exit Ramsgate A299, at next roundabout take 4th exit and the Nature reserve is immediately on your right and the entrance is where the trees stop. From A28 follow signs for Ramsgate. Just before you get to Sarre Mill turn right at the mini island on to the A253. Shortly before the junction with the A299 the entrance to the reserve will be found on your left before the trees start.

**Contact:** James Foad. Please telephone or email before the day to show your interest.  
Tel: 07850-368797: If answer phone is on please leave a message. E mail: james\_foad@hotmail.com  
Please put "Monkton Nature" in the subject line.

**Date & time:** Saturday June 9th, 2012. 9.45 for 10.00 am briefing.

**Location:** Ainsdale Sand Dunes, Sefton Coast, Merseyside

**Meeting Place:** The Ainsdale Discovery Centre, The Promenade, Shore Road, Ainsdale-on-Sea, Nr Southport, PR8 2QB

**Main subjects of interest:** orchids and other dune flora and fauna, insects, etc.

**Leader:** Trevor Davenport ARPS

Dr Phil Smith, MBE, has kindly agreed to join us on this field trip; Phil is a noted expert on the Sefton Coast and author of 'The Sands of Time' and 'The Sands of Time Revisited' (Amberley Press 2009).

**Additional information:** The sand-dunes of the Sefton Coast provide the largest sand-dune complex in England covering an area of approximately 2100 ha. It is a fascinating and ever-changing habitat with many photographic opportunities throughout the seasons. Early summer is usually when the dunes are richly rewarding for both botanic and entomological subjects. We should expect to find up to six species of Orchid as well as many other botanic species. Northern Dune Tiger-beetle (*Cicindela hybrida*) - a superbly photogenic insect; and a plentiful array of early butterflies and dragonflies. The area is also noted for two increasingly rare species: The Sand Lizard (*Lacerta agilis*), and The Natterjack Toad (*Epidalea calamita*), formerly (*Bufo calamita*). Although not easy to locate, we will do some prior research into possible locations.

There is plentiful accommodation in the nearby seaside resort of Southport.

**Items to bring:** There are very few natural hazards to worry about but the area is exposed so bring warm clothing and light weatherproofs in case of rain. Sensible shoes or boots are also essential. Bring a packed lunch and water or something to drink.

**Contact:** Trevor Davenport -

Tel: 01704 870284 Mobile: 07831 643844;

Email: trevor.davenport@virgin.net

Please call or email if you require further information.

**Date & time:** Sunday June 16th, 2013.

**10.00am for 10.30am start to 4.30pm approx.**

**Location:** Miller's Dale, Derbyshire

**Meeting Place:** Miller's Dale Car Park

**Grid Ref:** OS Sheet 119 SK 138 733.

**Cost:** Charge for car park.

**Main subjects of interest:** Flora and Insects.

**Leader:** Robert Hawkesworth FRPS.

**Items to bring:** Suitable outdoor clothing and strong footwear. Packed lunch and drink.

**Other information:** Terrain varies from metalled trail to possibly muddy riverside. The going is from flat along the trail, to quite strenuous if you decide to explore the areas high above the trail. The bank of the River Wye is also worthy of exploration - a steep climb up or down but both accesses are stepped.

**Contact:** Robert Hawkesworth FRPS It is helpful to know numbers so please book in advance.

Tel: 0115 9281050.

Mobile: (use on the day only) 07960 17729

**Date & time:** 6th July 2013, 9.00am to 5.00pm

**Location:** Ryewater Nursery, Bishops Down, Sherborne, Dorset DT9 5PL

(by kind permission of Clive Farrell)

**Leader:** John Bebbington FRPS

**Cost:** Free

**Main subjects of interest:** Ryewater Nursery is a very large reserve with a wide range of habitats, flowers and insects, all easily accessible. Originally a plant nursery, it has been turned into a nature reserve, with the emphasis on butterflies and dragonflies, and the range of habitats and plants is exceptionally rich.

**Items to bring:** Stout footwear or wellies if it is damp, waterproofs, packed lunch.



# Field Meetings 2013 continued:

## **Ryewater Nursery, Bishops Down, continued ...**

**Additional Information:** Unfortunately this venue is not suitable for wheelchairs, but the ground is level. There are toilets on site, next to the car park.

Sorry - no dogs.

**Directions:** Ryewater is at ST665106 (OS 1:50 000 sheet 194, Dorchester & Weymouth)

From the north - take the A352 Dorchester road south from Sherborne. After passing through the village of Longburton take the first left signposted Boyshill. Take the next left turn and after about ¼ mile turn right into Ryewater Nursery. There will be an 'RPSNG' sign with arrow.

From the south - take the A352 Sherborne road north from Dorchester. After passing through the village of Middlemarsh, go past the B3146 turning (on the right) and take the next right signposted Boyshill. Take the next left turn and after about ¼ mile turn right into Ryewater Nursery. There will be 'RPSNG' signs with arrows.

SatNav: Ryewater Nursery, Bishops Down, Sherborne, Dorset DT95PL

**Contact:** John Bebbington FRPS

Email: john.bebbingtonfrps@btinternet.com

Tel: 01458 253027 until 9pm on 5th July,

07790 289879 from 0700 on 6th July.

**Date & time:** Tuesday 6th August 2013 at 10.00am

**Location:** Windover Hill, Wilmington, East Sussex

**Meeting place:** Car Park at junction of Wilmington Street and South Downs Way

**Grid Ref:** TQ531032

**Leader:** Douglas Neve LRPS

**Cost:** None

**Items to bring:** Stout shoes, waterproofs, packed lunch.

**Additional information:** The car park is located 1.8 km SW of Wilmington. Please ensure that you park only in the car park indicated. The surface is uneven, so caution is advised. Access to the site involves a moderate climb of about 1.5km.

**Contact:** Douglas Neve - 01323 507015 Email douggrace@hotmail.co.uk

*Members are advised to check the website for updates and new meetings which may have been scheduled after publication of The Iris.*

**Date & time:** Sunday 17th November 2013 10.00am

**Location:** Clowes Wood, nr Whitstable, Kent.

**Meeting Place:** Forest Car Park

**Grid Ref:** TR136630 Closest Sat nav CT5 3ER

**Leader:** James Foad

**Cost:** Free

**Main subjects of interest:** Fungi

**Items to bring:** Stout shoes or wellingtons, waterproofs, packed lunch, hot drink, tripods.

**Additional information:** Part of the wood is suitable for wheelchairs and disabled but some areas may be slippery and/or muddy

**Directions:** From the M2 continue on the A299.

Then follow A2990 Thanet Way, at 3rd roundabout take the 3rd exit into Millstrood Road. Turn right into South Street, right into Radfall Road and continue to Clowes Wood and forest car park

**Directions:** From A28 exit onto B2248 Kingsmead Road. At the second roundabout take the 2nd exit on to St Stephen's Road, then at the next island the 3rd exit on to St Stephens Hill. At the next traffic island take 2nd exit on to Canterbury Hill which becomes Wood Hill then Hackington Road. After about 1.3 miles left into Radfall Road - car park will be on your left.

**Contact:** James Foad. Please call or email in advance to show your interest. Tel: 07850-368797: (Please leave a message). Email: james\_foad@hotmail.com Please put "Clowes Wood" in the subject line.

## Field Meetings 2013

### Its not too late to volunteer!

If you would like to host a field meeting in your area, please contact Richard Revels (contact details on page 2).

Details of your event can be posted on the Nature Group's own website: [www.rpsnaturegroup.com](http://www.rpsnaturegroup.com) as well as the RPS website. If possible, they will also be published in The Iris\*.

\* Subject to deadlines

# It's not cricket

by Tony Bond FRPS

In the Spring 2011 issue of *The Iris* I wrote about those jewels of the fungus world, the waxcaps, and how they are being used as indicators of unimproved grassland. When I did so I could not have anticipated that I would be involved in a survey for Natural England in an attempt to identify this now rare habitat.

It all started with a request from Alice Kimpton to members of the North West Fungus Group for information on waxcap sites on the West Pennine Moors. I know Alice from her days as manager of Ainsdale Sand Dunes NNR since when she has risen in the Natural England hierarchy. For those of you unfamiliar with God's Own County these are the western slopes of the Pennines between Bolton and Preston. I volunteered White Coppice, a collection of cottages and farms to the east of Chorley. I knew that the delightful cricket field there had a good waxcap population and I had photographed then on rough grazing nearby. Alice attended the AGM of the NWFG in February, 2012 to explain that the ultimate objective of the survey was to see if there were any sites which justified SSSI or NNR status. For this to happen about eleven species of waxcap plus some other grassland specie such as *Entoloma* would be needed.

The original proposals for how the survey was to be carried out were condemned as unworkable by the members of the NWFG. They were referred back to Kew and the modified version proved to be much more acceptable. I confirmed my interest although I knew that the project would test my identification skills. I would not have got involved at all but for a key provided by a member of the NWFG who is involved in the same work in North Wales as I know that *Hygrocybe* is not an easy genus.

The next stage was the bureaucracy culminating in a form which I had to sign specifying my placement with Natural England almost as if I were a permanent employee. Interestingly, there was no mention of the dreaded Health and Safety in this process although I did have to complete an emergency contacts form. Perhaps Natural England is fully aware that the law says that everyone is responsible for their own safety and that people involved in a project such as this will know how to behave in the countryside.

Having completed the formalities I was then sent details of the sites to be surveyed by Graeme Skelcher, the ecologist running the project. I opted for White Coppice and was allocated the cricket field and an area just to the north known as The Lowe. I was introduced to the area many years ago by the late Colin Smith who lived nearby in Chorley. We photographed Green Hairstreaks and Cuckoo on the hillside beyond the cricket field. Colin always wanted to play cricket there simply because of the setting, but I do not think that he ever did. It was here that Colin and I had our last outing just six days before he suffered a heart attack. And the last shot we took together after almost forty years of collaboration was a group of three Fly Agaric on the banks of the nearby River Goit.

I met Graeme at the cricket field on the 18th. of October to discuss the details and make a start. He also passed over to me a GPS receiver to record any hot spots. I agreed to make three visits spaced at two week intervals. I asked Graeme what was the best way to cover the cricket field area and he recommended walking in ever-decreasing circles (sounds familiar). We soon came across waxcaps and I set about identification using the key and doing a rough count. I was surprised how small they were compared with waxcaps I had seen at more natural sites and this made it rather tricky to assess the stickiness of the cap and stipe which are key features of waxcap identification. There was a definite hot spot in one corner for which the GPS receiver gave me a ten figure grid reference. A cricketer would have described it as deep extra cover for a right handed batsman at the pavilion end. I collected some samples and looked at the spores under the microscope but this did not prove useful as waxcap spores are much the same size and shape. However I did manage to identify six species of *Hygrocybe*, *chlorophana*, *ceracea*, *laeta*, *irrigata*, *pratense* and *reidii*. All of these were on a list provided by a friend of mine but she recorded ten species in 2000, a particularly good year. One look at The Lowe was enough to convince me that I was unlikely to find any waxcaps there. It had not been grazed for some time and was now just an area of rank grassland.

I returned two weeks later and was grateful that I was able to retreat to the car so easily during the frequent heavy showers. I was pleased to be able to add *H. coccinea* and *virginea* to the list. Having done the recording I got out my camera and Benbo but the small size of the fungi which hampered identification also made photography difficult. Some fungi only just poked through the top of the closely mown sward. The Lowe was unchanged.

The weather was much kinder for my last visit. I started by looking at The Lowe and much to my surprise found three *Hygrocybe laeta*. I found only three species on the cricket field but was delighted to identify *H. punicea* with its very robust stipe which was not on the list for 2000. It only remained for me to complete the record forms and return the GPS receiver.

I am glad that I took part in the survey although I was hoping to do more photography during my three visits. However it has been a dreadful autumn for we fungus folk despite, or because of, the very wet summer. If we are to be able to continue to enjoy our photography in places of natural history interest it is essential that someone identifies precious sites so that if they can be defended should there be any threats. A survey of just a few weeks and involving fungi is bound to be of limited value. I do not know whether the project will continue next year. It requires money to continue and must be of very low priority to someone sitting at a desk in Whitehall and working out where the next cuts are to fall.



#### Pictures:

1. The cricket field at White Coppice with The Lowe beyond.
2. *Hygrocybe chlorophana*, The Lowe, September, 2011.
3. *Hygrocybe coccinea*, the cricket field, 1st. November, 2012.
4. Fly agaric by the Goit, September, 2011.



# Alpine flowers of the Swiss Alps

by Mark Monckton ARPS



I have been photographing wildlife for over 15 years, mainly fungi, insects, orchids, butterflies and mammals. Last year (2012) I decided I wanted to photograph subjects completely different to my usual ones. I decided to go somewhere I had never visited before where I could photograph something completely new. So, I booked a botanical trip to Switzerland with a well-known nature tour operator. The trip was in mid June 2012, which was the beginning of spring where we would be staying. The eight day tour was based in the Swiss town of Wengen in Lauterbrunnen.

I met up with the tour group at London Heathrow from where we flew to Zürich. Several train journeys followed before finally arriving at the hotel where we would be staying for the next 8 days.

Our first trip took us to the summit of Männlichen (2,230 metres) in search of alpine flowers. We arrived via a 1,000 metre ascent by cable car from Wengen. The weather started off cloudy and windy, and improved during the day to warm and sunny. During the trip in the cable car we spotted two Chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra*) grazing on the steep slopes. After we arrived at the top, we looked around the cable car station for alpine flowers. We

found lots of Globeflowers (*Trollius europaeus*) and Mountain buttercups (*Ranunculus montanus*) in abundance. On the grass slopes near the cable car we spotted Mountain Pansy (*Viola calcarata*) and Birds eye primrose (*Primula farinosa*) and next to the melting snow we saw Crocus (*Albiflorus subsp. albiflorus*) in flower, both pink and white variants. At the edge of the cliff we found a 10 year old Swiss Rock Jasmine (*Androsace helvetica*) growing out from rocky ledge. During our ascent to the summit we came across Oxlip (*Primula elatior*), Spring Gentian (*Gentiana verna*) and Lousewort. Higher up on Männlichen, we found Alpine Buttercups, Alpine Wood Forget-Me-Not (*Myosotis alpestris*) and Moss Campion (*Silene acaulis*).

Following a break for lunch, we trekked to Kline Schidegg Station and along the path saw Alpine Marmot (*Marmota marmota*). Many high altitude birds were spotted along the way including Ring Ouzel (*Turdus torquatus*), Alpine Chough (*Pyrrhocorax graculus*) and Citril Finch (*Carduelis citronella*). Alpines seen included; Green Alder tree, Small White Orchid, Alpine rose (*Rhododendron ferrugineum*) and Mountain Avens (*Dryas octopetala*). Finally, we arrived at Kline Schidegg Station where we caught a train back to our Hotel.



The next day we took a walk to Lauterbrunnen (796 meters) passing through meadows and spruce forests. During our walk we came across Dark Columbine (*Aquilegia atrata*), Greater Masterwort (*Astrantia major*), Herb Paris (*Paris quadrifolia*), Baneberry (*Actaea spicata*), Birds Nest Orchids (*Neottia nidus-avis*), Martagon Lily (*Lilium martagon*), and Goatsbeard Spiraea (*Aruncus dioicus*). The spruce forest is home for a variety of butterflies; we saw the Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Heath Fritillary.



We stopped for lunch next to the river, and were entertained by Dipper and Grey Wagtail. During the afternoon some of us headed off on a bus to see the Trummelbach Falls. The falls are very impressive with 10 glacier falls inside the mountain. The falls are fed by the melting glacier defiles from the Eiger, Monch and Jungfrau. To access the falls there is a tunnel lift inside the mountain, and various stairs inside the mountain to view each of the falls. On the rocks outside of the falls we spotted Swiss rock Jasmine (*Androsace helvetica*).



On our third day we travelled to Allmendhubel, Murren, by train and then funicular railway. Looking around the station we discovered Matted Globularia (*Globularia cordifolia*) and Mountain Pansy (*Viola calcarata*), Purple Gentian (*Gentiana purpurea*), Carthusian Pink, Aconite-leaved Buttercup (*Ranunculus aconitifolius*), *Dianthus carthusianorum* and Round-headed Orchid (*Traunsteinera globosa*). During a walk to the waterfall we found Alpine Elder, Alpine Pasque Flower (*Pulsatilla alpina* subsp. *alpina*), Board Leaved Marsh Orchids (*Dactylorhiza majalis*), Globe Orchids and Early Purple Orchids (*Orchis mascula*) growing next to the rocks.



After lunch we made our way steep descent through the forest walked along the Mountain View Trail. We discovered the very rare Alpine Bladder fern (*Cystopteris alpha*) growing next to a rock by a stream. We also found some plants not previously seen, including Mountain House Leek, Alpine Leek (*Allium victorialis*), Alpine Sowthistle (*Cicerbita alpina*) and Lesser Twayblade (*Listera cordata*). A very nice clump of Alpine Toadflax was discovered growing amongst rocks next to a stream.

A train ride up to Wengernalp station (1873 meters) was planned for our next day, followed by a walk down through the colourful meadows and open spruce forests. On arrival to Wengernalp we explored the area around the station for flowers, spotting





Frog Orchid, Early Purple Orchid, Common Spotted orchid and more Alpine Toadflax. We also saw Small Tortoiseshell, Small Blue and Common Blue butterflies and during our walk through the meadows we came across Common Butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*), Bistort (*Polygonum bistorta*), Orange Hawkbit, Matted Globularia (*Globularia cordifolia*) and House Leek.



On the slopes of the north face of Jungfrau we spotted seven Ibex (*Capra ibex*). Then we walked to Wixi chair-lift where we saw Broad-leaved Marsh Orchid (*Dactylorhiza majalis*) and the electric-blue Bavarian Gentian (*Gentiana bavarica*). Walking through the forest we found Hairy Alpenrose and *Rhododendron hirsutum*. We also spotted a pair of Swallowtail butterflies mating.

Following lunch we entered a clearing in the forest where found a stunning display of Lady's Slipper Orchids (*Cypripedium calceolus*) in full flower. Also in flower were Great Yellow Gentian (*Gentiana lutea*), Meadow buttercup, Parnassus-leaved Buttercup (*Ranunculus parnassifolius*), Alpine Columbine (*Aquilegia alpina*) and Alpine Pasque Flower (*Pulsatilla alpina*).



A trip to the Alpine garden at Schynige Platte (2068 meters) had been organised for our fifth day. We travelled by train from Wengen to Lauterbrunnen, then a delightful cogwheel mountain train to the top of the mountain. we spotted Early Purple Orchids from the train as it made its way slowly up the mountain. The Alpine garden was founded in 1927 and has over 600 labelled species growing in their natural habitats. We walked around the circuit to see the 13 different habitats from various alpine regions. There were way too many flowers to list here, so I will only mention the notable species Fairy Foxglove (*Erinus alpinus*), *Primula auricular*, Spring gentian, Orange Poppy, many Alpine Pasque flowers and Spring Crocus (*Crocus albiflorus*).



After lunch we explored outside the Alpine garden, trekking to Daube, then to Oberberghorn and back to the alpine garden. During our trek we spotted Round-headed Orchid (*Traunsteinera globosa*), Alpine Sainfoin (*Hedysarum hedysaroides*), Lily of the Valley (*Convallaria majalis*), Naked stem Globularia (*Globularia nudicaulis*), and Leafy Lousewort (*Pedicularis foliosa*). We also saw Ring Ouzels, Citril Finch and Redpoll.



The following day we travelled by train from Wengen to Eigerghetcher station (2320 Metres) situated at the towering north face of the Eiger. We spent some time searching for plants around the station and discovered Chives (*Allium schoenoprasum*), Thyme and Mt. Cenis Pansy (*Viola cenisia*). Later we found the Glacier Crowfoot (*Ranunculus glacialis*) growing on the cliff face at the start of the Eiger trail.

Searching on the surrounding screes we found Round-leaved Pennycress (*Thlaspi rotundifolium*), Alpine forget-me-not (*Myosotis alpestris*), Spiniest Thistle (*Cirsium spinosissimum*), Alpine toadflax, Mountain Cenis Pansy (*Viola Cenisia*), Alpine Rockcress (*Arabis alpine*), Chamois Cress (*Hutchinsia alpine*), Broad-leaved Mouse-ear and Yellow Crest Willow Grass. Finally we walked through the meadows of Lauterbrunnen valley, and caught a train back to our hotel.

After breakfast on the day of our departure from Wengen, I spotted Hummingbird Hawkmoths feeding on the flowers on the patio. I enjoyed my visit to Switzerland - it was definitely worth going. The highlights for me were seeing the Lady's Slipper Orchids near Wengeralp, Glacier Crowfoot (*Ranunculus glacialis*) at the base of the Eiger and the trip to the Trummelbach falls.

#### Useful web links:

Botanical Alpine Garden,: [www.alpengarten.ch](http://www.alpengarten.ch)  
Trummelbach falls: [www.truemmelbachfaelle.ch](http://www.truemmelbachfaelle.ch)  
Allmendhubel, Murren: [www.schilthorn.ch/?uid=12](http://www.schilthorn.ch/?uid=12)



# The Falkland Islands

by Dawn Osborn FRPS



*King Penguin at Volunteer Beach*



*Black-browed Albatross*

A trip of a lifetime for many. If so I must be one incredibly lucky lady, as my recent trip to The Falklands was my seventh. All the previous trips have been amazing and this one was no less so.

As in previous years, I flew on the RAF charter from RAF Brize Norton to The Falklands - an 18 hour journey with a refuelling stop on Ascension Island. Once landing formalities were completed and our luggage collected we were met by our agent and transported to our hotel in Stanley for an overnight stay before heading off around the islands. After dumping the bags in my room, I headed out to have a quick look around Stanley and give my legs a much needed stretch.

Outside the post office I paused to look at a display of the latest stamps and ended up going inside to purchase some of the available sets. The Falkland Islands issue beautiful stamps of their wildlife and over the years I have built up quite a collection.

My first visit was made fifteen years ago and over the years I have noticed many changes around Stanley - the most noticeable have to be in the number of stores and the variety of goods on sale.



Fifteen years ago there was very little available in the way of 'souvenirs' but now there are many items, from fleece and knit wear, to soft toys and books, including many locally crafted items. Most noticeable however is the range of everyday goods now available to the Islanders. Most of us living in Britain these days take for granted the number of supermarkets and the variety of products for sale. I remember being quite surprised when I visited the only supermarket in Stanley in 1997 - it was very small with a very limited range of goods. I recall a poster announcing the arrival of butter from Britain that was still within its 'sell by' date. With goods being sent by ship this was rarely the case. The supermarket now is more the size you would expect to see in a small town in Britain and the range of goods on sale is comparable too. Fifteen years ago communication was by radio and most people living outside of Stanley (in 'camp') had no electricity other than what they generated with oil and that was usually for just a few hours a day. Wind turbines now generate electricity which is available 24/7 making a huge difference to the lives of folks out on the islands. As a consequence there is now a demand for modern electrical appliances and mobile phones. Most homes now have TVs, computers and the internet, even wi-fi. For visitors to the islands this means that even in the most remote of places there are no problems charging batteries for cameras or using laptops, etc., and staying in touch with home is now possible via the internet at just about every hotel and lodge - even ten years ago, once you left Stanley you were very much 'incomunicado'.

After an excellent meal at our hotel, and a good nights sleep, we were off to Stanley airport for our first flight. Getting around in the Falklands is still done by air. The Falkland Islands Government Air Service (FIGAS) operate flights between the islands and Stanley on a 'needs' basis; flights are arranged the evening before based on who needs to go where that day, and everyone is notified what time they will be flying. Its a system which works extremely well.

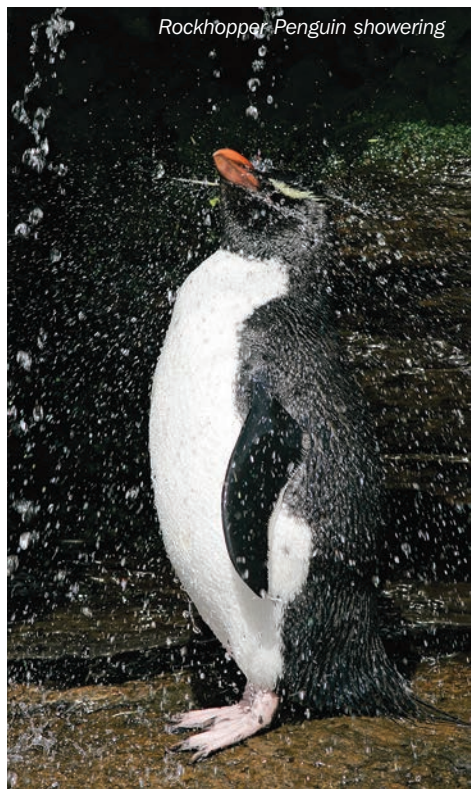
Our first destination was Saunders Island. Located in the north of the archipelago about 90 miles or an hours flight from Stanley, Saunders is a working sheep farm with about 6,000 sheep, primarily kept for production of wool. Saunders is a large island with a rich variety of habitats suiting a wide range of species. The cliffs on the northern edge are particularly favoured by Black-browed Albatross, where the updraft



*Black-browed Albatross*



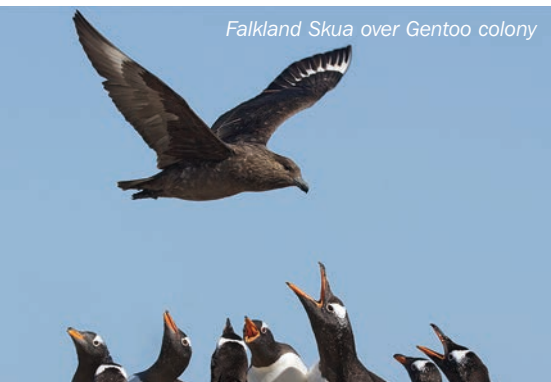
*Dolphin Gull mating*



*Rockhopper Penguin showering*



*Grass Wren singing*



*Falkland Skua over Gentoo colony*



*Gentoo parent and chicks*

from the ocean enables them to take off and land with ease. Approximately 12-13,000 pairs of Black-browed Albatross breed on the cliffs of Saunders Island every year. The cliffs are also shared in places with King Cormorant and Rockhopper Penguin. An area known as 'The Neck', literally a sandy neck between two peaks, supports large colonies of Gentoo and Magellanic Penguin, a growing colony of King Penguin and many other species. We also had excellent opportunities to photograph Dolphin Gull, Magellanic Oystercatcher, Falkland Skua, Snowy Sheathbill, Turkey Vulture and Striated Caracara; Commerson's Dolphin were seen frolicking in the surf but photographing them proved challenging! Saunders Island has been declared an 'Important Bird Area' and an 'Important Plant Area' with 9 of the 13 endemic Falklands species being found there.

Our next destination was Carcass Island, also in the North and a short hop from Saunders. It was named after HMS Carcass, a vessel which visited the islands in the late 18th century. Carcass is a smallish compact island, approx 6 miles long by 1.5 miles wide, but it also has a broad range of habitats and being rodent free it supports an abundance of small ground nesting birds including the endemic Cobb's Wren, as well as Gentoo and Magellanic Penguin, Ruddy-headed and Kelp Geese. Its probably the best place in the world to photograph the rarest raptor in the world - the Striated Caracara, known locally as the Johnny Rook. Carcass Island is particularly photogenic having some spectacular landscapes and fine beaches. The island also has one of the most picturesque King Cormorant colonies in the islands. Carcass Island has also been recognised by BirdLife International as an 'Important Bird Area'.

While in the north we made a short visit to Pebble Island - the third largest and 19 miles long, it boasts a four mile long beach, large ponds, moorland and rocky peaks. It supports 42 breeding bird species and is another 'Important Bird Area'. Our target species here were White-tufted Grebe and Southern Giant Petrel, but other species including Gentoos and Rockhoppers were also photographed at some very attractive sites.

Following Pebble we headed for Sea Lion Island the most southerly of the inhabited islands. A compact island just five miles long and about a mile wide with large areas of tussac, heathland, freshwater ponds, sandy beaches and cliffs. The island teems

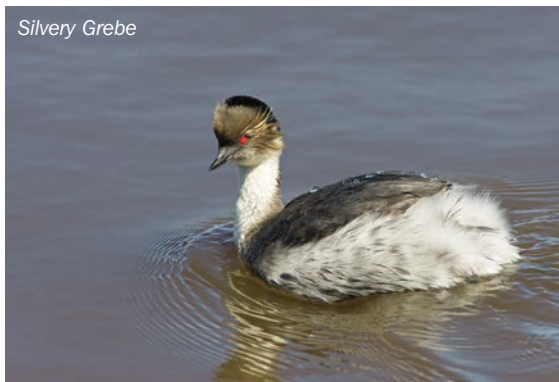


with wildlife and is probably the best place to photograph Southern Elephant Seal and pods of Killer Whale. Over 1000 Elephant Seals can be found here at the height of their breeding season. Pups are born from October into November, so there were plenty around still at the time of our visit. Their mothers leave them when they are just over three weeks old, and having mated they leave to feed at sea. Adult bulls were still to be seen on the beaches along with non-breeding bulls who had come ashore to moult and there were many altercations still to be captured.



*Southern Elephant Seals sparring*

The Gentoo colonies at Sea Lion Island seem to have quadrupled in the time I have been visiting. Indeed they can now be photographed within a minutes walk of the lodge. During the three weeks we spent in the Falklands we saw Gentoo chicks at stages from newly hatched to juveniles who were becoming very active. Gentoo colonies are noisy busy places, parents coming and going to feed hungry chicks, predators like Falkland Skua, Dolphin Gull and Striated Caracara patrolling overhead in the hope of robbing a nest of an egg or a hatchling. The beach is also a busy place, with Gentoo going to or returning from the sea with food to feed their young. Watching Gentoo come ashore is fascinating and addictive, photographing them is the best sport I know. The best time seems to be in the afternoon - the waves can be spectacular - and the more you practice the better you become at capturing them. Some burst through the waves, some hit the beach running and, if you're lucky you may have your lens focussed on one that will surf in. But watch out, sometimes in those big waves will be something that surprises you - a Sea Lion or Killer Whale hunting Penguin.

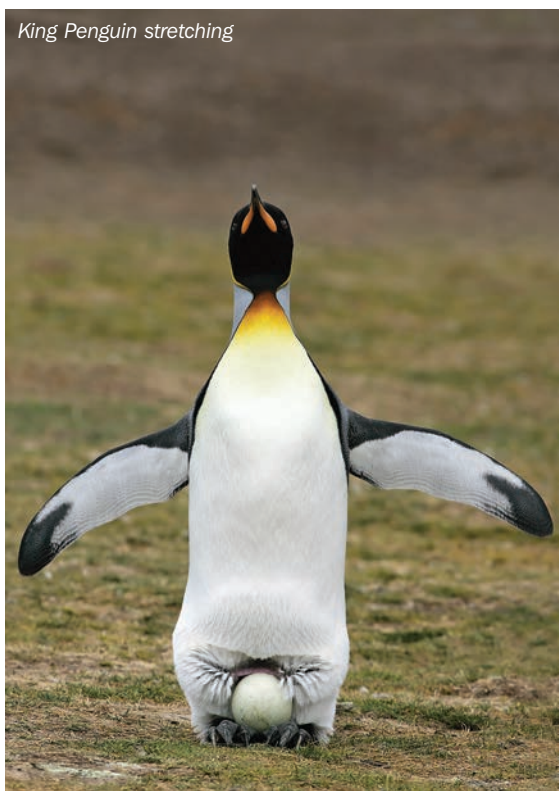


*Silvery Grebe*

The broad heathland at Sea Lion is home to Two-banded Plover and Rufous-chested Dotterel and I usually spend a morning or afternoon photographing them. Sometimes they can be so confiding they are actually too close. Snipe are also very approachable and there are lots of other small birds here too - Falklands Pipit, Black-throated Finch, Grass Wren and Dark-faced Ground Tyrant to name but a few.

Time passes too quickly at Sea Lion because there is so much to photograph and before we knew it we were off to our next destination: Bleaker Island. A most unsuitable name for this island. A working farm producing wool sheep and beef cattle, it is a low lying island with freshwater ponds, heathland

Continued on page 28



*King Penguin stretching*

# Costa Rica

by Margaret Johnson LRPS



*Botos Lagoon*



*Poas volcano*



*Scarlet Macaw*

In March 2012 four of us travelled to Costa Rica. Our journey to the capital, San Jose, took us just over twenty four hours.

Lying on the isthmus between North and South America, Costa Rica enjoys a diverse range of habitats. Our visit took us to all areas of the country from the Central Highlands to the cloud forests, the Caribbean and Pacific coasts and the volcanic areas. Each area has its own unique beauty and species of flora and fauna.

There were many birds and mammals to see as well as plants and insects. One of our target species was the Resplendent Quetzal and we achieved this in the Monteverde Cloud Forest. Although we were unable to get good photographs it was still a great thrill to see both the male and the female.

In the rainforest the trees were covered with plants. Each tree can support 150 different epiphytes and be home to millions of different insects. So far 3,500 different plant species have been found in Monteverde but scientists believe there could be up to 5000.

We made a visit to the Poas Volcano with its two craters. When we arrived the mist was swirling around the main crater and visibility was poor, so we



went to the Botus Lagoon. The mists cleared and we were treated to views of the blue waters of the lagoon. We returned to the main crater and here, too, the mist had cleared and we were able to look down into the crater which was smelling of sulphur and sending out gases in the form of steam.

In the heart of the Talamanca Mountains was Savegre. It was much colder here and it rained. It was an incredibly lush area and we were able to see quetzals again.

*Slaty-tailed Trogon*



*Montezuma's Oropendula nests*

*Acorn Woodpecker*



*Common Potoo*

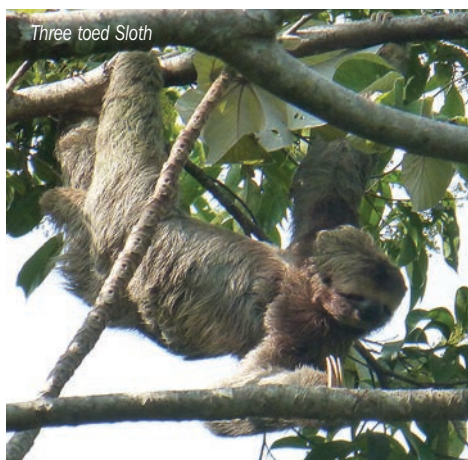




Basilisk Lizard



River Turtle



Three toed Sloth

It took us three hours to travel to Baru and the difference in temperature was amazing – from very cold and wet, to hot and sunny. Here on the Pacific coast we walked along the beach.

The most amazing part of our trip was our visit to the Oso Peninsula in the extreme south of the country. The first part was by road to Sierpe where we transferred to a boat. We were told we would be having a wet landing when we arrived and needed to be wearing shorts! Our boat set off down the river winding its way through the mangrove swamps. On our journey a Common Potto which we would never have spotted, was pointed out by our guide. It just looked like a protuberance of the tree. Eventually we came to the estuary where the Sierpe River meets the Pacific and then continued along the coast until we arrived at Casa Corcovado. It was time for the wet landing, so over the side and into the water we went, then waded onto the beach, where a tractor and trailer was waiting to take us up to the lodge. This was a magical place, so remote. We had a wonderful time and walked with our guide along the beach to find the Scarlet Macaws in the National Park. These birds are on the endangered species list and are so beautiful. They were much bigger than I had imagined and very, very noisy.

I have only given you a taste of this beautiful country and have not mentioned even a quarter of the things we saw. You need to visit for yourselves!



Coati mudi



# The Three Thousand Plus Lens - reaches subjects other lenses can't.

by Russell Edwards

Digiscoping is taking pictures of distant subjects through a telescope by holding or fastening a digital compact camera over the eyepiece of the telescope. (The latter is also referred to as a spotting scope or fieldscope. The spotting scope being the poorer relation of the two, although both can be used for digiscoping.)

The procedure is said to have first been recorded by a Malaysian photographer Laurence Poh who had trouble identifying a raptor, while out bird watching. In desperation he held his Olympus C-900 Compact camera against the eyepiece of his Leica telescope and took a picture. The bird was later identified as a Crested Honey Buzzard.

The advantage of digiscoping is that it can reach distant subjects, particularly birds, which are beyond the reach of even the most powerful conventional lenses. Surprisingly, the quality of the pictures is very good but excellent if they are enhanced using a computer programme such as Photoshop Elements.

The most powerful of conventional telephoto lenses are both costly, expensive and have a maximum focal length of about 800mm or double this when a 2x converter is added. A telescope with a 30x magnification eyepiece, which is connected to a Compact zoom with a maximum focal length of 126mm (35mm equivalent) \* gives an effective focal length of 3780 mm )

There is an almost infinite variety of combinations of cameras and telescopes but not all of them are successful. Vignetting, darkening at the corners of the picture can be a problem so if the photographer has either a camera or a telescope and needs to buy the complementary piece of equipment, it is best if this is tried out in the shop before purchase.

For those without either camera or telescope but setting out on a digiscoping course it is best to purchase a compatible set of camera, telescope and adaptor. Nikon do such a set, which ensures







optimum optical quality. Nikon's adaptor has the advantage that it permits the use of a standard cable release, essential to minimise camera shake. It is a pity that as far as I know, none of the Compact cameras on the market have a cable release to minimise camera shake even though many have a tripod thread.

Because of the huge magnification it is of the utmost importance that the digiscope is stable, that is there is no camera shake, and no wind vibration or instrument movement of any kind. Nikon recommend a bean bag for maximum stability but it really is only of practical use when photographing from a car. The alternative is a substantial tripod with preferably a 3-way pan and tilt head.

Having placed the telescope on a tripod and focused it on a distant subject the digital zoom camera is switched on and the zoom set to about half the maximum focal length: a 3.5 times optical zoom has focal lengths from 36-126mm, 35mm equivalent\* and set at 100mm gives the best image quality and will eliminate vignetting. The camera is now, either held close to the telescope eyepiece to take the picture or the camera is attached to the telescope by a universal camera mount or one, like the Nikon, designed specifically for a particular camera or telescope. The subject can now be re-composed using the monitor screen, but not focused, as this has already been done manually through the telescope. The shutter can now be released and the picture taken.

It is possible to focus the subject with the camera attached to the telescope using the monitor screen on which to focus the image using the telescope manual focusing control. This can be difficult if sunlight strikes the monitor screen. To overcome this make a rectangular cardboard tube as a shade, with the cross-sectional area of the monitor and about 10 cm long, which can then be fastened to the camera's tripod bush. The screen is then viewed wearing a strong pair of reading glasses (+3 or +4 dioptré) so that the screen can be viewed close to the eye.

Moving subjects are difficult to photograph but with a subject such as a wader bird, whose path can be predicted as it moves along the shore line, the telescope can be focused on the ground ahead of the bird and then wait for the bird to appear in the viewfinder.

My personal equipment consists of a Nikon 82 ED fieldscope, a P5000 Compact 3.5 x zoom camera and Nikon's FB6 compatible bracket. Contrary to advice from Nikon, I mount the bracket onto the camera and having focused the telescope, I slide the bracket, with the camera attached, onto the eye-piece. This takes practice as the bracket must be held in line with the telescope for it to slide on easily.

Most photographs can be improved by adjusting them in one of several computer programmes on the market such as Photoshop Elements or Lightroom and digiscoped photographs are no exception.

It has to be remembered when viewing digital images, the long distance the subject is from the camera: 200 metres or more. Considering this the resulting quality is exceptionally good. My first digital photograph of a kestrel was a matter of beginner's luck. I had been trying to take a photograph of a barn owl, which was nesting in an oak tree about 150 metres from a public footpath. The owl didn't turn up but a kestrel flew onto the uppermost branch of the tree, It was so far away that it appeared to be an extension of the branch. I knew it was a bird only because I saw it fly onto the branch. Fortunately the bird stayed on the branch long enough for me to assemble my equipment for the first time and take the photograph. I was amazed at the result.

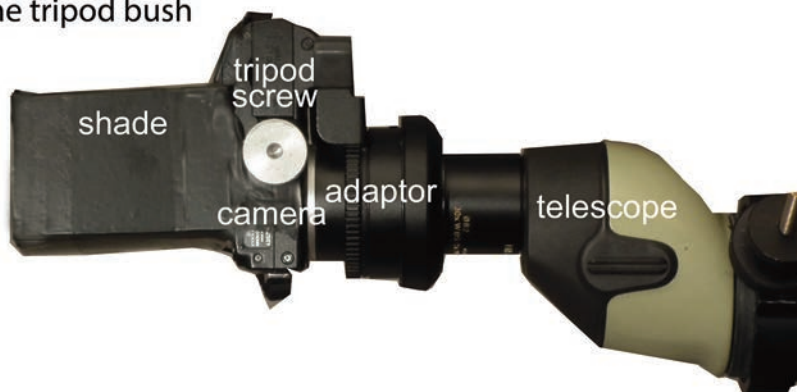
\* The actual focal length of the Compact camera lens is 26.3 mm but because of the smaller sensor it gives a field of view the same as 126 mm would on a 35 mm film camera.

#### Captions:

- 1 *Great crested grebes tidying up after a hard days nest building. About 200 metres from camera*
- 2 *A greater black backed gull fairly close at a 100 metres*
- 3 *The stillness of the heron makes for a good digiscoping subject*
- 4 *The telescope was focused at a point ahead of where this redshank was walking*
- 5 *A curvaceous common tern waiting to be fed*
- 6 *This kestrel at the top of an oak tree was so far away it appeared to be a twig.*
- 7 *I focused the telescope ahead of this curlew as it walked along the beach*



Diagram showing a monitor shade attached to the camera through the tripod bush



# Obituary

**Tony Hamblin FRPS - 1938-2012**



Tony was born in the Somerset village of Holcombe. His interest in natural history was sparked off by his primary school teacher who used to take the class on frequent rambles into the countryside. He built his first hide in his parent's garden using raspberry canes and old sheets to get closer to wildlife.

Tony left grammar school to join a local company that made reinforced concrete units as a draughtsman, gaining his Higher National Certificate on day release at college. In his teens Tony was a keen member of the local tennis club, and here he met a member who had an interest in budgerigars. Tony became very interested himself and had soon built an aviary in the garden, and was breeding his own birds and showing them locally. The expertise he gained in this area was valuable in later years when he began to focus on wild birds.

Tony met Valerie and they were married in 1961. He then obtained a position in a growing design and construction company in Stratford upon Avon, and in 1963 he and Val moved lock, stock and budgerigars to Bidford on Avon where they lived until present. He was now becoming a renowned breeder and exhibitor, being asked to judge locally and nationally, and also involved in the organisation of the national Show.

Tony and Val started a family, and when son Mark became keen on birdwatching, this re-ignited Tony's interest, and they were soon going out together to view and eventually photograph birds. Budgerigar breeding was now taking a back seat to bird photography. Tony joined the Royal Photographic Society, gaining his Associateship in 1984, followed by Fellowship in 1989. Also in 1984 Tony and Mark were invited to become joint members of the Zoological Photographic Club, when Eric Hosking was Secretary. Both have been Presidents of the Club.

By now Tony had set up his own business as a Contract Draughtsman, and this meant that he was able to choose his holidays and devote more time to photography. This gave him the opportunity to make trips to Africa, America and Europe. Although his trips abroad were memorable, he always said that you could not beat the British Isles for its diversity of wildlife and scenery, Scotland being a favourite, particularly when Mark moved there. He was always thrilled to gain a good image on a local patch, his winning image of two little owls being taken a quarter of a mile from home.

For many years Tony contributed to FLPA and RSPB Images picture libraries, and his images have been sold at home and abroad to a wide variety of magazines, books, calendars and other media. He was a winning photographer, taking three awards in BBC Wildlife Photographer of the Year, and being winner and runner up in British Birds Photographer of the Year. He won many medals in RPS Exhibitions and International Salons, and was frequently in demand as a judge.

Tony assembled a wide range of illustrated talks which became very popular throughout the Midlands. He never lectured at an audience, but brought them into his talks with his warm personality, enthusiasm for the natural world, and amusing anecdotes. When he retired he had not worked on a computer, but he soon embraced the digital age, becoming a self-taught expert on Photoshop, Lightroom, and other photographic software.

In 2005 Tony was diagnosed with scleroderma, which resulted in the partial amputation of a finger on each hand later in the year. The day after leaving hospital following the second operation, some friends were going to Donna Nook. "I want to come" was his reaction. He was weak, but his determination ensured he managed the long walk to the tide line, with friends carrying his gear. He

referred afterwards to that day as one of his most memorable, photographically.

In 2009 Tony was diagnosed with cancer. The first course of treatment was successful, but he began setting himself targets. The first was his and Val's Golden Wedding which they celebrated in 2011. After that he was determined to see the London Olympics, and he derived a lot of pleasure from that. Although his mobility was restricted in his latter years, he obtained great enjoyment from photographing moths in the conservatory, birds in flight at his feeders, and dragonflies at a local aquatics centre. Tony made a final trip to Scotland last May, photographing red squirrels, moorland birds, eiders and sea birds. He said that 2012 was one of his most enjoyable photographic years. His enthusiasm for the natural world and photography was never dampened by his illness. He attended the Joint Nature Photographer's Convention two weeks before he died, and gave a well received presentation. Tony was a loving husband, proud father and grandfather and a very good friend to many. He will be deeply missed.

Derek Walton ARPS





# **RPS Nature Group**

## **Residential Weekend 2013**

**Preston Montford Field Centre, Shrewsbury SY4 1DX**

**Friday 9th – Monday 12th August**

**Leader: John Bebbington FRPS**

The weekend will follow on from John's Insect Photography course (already fully booked).

**Cost for the weekend: £180 for shared room or  
£210 for a single room  
includes all meals, packed lunches, and use of the Centre's minibus.**

**Main subjects of interest: late summer flowers and insects. A moth trap will be run each night.**

**To book contact John Bebbington FRPS:  
Email: [john.bebbingtonfrps@btinternet.com](mailto:john.bebbingtonfrps@btinternet.com)  
Phone: 01458 253027**

## **Nature Photo Day with Paul Hobson**

**Sunday 30th June 2013 - 10am to 4pm. North Lincolnshire**

**Cost £45 including buffet lunch.**

The event has been organised by Geoff Trinder ARPS and will be held in the grounds of his home, in North Lincolnshire:

**Species to photograph:** at least 3 birds of prey species which will include Barn Owl and Tawny Owl; Harvest Mice; Common Toad; also possibly Midwife Toad and Common Lizard.

**Limited to 15 people.**

**Venue:** 'The Croft', Carrhouse Road, Belton, Lincolnshire, DN9 1PG

**Directions:** From M180, leave at junction 2 onto A161 and follow signs for Gainsborough. Belton is the first village. On entering the village turn right at the mini roundabout, signposted Sandtoft. After  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile turn left into Carrhouse Road. The Croft is the 2nd detached house on the left, about 100yds from the corner.

**To book ring Geoff on 01427 872051. Cheques should be made payable to RPS Nature Group.**



# Stay Calm & Carry On

by Colin Smale ARPS

## **Should camera clubs (and judges) be left as they are or should they be dragged kicking and screaming into the 21st century?**

With considerable sadness and after many years of happy snapping, I left my local camera club last year, why? Because I realized I am still looking at the very same sort of photographs I saw over 40 years ago and there seems no desire to move on into the new millennium in spite of amazing 21st century technology. I am still looking at that dragonfly sitting on a grass stem, the stem at a jaunty angle. The 'bird on a stick' and the inevitable butterfly on a flower, need I go on? When I give talks on wildlife photography I do admit that a bird has to perch somewhere and so, if you are going to do 'bird on stick' at least make it a good looking stick. I am longing to see some creativity and today's cameras will allow us to do just about anything we can imagine so ... get imagining. The question may fairly be asked "well what do you suggest?" Well my Damascus moment came when I saw a particular image of Charlie Hamilton James' kingfisher pictures. Google this and take a look at "Kingfisher diving" <http://www.charliehamiltonjames.co.uk/gallery/kingfishers.html>

Here is a picture of a common bird and before seeing this image you (and I) may well have said "well they have been photographed on sticks, in flight, in the nest burrow, it's all been covered." I was absolutely knocked out when I saw this, not just for the beauty of the image but for the previsualization and creative juices that went into it. You will all interpret this image and see how it was done, let's spread our creative wings and stop taking the same old images year after year.

DPI's have taken the place of transparencies. That is understandable as slides seem to be a thing of the past now but I don't remember ever seeing a transparency projected on screen complete with a window mount around it! DPI competitions are a sham. Transparencies are a one-off shot, get it wrong and you have had it so how can dpi's take the place of transparencies?

Folk can now take a photograph, on any medium, even a flat bed scanner and enter it as a 'DPI' along with all its photo shopped 'upgrades' and still call

this a replacement for transparency competitions. Kay Reeve FRPS (The Iris; P 27 Winter 2012/13) says "scrap the dpi section" and I totally agree with her. I wonder how many more feel the same?

Club Exhibitions - all framed the same size and crammed into whatever space is available - no creativity, no room for the pictures to 'breathe', all looking like cereal boxes on a Supermarket shelf.

Club judges: where do they find some of them??? Yes, most are ok as club judges go (but not all). My club had suffered from two particularly bad judges in recent times. The first one judged our county inter-club battles and so it was important, more important than usual. His opening comment was "I am not like other judges; I look at a picture and judge it by how I would have taken it". YIPES! That begs the question of course, what are his pictures like? In any case, if we all took pictures in the one style that would suit the judge, how tired would that be? Photography is an art form, proud of individualism, that's what makes it what it is. The second 'bad' judge looked at a particular monochrome print which had the word tears in the title. It was a sombre, thought provoking picture in a graveyard and the 'tears' were dewdrops of mist hanging on the ends of a branch of yew. Judges do like to crop and this one suggested cropping off these droplets as "they were taking your eye off the centre of the scene"! Just before he left that evening he said to me "well thank you for inviting me to judge for your club, I never get asked nowadays". (I wonder why?) It is grossly unfair, especially to newcomers to have to subject their work to such bad judges as these.

I understand one Yorkshire group have a system whereby the judge brings two A4 sheets of paper, one for him/her to comment on the club and the other for the club to comment on the judge. Now there's a good idea.

Last night I gave a talk at a nearby camera club. I listened to the announcements ... same announcements, same tasks and projects I was listening to forty years ago. I wondered if they realized there was a bright new world of photography 'out there' or, even if they were made aware of it, would they really want it. They all seemed more than content to stay calm and carry on.

# Book Review

---

## British Hoverflies

by Alan E. Stubbs and Steven J. Falk

British Entomological and Natural History Society.

Second edition 2002, reprinted 2012.

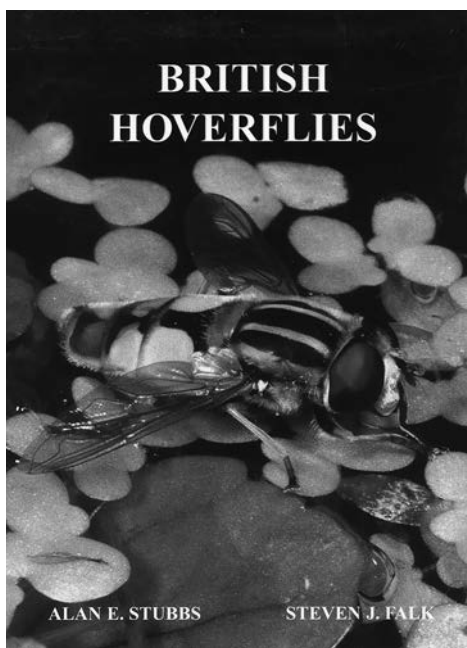
Hardback with dust cover, 528pp, 20 colour plates.

ISBN 1-899935-05-3.

Obtainable from Malthouse Books, The Old Malthouse,

Sutton Mandeville, SALISBURY SP3 5LZ,

£30 plus £6.09 p&p.



Hoverflies are generally considered to be the most attractive and photogenic group of our British Diptera, but there are many more species than the casual observer (including myself until recently!) might expect. This, the standard work on the group, is deservedly one of the most successful entomological publications of recent times and has been reprinted and updated eight times since its original publication in 1983.

The book begins with chapters on 'Observing, studying and photographing Hoverflies', 'Collecting' (unfortunately necessary with critical species), 'Habitats and Seasons', 'The early Stages', and 'The Characteristics of adult Hoverflies', all of which are extremely informative. Chapter seven – 110 pages long – is a series of keys to the identification of tribes, genera and species. Chapters 8-10 consist of detailed species accounts, followed by a checklist and an exhaustive bibliography.

Finally, there are line drawings of genitalia and superb colour plates of 170 species.

I cannot recommend this book too highly, especially if you are looking for a new challenge in Natural History photography – it is superbly produced and illustrated and although it appears expensive, worth every penny of its price.

John Bebbington

February 2013

---

## The Falkland Islands - continued from page 17

sloping to wide sandy beaches, low cliffs with gorges and shelving rocky coves. It is this latter feature which makes ideal breeding places for Southern Sea Lion. Leopard Seals can often be seen hauled out on beaches and in sheltered coves. The ponds provide breeding sites for many species including Black-necked Swans, Chiloe Wigeon and both species of Grebe. Colonies of Gentoo and Rockhopper Penguins are also present, plus over 8,000 breeding pairs of King Cormorant. There was plenty to keep our cameras occupied.

Our final destination was Volunteer Point, back on the mainland, and the site of the largest King Penguin colony outside of South Georgia. It is a picturesque setting in which to photograph these magnificent birds and a fitting end to our visit.

There have been significant changes in the Falklands, but the wildlife is unchanged and as magnificent as ever!

[www.dawnosbornfrps.com](http://www.dawnosbornfrps.com)

# Book Review

## Mushrooms

by Peter Marren

British Wildlife Publishing 2012

ISBN 978-0-9564902-3-0

Cover price £ 24.95

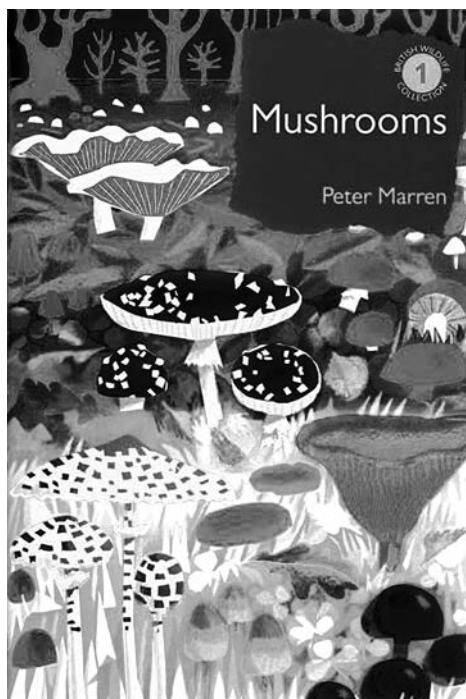
Available from British Wildlife Publishing.

Books on fungi are like buses - you wait ages for one and then two come along together. First there was the Collins Fungi Guide which was reviewed in the last edition of *The Iris* and now this. However the two are very different. It is the first in a series which is promised by British Wildlife Publishing by an author who has contributed to their magazine over many years. It is a personal account and quite unlike any book on fungi I have read before.

It starts with an autobiographical account of how, as a boy, the author's interest was aroused by finding waxcaps in a field near Buxton. He now describes himself as a naturalist and communicator but denies that he is a mycologist despite knowing more than some people who do. He is not one for spending hours peering down a microscope but prefers being out in the countryside looking for fungi. I was delighted to find two references to Gordon Dickson, a long-time member of the Nature Group, in the first chapter with more later.

The earlier chapters describe the basics of fungi-physiology, habitats, names, identification and edibility. There is a very interesting chapter on what fungi tell us about the natural habitat with particular emphasis on waxcaps. There are some fascinating statistics throughout the book which I have never seen before, such as the estimate that there are at least 12,000 species in Britain with more being identified every year. The excellent Collins guide which is the most comprehensive I know describes approximately 2,300 species.

The later chapters deal with issues which are best described as mycological politics. Rarity is a case in point. He proposes that distribution maps reflect the distribution of mycologists and not fungi. How do you distinguish between genuine scarcity and poor recording? The harder the fungus hunters look the more they find. A study showed that half of our basidiomycetes are rarely seen. Rarely recorded, a term used in the Collins guide, is a more realistic description than rare.



In the final chapters the author shows that he is unafraid to tweak the tail of the fungus hierarchy. The world of fungi used to be considered as boring and static. However the changes which have occurred in the last 10-15 years have made it difficult for the amateur to keep up. The issues described include conservation, collecting, legal protection, English names, compilation of Red Data lists and regulation. The British Mycological Society and the Association of British Fungus Groups are criticised for not talking to each other. Natural England does not escape. To quote from the book "Mycologists are notorious for disagreeing among themselves about the minutiae, while steadily ignoring practical needs."

This is a book which can be heartily recommended for anyone interested in fungi and the alternative view. Those of us who have been grappling with them for years know that when it comes to the fungi nothing is straightforward.

Tony Bond, FRPS



# The 2012 Nature Photographers' Joint Convention

The Hayes Conference Centre at Swanwick is a splendid place to hold the Joint Convention, it lies close to Junction 28 on the M1 and being situated approximately in the middle of England makes it as convenient as possible for everyone. Accommodation is good and the meals as good as one can reasonably expect for such a centre. The weekend event is open of course to members of the Nature Group of the RPS, and to members of the Zoological Photographic Club (ZPC), the Nature Photographers' Society (NPS) and the Nature Photographers' Portfolio (NPP). It goes without saying really that many members of the Nature Group are also members of one or more of the other esteemed clubs and societies. The Main Hall is large enough to accommodate us comfortably as well as having sufficient space for an exhibition of mounted prints from members of the participating Societies.

There were two highlight speakers this year, Robert Thompson FRPS, a renowned professional nature photographer from Northern Ireland and Mark Hamblin FRPS, a 'home grown' professional nature photographer now resident in Scotland. Not surprisingly there was a large attendance at this years meeting.

The weekend comprises short illustrated talks from members and of course the two full length presentations from the main speakers. You should not forget that many of our members comprise some of the best nature photographers in the country and the standard of the work shown was wonderful - an absolute delight to the eye. The two Highlight Presentations were, as you might expect, both quite exceptional.

Robert Thompson began his working photographic life using Mamiya 6x7 and 6x4.5 film cameras with Velvia and Provia before converting, as with all of us, to digital capture, his presentation was stunning and it is quite impossible to pay justice to it in mere words.

Mark Hamblin had the unenviable task of following that the next day, but he produced an equally fabulous show, which proved to be quite different and went to show that nature photography covers a very wide spectrum indeed. The quality of the images from both these renowned photographers goes to show what can be achieved when one applies oneself to the task in hand; "time and patience" as my father would often remind me!

On a different and perhaps sad and poignant note, one of my abiding memories of the weekend is, and will forever remain, that of Tony Hamblin (Mark's father) and Martin Withers both sitting in their wheelchairs chatting and laughing together; Tony sadly died shortly after the Convention and Martin, as we all are aware, is now seriously disabled.

The Joint Convention is held every two years and the next one will be in October 2014 and will be held once again at the Hayes Centre; as always it will be advertised here in 'The Iris'. If you have never thought about attending, why not give it a try next time? I do not think that you will regret it; they really are very friendly events and you might make some new friends and contacts.

Robert Hawkesworth FRPS

## Congratulations

**Associateships were awarded to:**

**Andrew Adams ARPS**

**Kenneth Drysdale ARPS**

**Edmund Fellowes ARPS**

**Lun Lau ARPS**

**Ludi Lochner ARPS**

**Roy Moore ARPS**

**Richard Nicoll ARPS**

**The following members received distinctions in Nature in 2012**

**Kenneth Plumb ARPS**

**Kenneth Rasmussen ARPS**

**Jane Reese ARPS**

**Fellowships were awarded to:**

**Karen Berry FRPS**

**Kevin Elsby FRPS**

# Regions

Shown Below are Nature Group members per RPS region together with regional codes and other statistics

CE - Central	61	<b>Distinctions</b>	
EA - East Anglia	67	Honorary FRPS	4
EM - East Midlands	44	FRPS	85
LN - London	18	ARPS	232
NI - Ireland (North)	2	LRPS	172
SI - Ireland (South)	3	Non-Distinction Holders	189
NO - Northern	14		
NW - North Western	50	<b>Total</b>	<b>682</b>
SC - Scotland	31		
SE - South Eastern	101		
SW - South Western	22		
SO - Southern	52		
TH - Thames Valley	53		
WE - Western	64		
WN - North Wales	8		
WS - South Wales	16		
YO - Yorkshire	32		
<b>Total UK</b>	<b>638</b>		
<b>Overseas</b>	<b>44</b>		
<b>Total Membership</b>	<b>682</b>		

These statistics are prepared from data supplied by the RPS Membership Department February 2013

Map courtesy of the RPS Journal January/February 2001 revised 2006

# Photographing Hoverflies in flight in the wild.

by John Bebbington FRPS

A few years ago, when I first moved permanently to Somerset, I thought that it would be fun to record Hoverflies – they are among the most attractive flies, and I believed at the time that there weren't too many species to tax my ability. How wrong can you be! There are far more species than I imagined, and many of them can only be separated from similar species by dissection.

However, this didn't stop me from photographing them, as we have a good range of species nectaring and feeding on pollen in our garden. They aren't difficult to approach or to photograph when basking or feeding. Sitting at our picnic table on a hot sunny day (there were such things once!) I was taken by the number of male hoverflies – especially *Eristalis pertinax* and *Helophilus pendulus* (the scientific name of the latter means 'Hanging Sun-lover!') hovering nearby. However, apart from their relatively small size, one problem which was immediately obvious was that they don't 'hover' in one spot, but are continually moving from side to side and backwards and forwards! Another was that the males are very aggressive and will dart off to investigate potential rivals.

I wanted to photograph these flies using available light, but my first DSLR – the Pentax K-10D – produced very noisy images at ISO settings above 400. With my Sigma 180mm lens, which gave me enough working distance to impact minimally on subjects, it proved impossible to combine a fast enough shutter speed with a high enough f number to get a decent image. It was also necessary to use manual focusing as the autofocus mechanism on this camera simply couldn't lock on such a small fast-moving subject. I did however achieve one success – a Lesser Bee-fly *Bombylus discolor* which was nectaring on our Grape Hyacinths, an image which my wife wanted for her talk on pollination.

My next DSLR – the Pentax K-x – gave relatively noise-free images at up to ISO 800, and this enabled me to obtain a few images which were reasonably satisfactory, although depth of field was limited.

I discovered that I was far more likely to succeed if I stalked males which were investigating females (provided that there was only a single male in attendance) or if I waited in shadow by an isolated Spear-thistle or Knapweed flowerhead. This latter technique seems to force the hoverflies to approach from the opposite side of the flowerhead, and it is even possible to set up a tripod once you have decided on the flight path of approaching insects.

In April 2011 my K-x suffered irreparable damage and, having recently reviewed the then new K-5, I purchased one and found that it is possible routinely to use ISO 1600 and, with the noise reduction facility in Lightroom 4, ISO 3200 and even 6400 to produce very acceptable images.

I became increasingly immobile during 2012, but perhaps the images which satisfied me most came from a half-hour spent standing in front of an isolated clump of Knapweed at Ryewater (a site which some Nature Group members know from field meetings) with the camera on a tripod. A male *Eristalis pertinax* was 'guarding' a feeding female, hovering above her while she nectared. I set the ISO at 6400 and shutter speed at 1/1000 second – fast enough to 'stop' body movement, but not wing movement. This allowed me to use f13, giving just about enough depth of field, as the two flies were in more or less the same plane.

After I had taken a single image, a second male appeared on the scene, and dropped down towards the first male. I took three more images before the two males suddenly disappeared, leaving the female still nectaring. Disappointment! However when I reviewed the images I was amazed to see that the final frame showed the second male grasping the first and, since he was facing in the opposite direction, presumably dragging him away! Sadly neither male returned.



What next? Well, it would probably help to use high-speed flash to give enough light to 'freeze' wing movement and give more depth of field, so that is the next project.

For me, one of the joys of close-up Natural History photography is the difficulty of a new challenge and the satisfaction when results are obtained. Of course, one can always do better – the perfect result is out there somewhere!

Finally, if you're interested in taking up insect photography, or improving on what you already do, may I immodestly recommend my book 'Insect Photography – Art and Techniques' published by Crowood Press. It's selling well – over 1200 copies so far. See it at:  
<http://www.crowood.com/details.asp?isbn=9781847973788&t=Insect-Photography---Art-and-Techniques>

Images:

- 1: Lesser Bee Fly *Bombylius discolor* nectaring on Grape Hyacinth.  
Pentax K10D, 1/800 sec f8, ISO 400.  
Noise reduction with Neat Image.
- 2: Hoverfly *Rhyngia campestris* hovering.  
Pentax K-x, 1/1000 sec f11, ISO1600.  
No noise reduction.
- 3 Marmalade Hoverfly *Episyrphus balteatus* hovering over Knapweed head
- 4: Hoverfly *Eristalis pertinax* male hovering.  
Pentax K-5, 1/6400 sec f8, ISO1600.  
Noise reduction with Neat Image.

Back cover:

- 1: single male *Eristalis pertinax* hovering over nectaring female.
- 2: second male appears.
- 3: second male approaches first male.
- 4: second male 'wrestles' with first male.

Noise in all the above four images was reduced using Adobe Lightroom 4 RAW converter.

