



# THE IRIS

MAGAZINE OF THE NATURE GROUP OF THE RPS

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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.

Copy may be sent by email (no attachments please), or as .txt or .doc files on floppy disc together with a printed copy, or simply typed using double line spacing on one side of the paper only.

Photographic images should be supplied as original slides whenever possible but 12 x 8 inch glossy prints are acceptable.

Monochrome images/illustrations may be sent as digital files either on CD or floppy disc.

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by Dawn Osborn ARPS

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Cover : Ramalina bourgeana  
EOS 3 with Canon 80/200 plus Nikon 6T Close-up lens, f22, Velvia  
by Robert Hawkesworth FRPS

Inside front Prickly Pear fruit,  
EOS 30 with Sigma 105mm at f11, Sensia 100  
by Barbara Hawkesworth ARPS

Back cover: Autumn colours, Banff National Park,  
by Peter Jones ARPS



# Committee

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The Chairman of the A&F Nature Distinctions Panel, the President, Director General, Hon. Treasurer and Finance Officer of the Royal Photographic Society are also ex-officio members.

## Exhibition/Archive Slides

To book the current or next Travelling Exhibition, contact:  
Peter Jones ARPS, details above.

To book previous years Exhibition Slides contact:

Mrs. Kath Bull ARPS,  
'Segsbury', St. John's Road, Crowborough, East Sussex,  
TN6 1RT Tel: 01892 663751

# Editorial

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Firstly, let me say a big 'thank you' to all those of you who took the trouble to put pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard) and

- communicated such positive comments about the Winter issue and/or
- sent in the articles and pictures which appear in this issue.

Unfortunately however, I was not inundated with articles and again have to plead for interesting items to fill the pages of our Summer issue. It is obvious from the entries in our own exhibition that members travel far and wide in search of pictures - I am puzzled as to why not more of you would welcome the opportunity to share your experiences with your fellow members. Please, don't put off writing an account of that last trip, or your experiences of photographing a subject requiring special techniques. Please, do it now. Email or Royal Mail me with the subject of your article and then spend an evening or two over the coming weeks to write something. I need copy and pictures no later than the 23rd of May, but I do need your commitment to send something now. It will be a very thin issue next time if you don't all get writing. I will put the stick away now.

In the last issue, David Osborn FRPS shared his initial experiences with his Canon 10D - this time Michael Huggan ARPS recounts his experiences on safari with his Nikon D100. We also have Robert Hawkesworth's account of a recent trip to Lanzarote in which he and his wife expanded their interest and knowledge of geology and vulcanology. Monique Vanstone shares her enjoyment of finding Stag Beetles in her garden and Peter Jones tells us all about his trip to Canada last autumn. Finally, part 2 of Michael Shirley's 'Ramblings of a Naturalist'. You will also find a listing of the Field Meetings which your fellow members have organised for your enjoyment. Please attend as many as you are able to - especially if they are in your region.



# From the chair

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When John Myring informed me that he had made the decision to resign his membership of the RPS it came as a great blow and made me feel very sad. He assured me that his decision had nothing whatsoever to do with the Nature Group, indeed it was his membership of our Group that had prevented him from resigning earlier. His reasons for resigning must remain private. I am sad for both the Nature Group and the RPS, for we have lost a very good friend.

John and I are of the same generation but since he has had a much longer membership in the Nature Group than I, to me he was somewhat of a father figure and was always on hand to offer me advice when requested.

For some eight years, ably assisted by his wife Margaret, he edited '*The Iris*'. Right from the very first issues it was always a good read, but John, building on the secure foundation laid by his predecessors, brought it to become one of the best nature photography magazines in publication and it was fortunate for us that with his interest in digital technology he was able to develop the magazine using the great advantages which computing has brought. John of course, quiet and modest, was always quick to point out that the reason for its success was due in no small part to us, the membership. I know what he means for without contributions from the members there would be no magazine at all. Nevertheless, he and Margaret have had the responsibility for putting it all together and making it so attractive. His kindly, friendly approach has shone through each issue and has been one of the main reasons why members have always been ready to contribute articles. The work didn't stop with putting each issue together - there are seven hundred or so copies to pack into envelopes (plus any separate flyers), applying address labels, posting, answering queries and managing to keep smiling through it all, though I'll warrant Margaret could tell a few tales!

John's work on behalf of the group was not of course with '*The Iris*' alone. For many years he was the Treasurer and recently had taken on the post of Nature Group representative on the Advisory Board. John, and Margaret, may I say a very big thank you from us all, you will be sadly missed.

As you may have noticed from the list of Officers and Committee Members in the last few editions of '*The Iris*', we have been running somewhat light. We have had no Vice-Chairman and the loss of John Myring has created yet another vacancy. This was discussed at our recent Committee Meeting, and happily I can now advise you of the changes.

I am very pleased to say that David Osborn FRPS has agreed to act as Vice-Chairman. David is a very well known and nationally regarded Nature Photographer and has recently been appointed to the 'A' and 'F' Distinctions Panel. He will make a fine Vice-Chairman.

Nick Jarvis ARPS, who runs our Notice Board and is our Field Meetings co-ordinator, is taking over from John Myring as our Representative on the Advisory Board. This is a particularly important post because this Board is our direct communication with Council and HQ. I am sure that Nick will do a fine job and it will not affect his work in his other two roles.

These two promotions meant that there were two vacancies on the Committee and we have co-opted the following members, Patricia Seekings ARPS and John Jones ARPS. Patricia coming from Ely gives that area some representation and as a woman also improves the gender balance a little, something which I have been anxious to do. In addition to classic nature work, Patricia enjoys the patterns and designs of nature for she has an imaginative photographic eye. Those of you who attended the Convention last summer will remember John Jones' underground presentation 'Life in the Darkness'; he is a caver and potholer, a thoroughly good naturalist and all round nature photographer. He also lives fairly close to Peter Jones and has offered Peter his help with the exhibition. I welcome them both and I am certain that they will serve you all well.

By the time you read this the days will be noticeably longer. I hope that you all have a good photographic spring.



Robert Hawkesworth FRPS

# **A Date for your Diary**

Robert Hawkesworth will be hosting his

## **Chairman's Day**

to be held

**Saturday 13th November 2004**

at

**Smethwick P.S.,**

**The Old Schoolhouse, Oldbury, West Midlands.**

Full details and booking form in the next issue.

## **RPS Nature Group Field Weekend Friday 28th – Monday 31st May 2004**

Organiser: John Bebbington, FRPS

### **Provisional Programme includes:**

- Welcome drinks, Afternoon Teas, Dinners, etc.
- Slide presentations (incl the areas around Juniper Hall, its flowers and insects).
- Excursions to local areas of special photographic interest -  
incl woodland, chalk grassland and heathland.

**Fees:** Residents £170, Non-residents £128.

Single room supplement (subject to availability) £8 per night, payable with the deposit.

**Fees include - Residents: full board accommodation, use of centre facilities and centre-organised transport.**

**Non-resident fees include all the above except accommodation and breakfasts.**

**Maximum 16 places available - early booking is advisable.**

For full details and a booking form or to make a provisional booking, please contact the Centre Secretary at Juniper Hall: Tel 0845 458 3507 (9am/5.30pm - voicemail at other times)

Fax 0845 458 9219.

Email: [enquiries.jh@field-studies-council.org](mailto:enquiries.jh@field-studies-council.org)

This is John's last year at Juniper Hall and he is delighted to be able to offer Nature Group members the opportunity to visit the Centre. This long weekend will provide an ideal opportunity to get together and to explore the rich areas around Juniper Hall at a good time for flowers and insects. The Centre garden now includes a Butterfly Garden, (generously funded by the Surrey with SW London branch of Butterfly Conservation) and is also home to a wide range of flowers, insects, birds and mammals. A moth trap will be run each evening to provide further photographic opportunities.

# Annual General Meeting and Spring Meeting

## The 28th Annual General Meeting

of the

### RPS Nature Group

will be held at:-

### Smethwick Photographic Society,

The Old Schoolhouse, Oldbury, West Midlands

(for directions see below),

**Saturday 24th April, 2004**

#### Timetable

- 10.30 am Assemble for 11.00 am. start
- 11.00 am **‘The Protection Racket’**  
a slide presentation about the colouration in European *Lepidoptera*  
by John Bebbington FRPS.
- 12.30 pm **Break for lunch.**  
Light lunches (ploughman’s or jacket potatoes) will be available.  
There is also a dining area if you wish to bring your own sandwiches.
- 2.00pm **Annual General Meeting.**

#### Agenda:

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Minutes of the 27th AGM 2003, printed in issue 86 of ‘The Iris’.
3. Matters arising
4. Chairman’s Report
5. Treasurer’s Report.
6. Secretary’s Report.
7. Any Other Business
8. Date and Venue of the 29th AGM 2005

Followed immediately by

#### Opening of the 2004 Exhibition

- 2.45 pm Presentation of the awards, followed by projection of the accepted slides. Exhibition Prints will be on display all day.

**Directions:** Leave the M5 at Junction 2. At the roundabout (with traffic lights, approximately 200 yards from motorway) turn right along the A4034 towards West Bromwich and immediately get into the left hand lane of a dual carriageway. At the first set of traffic lights (approx 1/3 mile) turn left into Park Street. At the end of this street turn right into Churchbridge (cul-de-sac). The Old Schoolhouse is the last but one building on the left.

# Timanfaya, the fire mountain.

Robert Hawkesworth FRPS

Lanzarote is not the first place you would think of for a natural history photographic holiday, but unfortunately we had had to cancel our spring holiday to Lesbos literally within 24 hours of departure caused by an unexpected health problem. We were to have met up with Dawn, Joyce and David Osborn as well as Colin Smith and his wife Joan and we were obviously bitterly disappointed. However after we had got the NHS investigations underway we began to consider the possibility of an autumn holiday in its place, the first two weeks in November seemed to be fairly safe we thought, it was about six months distant, surely by then all matters would be cleared up (not quite so as it turned out, but we were able to travel). Where should we head for? We didn't want too long a flight, but we did want some good weather, what about the Canaries? Now both my wife and I are very interested in geology and have a developing interest in lichens, so Lanzarote beckoned. It had the added bonus of being fairly dry with only on average 15 days a year of rain. Within a few hours we were booked and looking forward once more to a holiday.

Perhaps a brief account about Lanzarote would be helpful for those who are unfamiliar with the island. Essentially the whole landscape was re-written when a series of volcanic eruptions between 1730 and 1736 poured ash and lava across a large part of the island. After a period of tranquillity there were further eruptions in 1824 which again changed parts of the landscape. There are many features of interest to geologists including domes through which lava and gas erupted, volcanic tubes which were underground lava flows, lava seas or lakes (now called lava fields), cinder cones, volcanic bombs, accretion balls and I could go on, but at least you can see that there is much to keep anyone with an interest in vulcanology very busy.

I try to travel as light as possible photographically especially when travelling by air, so I carried only two lenses with me, both Canon, the 20-35 for habitat and landscape work and the small 80-200, on the latter of which I used one or

other of two Nikon close-up lenses the 3T and 4T, this particular combination giving me up to almost life size with very sharp definition. My wife chose the Sigma 17-35 and the new Sigma 105 macro, which is a lovely lens to use. We also had with us a 75-300 that we shared and used whenever we needed a little more reach than the 80-200. Camera bodies were EOS 3 & 30, both of which performed faultlessly. Film stock was Velvia and Sensia 100. Tripods obviously and carbon-fibre has made a huge difference to the weight, unfortunately they are expensive but worth saving-up for.

We chose to stay in the far south of the island at Playa Blanca which proved to be a good choice. A quiet resort with some good coastal walking and easy access to the Timanfaya Volcanic National Park. Bear in mind that the island is only some 40 miles long by 16 miles wide, so you are never very far from anywhere. We decided to have the first week without a car and explore on foot, booking a car for the second week. This worked very well for we were able to become somewhat touristy during the first week, taking in a couple of trips; one of which was in a six-seat 4-wheel drive people carrier driven by an ex-patriot from Wirral, Tommy, who was a mine of information and happy to stop anywhere within reason for photography. It meant that we could recce many places for a return when we had our car and although it was not cheap it saved us wasting time in fruitless journeys. We were driven into the Volcanic Park and transferred to a coach for the 45-minute journey around the volcanic trail (private cars are forbidden on this circuit), an interesting but photographically not very rewarding trip.

However, as we were to find out, we were able to get splendid access to different but equally good areas later in the holiday. The key to gaining this information was the visit to the Timanfaya Visitor Centre, which is just outside the National Park boundary. Here we met a young vulcanologist with fluent English who was delighted to tell us where we could walk safely across the lava fields, how we could walk





▲ Volcan del Cuervo  
EOS 3 with Canon 20/35mm at f16, plus polarising filter, Velvia

▼ Canarian Bean Caper (*zygophyllum fontanesii*)  
EOS 3 with Canon 20/35 at f22, Velvia







▲ Olivine with crystals of Peridot  
EOS 3 with Canon 80/200 plus Nikon 6T Close-up lens, f16, Velvia

▼ Crustose Lichens and Common Canary Spurge (*Euphorbia regis jubae*)  
EOS 3 with Canon 20/35mm at f16 plus polarising filter, Velvia.



into a volcanic cone, where we could safely park our car, where some of the best lichens and plants could be found, where we could find examples of different lavas, in fact she was able to answer all our questions. Wonderful!

Most, but certainly not all, of our photography took place during the second week when we were able to travel more widely. However walking westwards from our hotel, firstly along the promenade and then out onto a rocky area leading to the now derelict lighthouse at Punta de Pechiguera proved very rewarding, yielding not only many lichens but rather more surprisingly, a number of flowering plants. One of these, the Barbed-wire Bush (*Launea arborescens*), was well named, small dandelion-like flowers held above a tangle of wiry foliage, another was the Common Canary Spurge (*Euphorbia regis-jubae*), which arranged itself very elegantly over the rough volcanic rocks of the shore.

Our walk across one of the lava fields and into the volcanic cone of Volcan del Cuervo was certainly one of the highlights. From the spot where we were able to park our car the walk across to the cone, easily visible across the flat lava field, would have been about 15-20 minutes. It took us much longer of course, as you will all understand. The lichen-encrusted lava was a rich source of opportunities, the main species was *Ramalina bourgeana*, a foliose lichen not present in GB, this is one of the first colonisers. Most surprising was to find a small Rock-rose (*Helianthemum thymiphyllum*) tucked into the gaps between the boulders, it proved very difficult to photograph for it was almost prostrate and it was very windy! How it managed to exist with so little rainfall is a mystery. We walked through a huge gash in the side of the cone and down onto the crater floor, here we found good quantities of a Geranium (possibly *Pelargonium capitatum*), but almost no other flowering plants. There were however lots of volcanic features including flattened bombs, rope lava and huge accretion balls. The lighting however was very contrasty making for very difficult photography, flattening it with reflectors was only moderately successful. The colours in the rocks were quite remarkable, yellows, reds, purples and through to black. Lichens were of course everywhere, *Ramalina*

spp. and *Stereocaulon* spp., the latter especially on the more shaded areas. Returning across the lava field we noticed a number of Berthelot's Pipits (*Anthus berthelotii*) flitting about between the rocks. In a few of the huge volcanic boulders we found olivine, which in some cases had produced the beautiful green crystals known as peridot. These were rather easier to photograph, at least the boulders kept still and the lighting was somewhat less of a problem.

It is impractical in an article of this length to give an account of all the photographic opportunities that the island offers, but two further places we found rewarding were firstly the emerald green pool at El Golfo and secondly the caster sugar white sands near to Orzola in the north of the island. At El Golfo the green pool lies in an amphitheatre of volcanic rock separated from the blue sea by a large sand bar. The colour is due to a combination of volcanic minerals and algae and the water level remains constant. It is not easy to photograph well but rewards a patient search for a good viewpoint. Sunglasses are essential on the sands near Orzola, here you will find good specimens of the Canarian Beancaper (*Zygophyllum fontanesii*), it was difficult to expose because of the brilliance of the sand, I used from one-third to one stop overexposure and found on the whole that two-thirds over gave the best results, I was using Velvia at 50 ISO.

There are many other areas to explore; the salts pans, Salinas de Janubio a chequer-board of colours; the strange valley of La Geria with vines growing in hollowed out pits in the ashfields each protected with its semi-circular stone wall giving the landscape an almost unearthly atmosphere; and the Cactus Garden, yes I know it's a garden but it offers endless opportunities for pattern pictures. There really is a lot to do and we ran out of time.

All in all we thoroughly enjoyed the holiday, wonderful weather and hotel, and some very different photography.

# Stag Beetles

by Monique Vanstone

I live in an urban area of Dorset and have tried to make the garden wildlife friendly for about twenty odd years. There are lots of shrubs in the garden but no trees, however there are mature protected trees in the area.

I have always been interested in insects and, as a child, even collected them. I now prefer to photograph them. I place old pieces of wood and logs in various parts of the back garden for wildlife and regularly saw Stag Beetles, mostly females. However, four or five years ago they stopped appearing altogether.

I despaired to see them again, and then on 20 June last year (2003) a 'miracle' happened. I saw a male crossing the steps to get into the shrubs. I placed him on a log to photograph, thinking that he would fly away at dusk as they seem to do.

While I was watching him as he remained still on the log, my attention was attracted by a slight noise a few feet away. When I looked I could not believe my eyes, a female had just landed. I had never previously seen the two sexes together. Carefully, I placed the female on the same log to face the male - he showed no interest whatsoever and after a while he moved away. I thought he would disappear into the undergrowth but instead he came back onto the log.

I must have watched for about an hour or more before he finally crawled towards the female. She was blocking his path, so he crawled over her and at that point no doubt discovered how attractive she was and decided to mate with her. The mating lasted a good thirty minutes, following which they parted, both going off in different directions. I was overjoyed with the spectacle I had seen and felt privileged to have been able to observe it.

As there are plenty of rotting logs in the garden, I am sure more eggs will be laid giving birth to grubs and adults in the years to come. For now I have the memory of an exceptional natural event and my slides back from Fuji.







# Wildlife Digital Photo & Bird Fair

**Saturday 5th and Sunday 6th June**

9.30am - 5.00pm - Admission £5.00 Free Car Parking

**Brandon Marsh Nature Centre,**

Brandon Lane, Coventry

Digital Photo Workshops • Top Wildlife Photographers • Talks  
Binoculars • Telescopes • Books • Clothing •  
Bird Art • Bird Clubs • Bird Ringing • RSPB Groups  
Dragonfly ID Walks • Pond Dipping • Refreshments

## **Invitation**

The Nature Group has been invited to display a selection of digitally produced prints at this event. If you have a print in the NG Annual Exhibition which has been digitally printed and would be like it to be considered for inclusion in this exhibition also, please email the Editor before the end of March. Please note: A limited amount of wall space is available.

**Appeal** The Nature Group is also looking for a number of volunteers willing to man a stand at this event for a few hours each day. Offers to: the Editor.



# Digital in Tanzania

## Michael Huggan ARPS

Following the excellent article 'Discovering digital' by David Osborn in the previous edition of the Iris, I would like to share with you my experience using a Nikon D100 digital camera in Tanzania June 2003. David has given a good description of what comprises of a digital system so I will not cover the same ground again.

Using the D100 for about three months previous to the trip I obtained a good understanding of the handling and in particular, the impressive image quality. My main concern with the D100 was the limited number of images that can be recorded continuously (4 RAW and 6 JPEG) before locking the shutter for 10 seconds or so. This proved to be frustrating on occasions. Not wishing to take a laptop computer, I invested in a small battery/mains portable 30Gb hard drive on which to download images and, coupled with six 512Mb compact flash cards for the D100 and my trusty Nikon F5, set off for Tanzania.

I was also interested to see the comparison between film and digital. Where time permitted, I took the same scene with the F5 and D100 in order to get a like for like comparison. I soon realised that where a fast sequence of shots was required, the F5 at 8fps was unmatched whereas the D100's 2.5fps combined with the slow write speed to the flash card was frustrating to say the least.

As the trip progressed, I gained confidence in using the D100 with the benefits of previewing the images and histogram on the back of the camera. The speed of changing a compact flash card is about five times quicker than changing a film which was a further advantage. Using the JPEG Fine setting approximately 155 images are recorded on a 512 Kb card or 50 RAW images.

On several occasions I adjusted the ISO rating to suit the available lighting. One occasion in particular whilst returning to the lodge late in the afternoon, two of the land cruisers got stuck in the mud during a short, but intense rain storm. It was getting dark by this time and no one wanted to venture too close the other vehicles for fear of also getting stuck. In order not to miss a good photo opportunity, I adjusted the film speed to 1600 ISO used a VR lens and started shooting. I used the RAW setting to capture the images, as this would also give me a degree of exposure adjustment without adversely affecting the exposure. The results were amazing when viewing the image on the back of the camera and near daytime in light quality.

For most of the trip I used the RAW setting to capture the images and apart from the larger image size, I benefited from the facility to adjust the exposure before final processing by the computer.

Whilst I usually compensate to some degree when using film for sky shots and also a light coloured subject matter, the RAW image allows a greater control over exposure compensation by +/- 2 stops. This facility has enabled me to improve a number of my 'dark' shots and obtain the correct exposure. When shooting in the RAW mode I do not need to bracket my exposures as I used to with film.

The facility to review the image is of great benefit. Apart from showing the last or a sequence of pictures, the facility to view the histogram for correct exposure is invaluable in tricky light conditions.



▲ Topi



▼ Burchell's Zebra at watering hole





Young Lions in a tree









Crowned Crane



Great Egret



On return to the UK I downloaded the digital images from the portable hard disk to the computer's hard disk. I was somewhat apprehensive in attaching the small hard drive to my computer as this was the moment of truth! Eureka! all the images, 22 gigabytes in total, transferred satisfactory. I am still not sure exactly how many images I recorded but, based upon a mix of RAW and JPEG fine, I estimate 5,000 images equating to 140 rolls of film.

The images were initially viewed in Nikon View, the browser that came with the camera. The ability to view all the data on each image (shutter speed exposure, time etc.) is very useful. This was the first time I had been able to match all the relevant shooting data with the pictures. Where some of the shots are not in focus, or the depth of field is too shallow, I know exactly the relationship between the picture and information. This is very useful when using fast long lenses - 400/500 mm plus a 1.4 converter where the depth of field is shallow.

The next step was to print some of the images. I had previously had my monitor calibrated by SCS Services (I would recommend this to any serious digital photographer) so that the image viewed on the monitor matches the printed image. Printer output was via an Epson 1290 and using 16 bit RAW files converted into Tiffs via Photoshop. Many of my JPEG Fine files looked just as good as the RAW files, I could not tell the difference on a number of images. The prints ranged from A4 to Super A3 size and at all sizes the quality was outstanding.

## Image data

Page 13: **Tapi** - 400mm lens; 1/640 sec at f5.6; Aperture priority multi pattern metering; White Balance: Cloudy

**Buchels Zebra** - 400mm lens; 1/400 sec at f6.3; Aperture priority multi pattern metering; White Balance: Cloudy

Page 14: **Young Lions in a tree** - Focal length 400mm; 1/90 sec at f5.6; Aperture priority multi pattern metering; White balance cloudy

Page 15: **White rhinoceros migration** - Focal length 86mm; 1/90 sec @ f11; Aperture priority multi pattern metering; White balance cloudy

At the time of the Tanzania trip I was a Licentiate and I hoped to obtain a few more pictures to support an Associate application in September. Previous trips to Africa had enabled me to build up a collection of suitable images. With the September submission date coming up fast my next task was to assemble a collection of fifteen prints for my submission. Well, what a task. Assembling fifteen images to form a good panel was a major task. No doubt all those of you who have been awarded distinctions will remember agonising over what constitutes a good panel. After much deliberation and invaluable assistance from my wife, fifteen prints were selected from my collection. Surprise surprise! Fourteen of the fifteen prints were digital images from the Tanzania trip. My submission was successful – what a relief.

My submission was retained by the Nature Distinctions panel to show as an example of a successful 'A' submission at various workshops. The images supporting this article formed part of my submission.

For me, digital works. The flexibility to control all the stages from capture to printing is most satisfying. Since returning from Tanzania, I have purchased a 500 f4 lens and the new Nikon D2h - a capture rate of 40 images at 8 fps should ensure that I will not miss anything on my return to Tanzania in 2004. Finally, my thanks are due to Mike Wilkes FRPS who organised the trip and whose advice and assistance proved invaluable.

Page 16: **Grey Heron** - Focal length 400mm; 1/125 sec @ f8; Multi pattern metering, programmed auto; White balance: cloudy

**Crowned Crane** - Focal length 270mm; 1/640 sec @ f5.6; Aperture priority centre weighted metering; White balance: cloudy

These images were all recorded at an ISO sensitivity of 200

# Field Meetings for 2004

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## **Sunday 28 March - 11 a.m.**

### **Hampstead Heath**

Meet at: Hampstead YHA, 4 Wellgarth Rd, NW11.

Grid ref: 258873.

Park in YHA car park (street parking is resident only).

Subjects: Ancient trees and spring fungi.

Cost: Nil.

Lunch: Bring a packed lunch.

Leader: Diana-Elena Antonescu.

Tel: 07867 606204 imagesdiana@yahoo.co.uk

## **Wednesday 19 May - 10.30 a.m.**

### **Cressbrook Dale and Tansley Dale**

Meet at: Red Lion pub, Litton Village (please park considerately).

Grid ref: 165752 (sheet 119).

Subjects: Early-purple orchids, cowslips and other early flowers.

Cost: Nil.

Lunch: Bring a packed lunch.

Stout shoes and waterproofs may be required.

To contact the leader on the day, call

0771 208 7269.

Leader: Robert Hawkesworth FRPS.

Tel: 0115 928 1050

## **Sunday 23 May - 10.30 a.m.**

### **Kenwood, Hampstead Heath**

Meet at: West Lodge car park.

Grid ref: 268875.

Subjects: Landscaped gardens and ancient trees.

Cost: Nil. Lunch: Cafe on site or bring packed.

Leader: Diana-Elena Antonescu.

Tel: 07867 606204 imagesdiana@yahoo.co.uk

## **Friday 28 May - 17.00 to Monday 31st pm Juniper Hall Field Studies Centre, Surrey**

Meet at: Main reception.

Grid ref: TQ 173527.

Subjects: Spring flowers and insects.

Cost: tba.

Lunch: All meals included.

Commences Friday at 7pm and runs to Monday 31st May pm.

Leader: John Bebbington. E-mail:

john.bebbington.jh@field-studies-council.org

## **Sunday 06 Jun - 10 a.m.**

### **Oxwich Bay, Gower**

Meet at: Main carpark.

Grid ref: 502 864.

Subjects: Seashore marine life, insects and dune flowers.

Cost: £2.50 parking.

Lunch: Bring your own.

Bring wellies or footwear suitable for paddling, also waterproofs, suncream and hat.

Leader: Margaret Hodge FRPS.

Tel: 01792 207001

## **Saturday 12 Jun - 10.30 a.m.**

### **Wolstonbury Hill**

Meet at: Clayton Mills Car Park, Mill Lane.

Turning off A273, Burgess Hill Road, 10km.

North of Brighton.

Grid ref: TQ 325 134.

Subjects: Chalk downland and woodland orchids, on a 6km. hilly circuit.

Cost: Nil.

Lunch: Bring packed.

Contact leader to confirm before travelling.

Leader: John Fairbank.

Tel: 01273 732589 jnfairbank@aol.com

## **13 Jun 2004      Sunday 11 a.m. Chartley Moss NNR, Nr Uttoxeter**

Meet at: On grass verge N side of A518 Stafford to Uttoxeter road, 7miles E of Stafford.

Grid ref: SK 022289.

Subjects: Insects, especially dragonflies.

Cost: Nil.

Lunch: Bring packed.

Bring wellies.

LIMITED PLACES. NO DOGS.

N.B. Very uneven surface.

Please contact leader to reserve a place..

Leader: Alan Hartley.

Tel: 01889 590881 alanhartley@beeb.net

# Field Meetings for 2004

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## **Sunday 13 Jun 2004 - 10 a.m.**

### **Cloatley Meadows, Wiltshire WT**

Meet at: Reserve entrance car park.

Grid ref: ST 984 906.

Subjects: Hay meadow flowers and butterflies.

Cost: £3 donation to WWT.

Lunch: Bring packed (or pub 3 miles).

Directions: from Charlton on the B4040

Cricklade to Malmesbury road, turn north to Hankerton. At the village turn right to join Cloatley Road, then 1 mile to reserve.

Leader: John Hankin LRPS.

Tel: 01249 720917

## **Sunday 20 Jun 2004 - 10 a.m.**

### **Aston Clinton Ragpits, nr. Aylesbury**

Meet at: Aston Hill Woods car park.

Grid ref: SP 891101 (OS map 165).

Subjects: Chalk grassland with several orchid species including Fragrant and Pyramidal.

Also good for invertebrates.

Cost: Nil.

Lunch: Bring packed.

Directions: From Aylesbury take A41T east towards Hemel Hempstead. After about 3 miles turn right onto A4011 towards Wendover. After 1 mile turn left into minor road (signed Wendover Woods). Car park is on the left. Afternoon venue to be decided on the day.

Leader: Nick Jarvis ARPS FDPS.

Tel: 01908 607257 Email [nickjarvis@aol.com](mailto:nickjarvis@aol.com)

## **Sunday 09 Oct 2004 - 10 a.m.**

### **Ebernoe Common National Nature Reserve, W. Sussex**

Meet at: Car park next to Ebernoe Church.

Grid ref: SU 976 278.

Subjects: Ancient woodland with over 600 recorded species of fungi.

Cost: £2 donation.

Lunch: Bring packed.

Directions: From A283, 3.5m north of Petworth, 1.5m south of Northchapel, turn east into minor road signposted Ebernoe. 1.5 miles along this road turn right, just past telephone & post boxes, into Church & Reserve access road signposted Ebernoe Church/schoolhouse.

Contact leader to confirm before travelling.

Leader: John Fairbank.

Tel: 01273 732589 [jnfairbank@aol.com](mailto:jnfairbank@aol.com)

## **Tuesday 12 Oct 2004 10.30 a.m.**

### **Padley Gorge**

Meet at: Park in marked areas at side of road B6521.

Grid ref: 258800 (sheet 110 or 119).

Subjects: Fungi, waterfalls, autumn colour.

Cost: Nil.

Lunch: Packed.

Bring stout shoes/wellies and waterproofs.

To contact the leader on the day call

0771 208 7269.

Leader: Robert Hawkesworth FRPS.

Tel: 0115 928 1050

**Mike Lane will be giving his talk**

## **A Country Lane**

**23rd March 2004**

**Warwickshire Wildlife Trust  
Baginton Village Hall.**

**For further information  
Tel 01203 302912**

## **Sunday 24 Oct 2004 10 a.m.**

### **Clowes Wood**

Meet at: Main car park.

Grid ref: 092744 (map 139).

Subjects: Fungi and autumn colours. Cost: Nil.

Lunch: Bring packed.

Leader: Roger Pinn.

Tel: 01564 793616

[rogerwpinn@aol.com](mailto:rogerwpinn@aol.com)

# Canada's Wildlife.

by Peter Jones ARPS

It was 11.15am on Saturday 14th September 2003 when four of us set off from Mountsorrel to drive down to London's Heathrow to meet a further four of our group prior to checking in for our flight to Vancouver, and connecting flight onto Campbell River, Vancouver Island. We eventually arrived at our hotel at 10.00 pm., dropped our bags into our rooms and headed straight down to the bar for a well earned G&T before retiring to bed.

Following breakfast we took the hotel ferry to Quadra Island for some bird watching, passing some Harbour Seals on our way. Later we were to see Bald Eagles, small flocks of American Robins, Ravens, Canada Geese, Common Loons (Great Northern Divers to you and me) and Herons, etc. Following a pub lunch, we hopped on another ferry to the town of Campbell River. Just as the ferry was about to move off the Captain announced that there was a pod of Orca crossing the bows of the ferry some **????** yards away. He allowed them pass before moving off, which gave us an excellent opportunity to watch them. This was a really good start to our holiday and after a short stop we made our way back to our hotel for a swim in the pool or a soak in the hot tub before our evening meal.

The next day, following an early breakfast, we took a Seaplane to Knight Inlet for a four nights stay. Our flight lasted 30 minutes and the route took us over some of the most beautiful mountain scenery imaginable.

Upon arrival we checked in and were then given our safety drill, then it was off for our first Bear watch. First we travelled in a small boat across the inlet, then via bus to our chosen hide. We were in luck because within minutes we saw our first female Grizzly Bear with two nine month old cubs. What a marvellous feeling it was just to be there, watching them behave so naturally, catching Salmon and teaching the cubs both to catch and feed, and all within a few feet of us. In total we must have seen some fifteen individual Bears. Mr Kodak and Mr Fuji

should have been well pleased - the camera's shutters were clicking away rapidly.

We returned to the lodge for lunch and then visited the shore where a Black Bear was just waiting to be photographed

The next big highlight of our holiday was looking for Whales and were not disappointed! We travelled some two and half hours. During our journey we passed Harbour Seals and Porpoise's and also stopped to photograph Stellar's Sea lions. Finally our ultimate sighting of Orca Whales - we found six pods altogether, some of which were sleeping and others were feeding. For me, this was one of the most humbling experiences of my life, to be sitting in a small boat watching these beautiful creatures swimming all around, passing to the side and under our boat. We put a hydrophone in the water to enable us to listen to the Orcas communicating with each other - hearing them was such a moving experience, it made you want to cry. We also came across three Humpback Whales - watching them dive and bring their tails up out the water is a photographers dream!

Too soon it was time to fly back to Vancouver. However, this offered us an opportunity to do some shopping and enjoy a nice Alberta steak in one of the local restaurants.

At 6.15 the following morning, our taxi's arrived to take us the train station to catch the Rocky Mountaineer train to Kamloops. This must be one of the worlds most spectacular rail journey's. The train follows the Fraser River north east and leaves Vancouver's flat farmland behind. The scenery just gets better and better as the snow capped Rockies come into view. There were plenty of opportunities to photograph the changing scenery from the train. Our journey took us through such small towns as Hope and Yale before eventually reaching Hell's Gate - the canyon's most popular tourist attraction - where some 200 million gallons of water per minute surge through the 110 feet wide gap.





▲ Grizzly Bear



▼ Autumn colour in Banff National Park





▲ Grizzly Bear



▼ White-tailed Deer

We arrived at our hotel in Kamloops during the late afternoon and following a wash and a change, we ventured out in search of a drink and a bite.

Our start the next morning was not quite so early! We were picked up at 7am and taken back to the train for the next leg of our journey to the town of Jasper. The landscape is now changing even more rapidly and the autumn colours are starting to show their beauty. We follow the North Thompson River, passing Little Hells Gate and the town of Blue River, then onto the magnificent Pyramid Falls, cascading 300 feet down beside the rail track. A few more miles further we on we had wonderful views of the magnificent Mount Robson, the highest mountain in the Rockies at approx 12,972 ft. We finally reached our destination in the late afternoon and had only to cross the road from the station to reach our hotel.

After breakfast the following morning we picked up the hire vehicle which will remain with us for the rest of our holiday. With open blue skies, fluffy cumulus clouds, snow capped mountains and all the colour of autumn displayed before us, it wasn't long before our camera's were soon clicking away again.

Driving north from the town we passed Lake Annette and onto Medicine Lake, looking for wildlife to photograph. We saw Bald Eagles, Herons, ducks and White-tailed deer, etc. I couldn't believe my eyes when, on the far shore of the lake, I saw five Wolves playing on the shoreline. We observed them for some half an hour though our binoculars and telescopes and was one of the most exciting moments of our holiday.

We then travelled by boat to Spirit Island and spent two days here photographing a variety of subjects including Moose, Chipmunks and Killdeer Plovers as well as much of the island's scenery, before heading off south through Jasper National Park and eventually into Banff National Park. At the Columbian Ice fields we stopped and took a snowmobile onto the glacier. Unfortunately it is receding more and more quickly every year. On returning to our car we found a Raven perched on the bonnet, a rare sight in Britain.

A mile further down the road I spotted in the distance three Mountain Goats in their long white fur coats walking towards us. It wasn't long before they passed in front of us. We watched as they crossed the road and came down to a raging river which, they eventually swam with some trepidation. Once over they climbed up the other side and disappeared into the distance again.

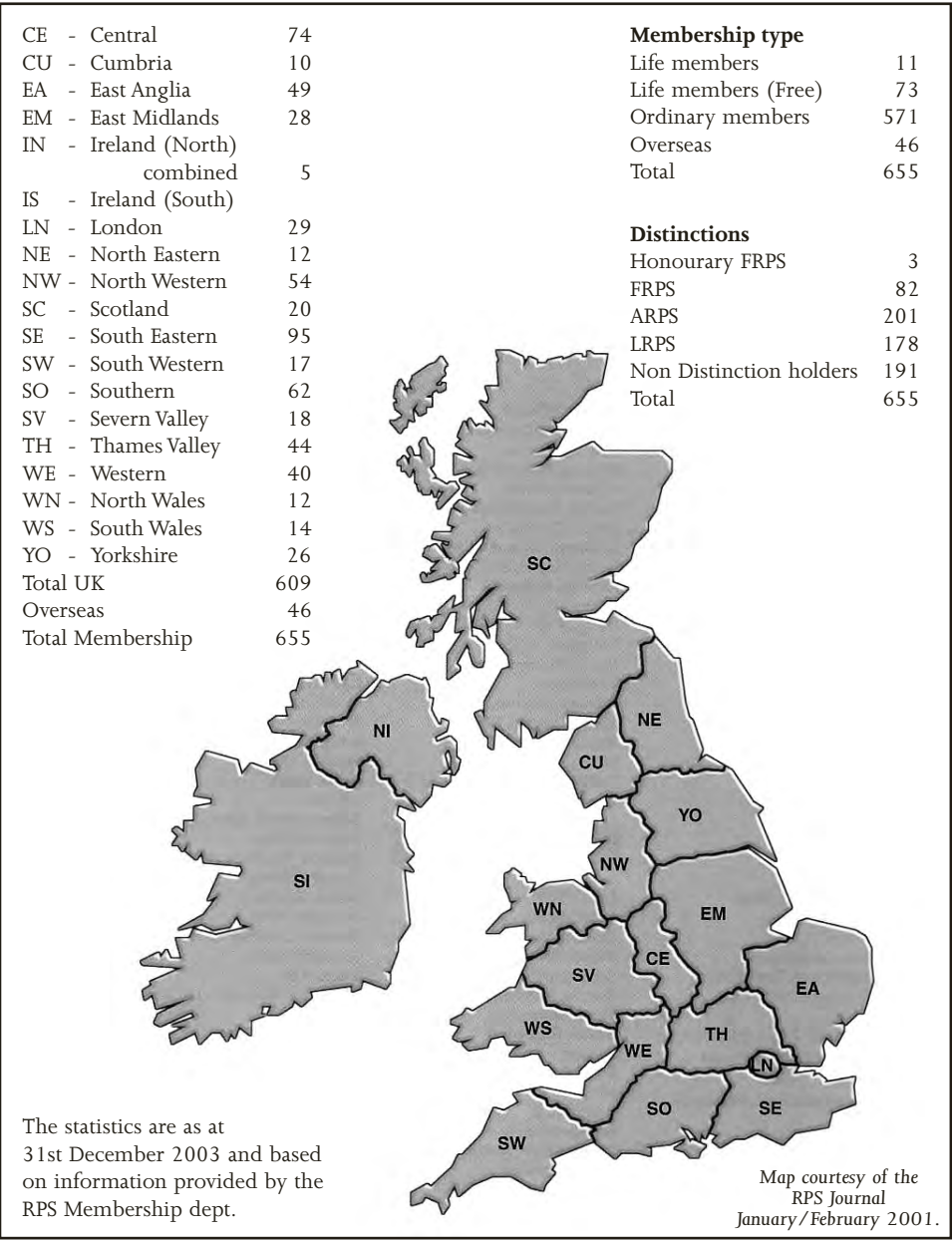
Our next overnight stop was at Num-Ti-Jah Lodge set at the edge of Bow Lake, an absolutely magnificent place to stay and steeped in history, even having its own museum. We then travelled south towards Banff Town, stopping to take photographs of White-tailed Deer, Elk and Big-horned Sheep. We also made visits to Peyton Lake, Lake Louise and the glaciers, and also managed to photograph Red Squirrels, Chipmunks, Grey Jays and Clark's Nutcrackers.

After spending two nights in Banff we sadly had to continue our journey to Calgary, in order to drop off our hire car and catch our return flight home. We had enjoyed two magnificent weeks seeing and photographing some of the best scenery and wildlife that Canada has to offer.

*Editors note: If any member is interested in joining Peter on this trip in September 2004 he can be contacted at: [www.wildwatchtours.co.uk](http://www.wildwatchtours.co.uk)*

# Regions

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





# Musings of a Naturalist part 2

by Michael Shirley ARPS

In December 1976 I retired. It seemed poor economics to pay to keep warm in England when we could do it for nothing in Kenya. Consequently we spent three months on the coast south of Mombasa before returning to our home here in Sussex in the Spring of 77. Each Spring after that I would watch out for the Orange Tip butterflies. I knew that their favoured food plant among the Crucifers was the Garlic Mustard. I would yearly search these plants for eggs and larvae and collect some in order to study them as they proceeded to the pupal stage and then eleven months later to emergence as butterflies. This went on for a number of years until the year when no amount of searching the beds of Garlic Mustard produced any result apart from backache! Then, one day while watching a female Orange Tip in the garden, I saw it settle on an inflorescence of Cuckoo-flower. Upon examining it after the butterfly had alighted I found the little pale yellow egg she had deposited. The eggs change to a rich golden colour after a few days and a brown when ready to hatch. Every year since then Garlic Mustard has yielded nothing whereas *Cardamine pratensis*, the Cuckoo-flower, has been fruitful.

I have puzzled for years over this. One April morning, while walking the Jack Russel, I noticed that the Garlic Mustard was just beginning to show some flower in the lane, whereas the *Cardamine* was very well advanced and had been for some time. Suddenly I thought that I had the answer.

Orange Tip larvae feed upon the developing seed pods of the food plant. The female deposits an egg at the base of the flower where the pod will later develop - the emerging larva then feeds upon the young pods which have developed, and rests always along such a pod. It is then almost invisible to the eye for it is wonderfully camouflaged.

Our first few winters here were often afflicted with some very severe cold and snowy weather such as we have not had to endure for many years since. Could it be that the now warmer winters have favoured the development of the Lady's Smock, (another common name) at the expense of the Garlic Mustard, so that it coincides more closely with the earlier emergence of the Orange Tips? Another result of the dreaded Global Warming?

An item in *The Garden*, the monthly journal of the R.H.S. reported on the temperature difference found in opening spathes of *Aisaemas* and *Arums*, when compared with ambient temperature. Apparently it was discovered that the base of the spathe, in the region of the nectaries, can be a number of degrees higher than the outside air. The explanation was that this production of heat in some way helped in the attraction of pollinating insects. So, one day I decided to take a thermoprobe with me when I walked the dog, in order to check the local *Arums*, or Cuckoo Pint, which were blooming in large numbers all around.

First tests were very exciting, differences of five or more degrees Celsius above the ambient temperature being recorded. However, I became suspicious when the air temperature began to fluctuate far too much so decided upon a test of the thermometer by placing the probe beneath my tongue for a few minutes. When it finally indicated that I should have curled up my toes long before, it became obvious that perhaps the battery needed a change. This was done and the experiment repeated. Quite disappointing. Not a degree of difference between the outside air and the cosy confines of the inner recesses of the *Arums* to be found anywhere.

# News & Views

## Changes at the Kruger National Park

Since I wrote about the Kruger National Park (*The IRIS* Summer 2000), there have been some major changes:

- I. The airport at Skukuza, which gave immediate access to the park, has been closed. There is a new International Airport at Mpumalanga-Kruger, situated near White River, to which you can fly from Johannesburg International. It is fairly close to the central section of the park. Virgin may fly there direct from the UK one day, but I cannot confirm this. If you want the southern end of the park, you could fly to Nelspruit, but driving from Johannesburg will only take five hours on excellent roads. There are tolls, so take some Rands, but the cost is small. It is easy to book accommodation in the park using the internet, but early reservation is best if you want the best choice. The website [www.parks-sa.co.za](http://www.parks-sa.co.za) is comprehensive.
2. The entrance fee has been increased to about £12 per day for overseas visitors, to make the park financially self-supporting. There is a reduced rate for longer stays, as the gate staff will explain.
3. There are now ten hides, of which three are potentially useful for photography. These are at Lake Panic, near Skukuza; Sweni, near the Nwanetsi picnic site, and Shipandane, near Mopane. All are marked on the park map, which is available at every camp shop.
4. Catering is in the hands of a private firm. The standard is modest, but prices are low. If you intend to cook for yourself, as the locals do, take a tin-opener.
5. The wildlife is as good as ever.

Peter Evans FRPS.

**Entries are invited for the**

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# News & Views

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Dear Editor,

I agree with Tremaine Cornish that there appears to be an obsession with perfection in natural history photography but would suggest that this not only relates to botany and fungi but also the animal kingdom.

The pictorial aspect seems to be pre-eminent nowadays as opposed to the factual approach, with the emphasis being on subjects in pristine condition against a super-bland background instead of shots showing the subject perfect or not with a recognisable habitat behind. As such I have felt discouraged in recent years from entering most exhibitions/competitions.

Nature is not dominated by perfection, there is change and decay in everything, and I feel that photographs of subjects showing 'warts and all' should be just as, if not more, acceptable than those which have the pretty picture studio portrait type appearance of so many of the shots which find favour today.

Roger Barnes ARPS

Dear Editor,

I am writing to say how much I agree with Mr Cornish.

My dictionary has ten definitions of 'perfect' giving variations according to specific situations. It seems we are in difficulty at the outset with regard to natural history photography.

I have often seen specimens I wanted to photograph and thought "The Nature Group will not like this." I often go ahead anyway. If I see a superb Fly Agaric *Amanita muscaria* with a chunk out of it, is this not a perfect illustration of how it is providing food to animals living in the same habitat?

Similarly, leaves backlit showing creatures burrowing within the confines of the leaf are not perfect leaf specimens but nevertheless illustrate the myriad workings and complexities of nature. There will I feel be many other examples.

Subject to human fallibility, I suggest that the perfection we seek to achieve should be in view-point, composition, exposure, season, etc. These alone will keep the majority of us fully occupied.

M. Lofthouse.

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**NB.** All payments must be made in £ Sterling.  
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Dear Editor,

re Stabilizing tripods, pages 22/3 of Iris No. 87:

The easiest way to stabilize a tripod in the wind or when mounted with a long lens is to hang a loaded rucksack or bag from the centre (adding stones to the rucksack will do). If the centre column does not already have a fitting for this, drill through it, add a loop of cord and clip a rucksack to this with a karabiner.

Best regards

Jack Jackson

# Reports on Field Meetings

## Sherwood Pines Tuesday 7th October 2003

It seemed quite strange that exactly twelve months previously the Sherwood Pines meeting was washed out with torrential rain and yet here we were this year in the middle of a drought! Considering that the auspices were not good because of the dry conditions, I was pleased that so many members turned up, some I may add from considerable distances.

The site is a rich one for fungi, having a good mix of conifer plantations and broad-leaved woodland of considerable age, consequently we could normally expect a wide range of species, however this year was not a normal one and we struggled to find much at all. Brick Caps (*Hypholoma sublateritium*) and Sulphur Tuft (*H. fasciculare*) provided some good specimens as well as some very small False Chanterelles (*Hygrophoropsis aurantiaca*). As you might expect we also found Honey Fungus (*Armillaria mellea*) in some numbers as well as *Mycena* spp.

That was about the sum total of fungi, but I was pleased to see a number of members getting to grips with bark studies and leaf mosaics.

Although it could hardly be called the richest Field Meeting I have run, from the amount of laughter and the custom we brought to the coffee bar, it seemed to have been greatly enjoyed by all.

Last time floods, this time drought. What will 2004 bring?

Robert Hawkesworth FRPS

Picture opposite:  
Sulphure Tuft (*Hypholoma fasciculare*)  
by Barbara Hawkesworth  
Camera: EOS 30  
Lens: Sigma 105mm at f16  
Film: Sensia 100



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