



# THE IRIS

MAGAZINE OF THE NATURE GROUP OF THE RPS

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Autumn/Winter 2006





*Above: Perito Moreno Glacier Argentina.*

*Below: Ice floes near Grey glacier- Chile.*



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Copy may be sent by email or on disc as .txt or .doc files, or printed using double line spacing on one side of the paper only.

Digitally captured photographic images are preferred supplied as Tiff files on CD. They should be at least 2555 pixels on the longest side. Scanned transparencies are also acceptable providing they are scanned to the same specification. Original slides/transparencies are also acceptable, however, the Editor cannot specify how long they may be away from the author.

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### Distribution:

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Cover Short-eared Owl by Phil Collier

IFC Perito Moreno Glacier, Argentina and Ice floes near Grey Glacier, Chile both by John Nathan LRPS

BC Cheetah and Lions feeding, by Tremaine Cornish LRPS



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### Nature Group Exhibitions

Copies of Nature Group Exhibitions dating back to 2000, are available to book for camera clubs/photographic societies. If you would like to book one of these or the current or next years' Travelling Exhibition, please contact: Peter Jones ARPS, details above.

### Field Meeting Reports

Please send these directly to the Editor (address above) by post or email.

# Editorial

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You may be quite surprised to receive your Winter copy of The Iris quite so early this year. The reason for this is because of the decision to bring forward the AGM by one month. The decision also had implications for our Annual Exhibition, the opening of which is on the same day as the AGM.

On the subject of the Annual Exhibition, your entry form for the 2007 exhibition is included in this issue - the 8 centre pages can easily be removed without damaging the remaining pages. Closing date is Saturday 6th January for Digital entries and Saturday 20th January for prints and slides. Why not take the entry form out of this issue and put it on your desk, by your PC or wherever you need to put it so that you do not forget to enter. Think about getting your entry in early - don't leave it until after Christmas because you may find you will be too late.

I am totally amazed that it is September. By the time you read this, I will be back from a photo-tour with David to the Rockies, hopefully with several gigabytes worth of good images. However, planning what kit to take on this trip has been difficult due to the new hand-luggage restrictions in place now and for the foreseeable future. There is no doubt that I will not be able to carry all the lenses I would like to have had at my disposal plus two camera bodies and a laptop PC in a single 45cm x 35cm x 16cm bag - the laptop simply cannot accompany me and I will have to resort to a Flashtrax, which has let me down before. Fortunately this trip is more about landscape and colour than wildlife, so with a few more gigabytes of memory card I might get by even if the Flashtrax breaks down. If this security situation is not relaxed in the short-term, I think airlines may have to come up with a secure storage facility in the cabin, that you would check your bag into upon boarding. The idea of checking my kit into the hold, with the trials it would go through before I got it back again, is not one I really want to consider.

More articles are needed for the next issue, so don't be shy!



# From the chair

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Well here I am again, sitting in front of the PC on a dreary grey day, looking out and watching the rain drops trickle down the window panes!! I simply can't believe that this is August!

What an absolutely strange summer we seem to have had. It started off fairly dismally, then changed abruptly to days of unbroken sunshine with scorching temperatures and heat that was almost unbearable. Then August, the month we always think of as being warm and settled, has turned out to have been dreadful, with cold winds off the sea and a definite autumnal feel to it. So, what a strange summer indeed!!

Sometimes the weather doesn't help our photography and it can be so frustrating, but that being said there's always something exciting and interesting to look back on. I can reflect on the summer of 2006 and say that I've had a number of really great and memorable days out. On one such occasion I bumped into fellow Nature Group members, Dickie Duckett and Malcolm Schuyll, while on an excellent trip to the Farne Islands, in fact the best day I've experienced there in years. I also had a few superb days photographing Merlin with an old friend in Dumfries - now that was a wonderful experience! Then I spent an excellent day in Bedfordshire photographing insects with Richard Revels - a truly memorable occasion, a field alive with butterflies, I have never seen so many in one place at any one time, there was movement everywhere. Richard also introduced me to the Bee Wolf Wasp, a magnificent little creature (but not if you're a bee!!) It is after all, the good days you remember most fondly, so all in all I have enjoyed some really great days.

Richard has asked me to raise the awareness of Lyme's disease within the Nature Group. This serious and potentially dangerous disease has been in the news frequently this summer. We all venture into woodlands and this infection, which is quite common particularly in woods with a healthy deer population, can easily be picked up from a tick bite. Please be careful. If you are bitten and any rash is noticed you should seek medical advice. An informative leaflet can be obtained from the Forestry Commission. Be aware and safe.

Dawn and I have been rather active throughout August in setting up our own web-sites. It can be quite confusing the first time and there is a steep learning curve in 'jargon' busting! I/T specialists most definitely talk in a completely different language and getting the cookies sorted means tea & biscuits to me and always will! Anyway we're both up and running now - it's been a very satisfying (and time consuming) project to complete. The links are on the Group's web-site, so please drop in and have a look.

I'm rather hoping that a wet August could give rise to a bumper fungi season. I'll always look forward to that as I really enjoy my fungi photography. Unfortunately the last few years have been quite poor. So let's hope that this year we may be in for something special.

Other things I am looking forward to - well, Wendy and I are off to the highlands soon. Optimistically I've got my fingers crossed for some exciting days out. Then, at the end of September, I've got the photo-tour to Canada followed by the Falklands in November, so I've got a very busy autumn with lots of potential for good photography to look forward to.

As for things to look forward to, don't forget the forthcoming Chairman's Day at Smethwick PS on Saturday 21 October 2006. This will be a very interesting day with some of our finest exponents in wildlife photography lecturing on the day. Please support them and the group - join us for this event and play your part in making this another successful group event to remember. Tickets are still available and pre-booking is required. Full details plus a booking form are printed in this edition of the Iris - so book now!

For those of you that can make it, I look forward to welcoming you all to the Chairman's Day and for those of you that can't, I wish you all a very Merry Christmas.

Regards



# The Nature Distinctions Panel

by Robert Hawkesworth FRPS

Over the years in which I have been closely associated with the Nature Group, both as Secretary and Chairman, it has become clear to me that many members have somewhat vague ideas about the Nature Distinctions Panel and the manner in which it conducts its business. There seems to be a widely held view that the Panel is an adjunct of the Nature Group and some of you even think that it is a sub-Committee of the Nature Group Committee! Such views are quite simply erroneous and it is felt that some explanation might be helpful.

At the outset it is very important to state that the Nature Distinctions Panel is an entirely separate body from the Nature Group and has no connection with it whatsoever. The members of the Panel are all experienced nature photographers who hold Fellowships of the Society, in many cases they may also be Nature Group members but it is in no way a necessary requirement.

At the time of writing, the panel Chairman is Roger Reynolds Hon. FRPS and the members are Roger Hance FRPS, David Osborn FRPS, Richard Revels FRPS and myself, Robert Hawkesworth FRPS. The panel meets twice a year, in March and September, to assess applications for Associateship and Fellowship. Applications for Associateship are assessed in public and if successful are passed on to the Council for ratification. Fellowship applications are assessed in camera (without an audience). Those applications deemed of the required standard are then referred to the Fellowship Review Board, which is made up of the Chairmen of the various subject panels as well as members of the Distinctions Advisory Board. This acts as a moderating process and ensures that as far as possible Fellowship standards are consistent across the subject areas. Successful applications at this level are then passed on for ratification to the Council.

In the case of unsuccessful applications, at both Associateship and Fellowship level, every effort is made to inform the applicant of the reasons for failure and to try to indicate a course of action for improvement and in the nature

category there has always been a happy tradition of this. Wherever possible arrangements will be made to meet with a panel member so that the matter can be explained in greater detail. Obviously things do occasionally go wrong and if anyone reading this feels that they have not received satisfactory help at this stage then they really should contact the Distinctions Manager at Bath, Carol Agar.

If you are working towards a distinction in nature then it is always helpful to receive guidance. A few years ago, a number of now past-members of the Nature Distinctions Panel put together an inter-active CD-ROM guide to obtaining an Associateship, which was produced and distributed by the Nature Group. It has since been updated and is available from the Treasurer of the Nature Group, Trevor Hyman LRPS, priced at £10. Another highly recommended course of action is to attend, if possible, a Distinctions Workshop/Advisory Meeting. The Nature Group has often held such sessions. If you have a friend who is a Fellow then his or her guidance may be sought, but remember that photography moves on and unless they are still 'at the cutting edge' so to speak then they may not necessarily be aware of current standards. It is also possible to seek advice from a panel member and this should be done by approaching the Distinctions Manager, Carol Agar. A panel member will certainly be able to say whether your work is generally of an appropriate standard, but that does not imply that you will be successful. They will not help you to make a final selection from your work for that is part of 'the examination paper'. General help with things to look for in putting a panel of work together, for example the balance of the content, the flow of colours, composition, the interplay of vertical and horizontal images and so on is always useful to receive. Make sure that you have read very carefully the Nature Section in the booklet 'Distinctions & Qualifications Criteria' so that your work is appropriate to Nature Photography.

Gaining an Associateship or Fellowship is never going to be easy, it takes everyone a great deal of time and effort to achieve the required standard, and that is as it should be. It is also quite expensive, for not only do you have your application fee, but if you are a print worker there is the added cost of printing and mounting, which is certainly no small matter. Transparencies should be re-mounted in new mounts, masking them where necessary and returning the transparency to the centre of the mount. Again very time consuming. If you are making a digital entry, which at the moment is only allowable for an Associateship, then follow the instructions given very carefully.

In conclusion I am sure that I speak for my fellow panel members when I say that we all wish to help you gain your distinction, but at the same time we will always maintain the very high standards required, for that of course is our responsibility.

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## Extracts from the RPS

# 'Distinctions & Qualifications Criteria'

### 2.4.4 Nature

Any subject within the various branches of natural history, including zoology, botany, physics, chemistry, meteorology, astronomy, palaeontology and anthropology, is permitted.

The images should be arranged in a harmonious manner and display a thematic approach towards the chosen subject(s) rather than appear as a haphazard collection of individual images. It is expected that the subjects will be wild, live and free and in a natural or adopted habitat of the subject's choice. It may be permissible, in some circumstances, for subjects to be presented which have been photographed under controlled conditions.

No kind of manipulation that alters the truth of the photographic statement is allowed. Only minor distractions or blemishes may be removed from the images.

Prints should be tastefully presented so they can be viewed as a cohesive body of work. Fellowship submissions, especially, should show a theme and individual style with the evidence of the development of an original idea where possible. Repetition of subjects should be avoided unless the resultant images show a different aspect in the life of the subject and are necessary to promote the chosen theme.

As well as the Statement of Intent, a list of subject names, both common and scientific, is required.

### Specific Assessment Criteria

Clear evidence of a genuine interest and involvement in this area of photography is required. Each subject should be shown in an illustrative or informative way so that its relevance to the portfolio as a whole can be seen. Accurate depiction of the subject is required. All images in a portfolio should contribute to an informative and cohesive presentation and each image should be individually interesting to the naturalist.

# Film Update - the alternative view

by Tony Bond FRPS

In *The Iris* No. 94, our Chairman, David, gave his reasons for going digital. While I accept that for some people the case for digital is overwhelming, it is not necessarily right for every member of the Nature Group. It all depends on where your interests lie and what you wish to do with your images. I believe that film still has a place. Technology will have to become far more mature to tempt me to convert.

Firstly, allow me to correct one error and some misconceptions in David's article. Nikon have not ceased to manufacture film cameras - the F6 remains in production. Canon also are still manufacturing a range of film SLRs. I am not aware that Kodak have announced their intention to cease making silver halide products. It is true that they have trimmed their product range, for example they no longer manufacture monochrome papers. Ilford on the other hand, have emerged from the trauma of administration and are back with a full range of monochrome products. Fujifilm have emphasised their commitment to silver halide by announcing a new ISO 400 transparency film which will be launched later this year.

I have read many articles in the photographic press by people who have converted from film to digital, but David's is the first to claim that digital saves you money. All the others have warned that digital can seriously damage your wealth. David has more photo opportunities than most of us - there must be few members of the Nature Group who make an average of 200 exposures per week. You do not need to be an accountant to know that any cost comparison depends on the assumptions you make. The real killer is depreciation. Digital camera manufacturers seem to be operating on a two year product life cycle. When a new model appears, the value of the one it replaces drops like a stone. After all, who wants a two year old computer? A friend of mine has spent £8,000 on three high end digital cameras, all of which are now obsolete. Then there is the cost of the all the ancillary kit - the pc, monitor, printer, etc., all of which need

replacing as they breakdown or become obsolete. No doubt the launch (in the foreseeable future) of Microsoft's new Vista operating system, will provoke many people to upgrade their PCs running Windows XP.

The recent Nature Group exhibition showed that inkjet prints can be of very high quality indeed. However, there is almost a conspiracy of silence concerning the serious problems which are associated with the technology. Anyone who believes that fading has been conquered should see the 2005-6 monochrome print folio of the Lancashire and Cheshire Photographic Union. The majority of the prints are inkjet produced and would have been approximately one year old when I saw them. It was apparent, from the abysmal print quality, that many of the entries had faded badly. Also, many had objectionable surface blooms. By contrast, the monochrome prints in the L&CPU Centenary Exhibition stole the show. The earliest, by John Benjamin Dancer was dated 1855 and there were two of Roger Fenton's from 1858.

The very different mechanisms of image formation puts inkjet media at a considerable disadvantage compared with silver halide colour paper. In the latter, the dyes are formed in well defined layers, well protected by gelatin, with one or more protective layers on top of the assembly. An inkjet printer drops the inks onto the surface of the paper and the dyes or pigments then have to migrate into the layer designed to receive them. This process may be assisted by a highly absorbent undercoat to suck the solutions into the assembly. Having arrived there, the dyes or pigments do not necessarily stay put. If you think that your ink jet prints are not as sharp as when you first made them, you are probably correct. Stability is critically dependent upon the dye/substrate interaction. Beware of claims such as "50 years life" because they will result from accelerated ageing which rarely reproduces normal storage precisely.



One commonly used additive to ink is glycol. This will evaporate from the finished print over time. If the print is displayed under glass, the glycol can condense in the form of droplets. Many high-street professionals who wish to sell frames as well as prints to their customers, now have their digital files printed on colour paper to avoid the problems of glycol and fading.

But if a print deteriorates, you can always make another one. Or can you? For an objective discussion of the issues raised by constant changes in hardware and software, I recommend that you read a paper by a former archivist for the Walt Disney Co. published in the *Imaging Science Journal*, an RPS publication. In it, she acknowledges the enormous advantages which digital technology has brought about in the ability to supply requests for images coming from anywhere in the world. However, she asks if you can read the word processing files you created just 6-10 years ago. We no longer know that CDs and DVDs will become obsolete in the not too distant future, but we do not yet know

what will succeed them. Do you remember Beta versus VHS? My first tentative steps in computing were stored on 5.25" diskettes. The 'floppies' came along and it was not long before it was difficult to find a working 5.25" drive anywhere in a busy R&D function. Then IT (bless them) decided to change the company-wide word processing programme. They assured us that our existing files would be compatible with the new programme. You can, no doubt, guess the rest.

I cannot do better than to conclude with the final sentence from the referred to paper. "If it is accepted that most customers and businesses will always gravitate towards the newest toys and latest technology, then the bottom line is that nothing is stable, and in the long term everyone will lose."

### Reference

Lerner A. Business archives and digital images: preservation issues versus getting the job out. *The Imaging Science Journal*, 2001, **49**, 171-174.

## 'An Interactive Guide to Obtaining your Nature Associateship'

Updated V2.0 CD-ROM now available - for PC only.

Approved by the RPS Council as an official RPS publication.

Over 140 copies sold to date.

The best advice for anyone considering applying for an Associateship in Nature Photography is to attend a Nature Distinctions Workshop. However for many it is not always possible to attend, and this CD is designed to cater for such applicants.

The guide is the result of collaboration between past panel members and RPS Distinctions Manager, Carol Agar, and produced by John Myring. Benefiting from the authors' extensive experience of viewing numerous applications, both successful and otherwise, the Guide leads the user through all of the aspects that need to be considered. Advice on selection and presentation of both prints and slides as well as the additional requirements needed to make a Digital application.

**The CD-ROM (PC only) is available for only £10 - including p&p.**

To purchase your copy send a cheque for £10 payable to 'RPS Nature Group' to:

Nature Group Treasurer, Trevor Hyman LRPS,  
3 Northcourt Lane, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 1QA.



# CHAIRMAN'S DAY

A full day of Nature Photography hosted by David Osborn FRPS

**Saturday 21st October 2006, 10 a.m.**

Smethwick Photographic Society,  
The Old Schoolhouse, Oldbury, West Midlands

## PROGRAMME

10.00 am	Arrival - Coffee/Tea	2.00 pm	Choir Boys & Lady's Slippers by Robert Hawkesworth FRPS
10.30 am	Introduction & presentation from the Chairman, David Osborn FRPS	2.45 pm	The Trials & Tribulations of Insect Photography by John Bebbington FRPS
11.15 am	Flashing Wild and Free - Richard Revels FRPS	3.30 pm	A selection of recent successful A&F panels including an F from Dawn Osborn FRPS and an A from Jane Creatorex ARPS
12.00 noon	Colin Smith FRPS presents a selection of his work	4.30 pm	Approximate finish time
12.45 pm	Lunch		

**Tickets are available now, priced at £15 each incl Lunch, Teas and Coffees.**

**Ensure your place - Book now!**

Complete the reply slip below and send with your cheque to arrive not later than Monday 15th September 2006.

Please send to: **David Osborn FRPS, Flat 2, 19 Mount Street, Cromer, Norfolk, NR27 9DB**

Please make cheques payable to: **The RPS Nature Group**

Please send me \_\_\_\_\_ tickets for Chairman's Day I enclose my cheque for £ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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Postcode \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

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# Patagonia

by John Nathan LRPS

Patagonia is an area I had long wanted to visit. It is the most Southern part of South America, and lies in both Argentina and Chile. Its latitude is from approximately 45 deg south to 55deg South, ie the most Southerly land mass in the world apart from Antarctica. There are several interpretations of the word 'Patagonia' one of which is that the Spanish settlers, seeing men with a fine physique, described them as 'Patagones', being the name of a popular literary character of the time.

Fortunately, I was able to organise a group of ten friends, who visited the area in January 2005 (mid-summer). In the summer it is warm but can be windy; in the winter it may be extremely cold and stormy, though sometimes it is still. But the weather is unpredictable at any time of year. There were certain advantages of arranging it ourselves. We could visit where we wanted, and our itinerary did not exist in any travel agent's books. We flew to Buenos Aires, then flew south in Argentina, travelled by coach to Chile. At the end of the trip, we drove to Punta Arenas, flew to Santiago, Chile, from where we returned home. Travel companies prefer a trip in which

you arrive and depart from the same airport. Another advantage of a self organised trip was that we were able to train together for a year in advance and therefore knew each other and could cope with the conditions. Also it was less expensive than a commercial tailor made trip. I booked our flights and a trekking company in Chile organised all our ground operations.

This was mainly a walking holiday, of which I took advantage for photography. This is difficult - walkers do not want to spend a long time waiting while photographers carefully line up shots, let alone wait for the light to be right. On the other hand, you can visit places more remote than photography holidays venture to, for half the price. You do need to give some serious thought to carrying the minimum of equipment, because you will have to carry it. In Patagonia there is no altitude problem - 1000 metres was about the highest we went. But it is so far south that the snow line is only about 1000 metres. You also have to take into account the fact that you may be out of contact with mains electricity for a week or more; this is a problem for digital cameras.





I took a Canon EOS10D + four batteries, a 17-35 Sigma EX lens, and Canon 75-300 IS lens. The image stabiliser was important, as I could not carry a tripod. My only flashgun was in camera. I took a 40GB Flashtrex battery powered portable hard disc with two batteries. I also took battery chargers for the camera and Flashtrex (why oh why do they make all these batteries a different shape so that you have to take several chargers). I also took several compact flash cards.

We spent a few days in Buenos Aires, then flew 1500 miles south to El Calafate. This is a small town some twenty miles to the East of the Andes. The countryside here is cool, with a scrub desert landscape, and is on the Southern shore of Lago Argentina, some ten miles long. After one night we travelled in a coach for four hours over dirt roads round Lago Argentina, then Lago Viedma. After some three hours you could suddenly see the Andes, snow covered, rising steeply from the plain ahead of you. After a further hour we arrived at El Chalten, a small frontier type town with about fifty houses spread along a mile of road. Our hotel was five miles further toward the mountains. We finally arrived in a beautiful location, from which we could walk directly into the mountains. This was Los Glaciares National Park, where we spent five days. We walked into the mountains daily. There were opportunities to take images, carefully study viewpoints, etc. but not to linger. It is not always realised, except from the air, that in this part of South America lies an ice cap, and we were only about five miles to the East of it. The icecap is the third largest in the world, after Antarctica and Greenland. It was 1000 ft higher than us, and hemmed in by jagged mountains; because of this it is difficult to see. Close to us was Mount Fitzroy, named after the Captain of the Beagle. Adjacent to the icecap are glacial lakes with glaciers flowing into one side and ice floes on the lake. There is also a fierce polar wind which blew us all over once! Our day walks, with a local guide, consisted of trips up to these glacial lakes.

The scenery was quite stunning. The first place we visited was the Perito Moreno Glacier, some three miles wide, descending from the icecap. This is one of the only glaciers in the world which is not receding. The green strip between desert and mountains is only a few miles wide, but in that strip were Southern Beech trees, the same genus as ours but stunted because of the fierce winter

weather, and with leaves half the size of the trees at home. There were Chilean Firebushes, which cover some hillsides in red when fully out in flower. We also saw air plants, parasites attached to trees and a variety of lichens.

After a week we then returned to El Calfate, then travelled by coach to Puerto Natales, Chile, a trading port started by the British toward the end of the nineteenth century, when a lot of Welsh people moved to Patagonia. There were Cormorants and Black-necked swans in the bay, which opens out after many miles to the Pacific. The countryside here is green, as it is to the West of the Andes

The following day we travelled some fifty miles to Torres de Paine National Park, to attempt the full circuit of the Torres de Paine range of mountains. Very few tourists attempt this but stick to the southern edge. Torres de Paine is a range of mountains with three central spires, the highest of which was first climbed by Sir Chris Bonington in the 1960s. This was a week of camping; we carried a day pack, and our property, in one kitbag, was carried on horses. So we each carried all the equipment we needed for the day. On our first day we stayed in an Ecocamp, a site of fixed tents, with ecologically friendly systems to minimise environmental disturbance. There was a lot of bird life round the camp, and sunrise over the Torres de Paine was an astonishing orange glow. The two photographers in our party were both allowed to use the one mains plug for charging up the batteries. You could leave excess gear in the Ecocamp. The next day we began an anticlockwise circuit, camping each night. My four camera batteries and two Flashtrax batteries just lasted the eight days without but I did no editing. It was an interesting experience downloading a CF card onto the Flashtrax in a tent, with wind and wet snow outside. All my pictures were taken in RAW.

In the Torres de Paine are Guanacos, the original wild animals from which Llamas and Alpacas were developed. They were nearly wiped out by ranching, but the Torres de Paine, now a world heritage site, has been a national park for some forty years, and here they are protected. They are prey for the most shy species, the Puma. This is a mountain lion and rarely seen. We were







extremely lucky to see one crossing the road in front of our van on our last day, but it all happened too quickly for photography. There are many bird species - largest are the Rheas, a flightless bird, slightly smaller than an Ostrich. On two or three occasions we saw Condors soaring around the higher peaks. This is the only place in the world which is a stronghold of the Condor, the heaviest of flying birds and a type of culture. Often heard, but rarely seen were Chilean Woodpeckers, the male of which has a scarlet head. We had one wonderful sighting of a Pygmy Owl, some 6 inches high, which just sat on its branch, giving us a disapproving look. Surprisingly, we also saw flamingos.

The plant life was also plentiful, with more Southern Beeches. There were also Gentians, Magellanic Orchids and *Calceolaria* growing wild.

Unfortunately, we could not complete the circuit, because the weather on the pass above Los Perros was just too bad. But we walked right round the other side, seeing the huge Glacier Grey on the way. There are many glaciers which descend from the icecap; some are enormous. Ice floes break off, and there is the strange sight of ice floes in rivers, whose banks are lush with vegetation.

This is a remarkable part of the world, with some unique species. I would recommend it to anyone who is fairly hardy. It is so far from home that it is a place you are likely to visit only once. Though I have not visited Antarctica, from pictures I have seen I believe that there is a far wider range of species in Patagonia, which makes it a more worthwhile place to visit.

Dr Peter Brandham and colleagues at Kew have assisted in plant identification.

#### Pictures

Page 9 - spires of Torres del Paine, Chile.

Page 10 - Magellan's or Porcelain Orchid,

*Chloraea magellanica*.

*Calceolaria uniflora*.

Air plant, *Misodendrum* sp.

Page 11 - Pygmy owl

Southern Lapwing.

Rhea, Torres del Paine National Park.

Page 12 - Chilean firebush, *Embothrium*

*coccineum*, with inflorescence inset.

# Safari to the Masai Mara, Kenya

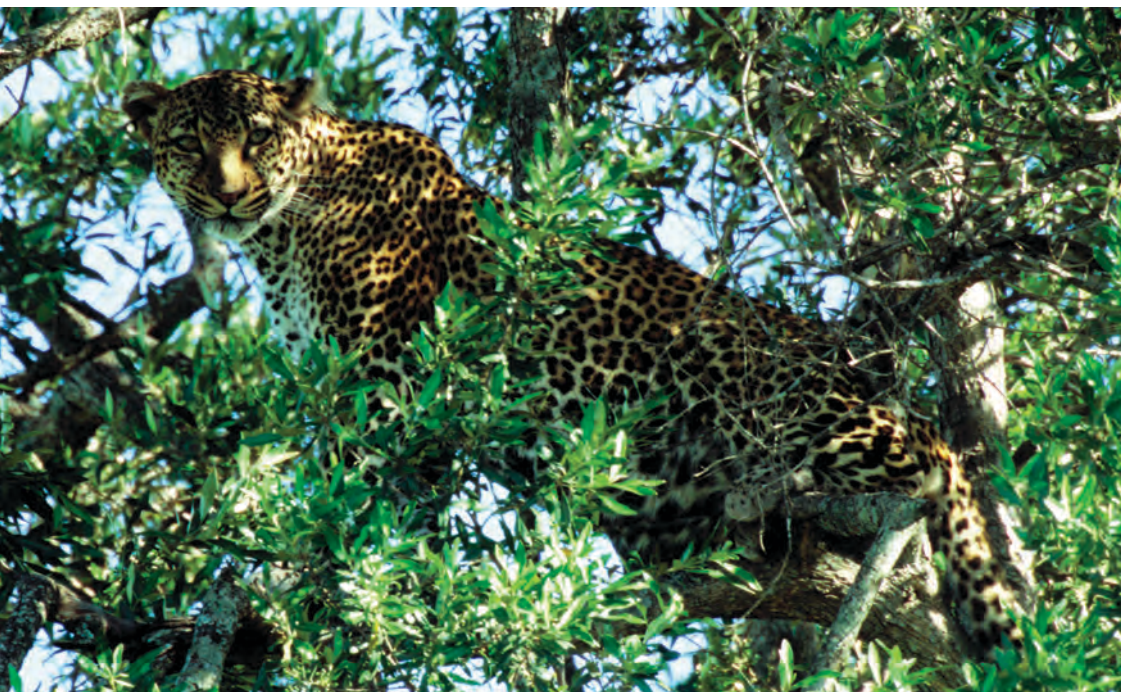
Tremaine Cornish LRPS.

I made the impulsive decision to travel to the Masai Mara after spotting an advertisement in the BBC Wildlife magazine. The prospect of travelling around the Mara with a BBC cameraman from the Big Cat Week / Diary programmes was just too much to pass by.

Imagine my delight when I heard that just five of us would be making the 10 day trip along with our agent. Finally the day arrived and it was time to board our overnight Kenya Airways flight to Nairobi, which thankfully was almost empty, and so I had the luxury of three seats and plenty of sleep. We landed early and missed seeing the African sunrise from the plane as anticipated. A quick transfer to a local airfield followed, then a leisurely breakfast before our propeller plane was due to depart. Flying time was a little over 50 minutes, plus two stops before we landed at our destination, Kenya's premier wildlife reserve, lying in the Southwest corner of the country, with Tanzania's Serengeti Reserve just to the south and Lake Victoria a little further to the West.

After a brief but very warm welcome I was escorted to my allotted tent, complete with four poster bed and private bathroom. After an ample lunch, we elected to get out onto the reserve to get a taste of what was in store for us. We met one of our drivers Paul, a young man who we heard is the top wildlife guide for Kenya, such that he trains many of the other guides across the country. We learned that he saw the prospect of guiding and driving us as a holiday, as he had a great joy in the wildlife of his country, and that even on days off he drives his family into the reserve to show them the wildlife that is his work. I also quickly found out that one of his passions was vultures, and so I made an instant friend. Our other driver was Warren our very own BBC wildlife cameraman.

Within a few minutes a lioness was spotted and she in turn led us to the remainder of the pride. I can tell you, when you find yourself in the back of an open land rover looking at a pride of a dozen or so wild lions, only 15 feet or so away for the first time you are unlikely to be able to think straight, let alone count accurately.





*African Elephant*



*Marabou Stork*



On looking around we saw a group of Mongooses all looking cautiously at the lions, as were a number of Vervet monkeys. It was clear that we were in for a treat.

Every morning I was awoken at 5:30 by my 'house boy' Gideon with a hot flask of coffee and a smile. Our first morning we had opportunities to photograph more Lion, Elephant, Cattle Egret, Rufus Knapped Lark and that was before breakfast! Later came Impala, Topi, Wildebeest, Hyena, a group of three Cheetah, Crowned Crane, Hammer-headed Stork, Jackson's Weaver bird and much more. Following lunch and a brief siesta, the 'Ridge Pride' of lions was the highlight of the after-noon followed by another pride with two cubs, Black-backed Jackals and several species of antelope.

It is difficult to single out one particular highlight. One day we saw a total of 41 lions and lost count of the number of elephant. Cheetahs with cubs were a delight, as were Leopards with their kill hanging in the trees. Another day, whilst out with Warren, we heard over the radio of a small group of Zebra trying to cross the Mara river. We held on tight and sped along the tracks to see that not only were they trying to cross the river but that there

was an Alligator close to hand. Would we see the gore of the kill? On one hand you want to see the action of a kill and on the other you want the Zebra to survive. The Alligator caught the last one – was this to be its final crossing? A shaking of mane and a kicking of hooves, and by Jove can they kick, and the zebra was free, it scrambled up the bank to live another day. A sigh of relief all round. The thrill of the chase was over in all but the blink of an eye. The Zebra was lucky that it was a young Alligator and not one of the larger ones that we had seen the previous day. Then it was time for breakfast in the shade of a tree. We found that we were being watched intently by a lone baboon just 50 feet away, obviously hoping for snacks and leftovers.

We spent another morning searching for the elusive Black Rhinos which are critically endangered. With only 15 of them reported to be present in the whole of the Mara, we had our work cut out. Now Rhino are known to frequent an area of the Mara that is thick with bushes and has little other wildlife, so there was the very real prospect of spending the entire day looking into bushes and thickets trying to spot one of these elusive creatures. Rhino may be big, but when you are scanning the terrain for a patch of grey amongst the bushes, it is no easy task. Black Rhino are not black and White Rhino are not white. Both are grey. On reading up on them and talking with Paul, our guide, we determined that white was a misunderstanding of the Afrikaans word for wide, and so the other one was called black. The alternative name for the White Rhino is the Square-lipped Rhinoceros and the Black Rhino is more accurately known as the Hook-lipped Rhinoceros. Imagine our delight when we eventually spotted a group of three about a kilometre away. We quickly but quietly manoeuvred ourselves into position so that we could see them at closer quarters. They may be short sighted and renowned for their timidity but they have a phenomenal sense of smell, so considerable caution was exercised.

Earlier on in the trip, Paul pointed out an object that he had spotted in the far distance and asked those of us in his vehicle what we thought it might be. It looked like the stump of a tree, with a patch of white on it. Could it be some species of Antelope? All sorts of proposals

*Lappet-faced Vulture*



*Spotted Hyena*



*Scrub Hare*



*Black-back Jackal*





were put forward - all of them wrong. We moved in closer and I was delighted at the sight of a male Kori Bustard in full courtship pose pulsing out its deep booming call in an effort to attract a mate from across the plains. The whole of its ruff shook with every boom, a real sight to behold. Later in the morning we happened across a female of the species, we wanted to match the two of them up, but nature had to take its own course.

On the final full day of safari, whilst out photographing various species of Gazelle and a pair of Hyena pup, I was fortunate to spot a Scrub or Southern Bush Hare - it was so very well camouflaged in its environment that everyone else had overlooked it, even though it was right beside our vehicle. Several shots were captured before it moved slowly and almost imperceptibly into the safety of its warren.



*Wattled Plover*

During our many safaris we were to be cheek by jowl with Kenyan giraffe, more Black-backed Jackal, Spotted Hyena, Bat-eared Fox, Coke's Hartjebeest, Topi, Brindled Gnu (otherwise known as Blue Wildebeest), Impala, Grant's and Thompson's gazelle, affectionately known as Tommy's, Kirk's Long-snouted Dik Dik, Cape Buffalo, Warthog and countless Elephant along with a profusion of birds including Yellow-throated and Rosy-breasted Longclaw, Marabou Stork, White-backed and Lappet-faced Vulture, Spur-winged and Wattled Plover, Tawny Eagle, Little Bee-eater, Secretary Bird, Yellow-throated Sandgrass, Yellow-billed Oxpecker, Helmeted Guineafowl, Lilac-breasted Roller, Superb Starling, Black-bellied, White-bellied and Kori Bustards. As well as of course the lions, cheetahs and leopards.

On more than one occasion whilst resting in my tent after lunch a family of Vervet Monkeys came on to my verandah after running across the roof of the tent and peeking into the netted windows and one morning I was awoken with a start by their screeching which sounded like a crow with a very sore throat. During the night, a number of Hippopotamus were heard snorting loudly in the river, which was not even 50 feet from the front of our tents.

On the last evening, as special guests, we dined by the river with a roaring fire and a private show by a group of handsome Masai warriors, who impressed us with how high they could jump. On the final morning we made a short safari before breakfast and then took a walk on the Mara with a Masai guide, which finished at his village, where the village women welcomed us in song. We returned to our camp for lunch and to pack for the short flight back to Nairobi. A whistle-stop tour of the city followed, then dinner at a local restaurant, the Carnivore, where you could eat your fill of Beef, Lamb, Pork, Chicken, Ostrich, Camel, and Alligator.

This was an excellent trip with regards to the photographic opportunities. Our journey home however was chaotic; the flight was cancelled and our airline did not get us into a hotel until well after midnight, which meant that I arrived home very frayed at the edges having had only 3 hours sleep during the previous 40 hours and feeling that I could never recommend anyone to travel with Kenya Airways.



# Wildlife Encounters in Cathar Country

by John Woodward LRPS

My wife and I stayed for a week in July with our son, daughter-in-law and their young family in the Corbieres - that arid limestone hill country between Carcassonne and Perpignan, famous for its Cathar castles and the terrible tales of persecution at the time of the inquisition in the 13th century. Our son had brought his moth trap and a useful book on reptiles and amphibians and we had a very enjoyable week getting acquainted with the natural history of the region.

I had with me a Canon 50D with three lenses - Canon 18-55mm, a Sigma 105mm macro and a Canon 100-400mm image stabilisation lens. Most of our encounters with wild life were with insects and reptiles and I used the wide-angle zoom almost exclusively, shooting hand-held on top JPEG at ISO 200-400 and using mainly natural light.

Birds are not easy to see at this time of year as they tend to skulk away in the scrub. We did get quite good views of short-toed eagles and also saw alpine swifts and crag martins in the deep gorges that are so much a feature of this part of France. Black Redstarts were common and we saw a Cirl bunting, but that was about all. Mammalian sightings were limited to a fox and a wild boar on our journey by night south from Narbonne. But the insects were a different story.

A Great Green Field Cricket (*Tettigonia viridissima*) came to the moth trap and we came upon a steppe saddle-backed grasshopper (*Ephippigera ephippigier*) during a visit to a castle. Our 8 year old grandson obtained a very creditable image of a Cicada on a basic digital camera, but although we heard them often, this characteristic insect of the Midi eluded my camera. A preying mantis (*Mantis religiosa*) enlivened a picnic lunch for us. There were many beetles - some of which we could identify, but most were alien to us as were the bewildering assortment of dragonflies, wasps, bees and two-winged flies that crossed our path. There was a Glow-worm in the garden each evening - our youngest grandchild, aged 4, was convinced it was a fairy (and perhaps it was).

Our son does very well with his moth trap, living as he does on the edge of a village in the East Anglian countryside. He sometimes collects up to 80 moths in a night, but here in the Corbieres that figure was more than doubled. Many of the species, especially the geometers and noctuids, were beyond identification by us as our field bible from BWP by Waring and Townsend did not cover the south of France. There were however some familiar visitors to the light including a leopard moth (*Zeuzera pyrina*) several lappets (*Gastropacha quercifolia*), grass eggars (*Lasiocampa trifoli*) scalloped oak (*Crocallis elinguarina*) and prominents such as the Iron Prominent



Aesculapian Snake (*Elaphe longissima*)



*Niobe Fritillary (Fabriciana niobe)*



*Elephant Hawkmoth (Deilephila elenor)*



*Striped Hawkmoth (Hyles livornica)*

(*Notodonta dromedaries*) and the Pale Prominent (*Pterostoma palpina*). We had hoped, being so far south, that we might attract Death's Head and Oleander hawks, but failed to do so. Elephant hawks (*Deilephila elenor*), perhaps one of the commonest sphingids in Europe, did turn up regularly and on one night we were delighted to find two Striped hawks (*Hyles livornica*) in the trap. The one I photographed was a bit the worse for wear - damage that I hope was not sustained by its confinement.

When I used to impale rather than photograph butterflies in the 50s, every buddleia bush in July would be covered with them, especially our five bright garden nymphalids. Not now. They turn up in ones and twos, but in some years seem almost to have disappeared completely. That's why a trip to southern France is such a thrill for those of us who mourn the passing of our butterflies. The area is full of these gorgeous insects (their name is a corruption of 'beautiflies') many of them species that we do not regularly see in Britain. In the Corbieres, the dominant species is the Marbled White (*Melanargia galathea*) and there are literally clouds of them. Another satyrid, the Great-banded Grayling (*Brintesia circe*), is also extremely common. Also present were both swallowtails - our own *Papilio machaon* and the so called 'Scarce Swallowtail' (*Iphiclides podalirius*) that is actually abundant in this and many other parts of France. We found five different fritillaries: The tiny Violet (*Clossiana did*), Niobe (*Fabriciana niobe*), High Brown (*Fabriciana adippe*), Silver washed (*Argynnis paphia*) and Granville (*Melitaea cinxia*). Among the lycaenids, we noted Common, Chalkhill and Silver-studded Blues as well as Ilex Hairstreaks (*Nordmannia ilicis*). Hemp Agrimony was the most sought after butterfly plant in the region, although where it could be found, buddleia was also very popular. That brilliantly coloured relative of our Brimstone, the Cleopatra (*Gonepteryx cleopatra*) was very much in evidence, feeding for preference on red valerian. Other whites included both Clouded and Pale Clouded Yellows, Wood Whites and our well-known Small and Large Whites. In all we listed about 30 species without really trying very hard, as there were other calls on our time such as exploring hilltop castles and abbeys, going for walks and cooling off in the swimming pool.



There are many more reptiles and amphibians in southern Europe than in the UK, but they are not very easy to find. We were fortunate that a small Spotted Parsley Frog (*Pelodytes punctatus*) was attracted to the light of the moth trap. We also visited a pond in a neighbouring village where there was a healthy and articulate population of Pool Frogs (*Rana lessonae*) - or were they Marsh Frogs (*Rana ridibundus*) the same species that was introduced to Romney Marsh in the 30s and has flourished there? Apparently you can only tell by measuring the size of a tubercle on the hind feet! We saw three species of lizard: the Iberian wall lizard (*Podarcis hispanica*) was very common, but a green lizard (*Lacerta viridis*) turned up inside the cottage and we found another in the bush and one more sitting on the rim of a concrete container. They are stunningly beautiful creatures. Our son discovered the third species after we had flown home. It was the attractive striped large Psammodromus (*Psammodromus algirus*).

Star turn for the reptiles was provided by an Aesculapian Snake (*Elaphe longissima*) that emerged from a hole in a stone wall in the cottage garden and gave the whole family (including the elderly photographer) a wonderful view before gliding away into another gap in the stones. It was of course perfectly harmless. Vipers are the only poisonous snakes in Europe. Another snake, larger and greener, had a favourite sunspot on a stone in the field below the cottage, but we were not able to identify or photograph it.

We were sorry to leave the Corbieres. It's a great place for anyone keen on natural history. I now have to download about 800 images, but one or two just might be good enough for my club nature competition next year!



Scarce Swallowtail  
(*Iphiclus podalirius*)



Spotted Parsley Frog  
(*Pelodytes punctatus*)



Great Green Field Cricket  
(*Tettigonia viridissima*)

# The Island of Mull - A Nature Photographer's Paradise



by Phil Collier

*The Isle of Mull is of isles the fairest,  
Of ocean's gems 'tis the first and rarest;  
Green grassy island of sparkling fountains,  
Of waiving woods and high tow'ring mountains.*

So wrote Dugald MacPhail, aka the Bard of Mull, when composing An t'eilean Muileach, the Anthem of Mull, in the 19th century, aptly describing the both the sheer beauty and the complete diversity of the landscape on Mull. Although only 25 miles from north to south and 28 miles east to west at its widest point – and as little as 3 miles at its narrowest – Mull has over 300 miles of some of the most dramatic coastline in Britain.

As for me? I quite simply can't get enough of Mull. I have now visited the island nineteen times and I'm going back in September this year to notch up my round twenty. I've visited in all four seasons and although each offers its own unique excellent photographic opportunities, late spring into early summer is my favourite time.

At this time of year there is wildlife everywhere, from the Ptarmigan on the high tops of the Ben More range and the mountains in Glen More, to the migrant Wheatear and Whinchat on the lower slopes and in the glens; from the regal Red Deer roaming the

island to the Otters along the kelpie shorelines; from the Dolphins and Minke Whales patrolling the seas around the Hebrides to the most majestic of all birds, the eagles. Both Golden and White-tailed Eagle are readily and often encountered around the island. Nature photographers really will think they have been spirited away to 'wildlife heaven'!!

As spring arrives – later here than in England – the migrant passerines begin to drop in and I have been fortunate to witness wintering Redwing and Fieldfare still on the island as the first Wheatears arrive from Africa. Whinchats arrive a little later to join their resident cousin, the Stonechat. As the season progresses, both vigilance and patience can be rewarded with photos of the parent birds of all three species bringing food to their young.

Spring also sees the return of two of my favourite birds, the Hen Harrier and the Short-eared Owl, both of which migrate further south to coastal haunts on the UK mainland to see themselves through the winter months.

The area around Glen More is particularly good for both of these birds and, with the traffic on the island at this time of year being relatively light, I have been able to spend hours sitting in the car watching the birds hunting over the rough moorland in the hope of obtaining some photographs. Once again, my patience has paid off with some good images of both species.

On most of my visits to the island I have been out to sea on a small trawler yacht owned by a friend of mine. Brennen is a director of a company that operates cetacean watching trips out of Tobermory, the island's capital – although this is somewhat of a misnomer – in reality it is a small town with a population of under 1,000. Mull's entire population is around 2,400.

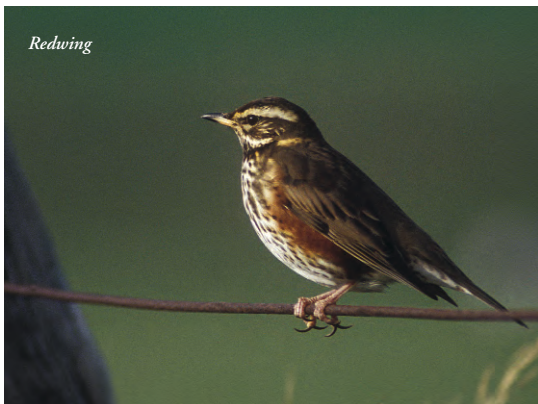
The waters to the north and west of Mull hold possibly the most ecologically diverse marine life in the UK. As a consequence there are good populations of both harbour porpoise and common dolphin and these are both seen regularly each year together with a supporting cast of both bottle-nosed and Risso's dolphins. Although dolphins are great fun to watch they are the devil to photograph and I have spent many years trying to hone my technique of anticipating the dolphins' path and where they are about to surface next.....hard to gauge when both the dolphins and the boat are moving and not necessarily at the same speed or even in the same direction!!

In addition to the dolphins there are regular sightings of minke whale and basking shark, both of which can grow to nearly 10 meters in length, and a family pod of orca (killer whale) is seen in most years.

Other marine mammals on Mull are common and grey (or Atlantic) seals which can usually be seen loafing on the offshore rocks and islands. On dry land, Mull has a healthy population of red deer. The stronghold for this 'monarch of the glen' is Glen More where they are often seen close to the roadside, particularly in the evenings, when they are relatively easy to photograph. A small herd of fallow deer can be seen around Knock at the narrowest part of the island.



*Hen Harrier*



*Redwing*



*Stonechat*



*Ptarmigan*





*Otter family*

However, to me, the most exciting and elusive mammal on the island is the otter. I was lucky to see one on my first visit to Mull although many subsequent visits were 'otter free'. More latterly I have become luckier – or my field-craft skills have improved! – and I have spent some wonderful hours in the company of, and photographing, otter families on the island. On one occasion, they came as close as 5 metres from me and, at times, I struggled to focus with my 500mm f4 lens which was simply too long to enable me to capture the action although I did get some really good head shots of the female crunching away on a crab.

Earlier this year, whilst on the island with my brother, Tim, we were both privileged to watch a female otter with two cubs swimming and feeding in one of the kelpie bays. We spent over an hour photographing the activity in beautiful early morning light. They were aware of our presence – of that I am sure – but this confirms that with the right approach (field-craft again!) most things are possible.

Thus far I have only skimmed the surface of Mull's wildlife and have yet to refer to two of the islands mega-birds. Of course, I am referring to the golden eagle and the much-publicised white-tailed eagle. Both of these magnificent raptors can be encountered anywhere on the island although neither are easy to photograph without obtaining a Schedule 1 permit. In all my visits I have managed a handful of distant flight shots of 'Goldies' and a single half-decent flight shot of a white-tailed. My visit in September this year is to concentrate solely on the latter and to try and capture this 'flying barn door' (as I have heard it affectionately named as a result of its 8 foot wingspan!)

There really is so much to see on the island and to cram it all into a short article simply cannot do the island justice. Indeed, I have not even begun to describe the wonderful landscape in which both the wildlife and the Muileachs<sup>1</sup> are so fortunate to live. In short, Mull is a 'must-visit' for every nature and landscape photographer!



*Whinchat*

My brother, Tim, and I are running a landscape and wildlife photographic course on the island in June 2007 and we would be delighted to offer you the chance to experience and capture the essence of Mull and its natural wonders. For further details, please see the advert on page 33 or visit [www.orangepebble.com](http://www.orangepebble.com)

<sup>1</sup> An inhabitant of the Island of Mull

# A Photographic Journey (part 2)

by Stephen Deakin LRPS

2005 was a strange year for me photographically speaking. On the one hand I have enjoyed taking some satisfying photos but on the other have had a running battle with some of the modern technology required to actually do anything with them. It has reached the stage recently where I have considered getting the film gear out and stocking up on slide film again. Or I could take my chances with the stock held in the fridge, now long since it's 'use by' date. A good film scanner would allow prints to be processed from the slides. But wait a minute, that puts me back at square one, in computer land.

I happened to be able to find the time to call in at the Focus show in Birmingham, along with the inevitable list of 'desirables' in my pocket. I had convinced myself that ownership of such items would allow me to enjoy my photography more than I had hitherto done. Fortunately I had decided to visit mid week and judging from the queues leading to the varied devices on display I made a wise decision - a weekend visit would have been very frustrating indeed.

First on my list was an Epson P2000 photo storage portable harddrive. None were available to purchase from Epson stand but they pointed me in the direction of a dealer who was doing a roaring trade in P2000's, so much so, that I had to go on a waiting list.

Second was a bulk ink system for the Epson 2100. I had set my heart on a Lyson system having had very good results with their Small Gamut monochrome cartridges in my Epson 1160, to this day I do not really understand how, but I ended up with a continuous ink system from PermaJet. If I am honest with myself, I guess it was because the PermaJet was priced very competitively.

My third requirement was for some sort of colour management system and having read favourable reviews of the Monaco EZ color system, I had decided I would buy one.

The bulk ink system has not lived up to my expectations and has proved to be temperamental. The instructions are thorough and leave one in no doubt how to proceed with the conversion, but in my opinion, one or two details let the system down. The ink bottle holder provides a stable extension on the right of the machine, but the two square holes through it do not line up with both of the rubber feet on my machine. This allowed the chassis to distort, upsetting the print head. The excessive grinding and banging noises during printing told me something was amiss. Eventually the printer started to go wrong in a big way, the print head repositioning itself mid print many time over. The feet are now packed up level and fortunately the print head has settled down again. The ink tubes are supposed to be held with a plastic



*Common Langur*



*Plain Tiger butterfly*



*Magpie Robin*

*Painted Stork*





clip where they pass over the edge of the casing but that item was missing from my kit and I have substituted a piece of sellotape. Getting the tubes just right so they do not foul takes a long time. The printer cover has to be open during printing to allow the tubing to pop up out of the cavity when at the far left hand end of the carriage, giving a potential for dust problems during printing. Epson inks never gave me any problems with blocked print heads, even when left for a couple of weeks or more. Now I am lucky if there is no blockage during a print run. Often, usually when an expensive sheet of paper is in the printer, one of the print heads will become blocked. Doing a nozzle check reveals either a missing or broken line at best or at worst the complete failure of any ink in one head. Even when all is working correctly, you cannot print on glossy paper without first installing the very necessary wheel lifter (sold as an extra and not mentioned at the time of purchase), but when this is fitted you cannot use roll paper because the cutter head cannot be mounted. The ICC profiles supplied are essential, however, they are that accurate on my particular machine, and I cannot match all the colours or tones displayed on my calibrated monitor. The MonacoEZ color software and scanner target should enable a better match. But my experience has been just the opposite and I have been unable to eliminate a green cast within the blue test prints without introducing other problems. After numerous attempts, many wasted hours trying to use the calibration software, wasting more and yet more paper and becoming more and more angry, I have decided to chalk up its purchase as a bad experience! All in all I have found the experience of going over to a bulk ink system frustrating. If it can save money over buying Epson cartridges it could yet prove to be worthwhile. Somehow I doubt it. I have now learned that the printer software keeps some sort of check on the output and prevents it from working when it deems it needs a service. So believing you can print off everything because you have the ink will not only incur paper and ink costs but also service charges for parts and labour.

Fortunately, the Epson P2000 proved to be a cracking piece of kit. Does everything it should and it is so much handier than a laptop. Negative points I have discovered are few:

- Raw files cannot be enlarged to get a detailed close up view.
- Its 2.5" hard drive could prove to be fragile.

But its plus points are:

- Small enough to fit in camera bag or pocket.
- Light weight.
- Stores up to thirty six Gigabytes of data (says it is 40 but formatting takes up remaining space) quite enough for a short trip.
- Battery holds a charge for a couple of days.

The other plus point was that it arrived just in time to accompany me on my return visit to India - a country which has always fired my imagination. I have no explanation for why this should be so. Perhaps the Beatles visit. Possibly 'Blue Peter' - a fondly remembered TV programme which, in my childhood, I very rarely missed - did the presenters (John Noaks, Valerie Singleton) go on a visit? Whatever the reason, I find I can persuade myself to just about endure the cramped flight in a tourist (3rd class) airline seat if given enough reason to do so. The carrot this time was the possibility of seeing a real live Tiger in it's natural environment.

Having picked up an affordable package holiday based on the Sariska Palace Hotel for a week in May, I was on my way. Sariska is a six-hour drive south-west from Delhi along the Jaipur toll road. The hotel is situated within sight of the entrance gate to the Sariska Tiger Reserve and was a former residence for the Maharaja when the park was his local hunting ground. Accommodation is modern, in the form of bungalow type rooms with en-suite, set around well-maintained gardens and a very welcome swimming pool. Meals are served throughout the day in the Palace itself. I decided prior to leaving England that each day of the trip would be devoted to looking for and photographing Indian wildlife and to forgo any trips to towns or markets. Since this was not my first time in India, I felt that I would not be missing too much.

Unfortunately the poachers killed the last of the Tigers at Sariska in the rainy season of 2004 and now they are no more. A guide at the Hotel told me he had not seen any Tiger for several years prior to this tragic news. The park covers a very large area containing three villages and dozens of temples within it's borders. A week after my return home, the Indian Prime Minister paid a visit to Sariska to see for himself the problems the park has in protecting the animals. Hopefully his interest will secure the future of the park.

# **Nature Group Residential Field Meeting**

**Friday 22nd to Monday 25th June 2007**

**Juniper Hall Field Centre, Dorking, Surrey RH5 6DA**

Following another successful field event in 2006, we will be holding a weekend meeting at Juniper Hall Field centre for 2007. The Nature Group has used this location many times in the past, when John Bebbington FRPS was warden in residence. John has now retired and it is Nick Laphorn who will welcome members to the centre. However, we do hope that John will be able to join us.

Situated on the North Downs near Box Hill, Juniper Hall has much to offer the nature photographer. The surrounding chalk downland has a high species diversity of flowers and insects, while farther afield the BNR Thursley Common, much affected by fire earlier this year, and the Wey and Arun Canal, provide more specialised habitats for the larger aquatic dragonflies and damselflies.

Ongoing changes at Juniper Hall include improvements in the catering facilities which will enable the two chefs to produce a high standard of cuisine. Other available facilities include the use of a moth trap, a laboratory with microscopes, digital and slide projectors, an excellent reference library with a wide range of field guides, and the use of the Centre's own minibus. There is also a small shop which stocks a range of goods including FSC publications and confectionery.

Cost: - £133.00. (incl VAT at 17.5%)

Includes three nights' accommodation, full board, packed lunches, afternoon tea and use of the Centre's facilities

To book a place or to request further information, please write direct to: -

Sue Brinsden, Centre Secretary,

Juniper Hall Field Centre, Dorking, Surrey RH5 6DA

Tel: 0306 883849. Email: [enquiries.jh@field-studies-council.org](mailto:enquiries.jh@field-studies-council.org).

No monies this year will go through the RPS Nature Group's accounts.

In addition, please register your interest and confirm your booking, with:

Kath Bull ARPS,

Segsbury, St John's Road,

Crowborough, East Sussex TN6 1RT

Tel: 01892 663751. E-mail: [kath.bull@virgin.net](mailto:kath.bull@virgin.net)



# Field Meeting Report

## Residential Meeting, Kingcombe, 30 May – 2 June 2006

Once again we met at the Kingcombe Centre in deepest Dorset. A larger group this year but with careful organisation, we all fitted into the Kingcombe minibus.

The Centre and its staff looked after us extremely well. Good food, comfortable rooms, and a meeting room were all appreciated. The weather was warm with a little breeze at times.

We visited three sites. A return visit to Ryewater Nursery, by kind permission of the owner, Clive Farrell, provided a good numbers of Small Blue butterflies *Cupido minimus* and around the lakes we found dragonflies and damselflies as well as *Donacia* beetles pairing.

Our second venue was Powerstock Common which combines acidic soils (on lower greensand) with a railway cutting through the chalk above. Marsh Fritillaries *Euphydryas aurinia* and other butterflies delighted us on the acidic area, as did the occasional Clouded Yellow *Colias croceus* flying in the railway cutting. Green Tiger Beetles *Cicindela campestris* were numerous on the chalk slopes. In both areas ponds were abundant with dragonflies & damselflies which exasperated many of us.

The final venue was Cogden Beach where we found fine showings of Thrift *Armeria maritima* and Sea-kale *Crambe maritima* with occasional Yellow Horned Poppy *Glaucium flavum*. Further east were fine stands of Great Horsetail *Equisetum telmateia*. We were surprised to see two Marsh Fritillaries flying along the beach as well as more Clouded Yellows!

We ran a moth trap on our final night and this provided some nice specimens of the Peppered Moth *Biston betularia* and a fine Eyed Hawkmoth *Smerinthus ocellatus*.

Our evenings were fully occupied looking at pictures brought along by group members. These included fine 'A' sets by Sue Rogers and Andy Callow.

Many thanks to Kath Bull for organising another successful residential meeting, to the group for their company and willingness to exchange experiences and knowledge, and to Kingcombe staff for their hospitality.

John Bebbington FRPS

## RPS Nature Group - Field Meetings 2007

Location \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting Place \_\_\_\_\_

Grid Reference \_\_\_\_\_

Leader(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Day & date \_\_\_\_\_

Cost (eg car parking) \_\_\_\_\_

Main subjects of interest :- \_\_\_\_\_

Items to bring (tick as applicable and add any other necessary items below).

Stout Shoes ☐ Wellingtons ☐

Waterproofs ☐ Packed Lunch ☐

Additional information:- \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Tel No: \_\_\_\_\_

E mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this form as soon as possible/  
or to arrive not later than 20th January 2007

Nick Jarvis,  
31 Meadow Way,  
Irthlingborough,  
Northants, NN9 5RS

Tel: 01933 651477  
or E-mail details to: Nickjarvis@aol.com

# Field Meeting Reports

## Deep Dale and Monsal Dale Tuesday 16th May 2006

After listening to the weekly weather forecast on the Sunday, and the very wet Monday that followed, I was very pleasantly surprised to find that over twenty optimistic souls turned up for this meeting. I was also delighted that it was dry and bright even with some good sunny spells. In common with many of the White Peak dales, Deep Dale has a rich flora and is particularly attractive in mid-May when Cowslips (*Primula veris*) and Early Purple Orchids (*Orchis mascula*) are abundant. This year however the orchids were not at their best, nevertheless for those not accustomed to seeing the display, it was still very colourful and everyone was soon photographically engaged. The White Peak looked at its best with the meadows patterned with flowers, drifts of Meadow Saxifrage (*Saxifraga granulata*) like snow with Red Campion (*Silene dioica*) studding it here and there, a wonderful display of Dandelions (*Taraxacum* sp.) was over but their clocks glistened like a silky net curtain.

On an open sunny hillside, just before the entrance to Deep Dale, Green Hairstreaks (*Callophrys rubi*) were abundant and two lucky members with cameras on a photogenic clump of Meadow Saxifrage found a crock of gold when one of the butterflies landed on the flowers. Their shutters rattled off many exposures. Lunch was taken back at the car park and even the rain was thoughtful enough to limit itself to a tiny sprinkle.

After lunch some members crossed over the road into Monsal Dale, certainly one of the top dales for beautiful scenery if not quite as florally rich as Deep Dale. Others, myself included, spent some time on the hillsides behind the car park where a number of us concentrated on the limestone outcrops, like miniature rock gardens with Herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*), Shining Cranesbill (*G. lucidum*), Mossy Saxifrage (*Saxifraga hypnoides*) and in shady spots Maidenhair Spleenwort (*Asplenium trichomanes*) and Brittle Bladder Fern (*Cystopteris fragilis*). Here I must personally thank a new member, David Wijnants, who had travelled from Tees-side to attend this, his first, field meeting, for it David who identified this pretty little fern which had puzzled me for some years. Welcome David, with your quiet enthusiasm and sound botanical knowledge I hope that you will have a long, happy time with us.

You are all aware that I have always been a great advocate of our field meetings. Many of you have said to me that it is not so much whether you take a lot of photographs that matters, it is the meeting up of friends, the laughter, and the companionship that is the real secret. Do give one a try. If you think you could organise one I assure you it is not difficult. You do not have to lead a guided walk, I have found over the years that it is best to let everyone have time to take photographs, after all that's what the idea is. We all enjoy pottering about and as long as all members know the way back to the car park, and what time lunch is planned, you can't go far wrong.

Robert Hawkesworth FRPS



Photo: Terry Bickley ARPS

# Field Meeting Reports

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## Hatfield Moors, S. Yorks 10th June 2006

On a blistering hot day, a small group of enthusiastic Nature Group members and friends met at Hatfield Moors, South Yorkshire, an area of 3,500 acres of peatland with an abandoned fringe of worked out gravel pits which, together with nearby Thorne Moors, form part of the Humberhead Peatlands NNR, owned and managed by English Nature. The meeting had been arranged by Eric Wright ARPS in conjunction with Steve Hiner, one of English Nature's Estate Workers for the NNR, himself a keen photographer with a City & Guilds in photography. Steve gave a brief introduction to the area and then we set off, armed with photographic gear, and plenty of drink, to explore some of the exciting habitats which the area offers.

A well laid out route took us along sand and gravel tracks surrounded by areas of water filled pits and willow scrub. This area was last worked commercially some ten years ago. The tracks were showing good signs of vegetation growth and the strong light proved to be a challenge for photographing Marsh Orchids *Dactylorhiza* ssp, Common Spotted Orchids *Dactylorhiza fuchsia*, Common Cudweed *Filago germanica* and Hawkbits *Leontodon* ssp. Walking east, we noticed a change from the dominance of Willow to Birch *Betula* ssp and Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*. Ditches were filled with dark brown peat stained water, and there were patches of Heather *Calluna vulgaris* and Cotton-grasses *Eriophorum vaginatum* and *E angustifolium* as we entered the edge of Hatfield Moors. Steve showed us the vast expanse of abandoned peatland, stretching as far as the eye could see, which is now undergoing a restoration programme by English Nature to turn it back into a lowland raised peat bog.

Ovipositing Large Red Damselflies *Pyrrhosoma nymphula* proved to be a photographic challenge to two members of the group as Benbo legs crept ever closer to the side of the ditch! Later a fine four spotted chaser dragonfly *Libellula quadrimaculata* obligingly kept returning to a perch for all to see and photograph.

The fenced enclosure we walked through was being grazed by Hebridean sheep - they had a look at us, and were quite photogenic! The sheep control birch regrowth after larger birch have been removed by mechanisation, in the hope of this becoming an area of heathland. The Scots Pines were majestic, and Steve explained the reasons for this type of management. This is now a good haunt for European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* and Adder *Viper berus*. Eventually the path veered west and after walking through a pleasant stand of birch with a good ground cover of Climbing *Corydalis* *Corydalis claviculata*, we left the peatland through the gravel pits, finding a nice example of Sand Spurrey *Spergularia rubra*, and back to the car park.

Although far from the best of photographic weather, we had all photographed something, and after a well earned lunch break, two or three members slipped back for another attempt at the orchids. The group had a really good insight into what the area has to offer, with a nice mix of habitat and very easy parking and walking. I guess autumn could be particularly good photographically, and nature's patterns from a winter perspective deserve a visit too.

Thanks to Eric for organising a successful day and Steve for acting as our guide.

For further information on Hatfield Moors visit English Nature's website: [www.english-nature.org.uk](http://www.english-nature.org.uk) (click on special sites, then National Nature Reserves and type in Humberhead Peatlands, then click search) or contact the Site Manager on 01405 740640.

Peter C Roworth ARPS.

Many thanks to Peter for writing the report. Peter managed the Humberhead Peatlands as it is now called for 12 years, firstly for Nature Conservancy Council and then English Nature. Eric Wright ARPS

# Field Meeting Reports

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## **Oxwich Field Meeting, Sunday 12th June 2006.**

What a difference - Oxwich 2005 we wore thermals and carried umbrellas, Oxwich 2006 temperatures in the mid 80's, we needed hats and carried Benbos. Fourteen people gathered at 10am to explore the shore and its rockpools on a falling tide. These fourteen included a child who was intensely interested in all that was found.

Tiny Shore Crabs scuttled across the wet sand, all with a wide variety of markings and colours - this variation in colour is much less visible in adults. We found attractive clumps of Netted Dog Whelk eggs under stones and being layed, sometimes the Coat-of-Mail shell, the Chiton, were photographed. A lively Pipefish Worm was seen amongst Sea Lettuce in a pool along with many adult Shore Crabs, including two females holding large clusters of orange eggs. Nearby, a brightly coloured Spider Crab proved to be a photographic challenge. Another lively crab, a very large Hermit in a Common Whelk shell, was interesting to watch. Red and Green Beadlet Anemones were found in pools along with many clusters of Snakelock Anemones. Strangely, no Common Starfish were seen, but a few very small Brittle Stars were found.

The fertile fruiting tips on the many varieties of Wracks made for interesting pattern pictures, as did the pronounced tracks of Periwinkle and Whelk across the smooth wet sand. Orange Sponge, an encrusting sponge, filled many of the cracks and crevices in the overhangs and Soft Coral (*Eunicca stricta*) hung in branches - amongst these was found a solitary, unattractive Ascidia which squirted jets of water from its exhalent.

## **Thorne Moors, S. Yorks 8 July 2006**

The meeting began under cloudy skies with an irritating breeze, turning warmer with occasional flashes of sunshine as the day progressed. A group of eight were shown around the reserve by Steve Hiner to where the most photogenic subjects were to be found. Opportunities for the camera were numerous but notable ones photographed were

After lunch we headed into the dunes, taking the walk along the full length of the beach on the firm damp sand and taking advantage of the slightly cooler air - this proved to be less exhausting on such a hot day.

Clumps of fresh unspoiled blue green Sea Holly exhibited aestivating Banded Snails in their whirls. There was a fine display of Sandwort spreading in the hot dry sand, also Sea Spurge and Sea Spurrey some of which had spears standing over a metre tall. Several Bee Orchids were seen as we walked through the more sheltered dune slacks and then there were large patches of Rugosa rose, Silver Weed, Eyebright, Rock Rose, Burnet Rose, Sedum Acre, Restharrow and Bloody Cranesbill, one of the great joys of Oxwich. There were lovely specimens of Pyramidal and Early Marsh Orchid surrounded by masses of Yellow Rattle. Large Sea Bindweed was photographed, as were several Broomrape standing amidst swathes of Buttercup. Yellow Flag Iris were past their best but proved interesting to Common Blue Damsel fly. We were fortunate to see several Clouded Yellow, Painted Lady and Red Admiral, plus many Common Blue Butterflies. We examined a large group of new Alder saplings hopeful of finding caterpillars, but despite the very damaged leaves, none were found.

It was a very hot day but a very full and productive one for photography. I very much hope that everyone went home having enjoyed the day. One member went home with some cuttle bones for his tortoise and we all enjoyed the lovely sound of a Cuckoo as we explored the dunes.

If I am still staggering around, the next Oxwich Field Trip will be on June 10th 2007.

Margaret Hodge FRPS

Intermediate Bladderwort (*Utricularia intermedia*). Round Leaved Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*), Large Heath butterfly (*Coenonympha tullia*). Four species of dragonfly including a newly emerged Migrant Hawker (*Aeshna mixta*), and Black Darter (*Sympetrum danae*). During our walk we went onto the 50ft high viewing platform from where Steve pointed out the boundaries of this vast area of the moors.

Eric Wright ARPS.



# Congratulations

**There were 17 applications for Associateships in Nature at the Autumn assessment. Five of the ten successful applications were from Nature Group members. Congratulations to them.**

## **Colin Ackerman**

Shepton Mallet.

Marine life of the coral reef CD ROM

## **Alan Boutel**

North Marston, Bucks.

Birds of Florida Prints

## **Chuck Eccleston**

Isle of Wight.

Isle of Wight flora and fauna Prints

## **John Hunt**

Hawkhurst, Kent.

Avian wildlife in UK & S Africa Prints

## **David Robinson**

Hessle, Yorkshire.

Birds connected with water CD ROM

**From Spring 2005 to Spring 2006 the RPS awarded only five Fellowships in the Nature Category, two of these were to Nature Group members**

## **Andrew Gagg (Spring 2005)**

Worcester.

European Flora Prints

## **Dawn Osborn (Spring 2006)**

Stafford

Birds of the Falklands Prints

The Nature Group now has 219 Associates, 159 Licentiates, and 86 Fellows.

This means that over 70% of all Nature Group Members hold a distinction.

Well done to us all!

# Field Meetings 2006

**Sunday October 8, 2006, 10.30am.**

## **Wakerley Wood**

Leader: Nick Jarvis FDPS ARPS

Meet: Main car park (near toilets)

Grid Ref: SP 963986

Cost: Nil

Bring packed lunch

Main interests: Fungi - incl a number of rarities.

Contact: Nick Jarvis ARPS,

T: 01933 651477

E: [nickjarvis@thenaturegroup.org](mailto:nickjarvis@thenaturegroup.org)

**Saturday 14th October 2006 10am**

## **Ebernoe Common NNR**

Leader: Chris Wood

Meet: Car park next to Ebernoe church,

Grid Ref: SU 976 278

Cost: £2 donation

Directions: From A283, 3.5 miles North of Petworth, 1.5 miles south of Northchapel, turn East into a minor road signposted Ebernoe (sign missing last year). 1.5 miles along this road turn right, just past telephone & post boxes, into access road sign- posted Ebernoe church.

Bring packed lunch.

Main interests: Ancient woodland and fungi.

Contact: Chris Wood (prior to travelling)

T: 01932 750597 or (better!)

E: [cjwood2000@hotmail.com](mailto:cjwood2000@hotmail.com)

**Tuesday October 17, 2006, 10am.**

## **Beacon Hill Country Park**

Leader: Robert Hawkesworth

Meet: Main Car Park. Leave the M1 at J23. Take the A512 towards Loughborough. At traffic lights turn right onto an unclassified road. Go straight ahead at the next traffic lights and approx 2 miles look for a car park on the right.

Grid Ref: Sheet 129 SK 521 149

Cost: Car parking £1.00 on entry at the barrier.

Main interest: Oak, birch and beech woodland which should yield many species of fungi.

Bring stout shoes or wellies, waterproofs and packed lunch.

Contact: Robert Hawkesworth

T: 0115 928 1050

M: 07960 177291 on the day only.

# Nomination Form for Election 2007

Please complete and return before  
**31<sup>st</sup> November 2006**

I wish to propose

\_\_\_\_\_

for the Office of

\_\_\_\_\_

**or - as a Committee Member**  
(Please delete as appropriate)

**Name of Proposer (Capitals)**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Proposer's signature**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Seconder (Capitals)**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Seconder's signature**

\_\_\_\_\_

**I agree to accept this nomination  
(Signed)**

\_\_\_\_\_

After completion by all three parties  
please post to:

Nature Group Secretary  
Margaret Johnson LRPS  
53 Mapperley Orchard,  
Arnold,  
Nottingham,  
NG5 8AH

## News

### Ordnance Survey Maps on the PC

As a new member to the Nature Group, I am very pleased and fortunate to have found you. Your members are most helpful, and the Iris is an excellent magazine, which I wish was published monthly.

One of the things I really appreciate are the Field meetings you organise. However, can I please appeal to the leaders of these events, to also include the letters in their grid reference for Ordnance Survey Maps ie Sheet 119 SK 171 705. With new software now available for the PC, you simply type in the grid reference - say SK 171 705 for example, and the map of the area, in this case Deepdale in Derbyshire, opens up on your screen. You can zoom in or out and just print the area you require. It is very useful when planning visits to a number of sites and when planning a vacation in the UK. It really is a useful bit of kit.

The software I use is by Anquet Maps and can be found at [www.anquet.co.uk](http://www.anquet.co.uk) - another site also based on Ordnance Survey is [www.fugawi.com](http://www.fugawi.com). To find out where else you can purchase this type of software from, just type Ordnance Survey in your search engine and you will be shown a list of them.

Colin Jeeves

## A Date for your Diaries

**The 2007 Annual Spring Meeting,  
AGM and Annual Exhibition**

will be held at

**Smethwick Photographic Society,  
The Old Schoolhouse,  
Churchbridge,  
Oldbury, West Midlands**

**Saturday 31st March, 2007**



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## David Osborn Photo-tours

spectacular wildlife photo-tours organised by David Osborn FRPS EFIAP

### Wildlife of the Falkland Islands

November 2007 \*

### Birds of Florida

March 2007

### Ascension Island

May 2007

### The Canadian Rockies

September 2007

In order to maintain the exclusivity of photo-opportunities, the group size for all of the above tours is limited.

\* only two places available for the 2007 Falklands Tour

**For full details on these and other tours**

**Tel: 01263 511221 or**

**Email [Poppyland3@aol.com](mailto:Poppyland3@aol.com)**





