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THE **RPS**
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Velvet shank, Flammulina velutipes by Tony Bond FRPS

THE **IRIS**



MAGAZINE OF THE NATURE GROUP OF THE RPS
Issue No. 123 / Winter 2015

David Osborn FRPS

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Cover shot:
Velvet shank, Flammulina velutipes
by Tony Bond FRPS

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Nature Group Exhibitions

CDs/DVDs of Nature Group Exhibitions are available for purchase by camera clubs/photographic societies for use in their programme. Please contact the Exhibition Secretary, details above.

Editorial

This year has passed so quickly. It's already mid-October and by the time you read this we will have put our clocks back for Winter. Speaking only for myself, I don't like Winter. I don't mind the cold but I hate the short damp grey days we endure here in the UK - consequently I try to spend as little time here as possible. Poor showings of fungi have been reported in some parts of the country but perhaps the fungi are just a little late fruiting. Lets hope so.

This issue contains notice of a Nature Distinctions Workshop to be held in Cambridgeshire next April and the Annual Residential Field Meeting next July in Suffolk. There is also pt 1 of an interesting article about the Kruger National Park in South Africa by member Ludi Lochner ARPS, while Andy Hayes LRPS tells of his experiences on the Glen Tanar Estate. You'll also find articles about Fungi and 1:1 Macro photography, plus a Field Meeting Report and an invitation for you to host a Field Meeting at a site near you next year.

Also in this issue there are accounts of issues relating to the new combined 'Definition of Nature' (not again do I hear you sigh?) Sorry, but it is a situation that will never be corrected if we don't voice our discontent. The accounts are published with kind permission of Rod Wheelans FRPS, Editor of the PAGB 'e-news' and the contributing authors of the articles. I suspect that many of you will already have access to 'e-news' through the photographic society/camera club you belong to. It is an e-publication and is issued to subscribers via email. It's a good source of information and if you don't already receive it you can check it out at: www.pagbnews.co.uk

Articles are required for the next issue, so please let me know if you have something of interest to your fellow members that you would like to see in print. The next issue will include pt II of Ludi's article and I have been promised some articles from members who have successfully achieved their ARPS in the Nature category, but there is always room for more. Please contact me by email in the first instance or if you want to discuss an idea you have for an article.

Finally, I was disappointed that not a single member contacted me with regard to the Editor's role that I will be vacating in April 2017. Surely there is a member somewhere with either the necessary skills or the will to acquire them?

Stay warm this winter and I wish an enjoyable and Happy New Year to you all.



From the chair

I must start by doing something I should have done in my first 'From the Chair', that is to thank Tony Bond FRPS for all the hard work he put in during his term as your Chairman. So a belated 'Thank you' Tony.

Running the Nature Group is very much a team effort with various committee members working away unseen by the general membership, doing all the essentials necessary to keep the group functioning and taking it forward. Again I should like to thank the committee members for all the hard work they have put in over the years, and hopefully will continue to do so during my term as Chairman and beyond.

As I write this in early September, summer seems to have come to an abrupt end, with the cooler damp weather of autumn seemingly arriving early this year. That's not good news for farmers who, in my area, still have many fields of corn to harvest. For photographers the weather of course affects the emergence time of insects and the flowering time of plants. This has played havoc with my photographic plans this year, some things being about on time, while others were two weeks or more later than normal. This of course has also badly affected some of the Nature Group field meetings.

I had planned to go to Trevor Davenport's field meeting on the Sefton Coast, but pulled out after receiving an e-mail from him stating that most of the target species for the site were not showing, or were in very low numbers due to the lateness of the season. As stormy weather was forecast for that day, I decided to 'chicken out' of going. Another field meeting I intended to go to was held at the RSPB's reserve at Lakenheath, Suffolk, where Hobby, a small species of Falcon, can provide the opportunity for good in-flight shots as they often pass close when pursuing Dragonflies and other insects. That day was one of light rain and drizzle so few if any Dragonflies would be on the wing, so I also gave that one a miss.

When arranging NG field meetings one thing we cannot foresee or control is the weather, and when it is bad on the day it is very disappointing for everyone concerned, including the leader. However that's the British weather for you! Hopefully in summer 2016 we will experience more settled weather conditions. Please try to attend a field meeting in 2016 if you can and if you have a suitable location which you think could be a good venue for a Nature Group field meeting, please contact Barbara Lawton FRPS our programme Co-ordinator, and discuss details with her.

Enclosed within this issue is the form for the 2016 Nature Group annual exhibition. Please make an effort to enter as many categories as you can. Section B, for plants, fungi, geology, etc., always has fewer entries than Section A, which includes mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, insects, etc. So please support Section B and enter some images - doing so may also offer increased opportunities of having pictures accepted in the exhibition, or even winning an award. During autumn and early winter, the fungi, mosses and lichens are at their best and can be very photogenic, so why not make the most of the opportunity to photograph some of them for your exhibition entry.

For some NG members venturing into macro photography may be a new challenge. I am all for people taking on new challenges, as it is only by trying something new outside of your 'comfort zone' that you will advance and extend your photographic skills. Getting into close-up photography need not cost a fortune. Compared to the telephoto lenses needed for bird photography, Macro lenses are not expensive. If you only want to 'give it a try', for just a small outlay you can purchase either a screw-on close up lens or a set of extension tubes that will fit your existing lenses. These inexpensive accessories can give surprisingly good results and is a much cheaper way to 'dip your toe' into the wonderful world of close-up photography.

Another way to advance your photography is to work towards an RPS Distinction. To assist Nature Group members a Natural History Distinctions Advisory Day has been organised by the RPS Central Region. This is to be held at Smethwick P.S. on November 8th. If you would like to attend as an observer, to listen to the comments of the advisors and see some successful Natural History L and A panels, contact RPS Central Region Organiser Mike Sharples. Tel: 07884 657535 or e-mail: mike.sharples@virgin.net to book a place. There may or may not be a place available for you to bring your own pictures for advice but you should contact Mike Sharples if you are interested.

By the time you read this issue of The Iris plans will already be underway to do something special for our 40th anniversary meeting next autumn. As soon as we decide on a date and venue we will let you know. It should be something not to be missed!

Richard

Benbo – End of an Era(?)

by Tony Bond FRPS

In the days before the birth of the Nature Group I cannot remember a tripod which went down to ground level. When the Group was becoming established I became aware of a tripod of an original design which did so and was called the Benbo. An early enthusiast was Heather Angel. Jokes about Benbo grappling and bagpipes soon proliferated. So if you came across someone with a Benbo and a Billingham bag you could be fairly sure that they were a fellow member, particularly if their camera was loaded with Kodachrome 25. I decided that I could no longer afford cheap tripods and bought a Benbo which we would now call a Mk.1. The first outing I remember for my Benbo was to Donna Nook in the days when if there were a dozen cars in the parking area at the end of the lane on a fine weekend in November it was busy. This was soon followed by a lightly used Baby Benbo bought for £40. This has served me well for flowers and fungi. Later still came a Trekker which has been much used for general photography.

The great feature of the Benbos is that the engineering is easy to understand by a backstreet mechanic such as myself. Also I have always been able to obtain spare parts. The bent bolt of the (then) editorial Benbo was replaced on the kitchen table. A locking knob of my Mk.1 was damaged and replaced. I almost lost a knob from the Trekker so now carry a spare. There was a perception that the later Benbos were not up to the same quality standard as the early ones manufactured by Kennett. My old mate Colin Smith borrowed my Trekker for a visit to India. On arrival he extracted the tripod and a leg dropped off. The split pin securing the leg in the socket at the top had come out during the journey and got lost. I do not recall how Colin managed with a Benbo bipod but when I retrieved the bits I smeared the top of the leg with Araldite and secured it with a self tapping screw in the original hole and have had no further problems.

One problem not of the Trekker's making occurred on my first day in the Falklands. While out in Stanley before breakfast I became aware that the head was loose. This has a 3/8" Whitworth thread and the fragile adaptor required to fit it to the tripod had broken. Unfortunately, the centre column had 1/4"

bolts at both ends. I was very lucky in that another member of the party had a spare head with the correct thread which I was able to borrow. On my return I decided that this must never happen again and contacted a friend who has had a lifetime interest in restoring and running vintage cars. I knew that he would have no problem finding a 3/8" bolt and for someone who had restored the Grand Prix Aston Martin in the workshop it was a straightforward task to fit it at one end of the centre column. So I now have a unique Trekker which will accept any head.

This article has been prompted by a casual remark at the recent Ainsdale field meeting that " someone is still using a Benbo". On standing up in the howling wind I realised that I was the only attendee with a Benbo. How times have changed! I know that carbon fibre tripods are popular for their lightness and many tripods will now go down to ground level but I have always had my doubts as to the effectiveness of carbon fibre. Those of you who were paying attention during your physics lessons will know that Newton's Second Law of Motion states that:

Force = Mass x Acceleration

Therefore the ability of a tripod to suppress movement due to a force such as a flipping mirror depends on mass and not whether the tripod is made of carbon fibre or aluminium. Naturally, quality of design and manufacture also have a part to play. Do we have a member with access to an accelerometer to prove the point?

The other question worth raising is whether we are seeing the demise of the tripod altogether in these days of four or five figure ISO ratings, flash and lenses with vibration reduction. I have seen people hand holding at night shoots when I have been giving several seconds exposure from my Mk.1. I do not know what sort of results they obtain but I know that I can be confident that mine will be sharp and free from noise.

My Benbos have served me well and I am expecting them to outlive me. So if you see someone carrying a Benbo on a field meeting you know who it is!

The Ultimate Workshop for Natural History Distinctions

The RPS, East Anglian Region and Natural History Distinctions Chair will be holding the ultimate Natural History Distinctions Workshop at

Foxton Village Hall, Foxton, Cambridge, CB22 6RN

Saturday April 02nd 2016.

This event is aimed at anyone interested in Natural History, and is open to RPS members and non-members alike. Whether you are in the process of working towards a submission of work for an RPS distinction, or just interested in Natural History photography, come along and meet some of the best RPS natural history photographers and see their images.

During the day we will cover every aspect of the Natural History distinctions process.

In order to fully illustrate *'what the panels are looking for'* we will show a number of recent successful and unsuccessful Associate and Fellowship panels. Both projected images and prints will be shown.

Running the day will be Natural History Distinctions Panel Chair, David Osborn FRPS and Deputy Chair, Roger Hance FRPS, who will be on hand throughout the day to offer advice and guidance to any prospective applicants, or for just general advice on Natural History images.

A formal ARPS advisory session is planned for those wishing to bring work but numbers will be limited so please book early. David Osborn FRPS, Chair of the Natural History Distinctions panel will be available to give advice to Associates working towards their Fellowship application, but this must be pre-booked. (FRPS advice will be done in camera.)

Leading Natural History photographers Dawn Osborn FRPS and Kevin Elsby FRPS will be in attendance and give presentations on their journeys through to successful Fellowships and if time allows it is planned that all of the four organising photographers will show examples of their current work and how it might fit in to a modern nature distinctions submission. All in all a pretty full day and one not to be missed.

Doors open at 09.15. Tea, coffee & biscuits will be available from 9.30 and at lunch time.

The meeting starts at 10.00 and will finish at 16.00 with a break for lunch at 12.30.

Please bring your own packed lunch.

There is a local convenience store and a pub just around the corner.

Cost:	Observers only	Members £20	Non - Members £25
	Advice on ARPS portfolio*	Member £35	Non-Member £40
	Advice on FRPS portfolio*	ARPS Members only £45	

Tickets can be booked on-line at: <http://www.rps.org/anglia> or contact ann@pin-sharp.co.uk for a booking form.

* Places for A & F advice are limited - book early to ensure your place.

The Kruger Park - a photographer's paradise!

by Ludi Lochner ARPS

Imagine a game reserve the size of Wales with 11 small camps scattered across it. Now imagine that there are about 145 animal and over 500 bird species to be found in that area and you will have a good idea of what the Kruger National Park in South Africa is all about.

One of the oldest game reserves in the world and also one of the largest, the Kruger encompasses land that has never been farmed – what you see is what it has looked like for thousands of years. The Kruger is also distinguished from many other game reserves in that it has, within its boundaries, seven entirely different geological systems, each with its own specific ecology, i.e. specific plant, invertebrate, reptile, bird and animal species in addition to the more common and wider spread species! Thus, typically, Tsesebe, Red Hartebeest and Cheetah are mainly to be found to the east on the grass savannahs while the Greater Kudu and Leopard are often to be seen in thorn bush towards the western areas of the reserve. Furthermore, the Kruger spans the Tropic of Capricorn – the northern part is therefore within the tropics while the southern part stretches down into the sub-tropical region. Birdlife from both the tropics and the sub-tropics are therefore to be found in the reserve. This, together with its geological diversity, accounts for the Kruger's richness in wildlife.

The Kruger has one further advantage over many of the reserves north of the South African border – it is self-drive. You can therefore plan your day as you wish to maximize your photo opportunities. I have my favourite waterholes and like to spend an entire day at particular waterholes. That is not possible if you are being driven around in company. On the other hand, on an escorted safari, you are normally in touch by radio with other safari vans and that can maximize your opportunities of seeing popular animals such as lions. That advantage, however, comes at a cost. In the Kruger, traffic is confined to the roads and if you are a late arrival, your photo opportunities of the animals may be restricted by the vehicles ahead of you.

The Kruger is also very accessible from the northern hemisphere. You can board an aircraft at Heathrow at about 21.00 hrs and be sipping a cold Castle beer, the next evening, while watching elephants coming down to drink from the Sabi River! And, of course compared to escorted safaris, the Kruger provides a much cheaper holiday. But more about that below.

In this, the first of three articles, I will be discussing the planning that goes into a Kruger safari. In the second article, I will be mapping out camps to visit, according to the time available to you, and recommending the hot spots in the Park while, in the third article, I will be offering suggestions for a successful photo safari in the Kruger!

When to visit the Kruger

The Kruger falls within a summer rainfall area. With exceptions, you can therefore expect it to cloud over towards afternoon, on many days, from about mid-October through to about mid-March. The countryside is verdant - animals can disappear within feet of the road - and it can also be very hot and humid - expect temperatures up to the mid thirties.

The bird migrants, which can make up half of the total bird species in the summer, start arriving from October and include many exotics like members of the stork family, bee-eaters, rollers and the like.

During the hot period, there are far fewer visitors with most of the camps only just over half full. That means less cars on the road and less disturbance when you are trying to photograph a Jacobin Cuckoo (there are 11 species of cuckoo in the Park) feeding on caterpillars close to the road.

Early in the summer, there are many young around – large crèches of impala lambs provide wonderful photo opportunities.

During the rest of the year, particularly as the year progresses towards October, the vegetation dies away and wildlife becomes very much more conspicuous. June through to October are generally regarded as cool and dry months and are therefore the most popular months for visiting the Park.

During school holidays you can expect it to be fully booked, so use the internet to check the dates of school holidays. To be sure of securing reservations in the more popular camps you will need to book about ten months in advance for a winter visit and about six months in advance for a summer visit.

I prefer February for the reasons stated earlier. It is also the month to be away from the United Kingdom and a good time to visit Cape Town!

Booking

Book through the S A National Parks website - www.sanparks.org

Travel

You will find the cheapest flights are on Middle-Eastern airlines but that adds many hours to the travelling time. I generally fly BA, Premium Economy. That allows me 2 x 23 kilos in the hold and single bag plus a 'computer' bag as carry-on luggage. Check these requirements before departure because they do change!

I pre-book a Toyota Corolla from Avis. That gives me the space to move from the driver's seat to a passenger seat if needs be.

Fuel is available at all camps.

Accommodation

Accommodation is in chalets – the local term is 'huts' or 'rondavels'! There are different grades of chalet – the cheapest are usually the oldest and most basic and may not have a shower/toilet en suite and lack kitchen and dining room utensils. These are mostly taken up by locals who come equipped with cooking utensils, crockery, cutlery and the like. Instead, go for a fully equipped chalet with en suite shower and toilet. Most chalets have a refrigerator, an essential in that hot climate. Expect to pay about £50 per night for a modern 2/3 bed chalet.

Catering

All the camps, other than bush camps and Crocodile Bridge, have a restaurant that provides a basic menu that can range from good to average pub food. A good dinner, including half a bottle of good South African wine, can be had for about £20 per head. All camps, other than bush camps, have a shop stocked with basics.

My practice is to leave camp when the gates open, generally 05.30 hrs, and to return at about 10.00 when it starts getting hot and the wildlife retire to the shade. I then have a brunch and spend the rest of the day downloading the images taken over the





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previous 24 hours, charging batteries as well as attending to other chores such as doing washing at the laundries provided at all camps. I go out again at about 16.00 hrs returning to camp before the gates close at 18.30 hrs, in the summer months.

What to pack

There is no need for formal dress, at any time. I live in a shirt, shorts, underwear and sandals during the day and change to long trousers in the evening. I usually pack sufficient clothes to last me about a week and rely on the laundries to keep me stocked with clean clothes.

As regards photographic equipment, one can get away with a camera fitted with a 100-400mm lens. I would add a 1.4X extender. That will give you the reach for most birds but such a combination requires newer lenses, such as the new Canon 100-400mm MkII lens and the Canon Mk III extenders if functionality and image definition are to be maintained.

My experience is that there is a tendency (I am guilty of it) to fit a lens of too long a focal length and the result is that the images are cropped too much. Also carry something similar to a 24-70mm zoom, for photos in the camp and of landscapes as you pass through the Park.

A good beanbag is essential. Choose an H-design so that it straddles the car's window sill and provides a flat upper surface, better still with a transverse indentation, to receive and hold the lens firmly. (I can recommend Wildlife Watching Supplies' Large Double Bean Bag.) Fill it with about 6 kilos of the cheapest rice, bought locally, and give the rice away to a deserving local when you leave!

Add to that equipment a remote release. If you are using a long focal length lens, the mere pressing of the shutter release button may cause sufficient movement to give rise to a loss of definition.

1. Bungalows at Crocodile Bridge
2. Tsessebe showing grass savannah
3. Burchell's Zebra
4. Hyena hunting
5. African Buffalo seeing off Nile Crocodile
6. Outcast African Buffalo Bull
7. Young Elephant
8. Wild Dog wearing tracking collar
9. Hamerkop with catch
10. Grey-headed Kingfisher
11. Saddle-billed Stork, female

I would also pack a flash unit. They can be useful for reducing the depth of shadows but their prime purpose is to provide a highlight in the eye of the animal or bird when it is not positioned to catch the rays of the sun but see Part 3 on this topic. It is unlikely that a flash unit mounted on the hot shoe will fit conveniently within the car window without the flash hitting the top of the window. I advise carrying a bracket so that the flash can be mounted to the side of the camera. In this arrangement, the camera/flash combination fits conveniently within the window, whatever the orientation of the camera.

If there is space, add a circular polarizing filter and a couple of ND filters. A tripod is a luxury you will have very little use for.

All my photographic equipment is carried on to the aircraft – it is not safe to pack it in the luggage intended for the hold unless you use something like a Peli case 1620 which will take long telephotos. I wrap lenses in bubble wrap and then wedge them tightly in position using large packs of sanitary pads positioned around the lens! The packs are lightweight and of the ideal resilience to protect the lenses against damage from a mishandling of the cases, even when marked 'Fragile'!

You will be entering a malaria area so take with you enough Malarone (or whatever your doctor prescribes). Start taking it before you arrive in the Park and after you have left, according to the instructions. (Larium is another anti-malarial tablet but is known to have serious side affects.) As in this country, Malarone tablets can only be purchased on prescription and are not available on the NHS! Add an insect repellent spray and insect repellent coils for burning at night.

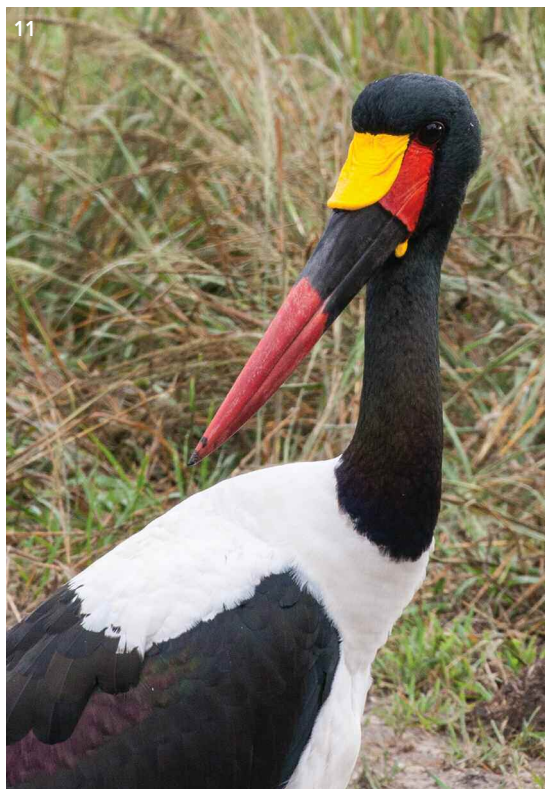
In the Spring edition of The Iris

I will look at different options depending on the length of time you have available for your Kruger safari and the hot spots to visit in each of those options.

About the author:

Ludi first visited the Kruger Park in June 1956. Since then he has been a regular visitor to the Park. He is not sponsored and does not receive a benefit for promoting the Park or any products mentioned in these articles – he lectures and writes about the Park to share his love for it with fellow photographers!

To see more of Ludi's images, visit:
www.ludilochner.com



Scotland's Nature at its best! Glen Tanar Estate, Aboyne.

by Andy S Hayes LRPS

This 'hidden gem' situated in the heart of Royal Deeside within the Cairngorm National Park is a nature enthusiasts idea of heaven. Whether your interest is in observing or photographing nature, this is an ideal location for a diverse and abundant range of flora and fauna to enjoy. The terrain of the estate covers ancient and managed woodlands leading to heather moorland and rolling hillsides dissected by burns and rivers. The real gems here are the staff who manage the wildlife. Their knowledge and experience make any visit a memorable one. The team continually monitor the wildlife on the estate, throughout the year, and look for subjects that could be developed for observing and photographing. It has to be remembered that this is a working estate and that while undertaking the normal work the team

observe and take note of the wildlife activity that the occasional visitor could never find. Photographic opportunities normally start with the Black Grouse lek in April and run through to July.

Depending on breeding patterns, Osprey can be seen in one of several nesting locations. I was lucky to photograph a pair nesting on an old dead tree in a remote area. The guide drove me along rough tracks to the crest of an open hillside moor and we set off down a steep deer track. Eventually we departed from the ease of the track and walked through deep heather. A word of caution; there is a degree of fitness and stamina required for some of these locations and a word with the staff when booking, is recommended. In saying that, the guides have been kind to me several times and strapped on my 30kgs

Black Grouse lek





backpack leaving me to concentrate on the task of staying upright and breathing! It's advisable to get in early as the birds tend to be more active early and late in the day. However, I was lucky to witness a meal of what looked like fine Scottish wild salmon being delivered to his mate and a chick. This all happened within an hour of me entering the temporary hide. I have taken to setting up two tripods, one usually with a 400mm lens attached to my 1DX and the other with a zoom lens attached to my EOS M. I use the EOS M to take short videos and have been quite successful in capturing events. Not to be recommended if you're not fully conversant with your equipment, you don't want to be trying to set off the video only to miss the main action with the stills camera. I concentrate on the stills camera

settings and once exposure and composition are right it's a matter of waiting for the action, so I then set up the video. If and when the bird comes to the nest, I make sure I have the still images before I set off the video.

The next opportunity is the 'big event', in my view, the chance to photograph that Scottish icon, the Golden Eagle. Glen Tanar has the only hide available in the UK for hire, to photograph these majestic birds and their young. I have been fortunate to have experienced this three times now and cannot express the emotion felt on each occasion. The eagle hide is an evening session and again the guide drives you through the estate and onto rough forest tracks. Strap on the kit and the walk is usually an uphill trek through native woodland and heather for 10 to 15 mins. The



Golden Eagle approaching the nest



Golden Eagle parent with chick

hide is located between 50 and 80 metres from the nest and again a 400mm lens on a full frame body is sufficient for flight and nest shots. Flight shots are restricted to the bird entering and leaving the nest as the area is in dense woodland. My first encounter with these birds left a lasting impression. I was in the hide by 5:00pm with about a million midges. Got everything set up and waited in anticipation. For the next two hours the two chicks slept, excised their wings, ate and pooped! If you've never seen a golden eagle chick poop I'll leave you to experience the event. You get plenty of time to check your settings, over and over again, anticipating something will happen. The chicks take on a different demeanour when the adults are in the area and this is the only warning you get. Suddenly it happens, silently one adult lands. Damn! Too quick for me and I only manage to get it on the nest with the two chicks. Something, I don't know what, made me move my lens to the left and there was the second adult approaching the nest. I held my breath, focused, tracked, fired off about 10 shots and the second adult landed complete with a grouse in its talons. Both adults stayed for only about 5 seconds and left. I sat motionless, my heart was pounding in my ears, did that just happen, did I get the shots? I stared at the back of the camera struggling to decide if I 'chimp' the shots. I had to, and was well pleased with the result. The chicks tucked into the grouse, flapped their wings, pooped again and went to sleep. I stayed for another hour and a half, the adults didn't return and the guide and I set off down the slope back to the Land Rover, my heart was still pounding. Five hours in the hide, five seconds of activity and five good images.



Golden Eagle parent stripping hare

This year I was fortunate to have two sessions with the eagles in a different location with two chicks in the nest. The first night only one adult came in, on the second night both adults came at different times. I had been told that the eagles are silent on their approach but this was not my experience. An eerie woomf woomf - the slow beat of an eagle's wings - alerted me as it approached the nest from directly in front of me. The eagle must have been in the tree above me preparing a hare for the chicks and the sound was the bird taking off towards the nest. I fired off several shots. The adult had brought in a young hare for the chicks. It stayed in the nest for about 14 seconds, turned and headed towards me, then veered to my right. As it did, I managed a few shots and was rewarded with a sharp image. The second evening was more productive with both adults coming in at different times, sadly not together. The trick is to watch for the chicks reaction - they become very alert and you can see their eyes following the adult in the sky above them. The parent will settle in a nearby tree to prepare the food, this gives you some idea of the direction the bird will fly from. The chicks become noisy and start screeching when the adult approaches. You don't get long, so be prepared. I fired off a series of shots as the bird came into view from my right carrying a large hare in its talons. It spent a little more time with the chicks, tidied up a hare carcass that had been lying over the front edge of the nest and left. 54 seconds of activity. The chicks tucked into the hare, one had several attempts to swallow the head of the hare, eventually managing to get those troublesome ears into the right position and with a final gulp it was gone! The second bird came in 40 minutes later, same approach, delivered another large hare, checked the chicks and left 14 seconds later. The nest was now a scene of utter carnage. I could see the remains of several hares strewn around the nest, some hanging over the edge. The chicks, ate, pooped and then settled for the night. At 9:30pm the guide assisted me out of the hide and we returned to the vehicle. Luckily there was a breeze and the midges were asleep! Another successful evening with some interesting images to treasure.

There are numerous other opportunities at Glen Tanar, Ring Ouzel, Merlin, Hen Harrier, Peregrine, Redstart and Crossbill to name a few. This is one place that I highly recommend for the opportunities, the location and the friendly welcoming staff.

Want to experience it for yourself?

Visit the website www.glentantar.co.uk or contact the office on 013398 86451.



Peregrine feeding chicks



Peregrine leaving the nest



Ring Ouzel feeding chicks

Book Review

'Wild Orchids of Bedfordshire'

by Graham Bellamy, Chris Boon and Richard Revels

Published by Bedfordshire Natural History Society.
2015-08-19 ISBN 978-0-9506521-9-1

Available from:

Mike Bird,
69 Cotefield Drive,
Leighton Buzzard LU7 3DN

Price: £20 plus £3.75 p&p, cheques payable to:
Bedfordshire Natural History Society

or Richard Revels,
73 London Road,
Biggleswade, Bedfordshire
SG18 8EE

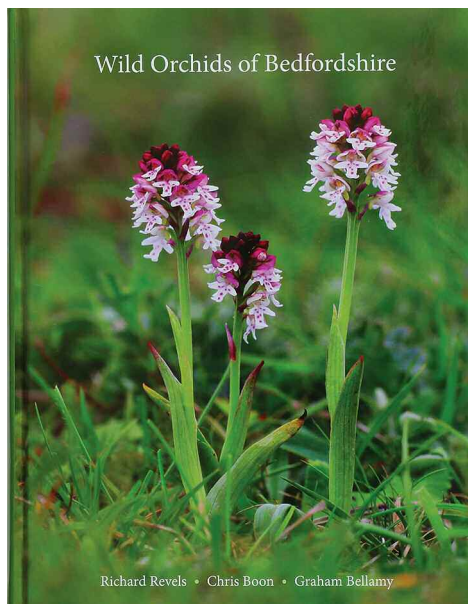
Price £20 plus £3.50 p&p, cheques payable to
R. Revels.

This superb new Flora is not only an account of the County's Orchid species but also contains three chapters with important background information; chapter 1 deals with habitats and conservation, chapter 2 gives an account of long-term monitoring of Autumn Ladies' Tresses at Knocking Hoe and chapter 3 deals with long-term monitoring.

Chapter 5 is a species checklist and chapter 6 gives accounts of the Orchids of Bedfordshire. Appendix 1 is a useful guide to the early leaves of these Orchids – a helpful guide for out-of-flowering season identification.

The authors, Graham Bellamy, Chris Boon and Richard Revels (our current Nature Group Chairman) have succeeded in producing a scholarly but eminently readable book, superbly illustrated by Richard's photographs, which will be of great use not only to botanists but also to any Nature Group member wishing to find and photograph Orchids in Bedfordshire.

John Bebbington
August 2015



Reviewed by Peter Marren in the August 2015 issue of *British Wildlife*. Peter described the book as "a superb production, beautifully printed, perfectly pitched, well presented and thoroughly reliable. This is English local botany at its very best."

RPS Nature Group Residential Weekend 2016

Friday 15th - Monday 18th July 2016

Flatford Mill Field Centre,
East Bergholt, Suffolk CO7 6UL



Subjects of Interest: Summer flowers, Insects and Birds. Varied habitats.

Cost: £195.00 Single room occupancy £185.00 Shared occupancy

Leader: James Foad LRPS

Contact: James Foad LRPS,
24B Queens Road, Ramsgate, Kent. CT11 8DZ
Tel: 01843 580295 Mobile: 07810 306365
Email: jamesfoadlrps@inbox.com

Additional Information:

Deposit of £150.00 is required on booking to secure your place. Balance of fees no later than Friday 3rd June 2016. Please make all Cheques and Postal Orders payable to: Field Studies Council Ltd and send to James Foad LRPS, 24B Queens Road, Ramsgate, Kent. CT11 8DZ

Maximum of 16 places available, Please note there are only 10 rooms available, therefore some rooms may have to be shared.

Early booking is essential to avoid disappointment as this residential weekend promises to be one of the most popular yet. When fully booked a waiting list will be operated.

Ainsdale Dunes Field Meeting

June 6th, 2015

Despite an unusually cold, dry Spring delaying the season on The Sefton Coast, twenty group members arrived at the Ainsdale Discovery Centre for a day in the dunes. Although the day was bright and dry we were badly hampered by the coastal curse of strong, blustery winds. Because of the cold season, many of the target orchid species were late, especially Bee Orchids (*Ophrys apifera*), which had been so prolific the year before.

There were high numbers of the lovely White Satin moth (*Leucoma salicis*) caterpillar in most stages of development: many had pupated and there were a few adult moths on creeping willow, so this insect was photographable in almost all stages of its development. Near the frontal dunes the group found Northern Dune Tiger Beetles (*Cicindela hybrida*) - a speciality of this area and found in only one other location in Britain.

Close searching of vegetation usually produces caterpillars of a variety of moth and butterfly species and some were found. Botanically, the area was not at its best, although scarce plants such as Hound's Tongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*) and Round-leaved Wintergreen (*Pyrola rotundifolia*) were plentiful.

In the afternoon several members re-located to near-by areas of the coast such as the "Green Beach". A small party drove to a small but lovely local site owned by LWT called Haskayne Cutting. This tiny site held a count of almost one thousand Northern (*Dactylorhiza purpurella*) and Southern (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*) Marsh Orchids with many variable hybrids to cause identification problems.

Our thanks to Dr Phil Smith, MBE, for sharing his knowledge of this wonderful area with the group, and to officers and staff of Sefton Coast & Countryside whose kind assistance is much appreciated.

Photos by Tony Bond FRPS

Trevor Davenport ARPS





Confused by the Nature Definition? You're not on your own!

by Dawn Osborn FRPS

Last year The Iris featured the subject of cheating in International Exhibitions and subsequently the 'new' Definition of Nature which was agreed between the Photographic Society of America (PSA), Federation Internationale De L'Art Photographique (FIAP) and the Royal Photographic Society (RPS) and which has since been adopted by the Photographic Alliance of Great Britain (PAGB) and its member Federations.

I came across two articles in separate issues of the PAGB e-news, both illustrating the confusion that the new rules are causing nature photographers and judges alike. Articles reproduced with permission of the Editor of PAGB e-news and the authors.

In the May 2015 issue of PAGB e-news, Nature Group member Gordon Bramham ARPS, MPAGB, EPSA, EFIAP/p reported that two of his images had been disqualified. Gordon wrote:

"These two images have both been incorrectly disqualified under the new Nature definition. The Pelican shot was deemed to have a "human element" because someone, the fisherman, had thrown the fish. I asked PSA to adjudicate and they said it was an incorrect interpretation of the new regulations and should have been allowed but the Salon replied that the Judges' Decision is Final. The Heron was disqualified because the mud track behind it was deemed to be man-made.

I think there needs to be clarification because two Salons in two different Countries have got it wrong so far."



PAGB's e-news commented that:
"Obviously this is nothing to do with the PAGB who have no control over Salons and Exhibitions but these do seem to be a severe interpretation of the Nature Definition. Far more than was ever intended. It is not the function of the PAGB to become involved at such matters. All problems must be resolved with the organisers which Gordon has sought, unsuccessfully, to do."

The PAGB's FIAP Officer, Dave Coates, said
"I suspect that, if the definition was not quite so recent, these decisions would simply have been dismissed as bad judging, which is where the blame should lie.

So far as the salon's reaction is concerned, there was little they could really do, except, of course, to get better nature judges next time. Even then, mistakes are always possible and things will go wrong occasionally. I fully understand Gordon's frustration but I doubt if we could ever formulate a definition that somebody couldn't get wrong!"

Gordon also told me that he had a couple more images disqualified incorrectly but had not bothered following up on them saying "It's not worth it. It seems that the judges of each salon interpret the rules as they see fit and when challenged the reply is "the Judges decision is final.""

Another Nature Group member, whose name is withheld so as not to unfairly identify any salon or any individual, reported the following in the June issue of PAGB e-news:



"Recently I was privileged to help judge the nature section of a well-known salon and during the course of the judging conflict arose with the interpretation of the 'new' Combined Nature Definition.

One judge thought that images that showed any signs of human presence should be disqualified. Discussions included an image of a lion crossing a game track in Africa because

the track was made by humans, a stonechat perched on barbed wire, a squirrel sitting on a log that had been cut by a forester and a photograph of gannets feeding with their nesting island in the background because the island had a lighthouse on it. He also wanted to disqualify an image of the northern lights because the author had included houses in the scene which I strongly believe is covered by the exception quoted above. Another area he was worried about was the depiction of 'cultivated plants' which meant that images of butterflies feeding on buddleia for instance should be disqualified.

Now it is my belief that he was being far too black and white in his reading of the rules – in fact, particularly in a country like Britain I think it is extremely difficult to take shots of wildlife in their environment without including at least trace elements of human presence.

In fact the even stricter Combined Definition for 'Wildlife' (a codicil to the Nature Definition) covers this: *"Images entered in Wildlife sections meeting the Nature Photography Definition above are further defined as one or more extant zoological or botanical organisms free and unrestrained in a natural or adopted habitat."*

The crucial wording here is surely 'in a natural or adopted habitat'. Most of the examples above are of animals in just such an adopted habitat. Interestingly, photographs taken at 'set-ups' where humans have deliberately organised and adapted a location in order to carry out photography are acceptable if there is no visual evidence that this has happened. So diving Kingfishers taken using Minnows in a 'trap' are fine but a White-tailed Sea Eagle fishing in a Norwegian fjord with a distant boat or wooden hut is not.

I think we need to sort out these Definitions so that their interpretation is applied realistically and this might even mean they need to be written again. Additionally, I think we need to consider exactly how correctly disqualified images are dealt with. In my opinion they should be scored with a zero and a note

accompanying them as to why they were disqualified. I know this will take time but authors entering these competitions need to know why an image is not suitable for nature/wildlife."

"Human elements shall not be present, except where those human elements are integral parts of the nature story such as nature subjects, like barn owls or storks, adapted to an environment modified by humans, or where those human elements are in situations depicting natural forces, like hurricanes or tidal waves."

It cannot be denied, there is confusion as to what is allowed and what is not. People are paying good money to enter exhibitions only to have their entries disqualified because the

judges are equally confused and have not been correctly informed and briefed by the Exhibition Chairman, who of course, may be equally confused.

I was surprised to learn that when Gordon asked PSA to adjudicate they said that the interpretation of the judges was incorrect. Clearly it was misinterpreted in the Pelican image, but there seems to be some confusion regarding the image of the heron.

In our Winter 2014 issue we included an extract from the August 2014 PSA Journal with permission of the author, PSA Exhibitions Vice President, Daniel Charbonnet, FPSA, EPSA,. Here is his clarification regarding 'human elements':

"Both the old PSA and FIAP definitions and the new common definition prohibit human elements that are not an integral part of the nature story. Human elements are not limited to people or parts of people in the image. Human elements that can cause your images to be disqualified, or at best scored low, include but are not limited to:

- Roads, paths, vehicle tracks or trails
- Fences and fence posts
- Power Poles
- Buildings (or parts of buildings)
- Walls or parts of walls
- Mowing and plowing patterns in fields
- Cut tree stumps, cut off limbs, branches or stems
- Jesses and thongs on legs of raptors and other birds (these are not scientific banding)"
- Signs
- Wires

It seems to me that the wording: *"free and unrestrained in a natural or adopted habitat."* negates much of what is defined as being 'human elements' - it isn't only Barn Owls and Storks that have adapted to an environment modified by humans, especially in a small country like Britain.

Surely PSA, FIAP and RPS (and PAGB) have some degree of control over the exhibitions that they give their patronage to? Exhibition organisers need to know precisely how the Definition should be interpreted. Most of all, it needs to be sorted out and in consultation with responsible and sensible nature photographers!

1:1 Macro and Beyond

in pursuit of the small and the very small.

by Ed Phillips

Introduction

With 97% of the world's animal species being invertebrates, many of them small or very small, macro techniques are often going to be necessary to do them justice photographically. This branch of photography undoubtedly presents challenges, but mastering it can provide a considerable sense of achievement.

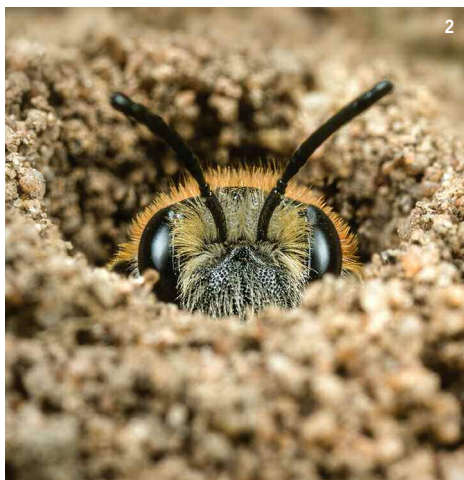
The purpose of this article is not to describe and review the many and various options available to produce a macro image (there are lots of other resources available), but to document my experiences in pursuit of small and very small creatures. True macro photography typically involves recording subjects at life-size (1:1 magnification ratio) or higher. Most camera manufacturers provide lenses that provide 1:1 macro facility. To get to higher 'magnifications' requires a little more effort. For Canon photographers though, there is the MP-E 65mm macro lens. This is what I have been trying to master over the last few years in an attempt to photograph invertebrates down to 0.5mm and smaller.

The MP-E 65mm is a lens for macro work only, operating from 1:1 to 5:1. It cannot focus at infinity (in fact, nothing further than around 10 cm) and 1:1 is

the 'widest' option. A queen bumblebee is about the largest subject that can easily be accommodated in the frame (with a full-frame camera). This is not a lens for dragonflies (or most butterflies come to that). Focussing is achieved by moving the whole camera assembly forward and backward. The single adjusting ring could be used, but this is designed to change the magnification. Depth-of-field is very narrow with a maximum of just over 2mm when at f/16 at 1:1, down to less than 0.5mm when at f/2.8 at 5:1.

Because of the small amount of light generally entering the lens, flash assistance is of great benefit. It is essential at higher magnifications, allowing faster shutter speeds and smaller apertures to be employed. Macro photographers have developed many ingenious methods of supplying flash assistance. I just use the Canon Twin-Lite system with some additional diffusion. My setup for regular 1:1 to 5:1 photography is illustrated, together with a more 'extreme' setup with the addition of a 1.4x tele-extender and a 36mm extension tube. This gives about 8x magnification. A 2x tele-extender can also be used, but with a little loss in image quality.

So, the lens is something of a challenge to use but can produce remarkable results once mastered.



Techniques

My hobby (spring and summer) is locating and photographing representatives of the UK's 240+ species of solitary bee. During autumn and winter, it's invariably springtails that I seek. I will go after anything that looks interesting though; the smaller the better! Most of the bees illustrated in this article are photographed at between 1:1 and 2:1 using a full-frame camera. For springtails and others examples of the 'very small', I generally use 5:1 and on occasions, add additional elements to achieve magnifications approaching 10:1. The whole setup does start getting somewhat cumbersome and difficult to control in these circumstances. I do all my macro photography hand-held (or using a beanbag). Very few invertebrates will wait while you set up a tripod. Flash assists in 'freezing' the scene.

I always recommend Manual mode for macro photography with flash. Typically, ISO would be set to between 100 and 200 and shutter speed at around 1/200 of a second or a little slower. Aperture would be at around f/11 at 1:1 magnification. As magnification increases, the aperture needs opening-up otherwise image-quality will deteriorate due to diffraction effects. I rarely go narrower than f/5.6 at 5:1. It's a matter of balancing depth-of-field and image quality.

I generally use the flash in E-TTL mode. I further control this using the camera's flash-exposure compensation (FEC) controls. For subjects on dark backgrounds, this will generally require up to -1.0 EV and for pale backgrounds, up to +1.0 EV. For 'bright white' backgrounds; up to +2.0 EV or a little more may be required. With experience, it is possible to determine the likely requirement for FEC by just looking at the 'scene'. Because of flash 'fall-off' though, if there is no reflective surface reasonably close behind the subject, the background can appear black. Sometimes it's possible to position a leaf or something with a suitable colour behind the subject, to give some background colour and interest. Also, by judicious adjustment of ISO and shutter speed, it is possible to allow some additional ambient light from the scene to be registered. Shooting in RAW also provides additional leeway for adjustments made during post-processing.

Results

The Globular Springtails illustrated (see page 22) are typically 2mm in body length, or smaller. Good



3

magnification and illumination is provided with the setup described earlier. Very narrow depth-of-field is unavoidable unless focus-stacking techniques are employed. Surprisingly, with practice, it is possible to get stackable images hand-held, even with live subjects 1mm long. It necessarily requires advancing the camera in steps of fractions of a millimetre but it is possible on a beanbag or if the camera assembly is well-braced. Specialist software like Zerene Stacker or Helicon Focus can then be used to assemble, align and stack the individual frames. Elements from multiple images can also be 'blended' using popular processing software like Photoshop.

4



5





Bees are somewhat easier. One of the UK's smallest solitary bees, the Harebell Carpenter Bee (*Chelostoma campanularum*) is only about 6mm long and about 1mm wide while others can approach the size of the honeybee (*Apis mellifera*) or even a little larger. As with most invertebrate photography, fieldcraft skills need to be developed to enable a close approach to be successful.



Photographing early or later in the day when temperatures are lower, offers some advantages. Most bee species (particularly ones still warming-up on chilly mornings or after showers) can easily be encouraged onto a finger. They seem to like the warmth. I usually offer my left index finger (I'm right-handed). I can then rest the camera on the base of my left thumb for support. Female solitary bee species can sting, but seldom do. I've never been stung by them anyway. A little more caution is advised with honeybees and bumblebees! Invertebrates warming-up on your hand, will often keep reasonably still, pose quite nicely and offer opportunities for orientation. They can then be returned to where they were found.

Conclusion



Invertebrate macro photography can be challenging. Achieving a 1:1 magnification ratio is easily achievable with the standard macro lenses available from most manufacturers. Greater than 1:1 can be attained with a variety of techniques including the additional use of inverted lenses, stacked lenses, add-on macro attachments, bellows and extension tubes. Canon users are fortunate in that the MP-E 65mm macro lens provides 1:1 to 5:1 flexibility in a single package.



Photographing the 'very small' provides additional challenges, particularly when the subjects are barely visible to the naked eye. With practice, perseverance and careful balancing of ISO, aperture and shutter speed settings with additional flash, results with high image-quality and acceptable depth-of-field can be obtained. In fact, I think I'm reaching the stage where I can now contemplate attempting an RPS distinction!

More images and a photography blog are available at www.edphillipswildlife.com.

Images

All images taken with Canon MP-E 65mm macro lens and diffused E-TTL flash

1. Wool-carder Bee (*Anthidium manicatum*)
1/160 sec, f/13, ISO 200
2. Early Mining Bee (*Andrena haemorrhoa*)
1/160 sec, f/11, ISO 160
3. Red-girdled Mining Bee (*Andrena labiata*)
1/200 sec, f/11, ISO 200
4. Buffish Mining-bee (*Andrena nigroaenea*)
1/160 sec, f/9, ISO 200
5. Blue Mason Bee (*Osmia caerulescens*)
1/160 sec, f/11, ISO 200
6. Chalcid Wasp - (*Callitula pyrrhogaster*)
1.0 – 1.5mm.
1/160 sec, f/5.6, ISO 200. Lens + 2x Tele-extender. Two images combined during post-processing.
7. Globular Springtail (*Sminthurinus aureus forma atrata*). 0.6mm. 1/125 sec, f/5.6, ISO 125. Lens + 2x Tele-extender.
8. Globular Springtails – (*Dicyrtomina saundersi*)
1/160 sec, f/7.1, ISO 160
9. Springtail (*Protophthora aurantiaca*)
1/160 sec, f/7.1, ISO 125

Equipment

- 10 Regular Macro Setup (1:1 to 5:1):
Canon MP-E 65mm Macro lens (at 1:1) plus MT24-EX Twin-Lite Flash with commercial push-on diffusers and additional home-made diffuser.
- 11 Extreme Macro Setup:
Canon MP-E 65mm Macro lens (at 5:1) with additional 1.4x Tele-extender and 36mm extension tube. MT24-EX Twin-Lite Flash with commercial push-on diffusers and mounted on a custom-made bracket.



Obituary

TERESA KRYSTYNA ZULĘCKA - 1944-2014



Krystyna was born in Radomle, Poland, now in Ukraine, in 1944, to a farming family, the eldest of three children. According to family lore her mother put the newborn on a handcart to flee from the advancing Russians. In later years her father wondered whether this experience explained why she had such a desire to keep travelling. After the war her parents were resettled on a farm near Sztum, south of Gdansk. She was schooled locally and after graduating from the Sztum Gymnasium trained as a dentist in Gdansk. Later she went on to obtain a Physician's diploma from the Academy of Medicine in Cracow, a city that remained close to her heart and where she established firm friendships that were to last the rest of her life.

Frustrated by the unrewarding working conditions in communist Poland, she dreamed of working as a doctor in Nigeria and was advised to learn English. Typically undaunted by the challenge, she managed to leave Poland for England in 1974. Thus began an exile from friends and family that was to last nearly ten years. Speaking almost no English upon her arrival in London, she worked as a cleaner, waitress and au pair to pay for night classes in English. A chance encounter led to her meeting the late David Watt, then Superintendent of St John's Hospital, a psychiatric facility in Stone, Bucks. David took her under his wing, launching her career

as a clinical psychiatrist. Armed with her membership of the Royal College of Psychiatrists and a joint publication with David in the prestigious journal *Psychological Medicine*, she successfully applied for further training at Senior Registrar level in Nottingham. There she met and married, Karel, myself, a fellow trainee, in 1982.

Her study of the psychological vulnerability of first-year undergraduate students at the University of Nottingham led to several publications and won her the 1985 Sir Ernest Finch Research Prize. After completing training she was appointed Consultant Psychiatrist at Bassetlaw, Nottinghamshire. She mentored medical students and Senior Registrars from the University of Sheffield Medical School and was devoted to the wellbeing of her patients. After a decade she moved north, working as a Consultant in Doncaster and Leeds before retiring early as a Mental Health Officer in 1999.

Krystyna was an enthusiastic photographer from her student days and with her newly found freedom she rekindled her earlier passion. The arrival of the digital age fuelled her enthusiasm and she eventually became successful in marketing her images through stock photography agencies. She was a member of The Royal Photographic Society (RPS) and its Nature Group. She gained her Associateship of the RPS in 2004 with a Documentary and Visual Journalism panel followed by a Licentiate of the British Institute of Professional Photography and a BA(Hons) degree in Contemporary Photographic Arts in 2005. During her degree course she received a Fujifilm Student Merit Award in its Social/Editorial Category. Specialising in editorial, documentary and nature photography she collaborated with journalists, writers and scientists. Her published images and illustrated articles appeared in books and magazines worldwide. She passionately believed that photography plays a major role in shaping public opinion in political, social and conservation work. In this regard she made a selfless contribution to the Images of England project in 2006, photographing listed buildings in the Leeds area, and was awarded second place in its Defining Image Competition. The compassion she had previously shown to her patients also manifested itself in concerns for the natural world. She

generously contributed images to ARKive, the not-for-profit initiative of the charity Wildscreen, to assist in the creation of an awe-inspiring record of life on Earth for the benefit of future generations as well as a resource for conservation, education and public awareness.

The undaunted spirit that led her to a new life in England did not leave her and she often ventured far afield on her own. She learned that the Atacama was about to bloom after a sudden rainfall and immediately headed to Chile to photograph the desert flowers, despite her almost complete lack of Spanish. She travelled to Argentina, Bolivia, Peru, Guyana, Malaysia, St Lucia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory to observe and photograph parrots in their natural environment. There were also trips to the USA and Canada, Portugal, Turkey, New Zealand, South Africa, Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego, Iceland, the Amazon rain forest and the Galapagos and Falkland Islands. Her work earned her first place in the Travel Photographer of the Year Competition (2003) and the International Bird Photography Competition of El Condor, Argentina (2004).

Always a Polish patriot, albeit a critical one, Krystyna took a keen interest in promoting the work of her country's folk artists, giving lectures and coordinating workshops on Kashubian embroidery and the art of traditional paper cutting. In 2013, she travelled to the remote Bieszczady region of southeastern Poland on the Slovak and Ukrainian borders, an area haunted by inter-ethnic conflicts that cost the lives of tens of thousands of people during and in the aftermath of WWII. Keen to make her own contribution to the memories of what was so tragically lost here, she set about recording for posterity the cemeteries, traditional wooden Orthodox churches and remnants of abandoned villages.

Krystyna had successfully overcome breast cancer in 1993 but, sadly, lost her battle with pancreatic cancer in December 2014 after a determined two-year struggle. She continued her artistic endeavours almost to the end and managed to self-publish three books in her final year, adding to her impressive list of scientific and artistic publications. Her spirit endures in her work that can be appreciated at www.clikc.co.uk and in the lives and memories of those who crossed her path. She is survived by myself, our beloved Olga, and her brother and sister.

Karel de Pauw

Invitation to host a Field Meeting

Hello Everyone

On behalf of the RPS Nature Group, I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who hosted or attended a field meeting during 2015. It was most unfortunate that on a number of occasions the weather presented challenging conditions.

RPS Nature Group Field Meetings have always been an integral part of the Nature Group's activities, offering members the opportunity to meet other natural history photographers, to exchange ideas, as well as opportunities to visit sites of natural history interest, which they would not normally access.

Considering that there are members of the Nature Group all around the country, it would be wonderful if a field meeting could be arranged in each of the RPS regions during the course of next year.

I am therefore making an appeal for members to consider becoming a host for a field meeting. If you visit a site, with interesting subjects to photograph, please consider becoming a leader – you will not be expected to instruct others about photographic techniques or be an expert at identifying all the wildlife subjects.

Many members of the Nature Group are retired, and therefore mid-week meetings are often very well attended.

To ensure inclusion in the Spring issue of *The Iris* details should be sent to me before Friday, 22nd January 2016. Please contact me if you require any further information.

Barbara Lawton, FRPS, DPAGB
8 Leybourne Crescent
Pendeford,
Wolverhampton, WV9 5QG

Tel: 01902 787811
Email: barbara.lawton@talktalk.net

I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards

Barbara Lawton

RPS Nature Group Field Meetings 2016

Please return this form before 22nd January, 2016

Day and Date:

Time:

Location:

Grid Ref/Post Code:

Meeting Place:

Subjects of Interest:

Additional Information:

Items to bring:

Cost: (eg Car Parking Fees)

Leader:

Address:

Tel:

Email:

Lyme Disease by Adrian Davies ARPS

I would like to re-iterate the advice given by Dr Elsby in his recent article on Lyme Disease.

About four years ago, after a day's photography on Dartmoor, I found a small tick on my upper leg, and removed it with tick tweezers. Three weeks later I started becoming feverish, and at one point, delirious.

The point where I had removed the tick had become highly inflamed (there is a 'selfie' on my web site: http://www.adriandaviesimaging.com/gallery_45485.html)

My doctor wanted to admit me to hospital, to administer anti-biotics intravenously, but relented and gave me very strong ones orally when he heard that my wife was a nurse. I was very unwell for a good couple of weeks.

For more information on Dartmoor ticks go to: <http://www.dartmoorcam.co.uk/dartmoortickwatch/>
www.adriandaviesimaging.com

Apologies

We owe our apologies for two errors that occurred in the Summer issue.

- To Conor Molloy for misspelling his name and
- Stewart Forbes whose Commended image was omitted from the 2015 Annual Exhibition pages.



Commended:
Ceratosoma nudibranch, Stewart Forbes

Congratulations

The following Nature Group members recently achieved their Associateships in Nature

Sue Adlard	-	Gloucestershire
Roger Clark	-	Hampshire
Robert Connelly	-	Kent
Penny Dixie	-	Rutland
Peter Farmer	-	London
Cathy Fitzherbert	-	Oxfordshire
Sarah Kelman	-	Cambridgeshire
Charles Lee	-	Essex
Darron Matthews	-	Staffordshire
Peter Orr	-	Berkshire
M. Solor Krishnamurthy	-	Bangalore
Nigel Spencer	-	Leicestershire
John Wychall	-	Surrey

The Nature Group Needs You!

Can you fill the role of Secretary

or

Editor of The Iris

If you are interested in taking on either of the above roles you should contact:

Margaret Johnson LRPS the current Nature Group Secretary or

Dawn Osborn FRPS, the current Editor of The Iris.

Both roles must be filled by the AGM in 2017 or earlier.

Fungi -The Hidden Kingdom

by Tony Bond, FRPS

At a time when our exhibitions are full of images of the extremes of animal and bird behaviour why bother with fungi? I have been interested for many years and am continually finding more about these organisms. They are nature's recyclers, returning organic matter to the soil. The true importance of their role in the health of the planet is only just being realised. Many plants depend on fungi for minerals while the fungus receives carbohydrates from the plant and recent research has shown that up to 90% of plants benefit from a symbiotic relationship with fungi. Indeed, the fungi have been called the internet of the plant world. The largest living organism on earth is a fungus, but not one which is found in Britain.

We do not even know how many species are on the British list. I have seen estimates varying from 12,500 to 15,000. One problem is that around 2,000 have not been recorded for over 50 years. Within this enormous number there is a huge variety of shape, size and colour to attract the photographer. They vary from obscure crusts to the spectacular fly agaric.

Understanding fungi and the mysteries of identification can be difficult. The best way to make a start is to go on forays organised by one of the many fungus groups which are to be found across the country. Other bodies such as the county naturalist trusts, Natural England and the National Trust also hold forays. These will be on sites well known for their fungal flora to which you can probably return on your own. If you foray with mycologists you need to be aware that they are looking for different features. We need specimens in perfect condition in an attractive setting. Mycologists are principally interested in identification and preparing lists. It pays to be alert to an exciting find before it ends up in someone's basket!

Fungi are active all year round but we only become aware of their presence when the fruit body appears. Most fungi fruit in the Autumn but you can find them any day of the year depending on the species. For number and variety mature woodland with beech and oak is the favourite. However, grassland fungi have an attraction all of their own and the colourful waxcaps are used by ecologists to locate unimproved grassland, an increasingly rare habitat. Fungi are very temperamental and do not necessarily fruit in the same place and at the same

time each year. They do not like dry conditions which is why September, 2014, was a disaster for fungus folk. However, the flip side is that in a good year you can return to a site time and time again and photograph different species on each visit. My own travels in search of fungi have taken me from the Lake District to North Wales but some of my most successful images have been taken within walking distance of my home and at a nearby National Trust estate. Part of the attraction of fungi for me lies in the surprise element of suddenly coming across treasure.

Compared with many branches of nature photography the equipment required is relatively modest. I currently use a full-frame camera with 60mm and 105mm macro lenses. A 24mm lens with a 2 dioptre supplementary lens is invaluable for the rare wide angle shots which can be very effective. The camera is always set to ISO 100 which means that exposures often run into seconds. This means that a tripod is essential and I have used a Baby Benbo for many years. This has non-extending legs which make it easy to set up but a fungus well off the ground often requires returning to the car for my Benbo Trekker. The tripod is topped off with a Manfrotto geared head which permits precise adjustment with no backlash. A right angle finder makes for comfortable viewing and allows me to concentrate on the subject. Another essential is a reflector to bounce light into the shadows. If direct sunlight falls on your fungus the contrast will be unmanageable and I use a Lastolite diffuser to cast a soft shadow over the subject. Flash can be very useful if used with discretion and is a better servant than master. If your reflector has not done enough to lighten the shadows try a bit of fill-in flash with the gun close to the lens. One way to add some sparkle to a flat subject is to hold the flash above the camera on an extension lead and give a splash of flash.

Having been a slide worker for many years I believe in getting it right at exposure and I do little image processing. If you intend to enter open exhibitions you need to be aware of the Definition of Nature Photography. While 'gardening' before exposure is allowed, cloning is not. Fungi can be very frustrating but are well worth the effort. And after many years I am still learning.

Black morel, *Morchella elata*. The morels fruit in the spring and all make excellent eating.



Wrinkled club, *Clavulina rugosa*. Photographed in ancient woodland on the carboniferous limestone of Cumbria.



Common puffball, *Tycoperdon perlatum*. The puffballs rely on disturbance to release their spores.



Shaggy scalycap, *Pholiota squarrosa*. A spectacular fungus and an exhibition favourite.



Lawyer's wig, *Coprinus comatus*. An example of the use of a wide angle lens.



Clustered bonnet, *Mycena inclinata*. The genus *Mycena* consists of over 100 species.



Scarlet waxcap, *Hygrocybe coccinea*, found on unimproved grassland and many are very colourful.



Scarlet elf cups, *Sarcoscypha austriaca*, normally found on mossy logs in late winter or early spring.



Fly agaric, *Amanita muscaria*. Surely the most photogenic of British fungi.



Giant polypore, *Meripilus giganteus*, lives up to its name - use a wide angle lens to show it.



Chicken of the woods, *Laetiporus sulphureus*, fruits mid to late summer.



Golden spindles, *Clavulinopsis fusiformis*, widespread on acid, unimproved grassland.