Chairman’s Day 2018
Saturday 15th September 2018

Smethwick Photographic Society
The Old Schoolhouse, Churchbridge, Oldbury,
West Midlands, B69 2AS
(for directions see below)

Programme:
10:00hrs  Doors open, tea and coffee available
10:30hrs  Welcome and Introduction
10:35hrs  ‘In Search of Dragons and Damsels – the Role of the Camera over 25 Years of Watching Odonata’ – Steve Cham, Dragonfly Expert and Author
11:40hrs  Short break
11:55hrs  David Osborn FRPS, Professional Wildlife Photographer
13:00hrs  Break for lunch
13:45hrs  Austin Thomas, Wildlife Photographer
14:50hrs  Short break
15:10hrs  ‘Wildlife in Costa Rica’ – Kevin Elsby FRPS, Chairman of the RPS Nature Group
16:00hrs  Close

Throughout the day there will be prints on display from recently successful A & F Distinction panels by Nature Group Members.

Please bring your own packed lunch as lunch will not be available. There is a dining area. Tea, coffee and drinks will be available at the bar.

Cost: £10 per ticket for RPS Members – £12.50 for non-RPS Members
The maximum number of tickets available is 80 so BOOK NOW!

To obtain your ticket:
Please send your cheque payable to RPS Nature Group plus a Stamped Addressed Envelope to:
Duncan Locke LRPS, Park Cottage, 6 Old Road North, Kempsey, Worcester, WR3 3JZ
or book through the RPS website:
http://www.rps.org/special-interest-groups/nature/events

Directions:
From Junction 2 of the M5 follow the signs for the A4034 north towards West Bromwich.
Once on the A4034 stay in the left hand lane and after about 1/3 mile turn left at the first set of traffic lights into Park Street.
At the end of Park Street turn right into Churchbridge (cul-de-sac).
The Old Schoolhouse is the last but one building on the left.
If you use SatNav use postcode: B69 2AS
Google Maps Coordinates: 52.497771, -2.019776
Please note that currently there are major road works between
Junctions 1 and 2 of the M5 plus delays at M5 Junction 4a northbound.
Please allow extra time for your journey to Smethwick if using the M5.
Highly commended prints

Golden Snub Bosed Monkeys by Duncan Locke LRPS, Red Fox by Jean Mason, Amboseli Elephants by Barrie Parker LRPS, Cob’s Wren with prey by Ken Rasmussen ARPS, Silvery Grebe Pair by Dawn Osborn FRPS

More on pages 22 - 36

Highly commended Digital

Roseate Spoonbill in flight and Ice shapes over puddle by Gordon Mills ARP, Fly Agarics in Fir wood by John Simpson ARPS, Lioness with cubs by Barrie Parker LRPS, Fragrant Orchid by Keith Polwin ARPS, Saxifrage longifolia on rockface by Richard Revels FRPS

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Items covering any aspect of nature photography and/or natural history are welcomed, including reviews on equipment and relevant books. The Editor can be contacted at: editor-iris-ps@virginmedia.com

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

Digitally captured photographic images are preferred but scanned transparencies are also acceptable. Images (whether vertical or horizontal) should be supplied on CD as flattened 8bit sRGB Tiff files, 6” x 4” at 300 pixels per inch (1800 x 1200 pixels, file size approx 6.17MB). Please do not send larger images. If your image is selected for use on the cover of The Iris you will be asked to supply a larger file.

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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 is my first issue of The Iris as Editor and I hope you like it! I took over the editorship from Dawn Osborn this spring. Dawn has helped me tremendously, which has made taking over relatively easy. I would like to thank her for all the kind help she has given me to get me started and all her hard work with The Iris over the years. Dawn has certainly raised the standards of the publication over the years and has been of great service to the Nature Group.

How have I got involved? Firstly I had a company that published books and produced books and magazines for other publishers. This has given me a bit of an understanding of how a magazine is put together and working with printers. Secondly I have been a natural history photographer for many years and enjoy seeing the work of fellow photographers with a similar interest. This is not my only RPS print project however. I also produce the Midlands Newsletter.

The Iris is a members’ magazine and relies on members for its content and I am looking forward to receiving plenty of articles from all you readers! You can get a feel for the number of words and photographs you need to provide by looking at past copies of our magazine. If you need a hand with the writing, that is fine- I am here to help! Let me know, via the e mail address opposite, if you wish to submit an article and I will send you details of what you need to do next.

I also need photographs for The Iris cover. Portrait pictures usually work best, especially those with some background space for the title and logo. Please send me your cover images and hopefully I will be able to put them in. I look forward to hearing from you.

Finally, do not forget the Nature Group eNewsletter. Please e-mail items of interest to: naturegroup_enews_editor@btinternet.com
Welcome to the summer issue of The Iris for this year. As I write this, we have just come to the end of an exceptionally warm and sunny spell of weather (well, at least in much of the eastern side of the UK) with unprecedented high temperatures. A record high temperature for an early Spring Bank Holiday was recorded, 28 degrees Celsius in Kent.

As a result of this many spring flowers are appearing much earlier than usual. There have been wonderful displays of Green-winged Orchid, for example, in some of the sites near me. However, for other groups things do not appear so good. There have been fewer numbers of butterflies about than perhaps one would expect with such fine weather, for example. Bird migration is well underway, and many of our summer migrants have returned from their wintering grounds in warmer climes further south.

Once again though, certain species are few and far between. As an example, when I moved into my current address, 30 years ago, I had the following species in or around my property – Garden Warbler, Spotted Flycatcher, Common and Lesser Whitethroat, House Martin and Turtle Dove. All have now disappeared, and it takes some effort to see these birds.

However, interestingly, I have seen more Lesser Whitethroats elsewhere this year than for some years, and Garganey, that beautiful migratory duck, also seems to be in the UK in large numbers this year. Turtle Dove has become such a rare bird though that it now features on the Rare Bird information services when they are sighted. How long before we lose this lovely species as a British bird?

Now, on to something more cheerful. We had a very successful AGM at Smethwick in April, when the Nature Group exhibition was opened. It was a great opportunity to see the superb work of members, covering an astonishing range of subjects. As your Chairman, it was my pleasure and privilege to hand out awards to the successful authors. You can see many of the winning images in this edition of The Iris. Well done to all of you, and I fervently hope that if you were unsuccessful yourself this year, or if you did not enter either of the sections of the exhibition, that you are moved to do so next time around.

Our guest speaker for the day was Robert Thompson who had flown in from Ireland to talk about his work as a professional natural history photographer and author.

His talk, spread over two hours, encompassed an extraordinary range of material with an emphasis on his macro work and landscape photography. It was met with universal enthusiasm and acclaim. In addition, Robert handed out copies of various book he has written to successful award winners from the exhibition – a most generous act indeed. Thank you once again Robert.

During the AGM, I was privileged to hand the Nature Group Silver Medal to Margery Maskell, who has stepped down from her role as treasurer and webmaster, in recognition of her sterling work that she has done on behalf of the nature group over many years. It was an award which is well deserved, and recognises her outstanding contribution to the group during this time.

As chairman of the group I am allowed to hold a Chairman’s Day, and this will be on Saturday 15th September at Smethwick. I have invited three top wildlife photography experts, well known in their field to each give us a presentation on the day.

David Osborn, Chairman of the RPS Distinction Panel in Nature and known to many of you, is a very experienced wildlife photographer and leads photographic tours in wildlife to America and the Falklands. http://www.davidosbornphotography.co.uk

Steve Cham is one of the leading experts in the UK on dragonflies. He is an author, and edited the excellent Atlas of Dragonflies in Britain and Ireland. He is also the co-author of the Field Guide to the Dragonflies and Damselflies of Great Britain and Ireland.

Our third speaker for the day is Austin Thomas, another professional wildlife photographer and tour leader. Austin is well known for example for his Little Owl work. http://www.austinthomas.co.uk

I hope to have some successful Nature Distinction panels for viewing on the day, with, hopefully, the authors giving us a chat about their route to success.

Finally, I will be giving a talk of my own, on the diverse wildlife to be found in the wonderful central American country of Costa Rica.

I hope to see as many of you there as possible but please note this is a ticket only event and you need a ticket to get in. Please refer to the advertisement in this edition of the Iris and in the e-Newsletter.

In the meantime I hope your summer photography continues to bring rewards.

Kevin
Uganda

by Margaret Johnson LRPS

In July 2017, three friends and I went to Uganda for a month. It well deserves the name ‘Pearl of Africa’ as it is a very beautiful and varied country.

We began our visit in Entebbe and had a driver/guide with the four of us for the entire time. Frank was both very knowledgeable and an excellent driver, which he needed to be as the roads were very rough.

Our first stop was the Mariba Forest where a guide was waiting to take us through this primary rain forest. It was an interesting walk and we saw Red-faced monkeys which have incredibly long tails, many species of butterflies and plants with medicinal properties. We journeyed on to Nile Porch where we stayed in tents overlooking the Nile River. A trip on the river gave us lots of opportunities to see many different species of birds. We also visited the source of the Nile.

Our next stop was Sipi Falls where our tents were pitched on a hillside overlooking these very spectacular waterfalls. It rained in the afternoon and we watched as a Cinnamon-breasted Bee-eater continued feeding despite the rain.

At Murchison Falls NP, birds and animals started to appear as soon as we crossed into the park. We saw lots of Ugandan Kob, which are members of the antelope family and are the national animal of Uganda. There were also Elephant, Giraffe and Jackson’s Hartebeest.

The following day we had another cruise on the Nile. Again we saw many birds and animals including Hippos, Crocodiles, Pelicans, Cranes, Weaver Birds, Kingfishers, Fish Eagles, Oribi and Monkeys. Later we saw Egyptian Geese.

A game drive in the NP gave us opportunities to see many mammals and birds. Deffassa Waterbuck, Warthog, Side-striped Jackal, Lion and a pair of Ground Hornbills. We were told that the Hornbill mates for life and when one of them dies the other commits suicide by flying high into the air and flinging itself back down to the ground!

A four hour drive took us to the Amuka Rhino Sanctuary. On arrival we immediately went Rhino tracking. We only walked for about five minutes before coming across four Southern White Rhino under a tree. Thomas told us one of them was pregnant. The gestation period of Rhino is 16 months. The other three animals were each about four years old. They can be recognised by the shape of their horns and by their ear notches. Rhino can weigh up to three tons and run for short distances at speeds up to 45mph. The Rhino had guards 24/7 doing 12 hour shifts. There were now 20 Rhino in the sanctuary. When their numbers increase they will begin relocating them to other National Parks in Uganda.

We had a long but very interesting drive the next day to Kibale Forest Camp. The King had opened a newly refurbished church and was going back to his home. All the towns and villages that the King would pass through were lined with people in their best clothes blowing horns and shaking banana leaves.

Next morning we did a circular walk around the grounds of the camp looking at the flowers, fungi and Patas Monkeys and after lunch we went on a crater lakes walk. Some of the craters lakes had water in them and some were just a caldera covered in grass and trees but they were very beautiful.

Two of our party went Chimpanzee trekking the next day but I knew that I would not be able to manage it. They did have a fantastic day. Before leaving the next day we did a swamp walk and saw the Red Colobus monkey, Hadeda Ibis and Agama Lizard. Then we travelled on to Semiliki, a Ugandan Wildlife Authority Camp, driving through the mountain passé - the scenery was breathtaking.

We spent some time the next day in a boat on Lake Albert - an enormous lake but quite shallow in parts - our guide and the captain had to use poles at times. We found both male and female Shoebills - a huge and rather prehistoric looking bird. We were able to get quite close to them and saw the male catch two fish. After eating he always takes a drink of water. Apparently they also mate for life and nest on floating vegetation. We spent an hour with them before returning to shore.

A walk through the rain forest the next day, brought us to the hot springs. It was still cool so the springs were steaming well. There was a male spring and a female one so called because you could cook in the female spring but not the male. (Males don’t usually cook in Uganda). We walked on boardwalks over some lightly bubbling pools which smelled strongly of sulphur. Here we saw Red and Grey Mangabey monkeys and then a Blue monkey. Each
On the road again, another long journey brought us to Eagle’s Nest Camp at Lake Mburu. After settling in we set off on another game walk and saw many birds and animals. Our guide showed us how Termite mounds were constructed and how they used their saliva to build up the soil.

During a boat ride we were lucky to see the African Fin-foot which is a rarity. There were nesting Fish Eagles in the trees. We also saw one on the ground near the water’s edge and in the sunlight I realised for the first time that it is not just black and white but has beautiful rich brown feathers too.

Another night game drive gave us sightings of Genet, Savannah Hare, Bush Baby, Water Thick-knee, Civet, White-tailed Mongoose, Giraffe, Hippo, Warthog and Bushbuck but no Leopard. It is the one animal that has eluded us. It gives us a good excuse to go back to this beautiful country.

On our way back to Entebbe the following day we had a final boat ride on the Mabamba Swamp. The swamp was very beautiful with many water lilies and birds. There are nine Shoebill living in the swamp and we did manage to find one of them.

It had been a wonderful holiday and was tailor-made for us by Travel Local and their associates in Uganda, Kombi Tours.
A Circuitous Route to an ‘A’ in Natural History

by Malcolm Blackburn ARPS

I bought my first camera in 1954 and made some pocket money taking and selling prints of school and house sports teams. This enterprise went well until I left the prints washing in the house baths one evening, and the housemaster couldn’t find a bath free to use! I did have some modest success in competitions, including a children’s one run by the Science Museum in London.

During my career in industry, I took lots of record shots in the workplace, and of my many foreign trips using slide film and later colour print film. I naturally also took family pictures.

I joined my local camera club about eleven years ago, entering their competitions to gain experience and learn from my mistakes. In 2011, I gained my LRPS. I felt that the A would be difficult to achieve so I entered BPE Exhibitions and then progressed to Internationals, gaining my AFIAP in 2014 and my EFIAP in 2016. I also gained my DPAGB earlier this year. I had no particular genre, but generally used travel images. I am not artistic, but my strength is in technical matters. Natural history is challenging, as many will know, and I decided to use images from Southern Africa for my first attempt at the A.

My wife and I spent ten days with Steve and Ann Toon on their first safari with paying guests. We spent five days in Botswana on the Chobe River, mainly on specially equipped photographic boats, and then left for a four day stay at the Zimanga Game Reserve in Kwazulu Natal. This ten day trip resulted in 3500 images. The conditions on the Chobe were ideal as the birds and animals were not interested in us and behaved naturally. Zimanga was a wonderful place, with photographic hides designed by Bence Máté in the 66,000 acre reserve. This is where I photographed the ‘Zebras at Daybreak’
I picked a set of images to produce the application for the A, and showed them to various photographic colleagues; I followed their advice to select alternative images, with the assurance that I would do well. On the day, the assessors looked hard at my application and failed me - not even a referral! The chairman’s report followed and I realised that I had not been self-critical enough - I liked the images and was therefore complacent. Reasons for my failure were poor depth of field on two images, cluttered background on a nest shot (I must teach the birds how to weave!), a faint mark across the sky area of a shot which I should have seen and corrected, and two action images of birds bathing where only their eyes were sharp. The comments also included some helpful advice to obtain good action shots. It was suggested that I attend an Advisory Day, but these are few and far between for natural history, and usually occur when we are away. I opted for a Fine Art day in Bath at the beginning of the year, with a technical report on my images sent to the two assessors. They provided some good advice, but slaughtered me for my printing standards. After several days of sorrow, I resolved to improve my printing, despite having received print acceptances for internationals in the past.

I went back to Zimanga for a week in May this year. There were even more excellent hides, including the Umgodi night hide with LED lighting, and a vulture hide. I decided that I should concentrate on action shots. One week produced about 2000 images – an awful lot of Lightroom time to sort out the wheat from the chaff. I kept the best images from my previous application and added the remainder from this year’s efforts. I worked hard to use sharp images with good depth of field, good middle tones and with action as an important element. I sent my selection to Steve and Ann Toon, and by return received some first class advice which I incorporated. My final shots were checked by our club chairman, who came up with some other good suggestions. The result was that I printed variations of many of the shots three times before settling the selection.

On the day, the first two candidates passed and the next two failed. It was then my turn. The assessors spent most time in animated conversation together on my shot of the three Pied Kingfishers, and I began to wonder what I had missed in the printing! The preliminary vote was taken, but we were unaware of that result. One assessor was invited to comment - he liked my panel, but thought the Kingfisher image had been fabricated with three shots of the same bird. Candidates can watch but not speak - I seethed in silence! The second assessor was very positive and said...
he believed the kingfisher image was in fact one exposure – I could have hugged him had the rules been different! The difference between assessment and the law is that the jury has to consider evidence and not conjecture. I am glad to say that the second vote was positive, and I was recommended to the Board for an A.

My advice to candidates -

• Write your statement of intent to encompass the images you have or plan to take. Be prepared to modify it to optimise it.
• Look very critically at your images, and don’t accept them just because you like them.
• Find an experienced and critical photographer to tear them apart, and then take their advice.
• When you think you have your best images, go to an Advisory Day and incorporate their suggestions. Candidates that have attended such a day are far more likely to pass.
• Read the advice in the official paperwork from the RPS, and include it in your preparations.
• Keep on trying.

2. White-fronted Bee Eater (Merops bullockoides) and prey

3. Pied Kingfishers (Ceryle rudis) and intruder

15. Yellow-billed Stork (Mycteria ibis) landing

10. Cape Buffalo (Syncerus caffer) at waterhole
Statement of Intent
Malcolm Blackburn LRPS
12th September, 2017 - Natural History

I first visited Africa in the 90’s and again in 2005 and became interested in Natural History both in Africa and other parts of the world. In the last two years I returned to Southern Africa and had a wonderful opportunity to photograph wildlife. My aim was to accurately record wildlife in their surroundings and in their day to day activities.
Namaqualand, in South Africa, is said to be a blaze of
colour in early Spring. Late winter rains which, in
South Africa come in late July and August, trigger the
blooming of carpets of flowers.

I first visited South Africa in 1994 when I worked
there for a short time. It was during that time I first
learned about the flowers and I had wanted to visit
the area ever since. In September 2017 I finally made
it. The rains, however, are unpredictable. In some
years the flowers are very good but if the rains are
poor there is little to be seen. We therefore planned
an extended trip, flying to Cape Town and driving
North to the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park which is in
the Kalahari Desert.

After an overnight flight to Cape Town we drove
north to the small coastal town of Langebaan. Langebaan is the gateway to the West Coast National Park,
a famous wetland area. The park is good for birds and
there are a number of hides. I also found it relatively
easy to photograph birds outside the hides with
pleasing pictures of Double Collared Sunbird and
Cape Wagtail.

The park is also known for its flowers with Arum
Lilies covering the hills, and fields of Namaqua
Daisies, orange, purple and white, contrasting with
the blue of the sea. The flowers were particularly re-
splendent in the Postberg section of the park, which is
only open during the flower season.

While we were in Langebaan we also visited the
West Coast Fossil Park where a large number of fos-
sils, about five million years old, have been discov-
ered. They include many species now extinct, such as
Short Necked Giraffe, Hipparion (three toed horse)
and an early form of Mammoth. Near the entrance
male Cape Weavers entertained us as they built their
nests in the trees. The kidney shaped nests, which are
made from grass and reeds, are waterproof and en-
closed, and have to be checked by the females before
they decide to mate. This meant that whenever a fe-
male flew nearby the males would stop their weaving
and display hoping to attract her attention.
From Langebaan we drove to the town of Springbok, further into the traditional flower areas. On the way we stopped at Lamberts Bay, another destination I had been hoping to visit since my first trip to South Africa. Lamberts Bay is a small fishing village which is also home to a large Cape Gannet colony. The colony lies on Bird Island a rocky outcrop connected to the village by a breakwater wall. A spacious two storey hide has been erected next to the colony. The lower level has glass in the windows which is not ideal for photography but the upper storey is glass free. It offers lots of opportunity for flight shots as the Cape Gannets come in to land in the midst of the colony, or take off from the edges of the colony. The island is also home to Jackass Penguins, Cape Cormorants, Common and Sandwich Terns and Kelp Gulls which, apart from the Penguins, can be photographed in flight.

Lamberts Bay is also said to offer good flower viewing but, sadly, there were few flowers. As we continued our journey we learned that 2017 was not a good year for the flowers. Locals told us that for a reasonable display they needed at least 100 mm of rainfall and with 300 mm the flowers would be excellent. In 2017 there had been less than 50 mm of rain.

There were a few birds to photograph and I spent some time trying to get images of Dassies (Rock Hyrax). Oddly, the nearest living relatives of this animal, which is the size of an overgrown rabbit, are Elephants and Sea Cows (Manatees). I found them difficult to get close to, however. Living among rocks and with good hearing they scamper off well before they were in reach of my 400mm lens.

Our next stop was the Augrabies National Park. The Orange River, which rises near the Indian Ocean, flows west until it arrives at Augrabies where it drops 56 metres in a spectacular waterfall. The National Park, with the falls as its main attraction, offers a range of photographic opportunities. There are the falls themselves as well as a variety of wildlife. I was able to try my hand at photographing Dassies again, but here the problem was not getting close to them but getting far enough away so the lens would focus.

In my experience most wildlife is easier to photograph in the National Parks where you can drive yourself around than in more remote places and in private game reserves. There are exceptions – Elephants, Rhino and the big cats are easier to find, get close to and to photograph in private reserves. Most animals seem far more relaxed in the National Parks, however, probably because there are many more vehicles, they are more accustomed to people. Despite the rules to the contrary, I also suspect that many animals are fed...
by visitors and that is why the Dassies are so tame at Augrabies. Some birds are approachable too, particularly the Pale Winged Starlings which occur in large numbers around the camp accommodation in the hope of getting an easy meal. With care it is possible to get within a few feet of the birds so portraits are possible. The park is also home to Reticulated Giraffe, Mountain Zebra and, as the Orange River defines the border with the desert regions of Namibia, the graceful Gemsbok.

Our final destination was the Kgalagadi Trans-Frontier Park which was formed by combining the former Kalahari Gemsbok National park of South Africa with the Gemsbok National Park of Botswana. There are no fences or border posts within the park so animals are free to roam. The park is part of the Kalahari Desert and has no tarmac roads so 4x4 vehicles are essential in most parts of the park.

A visit to the Kgalagadi is a classic African Safari but without some of the major animals that are expected on safari. The dry conditions mean there are no Elephants or Rhinos, no Monkeys or Baboons and no water birds. However, this is more than made up for by the variety of animals that do inhabit the park. The big cats, (Black-maned) Lion, Leopard and Cheetah are relatively common as are the antelopes that form their prey such as Wildebeest, Springbok and Gemsbok.
There are many species of smaller mammals including Bat-eared and Cape Foxes, Black-backed Jackal and the smaller cats such as Caracal, Genet and African Wild Cat. The park is also well known for its birds, particularly the raptors. There are several species of eagle, falcon, goshawk and owl. Among those it was possible to photograph were Bateleur and Black-breasted Snake Eagle, Lanner and Pygmy Falcon, Pale Chanting and Gabbar Goshawk and Spotted Eagle Owl. A plentiful supply of rodents such as Four-striped Mice and Whistling Rats, several species of Mongoose (including Meerkats), snakes and smaller birds provide a plentiful supply of food for the raptors.

Our holiday to the Western Cape was enjoyable and provided many photographic opportunities. It offers more variety than a conventional Safari holiday but seems to be less popular with British visitors than other locations. So, if you are thinking of going on an African trip in the future and want good photographic possibilities with lots of variety do consider the Western Cape. Keep your fingers crossed, however, that the rains are sufficient to bring out the flowers!
My Journey to an ARPS Distinction

by Mary Kirkby ARPS

Having been given a basic Nikon DSLR by my husband 10 years ago when I was going on a trip to Bhutan with a group of friends, I came back with some very nice ‘snap shots’ which gave me the urge to want to make the most of my camera and the encouragement to want to take better images.

I decided the best way forward for me was to join a photographic club to learn more on how to improve my photography. I joined Stratford Photo Group as a complete Novice and with very little knowledge as to how a camera worked or what it could do. I was made very welcome and it was here that my journey began, eventually leading me to aspire to membership of the Royal Photographic Society (RPS) and perhaps even a Distinction.

I am a very keen traveller with a passion for wildlife, especially African Wildlife, and it was this subject that I concentrated on. I had a Mentor in the club, an Associate RPS member, who encouraged me to enter the club’s own Internal Competitions and with varying success I went on to enter National and then International Competitions. I discovered however that success in entering International competitions did not necessarily mean my photography had neared the standard required by the RPS. However, with growing success and confidence I attended an ‘Advisory Day’ run by the RPS where examples of the standard required to attain a Distinction are shown and advice is given by members of the RPS Distinctions Board.

My next step was to attend a weekend run by the Nature Group of the RPS. Aspiring participants were asked to bring along examples of their work for critiques and advice as to how to compile a panel of images for submission - 11 selective images not necessarily of the same subject for an Licenciate RPS and 15 images to make a balanced panel for an ARPS. The weekend was such a help and success for me, as I received advice and encouragement from two of the RPS Nature Panel members who were attending in an advisory capacity. Their advice, evaluated from the images I had taken along, was to work towards an ARPS. This was a leap I would not have taken without their encouragement. I also learned a valuable lesson - the images I thought were

Mary Kirkby

Wildlife of the Serengeti

September 2017
sharp before the weekend, I (painfully) learned were not so. Therefore several of my prints were deemed unacceptable!!! Going for an ARPS without being awarded an LRPS first is an unusual step but I received the support of my fellow club members specially the Competition Secretary (my Mentor) so, although somewhat daunted, I decided to go for it.

Having lived in Kenya for a number of years and where my love of African Wildlife began, plus the fact that I have been in the very fortunate position of being able to return to Africa several times since with a camera, I was able to plan what it was I was aiming for and what I wished to convey to the viewer.

I returned to Africa to attempt to capture my memories of the incredible wildlife and the environment in which it lives. I wanted my Panel to not only convey my love of the African Serengeti and its wildlife, but also to capture the essence of their existence by showing the various aspects of survival behaviour: be it mating, nurturing or hunting, within their natural habitat.

I also wished my Panel to inspire the present generation to realise the need to preserve and protect this amazing wildlife in their environment: thus helping to ensure their survival for future generations.
This last paragraph is taken from my Statement of Intent - required by the RPS in support of a submission. I think it is important to have this plan before embarking on putting together a Panel as it gives a focal point from which to work. Senior members of the RPS Distinction Panel can be appointed to offer their advice and encouragement to anyone applying for a Distinction and I would strongly advise anyone working towards a Distinction in nature to take advantage of this. Of course, you should keep in mind that your final Panel is entirely your own work and your submission will be assessed by a panel of six different assessors. Dedication to the task, focus, perseverance, patience and (most important) attention to detail - these, for me, were the greatest challenges.

Although I was focused on my challenge it took me three trips to the Serengeti to get the images I wanted, as of course the Wildlife does not come or act to order - so I was prepared for an expensive Panel! When I was happy with my selection and the quality of my images, plus a number of ‘spares’ I submitted several different attempts at a Panel to my RPS Mentor who gave me his valuable time, advice and tips on how to harmonise a Panel. My Statement
of Intent kept me to the point and I decided my Panel would be in three lines of five making the top line hunting - the key to survival; the second mating and nurturing - nurturing being a follow up on mating; the bottom line aspects of behaviour. Having assembled my Panel following these guidelines, I stood back to see if it worked as a whole, the images combining together to create a pleasing ‘16th’ image. After discarding and juggling images umpteen times over, I finally put my Panel together and applied to the RPS to make my submission.

Having been given a date, my next step was to attend an Assessment Day at Bristol HQ as a non-participant to see what I was in for! This was well worth while as not only did it show me how the day worked but also gave me an insight as to what the assessors were looking for while listening to their informative comments. If I was feeling confident of success up until then, after the Assessment Day experience I realised it was going to be tough but I had done my best and kept my fingers crossed that my application would be acceptable.

My own Assessment Day arrived and, having attended the previous one, I was not quite so nervous as I knew the format. My Panel was shown after lunch and I sat, heart in mouth while the Assessors first viewed it from their seats then went up to the displayed Panel to inspect each print individually and share comments with each other. When they had all returned to their seats the Chairman stood in front of them and asked them to give their verdict!

My Panel was successful! I was overjoyed and can’t express my sense of relief. One thing was certain - the effort and perseverance over the previous 18 months was worth it to obtain my ARPS - and special thanks must go to the RPS for giving me the challenge to experience a fulfilling journey.
Iceland has become incredibly popular as a location for photography in recent years, particularly for the landscape photographer. However, the June tour I booked with ‘Nature’s Images’ concentrated, very much on the birdlife. We were a group of eight and we shared two mini-buses. It may be summer but there is no guarantee of warmth or sun. It was thus a case of packing everything you might need for freezing cold to nicely warm, wet or dry. A ten-night trip, we stayed at only three different locations.

I chose to take my 100-400mm lens with cropped sensor and full frame bodies, the latter being used quite extensively as the light was not great much of the time. Most of my fellow photographers were using 500mm or 600mm lenses but I didn’t feel up to carrying such heavy kit abroad and for me it was the right decision.

First stop was Selfoss and almost all the photographic time was spent at a wetland site a few miles away. I quickly learnt (yet again) that my allegedly waterproof boots were no such thing, but I had taken the precaution of packing waterproof/windproof socks so managed to stay reasonably dry; wellies might have been a better bet though. The main target species was Red-throated Diver though there were a few other attractions such as Whooper Swan, Eider Duck, Red-necked Phalarope and Dunlin plus various waders at the roadside en route. We stayed in the area for three nights and had six sessions on site. Mostly the weather wasn’t too helpful but we did have one late afternoon/evening and one morning with lovely light.

After the final morning session, followed by
On breakfast, we began our journey to Jokulsarlon, with a few stops on the way. I was surprised to see swathes of purple Lupins. They are very pretty but I couldn’t help wondering whether this alien plant species was altogether good news. Originally imported from North America to combat top-soil loss, it is very invasive and has become a real problem in some habitats, out-competing some native plant species.

One of the stops on the way to Jokulsarlon was Vik. Here is a pretty church in a commanding position; it must have been photographed thousands of times. Down towards the small bay was an area of scrub (and Lupins). It was damp and drizzly but there were a few birds to be seen. Redwings were busy with territorial stuff, so much so that they seemed not too bothered about a couple of photographers stumbling around the scrub. As it started to rain a little harder, I returned to the van to get a waterproof coat and a full-frame body (better performance at higher ISO). I saw a Snipe perched on a rock between the car park and me and thought I should photograph it. Taking a few frames at a time I gradually moved towards it and was pleased with how close I eventually came. Recompense for now being quite wet.

The lodge style hotel on a farm near Jokulsarlon was excellent. There was a little time to look for birds around the grounds, but we spent most of our time at Jokulsarlon itself. This is particularly popular with landscape photographers of course, especially the icebergs on the black volcanic sand beach. Some of us did try our hand at this but mostly we concentrated on the birds around the glacial lagoon. Some very confiding Snow Buntings were nesting among the rocks; Eider Ducks and a few Harlequin Ducks swam in the icy waters, along with an occasional Common Seal. A variety of Gulls and a vast number of Arctic Terns were perched on icebergs; a few Barnacle Geese wandered the grass nearby and an occasional Bonxie flew across, seemingly to see what havoc it could create. Around sunset each evening there was a massive feeding frenzy of Arctic Terns in the lagoon; presumably tidal conditions had created a glut of food. It was just a pity that the light was rather poor.

Our three nights near Jokulsarlon was followed by four nights at Lake Myvatn - a volcanic lake amid huge lava tunnels and volcanic landscapes that must be a geologist’s dream. Much of our focus here was on the lake itself and the outflowing river, with the highlights being Slavonian Grebes (which I had not previously seen in full summer plumage), Harlequin Ducks and the many Red-necked Phalaropes. The Phalaropes feed on the thousands of flies and midges on the surface of the
water. I can safely say that there is scope for many more Phalaropes based on food availability! Although annoying, these flies apparently don’t bite; that maybe so but I can say that after a couple of hours lying down on the sand at the edge of the lake to get low-angle shots, my wrists were well bitten – these were probably sand-flies and I should have done the coat cuffs up good and tight before I started. I had two sessions with the Phalaropes and Grebe, one of which was greatly enhanced by that rare commodity, sun, and was very fortunate that a pair of Scaup dropped in close by too.

Almost all the Phalaropes we saw were female. Unlike most bird species, in this case it is the female that is more brightly coloured as it is she that does the courting and territorial stuff; the male incubates and looks after the youngsters. The dowdy looking males were presumably on nests while we were there.

The hard-working guides from Natures Images took four portable hides from the UK as they knew a local land-owner who was happy for these to be put up for a couple of days beside one of his large ponds. We each had a morning session in these over two days and tossed a coin for the opportunity of another on the last morning. It was not the most comfortable experience. There were no seats so I put some of my used clothes into a plastic carrier bag to act as a cushion but being short, I had to kneel rather than sit on it and as it was on quite a slope, I was constantly sliding down. Light was poor and activity was quite limited but we had good views in particular of Long-tailed Ducks.

Away from the Lake and its immediate environs, we visited a waterfall and went in search of Ptarmigan. The rocky and scrubby terrain near the waterfall proved to be good for Whimbrel and in some more low-lying meadow type habitat we found Black-tailed Godwits and a pair of Golden Plover by the roadside. The Ptarmigan proved rather elusive however, we did eventually find one male perched up on a rock. I think we all expected it to be more subtly marked to blend in with the rocks but what a lovely bird it was to see.

The drive back to Reykjavik for our flight home offered few opportunities to stop but illustrated what a delight Iceland must be for the geologist, with great examples of huge hanging valleys from glacial times.

Despite limited sun, this was a very rewarding trip with some great birds. I felt that being based at three locations over the ten-night trip was enough and meant that we had time to enjoy the birdlife without dashing about looking for the next bird on the list. The days are long and the nights don’t get very dark but with sun at a premium, spending several days at one location meant that there was a better chance of some decent light.
Print Gold Medal Female Pine Marten by Ian Mitchell ARPS

The RPS Nature Group
Summer Exhibition 2018

Digital Image Gold Medal Barn Owl hunting by Barrie Glover
Bronze Medal Prints
Snow Hare by Ian Mitchell ARPS
Holy Orchids (Orchis sancta) by Lesley Simpson ARPS

Selector’s Choice
Great Crested Grebe feeding Chick
by Maggie Bullock LRPS
Flesh Flies mating by Ann Ruth Helen Healey ARPS
Ptarmigan by Sarah Kelman ARPS
Sheet Ice from Ice Cave by Ann Miles FRPS
Highly Commended
Floating Bladderwrack
by Sonja Thompson FRPS
Porcelain Fungus
by Stanley A Saunders ARPS
Black Vanilla Orchid
by Ann Miles FRPS
Nemoptera at rest
by Ralph Snook ARPS
Male Puss Moth
by Trevor Davenport ARPS
Little Bee-Eaters
by Gordon Follows ARPS
Zhangjiajie National Park China
by Duncan Locke LRPS
Selector's Choice
Sea Holly by Sandy Cleland FRPS
Magpie fungus by Stanley A Saunders ARPS

Highly Commended
Bee Orchid (*Ophrys apifera*)
by Lesley Simpson ARPS
Caingorm Mountain Hare
by Ian Mitchell ARPS
Dunes and Salt Pan, Namib Desert
by Gerald Griffin ARPS
# The Nature Group Annual Exhibition 2018

## Accepted Prints

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<tr>
<td>Gold Medal</td>
<td>Ian Mitchell ARPS</td>
<td>Female Pine Marten</td>
<td>Snow Hare</td>
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<td>Rosamund Macfarlane</td>
<td>Holy Orchids - <em>Orchis sancta</em></td>
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<td>Lesley Simpson ARPS</td>
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<td>Bronze Medals</td>
<td>Maggi Bullock LRPS</td>
<td>Great Crested Grebe Feeding Chick</td>
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<td>Sandy Cleland FRPS</td>
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<td>Selectors' Choices</td>
<td>Maggie Bullock LRPS</td>
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<td>Gordon Follows ARPS</td>
<td>Little Bee-Eaters</td>
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<td>Gerald Griffin ARPS</td>
<td>Dunes and Salt Pan, Namib Desert, Namibia</td>
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<td>Duncan Locke LRPS</td>
<td>Zhangjiajie National Park China</td>
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<td>Duncan Locke LRPS</td>
<td>Golden Snub Nosed Monkeys</td>
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<td>Jean Manson</td>
<td>Red Fox</td>
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<td>Black Vanilla Orchid</td>
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<td>Ian Mitchell ARPS</td>
<td>Cairngorm Mountain Hare</td>
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<td>Dawn Osborn FRPS</td>
<td>Silvery Grebe Pair</td>
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<td>Barrie Parker LRPS</td>
<td>Amboseli Elephants</td>
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<td>Ken Rasmussen ARPS</td>
<td>Cobbs Wren with Prey</td>
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<td>Bee Orchid - <em>Ophrys apifera</em></td>
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<td>Ralph Snook ARPS</td>
<td>Nemoptera at rest</td>
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<td>Sonja Thompson FRPS</td>
<td>Floating Bladderwrack</td>
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<td>Author</td>
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<td>Bob Breach</td>
<td>Male and Female Common Orb Weavers and prey</td>
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<td>Brown Bear - Katmai National Park</td>
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<td>Maggie Bullock LRPS</td>
<td>Whooper Swans in flight</td>
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<td>Great Crested Grebe feeding chick</td>
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<td>Sea Eagle in flight</td>
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<td>Paul Carter LRPS</td>
<td>Mountain Hare in Snow</td>
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<td>John Chamberlin FRPS</td>
<td>Spoonbill with catch</td>
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<td>Sandy Cleland FRPS</td>
<td>Squacco Heron in breeding plumage</td>
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<td>Bull Moose</td>
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<td>Sandy Cleland FRPS</td>
<td>Short-Eared Owl hunting</td>
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<td>Sedge Warbler with Cranefly</td>
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<td>Sandy Cleland FRPS</td>
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<td>Forget-Me-Not</td>
<td>Selector's Choice</td>
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<td>Sandie Cox ARPS</td>
<td>Kittiwake Landing on iceberg</td>
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<td>Liz Cutting ARPS</td>
<td>Tiger cub, India</td>
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<td>Trevor Davenport ARPS</td>
<td>Snow covered Bison</td>
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<td>Northern Dune Tiger Beetle excavating burrow</td>
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<td>Male Puss Moth</td>
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<td>Mottled Grasshopper on Plantain seedhead</td>
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<td>Ochre Coral Fungus (Ramaria Sp)</td>
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<td>Honey Fungus</td>
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Roy Dorkins                                     Female Kingfisher
Kevin Elsby FRPS                            Brent Geese
Wendy M Burton Eve ARPS                      Coconut Octopus, Celebes Sea
                                               Harmer's Horeshoe Worm, Celebes Sea
                                               Anemone Fish in Red-balled Anemone
Brian Ferry LRPS                            Comma Nectaring on Marjoram
                                               Herb Paris
James Foad LRPS                            Gannet Emerging with fish
                                               Emperor Moth Larvae 5th Instar
Gordon Follows ARPS                         Abyssinian Roller
                                               Little Bee-Eaters
Gerald Griffin ARPS                         Female Mountain Gorilla
                                               Male Malachite Sunbird
                                               Marsh Orchid
                                               Dunes and Salt Pan, Namib Desert, Namibia
John Haigh LRPS                             Magellanic Penguin
Richard Hall LRPS                           African Fish Eagle Mobbed by Blacksmith Plover
                                               Impala Face-off, Serengeti
Roger Hance FRPS                           Grass Snake and Insect
                                               Two Green Winged Orchids
Stewart Haynes                               Dunlin
Ann R H Healey ARPS                        Flesh Flies Mating
                                               Japanese Macaques Grooming
                                               Coronne Des Epines
John Jones ARPS                             Cave Spider with exoskeleton
                                               Ocheolechia parella
                                               Porcelain Agarics
Yealand Kalfayan                            Marsh Marigold in the High Pyrenees
Sarah Kelman ARPS                           Ptarmigan
Eddy Lane ARPS                              Five Gentoo Penguins, Falklands
Pamela Lane ARPS                            White Rhino, Kazaranga
Duncan Locke LRPS                           Golden Snub-nosed Monkeys
                                               Cormorants in Cypress Tree
                                               Steller’s Sea Eagle
                                               Zhangjiajie National Park, China
                                               Aurora Borealis
                                               Orange Lichen
                                               Burnt Tip Orchid
Rosamund Macfarlane                        Snow Hare
                                               White-tailed Sea Eagles
Jean Manson                                  Short-eared Owl and Kestrel
                                               Red Fox
                                               Brown Hares
Michael Marshall                            Wild Garlic Flower
Dave McKay ARPS                              Thrift and White Campion
Ian McLean ARPS                             Robber Flies mating
Ann Miles FRPS                              Bittern Catching Minnows
                                               Kite-tailed Robber Fly
                                               Black-tailed Skimmer on Meadow Sweet
Ann Miles FRPS  Black Vanilla Orchid  
*Altocumulus lenticularis*  
Sheet Ice from Ice Cave  
Highly Commended  
*Selector's Choice*

Ian Mitchell ARPS  Female Pine Marten  
Cairngorm Mountain Hare  
Gold Medal  
Highly Commended

Richard Nicoll ARPS  Stoat hunting  
Highly Commended

Dawn Osborn FRPS  Common Loon parent and chick  
Silvery Grebe pair  
Great Blue Heron with young Marine Iguana  
Gentoo Penguin leaps from the sea  
Soaptree Yucca gone to seed - Northern Chihuahuan Desert USA  
Cross-bedded Navajo Sandstone - Zion Plateau Utah  
Alpine Toadflax  
Alpine Rock Thyme  
Highly Commended

Barrie Parker LRPS  Amboseli Elephants  
Highly Commended

Ken Rasmusen ARPS  Cobbs Wren with prey  
Highly Commended

Kay Reeve FRPS  Lime Hawk Moth  
Angel’s Bonnet Fungi  
Cloued Agarics  
Highly Commended

Richard Revels FRPS  Elephant Hawkmoth feeding at Honeysuckle Flowers  
Migrant Hawker Dragonfly in flight  
Bee Orchid Variant *Friburgensis*  
Fungus *Mycena crocata*  
Highly Commended

David Robinson ARPS  Willet feeding  
Highly Commended

Mike Rowe FRPS  Fighting Giant Petrels  
Running Sanderling with Sea Slater  
King Penguins on a windy day  
Highly Commended

Stanley A Saunders ARPS  Bee Wolf Wasp with Honey Bee prey  
Hazel Catkin dispersing pollen  
*Porcelain Fungus*  
*Magpie Fungus*  
Highly Commended  
*Selector's Choice*

Lesley Simpson ARPS  Argiope bruennichi and prey  
Thomisus onustus feeding on Bee  
Bee Orchid - *Ophrys apifera*  
*Ophrys elegans*  
Holy Orchids - *Orchis sancta*  
Highly Commended  
Bronze Medal

Ralph Snook ARPS  *Nemoptera* at Rest  
Ferruginous Duck  
Reticulated Giraffe Flehmen  
Highly Commended

Helena Spinks LRPS  Dalmation Pelican  
Arctic Fox with Fish  
Polar Bear

Nigel Symington LRPS  Silver-studded Blue  
Autumn Lady’s-Tresses  
Pyramidal Orchid  
Thyme Broomrape  
Highly Commended

Sonja Thompson FRPS  Floating Bladderwrack  
Highly Commended

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**The Tony Wharton Award 2018**

*Given to the most successful entrant in the exhibition, Dawn Osborn FRPS*
# The Nature Group Annual Exhibition 2018

## Accepted Projected Digital Images

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
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<th>Award</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Gold Medal</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Barrie Glover</td>
<td>Barn Owl hunting</td>
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<td>Trevor Davenport ARPS</td>
<td>Apollo Butterfly on Fleshy Plantain</td>
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<td>Mike Rowe FRPS</td>
<td>Mycena Sp</td>
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<td><strong>Bronze Medals</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Trevor Davenport ARPS</td>
<td>Wild Garlic (Ramsons)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mike Rowe FRPS</td>
<td>Spittal Beach formations</td>
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<td>Roger Hance FRPS</td>
<td>Snakes Head Fritillaries</td>
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<td>Roger Hance FRPS</td>
<td>Magpie Ink Cap in habitat</td>
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<td>Jean Manson</td>
<td>Brown Hare at dusk</td>
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<td><strong>Selectors’ Choices</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Johan J Botha ARPS</td>
<td>Hoopoe</td>
<td>Highly Commended</td>
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<td>Peter Farmer ARPS</td>
<td>Jackal with prey</td>
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<td>Barrie Glover</td>
<td>Polar Bear and cubs</td>
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<td>Roger Hance FRPS</td>
<td>Parent Bug (Elasmucha grisea) Nymphs</td>
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<td>Roger Hance FRPS</td>
<td>Wood Anemones (Anemone nemorosa) in habitat, Lathkildale</td>
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<td>Highland Commended</td>
<td>Sandy Cleland FRPS, Roger Barnes ARPS</td>
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<td>John Boyd LRPS</td>
<td>Red Deer Hind with suckling calf</td>
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<td>White-headed Buffalo Weavers</td>
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<td>Ann Healey ARPS</td>
<td>Green-veined White with egg</td>
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<td>Julia McNeill Richardson LRPS</td>
<td>Crested Tit vs Coal Tit</td>
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<td>Gordon Mills ARP</td>
<td>Roseate Spoonbill in flight</td>
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<td>Barrie Parker LRPS</td>
<td>Lioness with cubs</td>
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<td>Keith Polwin ARPS</td>
<td>Fragrant Orchid</td>
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<td>Gordon Mills ARP</td>
<td>Ice Shapes over puddle</td>
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<td>Richard Revels FRPS</td>
<td>Saxifrage Longifolia on rockface</td>
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<td>Gordon Mills ARP</td>
<td>Fly Agarics in Fir wood</td>
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<td><strong>Author</strong></td>
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<td>Nigel Atkins LRPS</td>
<td>Hoopoe</td>
<td>Highly Commended</td>
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<td>Andy Barnes LRPS</td>
<td>King Penguins standing firm in a snow storm</td>
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<td>Roger Barnes ARPS</td>
<td>Wild Garlic (Ramsons)</td>
<td>Highly Commended</td>
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<td>John E Bebbington FRPS</td>
<td>Corn Cockle Seeds</td>
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<td>Paddy Beck</td>
<td>Short-eared Owl</td>
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<td>James Black ARPS</td>
<td>Blister Beetle</td>
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<td>Johan J Botha ARPS</td>
<td>African Wild Dogs attacking Puku</td>
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<td>Common Blues mating</td>
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<td>Red Campion</td>
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<td>Lycoperdon perlatum</td>
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<td>Erosion, Death Valley</td>
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<td>John Boyd LRPS</td>
<td>A Mountain Hare waiting for winter</td>
<td>Highly Commended</td>
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<td>Red Deer Hind with suckling calf</td>
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<td>Bill Budd</td>
<td>Praying Mantis</td>
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<td>Maggie Bullock LRPS</td>
<td>Great Spotted Woodpecker</td>
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<td>Peter Burkill</td>
<td>Blakiston’s Fishing Owl</td>
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<td>Steller’s Sea Eagle</td>
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<td>Paul Carter LRPS</td>
<td>European Bee Eaters mating</td>
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<td>Curls in flight</td>
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<td>Rachel Carter LRPS</td>
<td>Barn Owl and prey pursued by Magpie</td>
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<td>Chinsp Penguins on parade</td>
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<td>Ice formation</td>
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<td>John Chamberlin FRPS</td>
<td>Squacco Heron landing</td>
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<td>Corn Bunting landing</td>
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<td>Little Bustard at Lek</td>
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<td>Sandhill Cranes landing</td>
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<td>Brian Chivers LRPS</td>
<td>Wasp Eating</td>
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<td>Plant Fossil in Sandstone</td>
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<td>Carnivorous Plant</td>
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<td>Sandy Cleland FRPS</td>
<td>D’Arnauds Barbet</td>
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<td>White-headed Buffalo Weavers</td>
<td>Highly Commended</td>
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<td>Pixi Cups (Cladonia pyxidata)</td>
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<td>Bonfire Moss (Funaria hygrometrica)</td>
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<td>Larch Flowers</td>
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<td>Bears-Breech (Acanthus mollis)</td>
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<td>Martin Collins</td>
<td>Eurasian Whimbrel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ray Cooper ARPS</td>
<td>Osprey (Pandion haliaetus)</td>
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<td>Bronze Sunbird</td>
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<td>European Bee-Eaters (Merops apiaster)</td>
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<td>Sandie Cox ARPS</td>
<td>Female Polar Bear with cubs</td>
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<td>Humming Bird feeding</td>
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<td>Liz Cutting ARPS</td>
<td>Red-necked Phalarope with Fly</td>
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<td>Trevor Davenport ARPS</td>
<td>Apollo Butterfly on Fleshy Plantain</td>
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<td>Bronze Medal</td>
<td>Male Common Darter</td>
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<td>Early Thorn Moth</td>
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<td>Velvet Shank</td>
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<td>Shaggy Scalycap</td>
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<td>Fly Agaric Fungus</td>
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<td>Derek R Dewey-Leader LRPS</td>
<td>Bar Tailed Godwit landing at Welney Wetlands</td>
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<td>Roy Dorkins</td>
<td>Osprey with Trout</td>
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<td>Kenneth Drysdale ARPS</td>
<td>Brown Hare</td>
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<td>Red Deer after rain shower</td>
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<td>Dickie Duckett FRPS</td>
<td>Spur-Winged Plover displaying</td>
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<td>White-Tailed Eagle pursuant</td>
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<td>White-tailed Eagle &amp; Magpie in rain</td>
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<td>Ernest Eaton LRPS</td>
<td>Northern Gannets greeting ritual</td>
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<td>Slug hanging on slime</td>
<td>Highly Commended</td>
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<td>Pyramidal Orchid</td>
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<td>Shaggy Ink Cap</td>
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<td>Chris Ellison ARPS</td>
<td>Minstrel Bug</td>
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<td>Oak Bracket Fungus</td>
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<td>Kevin Elsby FRPS</td>
<td>Little Bee Eater</td>
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<td>Yellow Oriole</td>
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<td>Wendy M Burton Eve ARPS</td>
<td>False Clown Anemone Fish</td>
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<td>Flamboyant Cuttlefish</td>
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<td>Peter Farmer ARPS</td>
<td>Polar Bear and cubs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Selector's Choice</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Gordon Follows ARPS
Cuckoo Singing
Aspen reflections
Slimy Beech Cap

Highly Commended

Barrie Glover
Waxwing on Rowan
Pheromone testing
Barn Owl hunting
Kingfisher pair
Winskill Limestone Pavement
Spittal Beach Formations

Gold Medal

Selector’s Choice

David Richard Green
Yellow Dungflies mating

Selector’s Choice

Gerald Griffin ARPS
Red-Billed Oxpecker on Giraffe

Selector’s Choice

John Haigh LRPS
Southern Giant Petrel
Gentoo Penguin

Selected’s Choice

Richard Hall LRPS
Elephant Wading In Chobe River

Selector’s Choice

Roger Hance FRPS
Grass Snake Rearring Up
Starling
Long Horned Beetle
Lizard Orchid
Glistening Ink Caps
Snakes Head Fritillaries
Maggie Ink Cap in habitat

Selected’s Choice

Martin John Hancock
Green Winged Orchids

Selected’s Choice

Stewart Haynes
Bananaquit
Willet

Selected’s Choice

Ann R H Healey ARPS
Beautiful Demoiselle
Hoverfly on Lily
Green-Veined White with egg
Alliaceae leucocoryne ixioides

Highly Commended

Margaret Hocking ARPS
Pronking Springbok

Roy Hodgkiss ARPS
Black Headed Gull diving
Caloplaca heppiana
Mycena

Sue Howard LRPS
Frogghopper (Philaeus spumarius)

Bob Johnson ARPS
Spotted Hyenas and Grants Gazelle
Cheetah and Impala

Phil Jones LRPS
Barn Owl hunting
Gannet with nesting material

Yealand Kalfayan
Small Heath roosting on grass stem
Swallowtail (Female) on Lavender
Viper's Bugloss

Sarah Kelman ARPS
Bucking Bison
Territorial Yellow-billed Storks

Bryan Knox ARPS
Chalk Fragrant Orchid Var Alibiflora
Heath Spotted Orchid
Fly x Bee Orchid

Eddy Lane ARPS
Gentoo Penguins surfing

Pamela Lane ARPS
Indian One Horned Rhino & calf - Kazaranga
Newborn Fur Seal pup - Galapagos
Duncan Locke LRPS  Black Snub Nosed Monkeys
Rosamund Macfarlane  Dalmatian Pelicans
Jean Manson  Stellers Sea Eagle
Margery Maskell ARPS  Juvenile Yellow-crowned Night Heron with crab
                   Angle Shades Moth
                    Cladonia fimbriata Cup Lichen
Dave McKay ARPS  Gannets fishing
Ian McLean ARPS  Grecian Copper
Julia McNeill Richardson LRPS  Crested Tit vs Coal Tit
Ann Miles FRPS  Camponotus herculeanus
                   Brown Hare
                   Forming Ice Sheet
Gordon Mills ARPS  Reddish Egret canopy dance
                   Roseate Spoonbill in flight
                   Tiger kill - Ranthambore National Park
Mark Monckton ARPS  Olive Skipper
Lajos Nagy  Grey Heron fishing 09
              Cormorant fishing 03
              Seagull with fish
              Pulsatilla alba
              Lights in the Forest
Richard Nicoll ARPS  Female Stonechat
                   Little Egrets fighting
                   Common Tern rivalry
Dawn Osborn FRPS  Blue-Footed Booby courtship display
                   Dwarf Mongoose on a Termite Mound
                   Inflorescence of Water Mint
                   Slimy Yellow-Stemmed Mycena
                   Inflorescence of Southern Marsh Orchid
                   Water Horsetail
Barrie Parker LRPS  Lioness with cubs
Andrew Parsons ARPS  Young Rabbit Sitting Up
Gill Peachey LRPS  Mating Ringlets
                   Six-Spot Burnet Moth
Ron Perkins  Sika Stag
              Cormorant
              Peregrine
Kevin John Pigney LRPS  Seal Pup
                   Young Roe Deer
John Plant LRPS  Fulmar Pair Greeting (Fulmarus glacialis)
Mike Pockney  Earwig on Nettle
              Weevil
              Pale Tussock Moth Caterpillar
              Hoverfly
Keith Polwin ARPS  Mayfly (Ephemera danica)
                   Water Rail on ice
                   Black-headed Gulls interaction
                   Deformed Early Purple Orchid
                   Autumn Gentian
                   Burnt Tip Orchid
                   Fragrant Orchid

Selector’s Choice
Highly Commended
Highly Commended
Highly Commended
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Images</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Ken Rasmussen ARPS                  | Gentoo Penguin jumping ashore  
Imperial Shag with nesting material  
Black-throated Finch calling  
Thrift in habitat  
Marsh Helleborine |
| Jane Rees ARPS                      | Pyrenean Saxifrage  
Joshua Trees |
| Richard Revels FRPS                 | Honey Bee flying to Ivy flowers  
Pine Hawk Moth Larva eating Pine Needle  
American Signal Crayfish  
Grey Squirrel jumping with Conker  
Greater Knapweed flower head  
Ice Shapes over Puddle  
*Saxifrage longifolia* on Rockface |
| Nick Robertson-Brown FRPS           | Bottlenose Dolphins  
Tiger Shark  
Elephant Seal amongst King Penguins |
| Jean Robson                         | Snowy Egret fight  
Magellanic Oystercatchers  
Gentoo running ashore  
Heath Spotted Orchid  
Common Puffball  
*Mycena* Sp  
*Thelephora palmata* |
| Mike Rowe FRPS                      | Small Tortoiseshell - Newly Emerged  
Weevil  
Grass Snake  
Wrinkled Club Fungus |
| Stanley A Saunders ARPS             | *Osprey* |
| Vincent Scriven LRPS                | *Osprey*  
Turkey Tail Fungi  
Autumn Lady’s Tresses |
| Mike Wilkes FRPS                    | *Osprey* with fish  
Eurasian Buzzard  
Brown Hare |
| Michael Yuille                      | Kingfisher on a Bullrush  
Small Insect in Dandelion Fluff |
| Kristina Zvinakeviciute             | Large Shag  
Snowy Egret  
Osprey  
Red Kite |
| Nigel Symington LRPS                | Corn Bunting dispute  
Male Resplendent Quetzal |
| Michael Warren ARPS                 | Heath Spotted Orchid  
Mating Common Blue Butterflies |
| Gordon Wilcock LRPS                 | Kestrel with prey  
Fieldfare pulling worms  
Brown Hares mating |
| Caron Helena Steele ARPS            | Northern Gannet with fish  
Aurora over Vestrahorn |
| Cliff Spooner LRPS                  | Red Kite over snow  
Bunting dispute  
Male Resplendent Quetzal |
| Judy Smith LRPS                     | Detail from Pump Geyser, Yellowstone  
Mycena Sp, Derbyshire |
| Ralph Snook ARPS                    | European Bee Eater Wing Stretch  
Corn Bunting dispute  
Male Resplendent Quetzal |
| Helena Spinks ARPS                  | Meadow Pipit with fly  
Osprey with fish  
Brown Hare |
| Caron Helena Steele ARPS            | Northern Gannet with fish  
Aurora over Vestrahorn |
| Nigel Symington LRPS                | Heath Spotted Orchid  
Mating Common Blue Butterflies |
| Michael Warren ARPS                 | Kestrel with prey  
Fieldfare pulling worms  
Brown Hares mating |
| Gordon Wilcock LRPS                 | Kingfisher on a Bullrush  
Small Insect in Dandelion Fluff |

*Highly Commended*  
*Bronze Medal*  
*Highly Commended*
Selector’s Choice (This page)
Polar Bear and Cubs by Peter Farmer ARPS
Spittal Beach formation by Barrie Glover
Magic Ink Cap in habitat
by Roger Hance FRPS

Selector’s Choice (Opposite page)
Brown Hare at dusk by Jean Manson
Jackel with prey by Johan J Botha ARPS
Snakes Head Fritillaries
by Roger Hance FRPS

Highly Commended
White-headed Buffalo Weavers
by Sandy Cleland FRPS
Hoopoe by Sandy Cleland FRPS
Red Deer Hind with suckling calf
by John Boyd LRPS
Bronze Medals
Apollo Butterfly on Fleshy Plantain
by Trevor Davenport ARPS
Mycena sp. by Mike Rowe FRPS
Highly Commended
Wild Garlic (Ransons) by Roger Barnes ARPS, Slug hanging on slime by Ernest Eaton LRPS, Green-veined White with egg by Ann Healey ARPS, Waxwing on Rowan by Barrie Glover, Crested Tit vs Coal Tit by Julia McNeill Richardson LRPS, Shaggy Scalycap by Trevor Davenport ARPS
Minutes of the 42nd AGM
of the RPS Nature Group

The 42nd Annual General Meeting of the RPS Nature Group was held on Saturday 21st April 2018 at Smethwick Photographic Society starting at 1345hrs. It was chaired by Kevin Elsby FRPS and attended by 52 Members.

Apologies for Absence:
Apologies for Absence had been received from: John Bebbington, Tony Bond, Peter Burkill, Liz Cutting, Dickie Duckett, Gianpiero Ferrari, Margaret Johnson, Mary Kirkby, David Osborn and Geoff Trinder.

Minutes of the 41st AGM 2017:
These had been published in the Summer 2017 issue of The Iris (No. 128).

Duncan Locke apologised for an error that had occurred in the first line of the minutes. The 2017 AGM had been the 41st Nature Group AGM and not the 35th as stated in the minutes.

Sonja Thompson said that the statement under ANY OTHER BUSINESS that: ‘Sonja said that she was a member of Gloucestershire CC and they run a yearly competition for schools and this year they had 900 entries and is a great showcase for young people.’ was incorrect as apart from anything else she had never been a Member of Gloucestershire CC! It should read: ‘Sonja suggested a competition for Younger Members.’

Subject to the corrections above, it was proposed by Ralph Snook and seconded by Stan Saunders that the minutes be approved.

Matters Arising:
None.

Chairman’s Report:
This has been my first full year as Chairman and I have been ably supported by my Committee. I wish to sincerely thank them for their hard work over the past 12 months.

Membership of the Group remains stable at just under 1000.

During the year, Dawn Osborn announced her intention to step down from editing The Iris, after many years. We appointed Kevin Booth in her place but sadly, shortly afterwards, Kevin had to withdraw from this role due to health reasons. As a result, Dawn stepped in to keep The Iris moving and we are pleased that Gerald Griffin has agreed to take on the role of Editor of The Iris in the future. I would like to place on record the grateful thanks of the committee for Kevin’s contribution and wish him well for the future.

Dawn in the meantime has started to produce the e-Newsletter which has been well received. With both of these productions there is always a need for new material so do please consider writing an article for possible inclusion and send to Dawn using the address in The Iris.

On 25th November there was a photo techniques day held at Smethwick, expertly coordinated by Barbara Lawton and Duncan Locke. I was personally unable to attend, but all the feedback I have had about the day has been positive and the Committee continues to try to develop ideas that will be of interest to Group Members and it is felt that similar workshop type events should be held in the future. All ideas are welcome.

The Annual Exhibition became a Touring Exhibition last year with successful trips to Wingfield Barns in Suffolk and to Edinburgh. Both venues reported very good reviews of the work of Members and we are doing the same thing again this year. I would especially like to thank Ralph Snook for doing so much work to organise this which brings the Nature Group to a much wider audience than previously. Speaking of the Exhibition, plans to add video clips have had to be put on hold for now but the Committee will continue to explore the merits of this for future years. There are significant technical concerns to overcome.

Finally a date for your diary – Chairman’s Day – on the 15th September, to be held here at Smethwick. I propose to have a selection of guest speakers and also successful A and F nature panels and their
photographers to talk about them. Please watch The Iris and e-Newsletter for updates later in the year.

**Treasurer’s Report:**
The Balance Sheet (attached at the end of these Minutes) is an overall summary of Receipts and Payments for the year. As some items, like the Annual Exhibition, straddle year ends, it cannot be a detailed Balance Sheet for each item.

**Group Cash Book Balance:**
The Balance Sheet shows an excess of Income over Expenditure of £1,624.52, giving a Cash Book balance of £19,643.14.

**Subscriptions:**
The income is that credited monthly to our Cash Book Account during the current Financial Year – subscriptions paid to the RPS for December 2016 through to November 2017.

**Events & Workshops:**
a workshop – Photo Techniques – was run on the 25th November. This raised £38.26.

The Balance Sheet implies an expenditure of £809.74 for this workshop, rather than the true amount of £309.74. This is because the extra £500 is the deposit for the 2019 Residential Weekend. Previously, the deposit was paid by the Members who booked up for the event, but the event organiser for the 2019 Weekend wanted the deposit to be paid a lot earlier. This £500 will be refunded in due course.

**Annual Exhibition:**
As mentioned in the ‘General Comments’ above, the figures cannot be a true representation of the income and expenditure of running an Annual Exhibition, as they include sales of the 2016 CD, plus costs for running the 2018 exhibition.

The Balance Sheet implies a loss of £712.80, but there was a one-off payment of £841.38 for a new laptop, as the old one was no longer fit for purpose.

**VAT Returns:**
Detailed VAT Returns were produced for the first three quarters of 2017. The VAT paid/refund details are from the last quarter of 2016 and the first three quarters of 2017.

**The Iris:**
Three editions were published this year - #127, #128 and #129. The cost of production, and particularly postage, continues to rise, though subscriptions and adverts have helped to offset some of the costs.

**Miscellaneous Income:**
This is income from the book sales of RPS Portfolios One and Two.

**General Administration:**
This includes all running costs of the Nature Group – general postage, stationery, and travel to Committee Meetings.

**Stepping down:**
As you will have read in the Spring issue of The Iris, I am stepping down as your Treasurer. My original plan was to do one more year before stepping down. Unfortunately, a lot has happened health wise, with both my husband and myself, over the last few years, and more so during the last few months. Hence the need to hand over the Treasurer’s role to someone else now.

Kevin was diagnosed with advanced prostate cancer in July 2015. He started on his third treatment in January this year, as the two previous treatments had failed to stabilise the cancer. This latest treatment is a two year clinical trial of a new immunotherapy drug, which means regular trips to London for the infusion. This drug can cause nasty side-effects, which means that whenever he gets a high temperature, he now has to go to the nearest A&E for antibiotics and blood tests.

I was diagnosed with thyroid cancer in November 2011, and had the third operation for this in November 2014, as it has spread to the lymph nodes in my neck. As I get tired very easily, Kevin had been supporting me, by doing all of the driving, etc., but he is unable to do much now. In addition, following a diagnosis of polyps in my gallbladder a while ago, I finally had this removed at the end of January. The results were clear, but I am still recovering from the side effects of the operation.

My thanks to the Committee, and to yourselves, for supporting me during the 11 years that I had been the Treasurer of the Nature Group.

**Secretary’s Report:**
There have been two Committee Meetings since the last AGM. Both Meetings were held here at Smethwick and both were well attended.
As stated at the end of her Treasurer’s Report, Margery Maskell is standing down as of this AGM as both Honorary Treasurer and Webmaster. For the present, David O’Neill, has agreed to take on the role of Treasurer and Ralph Snook has agreed to take on Webmaster.

The Nature Group Committee is elected to serve for two years; the present Committee was elected at the 2017 AGM and will serve until the 2019 AGM next year. With the present changes to the Committee, there will be vacancies next year, so if you are interested in getting involved, then please let me or any other of the Committee Members know.

I act as Membership Secretary in that I monitor the number of Members in the Group, send a welcome letter and a copy of the current issue of The Iris to each New Member and I e-mail a questionnaire to those leaving asking them their reason for leaving. All this is based on spreadsheets that I receive each month from the RPS in Bath.

The current membership of the RPS Nature Group from the RPS website is 979 Members and the Nature Group is the second largest Special Interest Group after Digital Imaging. In the twelve months from the 1st April 2017 to the 1st March 2018 the membership varied between a minimum of 984 and a maximum of 1006 so overall it was fairly stable at about 1000 Members.

You are probably aware that the RPS ended central funding of First Year Free Membership of a Specialist Interest Group as of the 31st December 2017. First Year Free Membership was seen as a way of getting RPS Members involved in the Groups and liking it so much that they became paying Members at the end of the year. The Nature Group was given the option of continuing with this Free Membership providing it was funded out of the Group funds. I did analysis of the membership towards the end of 2017 to try and quantify this situation and concluded that it was not cost effective for the Group to continue with First Year Free Membership. This was agreed by the Committee and Free Membership has now ceased.

It is still too early to say precisely what effect this will have on Nature Group membership, but I am expecting it to decrease to somewhere between 850 and 900 Members by the end of 2018.

So why do Members leave the Group? There are three mechanisms at work:

Firstly, and it only represents literally about one Member a month, there are still occasional problems with the RPS HQ direct debit system so a Member is shown as leaving and then almost immediately rejoining.

Secondly, there is the normal turnover of Nature Photographers joining the group and those of more advancing years ceasing to be Members. Difficult to quantify as the numbers do vary considerably from month to month, but on average it is about ten Members per month.

Thirdly, there was up until the end of last year a continual turnover of Free Group Members. This was again about ten Members per month so I am expecting that the Group will lose about 120 Free Group Members in 2018 as those who joined in 2017 do not take up paid membership.

I get very few complaints about the Nature Group from those who reply to my questionnaire asking them why they left the Group. Some have simply left the RPS due to the high cost of membership, but some do complain about the lack of Nature Group events close to where they live. Something that I believe we need to address.

At last year’s AGM the subject of age profile of the Group was discussed. I do track the age profile and it is high with our oldest Member being very close to 98, but the youngest is only 14. My general rule which is actually very accurate is that 60% of the Nature Group membership is over 60. Again this is an area that I believe we need to address.

Any Other Business:
There was a short discussion on the issue of Nature Group events being organised at different venues around the UK so at least some would be close to where individual Members live. David O’Neill said that the RPS Special Interest Groups were well aware of this problem and were trying to identify and book venues around the UK that could then be used by the Special Interest Groups to hold meetings.

Date and Venue of the 43rd AGM 2019:
The 43rd Annual General Meeting of the RPS Nature Group will be held at Smethwick Photographic Society, The Old Schoolhouse, Oldbury, B69 2AS on Saturday 6th April 2019.
### RPS Nature Group – Balance Sheet

**Receipts and Payments Accounts for 1st January to 31st December 2017**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 2016</th>
<th>Nature Group ‘Cash Book’ at RPS HQ</th>
<th>Year 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Receipts</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14,191.27</td>
<td>Subscriptions</td>
<td>12,863.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>760.00</td>
<td>Lectures &amp; Workshops</td>
<td>348.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,941.00</td>
<td>Annual Exhibition</td>
<td>1,474.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>30.29</td>
<td>VAT refunded</td>
<td>61.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60.00</td>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>30.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>174.00</td>
<td>IRIS Subs, Adverts, etc.</td>
<td>114.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>17,156.66</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>14,891.21</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Payments</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8,210.13</td>
<td>The Iris incl. postage</td>
<td>7,415.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,152.51</td>
<td>Lectures &amp; Workshops</td>
<td>809.74</td>
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<tr>
<td>1,260.70</td>
<td>Annual Exhibition</td>
<td>2,186.80</td>
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<tr>
<td>306.70</td>
<td>VAT paid</td>
<td>183.24</td>
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<tr>
<td>2,471.08</td>
<td>General Administration</td>
<td>2,671.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>13,401.12</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>13,266.68</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Receipts minus Payments</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1,624.52</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Balance Sheet at 31st December 2017**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature Group Cash Book</th>
<th>£</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balance brought forward from 2016</td>
<td>17,968.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleared Cheques from 2016</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncleared Cheques from 2017</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income minus Expenditure 2017</td>
<td>1,624.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>19,643.14</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Carried Forward To Financial Year 2018</strong></td>
<td><strong>15,643.14</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Signed:**

Margery J Maskell (Hon Treasurer)

5th January 2018
The RPS Nature Group Summer Exhibition 2018

Highly commended prints

Golden Snub Bosed Monkeys by Duncan Locke LRPS, Red Fox by Jean Mason, Amboseli Elephants by Barrie Parker LRPS, Cob’s Wren with prey by Ken Rasmussen ARPS, Silvery Grebe Pair by Dawn Osborn FRPS

More on pages 22 - 36

Highly commended Digital

Roseate Spoonbill in flight and Ice shapes over puddle by Gordon Mills ARP, Fly Agarics in Fir wood by John Simpson ARPS, Lioness with cubs by Barrie Parker LRPS, Fragrant Orchid by Keith Polwin ARPS, Saxifrage longifolia on rockface by Richard Revels FRPS

More on pages 22 - 36
Chairman’s Day 2018  
Saturday 15th September 2018

Smethwick Photographic Society  
The Old Schoolhouse, Churchbridge, Oldbury, West Midlands, B69 2AS
(for directions see below)

Programme:
10:00hrs  Doors open, tea and coffee available
10:30hrs  Welcome and Introduction
10:35hrs  ‘In Search of Dragons and Damsels – the Role of the Camera over 25 Years of Watching Odonata’ – Steve Cham, Dragonfly Expert and Author
11:40hrs  Short break
11:55hrs  David Osborn FRPS, Professional Wildlife Photographer
13:00hrs  Break for lunch
13:45hrs  Austin Thomas, Wildlife Photographer
14:50hrs  Short break
15:10hrs  ‘Wildlife in Costa Rica’ – Kevin Elsby FRPS, Chairman of the RPS Nature Group
16:00hrs  Close

Throughout the day there will be prints on display from recently successful A & F Distinction panels by Nature Group Members.

Please bring your own packed lunch as lunch will not be available. There is a dining area. Tea, coffee and drinks will be available at the bar.

Cost: £10 per ticket for RPS Members – £12.50 for non-RPS Members
The maximum number of tickets available is 80 so BOOK NOW!

To obtain your ticket:
Please send your cheque payable to RPS Nature Group plus a Stamped Addressed Envelope to:  
Duncan Locke LRPS, Park Cottage, 6 Old Road North, Kempsey, Worcester, WR5 3JZ
or book through the RPS website:  
http://www.rps.org/special-interest-groups/nature/events

Directions:
From Junction 2 of the M5 follow the signs for the A4034 north towards West Bromwich.
Once on the A4034 stay in the left hand lane and after about 1/3 mile turn left at the first set of traffic lights into Park Street.
At the end of Park Street turn right into Churchbridge (cul-de-sac).  
The Old Schoolhouse is the last but one building on the left.
If you have SatNav use postcode: B69 2AS
Google Maps Coordinates: 52.497771, -2.019776
Please note that currently there are major road works between Juncitons 1 and 2 of the M5 plus delays at M5 Junction 4a northbound. Please allow extra time for your journey to Smethwick if using the M5.