

THE IRIS

MAGAZINE OF THE NATURE GROUP OF THE RPS

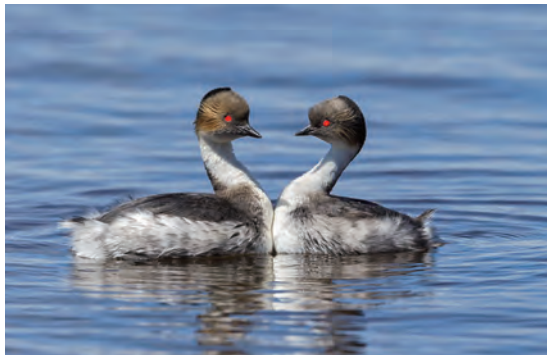
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THE **RPS**
ROYAL
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The RPS Nature Group Summer Exhibition 2018

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

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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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Cover image
Black Vanilla Orchid by Ann Miles 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 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_ews_editor@btinternet.com



From the chair

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.

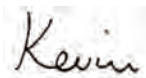
Our third speaker for the day is Austin Thomas, another professional wildlife photographer and tour leader. Austin is well known for example for his Little Owl work. <http://www.austinthomas.co.uk>

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.



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 crater 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, Hadedda 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



time we saw a monkey our guide Merica phoned in their position. She said the blue one had come across from the Congo. If it was seen on three separate occasions it was assumed that it would stay. We drove through Fort Portal and crossed the Equator to Queen Elizabeth NP and Marafiki Safari Lodge.

Our next game drive took us predator tracking but there were a lot of other vehicles which was not so good. We saw two lionesses in a Euphorbia tree. We watched them for some time before moving off and finding five lionesses lolling around in the grass. There were a number of skulls lying around - it was obviously their eating area.

We stayed at Enjojo Lodge in Ishasha for one night before driving into the Virunga mountains to Ruhija Gorilla Friend's Camp. It was colder there but very beautiful. Our journey continued past Lake Bunyanise to Lake Mutanda where we spent a few nights at the Lake Resort, our cottages enjoying a view overlooking the lake, islands and mountains.

The next evening we enjoyed a sundowner boat trip. The Captain sailed close to the islands enabling us to see Pied Kingfishers, nesting Cormorants feeding their young, Pink-backed Pelicans high in the trees, many circling Black Kites, Night Heron, Pink-beaked Duck and Crimson Canary.

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.

The Nature Group Annual Exhibition 2018

A DVD containing all of the accepted images from the 2018 Exhibition is now available to order online from the RPS Shop. Priced at only £10

See the RPS website for more details

A Circuitous Route to an 'A' in Natural History

by Malcolm Blackburn ARPS

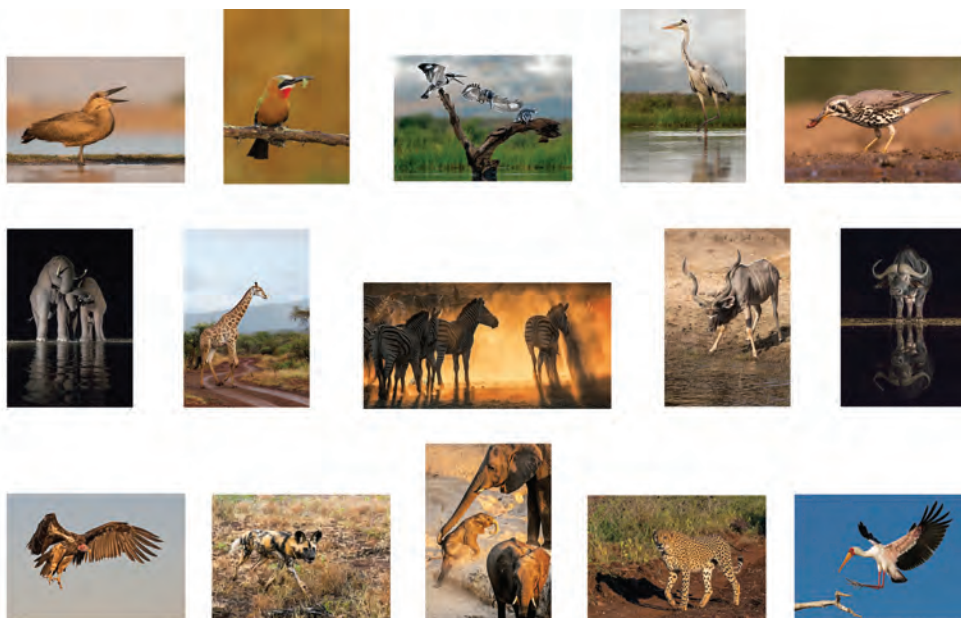
I bought my first camera in 1954 and made some pocket money taking and selling prints of school and house sports teams. This enterprise went well until I left the prints washing in the house baths one evening, and the housemaster couldn't find a bath free to use! I did have some modest success in competitions,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





1. Hamerkop (*Scopus umbretta*) at sunset



12. African Wild Dog (*Lycaon pictus*) hunting



6. African Elephant Mother and Calves (*Loodonta africana*) at waterhole

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.



3. Pied Kingfishers (*Ceryle rudis*) and intruder



15. Yellow-billed Stork (*Mycteria ibis*) landing



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



10. Cape Buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*) at waterhole



11. Lappet-faced Vulture arriving
(*Torgos tracheliotus*)



14. Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*) around sunrise



7. Giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis*) crossing track



4. Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)

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.



8. Plains Zebras (*Equus quagga*) at sunrise

Exploring the Western Cape

by Ken Rasmussen ARPS



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 resplendent 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 fossils, about five million years old, have been discovered. 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 enclosed, and have to be checked by the females before they decide to mate. This meant that whenever a female flew nearby the males would stop their weaving and display hoping to attract her attention.

Flowers at the West Coast National Park





Bat-eared Fox



Lion cubs



Black-maned Lion



Gemsbok

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 of 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.



African Wild Cat



Black-breasted Snake Eagle



Cape Weaver displaying



Double Collared Sunbird



Lanner Falcon



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 Licentiate 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.



Birds of Iceland

by Liz Cutting ARPS



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 confident 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.

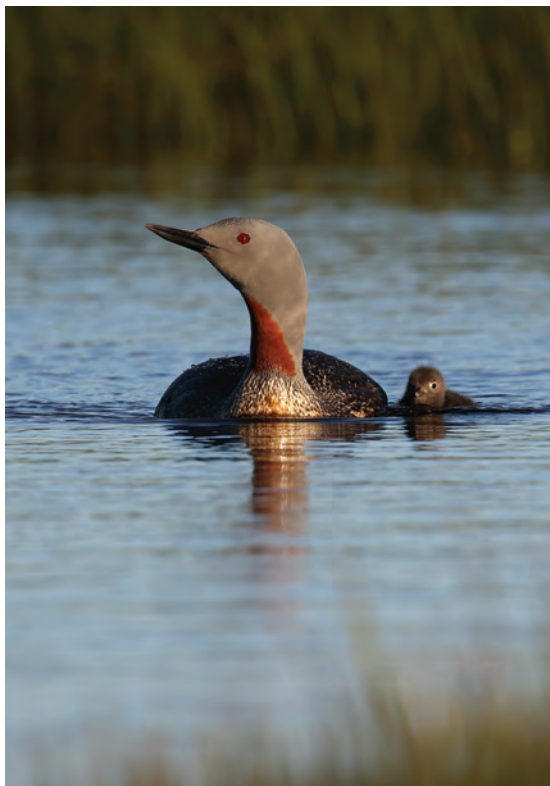
Almost all the Phalaropes we saw were female. Unlike most bird species, in this case it is the female that is more brightly coloured as it is she that does the courting and territorial stuff; the male incubates and looks after the youngsters. The dowdy looking males were presumably on nests while we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



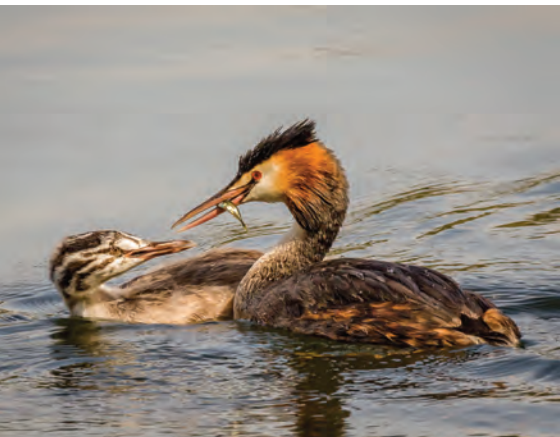
Digital Image Gold Medal Barn Owl hunting by Barrie Glover



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

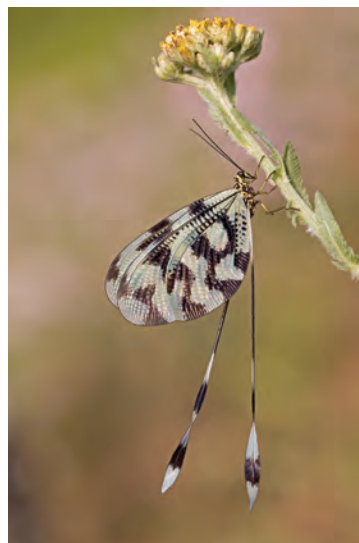
by Trevor Davenport ARPS

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

Gold Medal	Ian Mitchell ARPS	Female Pine Marten
Bronze Medals	Rosamund Macfarlane	Snow Hare
	Lesley Simpson ARPS	Holy Orchids - <i>Orchis sancta</i>
Selectors' Choices	Maggie Bullock LRPS	Great Crested Grebe Feeding Chick
	Sandy Cleland FRPS	Sea Holly
	Ann Ruth Helen Healey ARPS	Flesh Flies Mating
	Sarah Kelman ARPS	Ptarmigan
	Ann Miles FRPS	Sheet Ice from Ice Cave
	Stanley A Saunders ARPS	Magpie fungus
Highly Commended	Trevor Davenport ARPS	Male Puss Moth
	Gordon Follows ARPS	Little Bee-Eaters
	Gerald Griffin ARPS	Dunes and Salt Pan, Namib Desert, Namibia
	Duncan Locke LRPS	Zhangjiajie National Park China
	Duncan Locke LRPS	Golden Snub Nosed Monkeys
	Jean Manson	Red Fox
	Ann Miles FRPS	Black Vanilla Orchid
	Ian Mitchell ARPS	Cairngorm Mountain Hare
	Dawn Osborn FRPS	Silvery Grebe Pair
	Barrie Parker LRPS	Amboseli Elephants
	Ken Rasmussen ARPS	Cobbs Wren with Prey
	Stanley A Saunders ARPS	Porcelain Fungus
	Lesley Simpson ARPS	Bee Orchid - <i>Ophrys apifera</i>
	Ralph Snook ARPS	Nemoptera at rest
	Sonja Thompson FRPS	Floating Bladderwrack

Author	Title	Award
Bob Breach	Male and Female Common Orb Weavers and prey	
	Brown Bear - Katmai National Park	
Maggie Bullock LRPS	Whooper Swans in flight	
	Great Crested Grebe feeding chick	Selector's Choice
	Sea Eagle in flight	
Paul Carter LRPS	Mountain Hare in Snow	
John Chamberlin FRPS	Spoonbill with catch	
	Squacco Heron in breeding plumage	
	Bull Moose	
Sandy Cleland FRPS	Short-Eared Owl hunting	
	Sedge Warbler with Crane-fly	
Sandy Cleland FRPS	Sea Holly	Selector's Choice
	Forget-Me-Not	
Sandie Cox ARPS	Kittiwake Landing on iceberg	
Liz Cutting ARPS	Tiger cub, India	
	Norfolk Hawker	
Trevor Davenport ARPS	Snow covered Bison	
	Northern Dune Tiger Beetle excavating burrow	
	Male Puss Moth	Highly Commended
	Mottled Grasshopper on Plantain seedhead	
	Ochre Coral Fungus (<i>Ramaria</i> Sp)	
	Honey Fungus	

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	Highly Commended
	Little Egret preening	
Gerald Griffin ARPS	Female Mountain Gorilla	
	Male Malechite Sunbird	
	Marsh Orchid	
	Dunes and Salt Pan, Namib Desert, Namibia	Highly Commended
	Fern (probably <i>Dryopteris rodolffi</i>), Bale Mountains, Ethiopia	
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	Selector's Choice
	Japanese Macaques Grooming	
	Coronne Des Epines	
John Jones ARPS	Cave Spider with exoskeleton	
	<i>Ocheolechia parella</i>	
	Porcelain Agarics	
Yealand Kalfayan	Marsh Marigold in the High Pyrenees	
Sarah Kelman ARPS	Ptarmigan	Selector's Choice
Eddy Lane ARPS	Five Gentoo Penguins, Falklands	
Pamela Lane ARPS	White Rhino, Kazaranga	
Duncan Locke LRPS	Golden Snub-nosed Monkeys	Highly Commended
	Cormorants in Cypress Tree	
	Steller's Sea Eagle	
	Zhangjiajie National Park, China	Highly Commended
	Aurora Borealis	
	Orange Lichen	
	Burnt Tip Orchid	
Rosamund Macfarlane	Snow Hare	Bronze Medal
	White-tailed Sea Eagles	
Jean Manson	Short-eared Owl and Kestrel	
	Red Fox	Highly Commended
	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 <i>Altocumulus lenticularis</i> 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	
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 Rasmussen ARPS	Cobbs Wren with prey	Highly Commended
Kay Reeve FRPS	Lime Hawk Moth Angel's Bonnet Fungi Clouded Agarics	
Richard Revels FRPS	Elephant Hawkmoth feeding at Honeysuckle Flowers Migrant Hawker Dragonfly in flight Bee Orchid Variant <i>Friburgensis</i> Fungus <i>Mycena crocata</i>	
David Robinson ARPS	Willet feeding	
Mike Rowe FRPS	Fighting Giant Petrels Running Sanderling with Sea Slater King Penguins on a windy day	
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 - <i>Ophrys apifera</i> <i>Ophrys elegans</i> Holy Orchids - <i>Orchis sancta</i>	Highly Commended
Ralph Snook ARPS	<i>Nemoptera</i> at Rest Ferruginous Duck Reticulated Giraffe Flehmen	Bronze Medal 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	
Sonja Thompson FRPS	Floating Bladderwrack	Highly Commended

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

Gold Medal	Barrie Glover	Barn Owl hunting
Bronze Medals	Trevor Davenport ARPS	Apollo Butterfly on Fleshy Plantain
	Mike Rowe FRPS	Mycena Sp
Selectors' Choices	Johan J Botha ARPS	Jackal with prey
	Peter Farmer ARPS	Polar Bear and cubs
	Barrie Glover	Spittal Beach formations
	Roger Hance FRPS	Snakes Head Fritillaries
	Roger Hance FRPS	Magpie Ink Cap in habitat
	Jean Manson	Brown Hare at dusk
Highly Commended	Sandy Cleland FRPS	Hoopoe
	Roger Barnes ARPS	Wild Garlic (Ramsons)
	John Boyd LRPS	Red Deer Hind with suckling calf
	Sandy Cleland FRPS	White-headed Buffalo Weavers
	Trevor Davenport ARPS	Shaggy Scalycap
	Ernest Eaton LRPS	Slug hanging on slime
	Barrie Glover	Waxwing on Rowan
	Ann Healey ARPS	Green-veined White with egg
	Julia McNeill Richardson LRPS	Crested Tit vs Coal Tit
	Gordon Mills ARP	Roseate Spoonbill in flight
	Barrie Parker LRPS	Lioness with cubs
	Keith Polwin ARPS	Fragrant Orchid
	Gordon Mills ARP	Ice Shapes over puddle
	Richard Revels FRPS	Saxifrage Longifolia on rockface
	John Simpson ARPS	Fly Agarics in Fir wood

Author	Title	Award
Nigel Atkins LRPS	Hoopoe	Highly Commended
Andy Barnes LRPS	King Penguins standing firm in a snow storm	
Roger Barnes ARPS	Wild Garlic (Ramsons)	Highly Commended
	Corn Cockle Seeds	
John E Bebbington FRPS	Autumn Orb-Weaver Spider (<i>Metellina segmentata</i>) courtship	
	Madeiran Wall Lizards (<i>Lacerta dugesii</i>) on burnt Pine trunk	
	Parent Bug (<i>Elasmucha grisea</i>) Nymphs	
	Wood Anemones (<i>Anemone nemorosa</i>) in habitat, Lathkildale	
Paddy Beck	Short-eared Owl	
	Blister Beetle	
James Black ARPS	African Wild Dogs attacking Puku	
	Common Blues mating	
	Red Campion	
	<i>Lycoperdon perlatum</i>	
	Erosion, Death Valley	
Johan J Botha ARPS	Jackal with prey	Selector's Choice
	Meerkat faces	
	Cactus sunrise	
	Canyonlands sunrise	
	Blowing Wind	
	Sand Waves	
John Boyd LRPS	A Mountain Hare waiting for winter	
	Red Deer Hind with suckling calf	Highly Commended

Bill Budd	Praying Mantis	
Maggie Bullock LRPS	Great Spotted Woodpecker	
Peter Burkill	Blakiston's Fishing Owl	
	Steller's Sea Eagle	
Paul Carter LRPS	European Bee Eaters mating	
	Curlews in flight	
Rachel Carter LRPS	Barn Owl and prey pursued by Magpie	
	Chinstrap Penguins on parade	
	Ice formation	
John Chamberlin FRPS	Squacco Heron landing	
	Corn Bunting landing	
	Little Bustard at Lek	
	Sandhill Cranes landing	
Brian Chivers LRPS	Wasp Eating	
	Plant Fossil in Sandstone	
	Carnivorous Plant	
Sandy Cleland FRPS	D'Arnauds Barbet	
	White-headed Buffalo Weavers	Highly Commended
	Pixi Cups (<i>Cladonia pyxidata</i>)	
	Bonfire Moss (<i>Funaria hygrometrica</i>)	
	Larch Flowers	
	Bears-Breech (<i>Acanthus mollis</i>)	
Martin Collins	Eurasian Whimbrel	
Ray Cooper ARPS	Osprey (<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>)	
	Bronze Sunbird	
	European Bee-Eaters (<i>Merops apiaster</i>)	
Sandie Cox ARPS	Female Polar Bear with cubs	
	Humming Bird feeding	
Liz Cutting ARPS	Red-necked Phalarope with Fly	
Trevor Davenport ARPS	Apollo Butterfly on Fleshy Plantain	Bronze Medal
	Male Common Darter	
	Early Thorn Moth	
	Velvet Shank	
	Shaggy Scalycap	Highly Commended
	Fly Agaric Fungus	
Derek R Dewey-Leader LRPS	Bar Tailed Godwit landing at Welney Wetlands	
Roy Dorkins	Osprey with Trout	
Kenneth Drysdale ARPS	Brown Hare	
	Red Deer after rain shower	
Dickie Duckett FRPS	Spur-Winged Plover displaying	
	White-Tailed Eagle pursuit	
	White-tailed Eagle & Magpie in rain	
Ernest Eaton LRPS	Northern Gannets greeting ritual	
	Slug hanging on slime	Highly Commended
	Pyramidal Orchid	
	Shaggy Ink Cap	
Chris Ellison ARPS	Minstrel Bug	
	Oak Bracket Fungus	
Kevin Elsby FRPS	Little Bee Eater	
	Yellow Oriole	
Wendy M Burton Eve ARPS	False Clown Anemone Fish	
	Flamboyant Cuttlefish	
Peter Farmer ARPS	Polar Bear and cubs	Selector's Choice

Gordon Follows ARPS	Cuckoo Singing Aspen reflections Slimy Beech Cap	
Barrie Glover	Waxwing on Rowan Pheromone testing Barn Owl hunting Kingfisher pair Winskill Limestone Pavement Spittal Beach Formations	Highly Commended Gold Medal Selector's Choice
David Richard Green	Yellow Dungflies mating	
Gerald Griffin ARPS	Red-Billed Oxpecker on Giraffe	
John Haigh LRPS	Southern Giant Petrel Gentoo Penguin	
Richard Hall LRPS	Elephant Wading In Chobe River	
Roger Hance FRPS	Grass Snake Rearing Up Starling Long Horned Beetle Lizard Orchid Glistening Ink Caps Snakes Head Fritillaries Magpie Ink Cap in habitat Green Winged Orchids	Selector's Choice Selector's Choice
Martin John Hancock	Fly Agaric	
Marston Hart LRPS	Moorhens Fighting	
Alan Hartley ARPS	Bananaquit	
Stewart Haynes	Willet	
Ann R H Healey ARPS	Beautiful Demoiselle Hoverfly on Lily Green-Veined White with egg <i>Alliaceae leucocoryne ixioides</i>	Highly Commended
Margaret Hocking ARPS	Pronking Springbok	
Roy Hodgkiss ARPS	Black Headed Gull diving <i>Caloplaca heppiana</i> <i>Mycena</i>	
Sue Howard LRPS	Froghopper (<i>Philaenus spumarius</i>)	
Bob Johnson ARPS	Spotted Hyenas and Grants Gazelle Cheetah and Impala	
Koshy Johnson FRPS	Weaver Ants with dead Cockroach Mating Thomson Gazelles	
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 <i>Albiflora</i> 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	Soldier Beetle	
Jean Manson	Dalmatian Pelicans	
Margery Maskell ARPS	Stellers Sea Eagle	Selector's Choice
	Brown Hare at dusk	
	Juvenile Yellow-crowned Night Heron with crab	
	Angle Shades Moth	
	<i>Cladonia fimbriata</i> Cup Lichen	
Dave McKay ARPS	Gannets fishing	
Ian McLean ARPS	Grecian Copper	
Julia McNeill Richardson LRPS	Crested Tit vs Coal Tit	Highly Commended
Ann Miles FRPS	<i>Camponotus herculeanus</i>	
	Brown Hare	
	Forming Ice Sheet	
Gordon Mills ARPS	Reddish Egret canopy dance	
	Roseate Spoonbill in flight	Highly Commended
	Tiger kill - Ranthambore National Park	
Mark Monckton ARPS	Olive Skipper	
	Dark Green Fritillary	
Lajos Nagy	Grey Heron fishing 09	
	Cormorant fishing 03	
	Seagull with fish	
	<i>Pulsatilla alba</i>	
	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	Highly Commended
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 (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>)	
Mike Pockney	Earwig on Nettle	
	Weevil	
	Pale Tussock Moth Caterpillar	
	Hoverfly	
Keith Polwin ARPS	Mayfly (<i>Ephemera danica</i>)	
	Water Rail on ice	
	Black-headed Gulls interaction	
	Deformed Early Purple Orchid	
	Autumn Gentian	
	Burnt Tip Orchid	
	Fragrant Orchid	Highly Commended

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 <i>Saxifrage longifolia</i> on Rockface	Highly Commended Highly Commended
Nick Robertson-Brown FRPS	Bottlenose Dolphins Tiger Shark	
Jean Robson	Elephant Seal amongst King Penguins	
Mike Rowe FRPS	Snowy Egret fight Magellanic Oystercatchers Gentoo running ashore Heath Spotted Orchid Common Puffball <i>Mycena</i> Sp <i>Thelephora palmata</i>	Bronze Medal
Stanley A Saunders ARPS	Small Tortoiseshell - Newly Emerged Weevil Grass Snake Wrinkled Club Fungus	
Vincent Scriven LRPS	Osprey	
Paul Sievers ARPS	Turkey Tail Fungi Autumn Lady's Tresses	
John Simpson ARPS	Black Arches Moth Black-veined White on Fragrant Orchid Amythyst Deceiver <i>Orchis pauciflora</i> Fly Agarics in Fir Wood Tongue Orchid 2	Highly Commended
Judy Smith LRPS	Detail from Pump Geyser, Yellowstone <i>Mycena</i> Sp, Derbyshire	
Ralph Snook ARPS	European Bee Eater Wing Stretch Corn Bunting dispute Male Resplendant Quetzal	
Helena Spinks ARPS	Meadow Pipit with fly Osprey with fish Brown Hare	
Cliff Spooner LRPS	Red Kite over snow	
Caron Helena Steele ARPS	Northern Gannet Fishing Aurora over Vestrahorn	
Nigel Symington LRPS	Heath Spotted Orchid	
Michael Warren ARPS	Mating Common Blue Butterflies	
Gordon Wilcock LRPS	Kestrel with prey	
Mike Wilkes FRPS	Kori Bustard displaying Fieldfare pulling worms Brown Hares mating	
Michael Yuille	Kingfisher on a Bullrush	
Kristina Zvinakeviciute	Small Insect in Dandelion Fluff	



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 Fleishy 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.

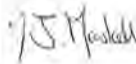
RPS Nature Group – Balance Sheet

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

Year 2016	Nature Group 'Cash Book' at RPS HQ	Year 2017
Receipts		
14,191.27	Subscriptions	12,863.44
760.00	Lectures & Workshops	348.00
1,941.00	Annual Exhibition	1,474.00
30.29	VAT refunded	61.77
60.00	Miscellaneous	30.00
174.00	IRIS Subs, Adverts, etc.	114.00
17,156.56	sub totals	14,891.21
Payments		
8,210.13	The Iris incl. postage	7,415.00
1,152.51	Lectures & Workshops	809.74
1,260.70	Annual Exhibition	2,186.80
306.70	VAT paid	183.24
2,471.08	General Administration	2,671.91
13,401.12	sub totals	13,266.69
3,755.44	Receipts minus Payments	1,624.52

Balance Sheet at 31st December 2017

Nature Group Cash Book	£
Balance brought forward from 2016	17,968.62
Cleared Cheques from 2016	0.00
Uncleared Cheques from 2017	50.00
Income minus Expenditure 2017	1,624.52
Total	19,643.14
Total Carried Forward To Financial Year 2018	19,643.14



5th January 2018

Margery J Maskell (Hon Treasurer)



The RPS Nature Group Summer Exhibition 2018

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 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.

