

THE IRIS

MAGAZINE OF THE NATURE GROUP OF THE RPS

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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 sRGB Tiff files, 6" x 4" at 300 pixels per inch (1800 x 1200 pixels, file size approx 6.17MB). If your image is selected for use on the cover of The Iris you will be requested to supply a file size with dimensions approx 3000 x 2000 pixels.

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Contents

- 2 Editorial
- 3 From the Chair
- 5 Costa Rica
by David Cantrille FRPS
- 9 Finnish Winter Wonderland
by Connor Molloy
- 13 RPS Nature Group Annual Exhibition 2015
Award winning images
- 17 List of acceptances
- 25 More award winning images
- 29 Flowers of the Italian Dolomites
by Ken Rasmussen ARPS
- 33 Patch Works
by Colin Smale ARPS
- 36 Minutes of the 39th
Nature Group Annual General Meeting
- 40 Wildlife photography and Lyme disease
by Dr. Kevin Elsby



Cover shot: *Banded Demoiselle on
Convolvulus (male)*
by Trevor Davenport ARPS
Bronze Medal 2015

Committee

Officers

Chairman: Richard Revels FRPS

Biggleswade, Beds. SG18 8EE

Tel: 01767 313065 E-mail: richard.revels@talktalk.net

Secretary: Margaret Johnson LRPS

53 Mapperley Orchard, Arnold, Nottingham, NG5 8AH

Tel: 01159 265893 E-mail: m.jos@btinternet.com

Treasurer: Margery Maskell ARPS

Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 5DW

Email: rpsngtreasurer@virginmedia.com

Vice Chairman: Kevin Elsby FRPS

Aylsham, Norfolk,

Tel: 01263-732839 Email: wildlife@greenbee.net

Immediate Past Chairman: Tony Bond FRPS

Leigh, Lancs WN7 3LJ

Email: anthony.bond39@btinternet.com

Committee Members

Editor of The Iris: Dawn Osborn FRPS

Dereham, Norfolk,

E-mail: iris_editor@btinternet.com

Exhibition Secretary: Ralph Snook ARPS

Bristol BS32 4EJ

E-mail: ralph.snook@btinternet.com

NG Rep to Advisory Panel: David O'Neill LRPS

Reading, Berkshire, RG1 6DG

Email: david.oneill@wildhorizons.uk.com

Programme Co-ordinator: Barbara Lawton FRPS

Wolverhampton, West Midlands, WV9 5QG

E-mail: barbara.lawton@talktalk.net

Webmaster: Margery Maskell ARPS

Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 5DW

Email: rpsngtreasurer@virginmedia.com

John Jones ARPS

Kegworth, Derby, DE74 2FW

Tel: 01509 672125

Sue McGarrigle LRPS

Worcester.

E-mail: sue@suemcgarrigle.co.uk

Geoff Trinder ARPS

Belton, Doncaster, DN9 1PG

Tel: 01427 872051

Ex officio Committee members

President of the Society;

Vice-President of the Society;

Director General of the Society;

Hon. Treasurer of the Society;

Chairman of the Nature A & F Distinctions Panel

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

It's June 1st, the meteorological 1st day of Summer and it feels more like March or November. We have a gale warning and its grey and cold. While the daffodils and snowdrops thrived into Spring, and bluebells arrived on time, orchids and insects seem to be thin on the ground in some parts of the country. The general opinion seems to be that nature is running about two weeks behind compared to previous years. It will be July when you read this, so hopefully we will have seen a significant improvement in the weather by then.

This issue contains some fine images, not least of which are those that were successful in winning awards in the recent Nature Group Exhibition. One of the Bronze Medal winning images is featured on the front cover, and there are other images featured on the back cover and commencing on page 13 plus a full list of the accepted images.

Thanks to fellow members David Cantrille FRPS, Connor Molloy, Ken Rasmussen ARPS, Colin Smale ARPS and Kevin Elsby FRPS for supplying articles for this issue.

It has been my pleasure to hold the post of Editor of The Iris since Autumn 2003. I can hardly believe that it will soon be twelve years since my first issue. However, I have decided that it is time to pass the baton to someone new and have announced my intention to step down as Editor by the AGM in 2017, which means that Spring 2017 is the last issue that I will undertake. I do not know who will take on the role of Editor, but I hope that there is someone reading this who feels willing and able to become the next Editor. If you are such a person, please get in touch at the earliest opportunity.

At the recent AGM, the Group's Secretary, Margaret Johnson, also announced her intention to step down. Margaret has done an excellent job for the Group for twelve years and has enjoyed it very much. However, she too feels that it is the turn of another member to take over this post. If you feel able to volunteer for the position, please contact Margaret as soon as possible.

Finally, I do hope that many of you will find worthy subjects to point your lenses at during the coming months and will be inspired to write an account of your photographic adventure for your fellow members. Articles are required for the Winter issue, so please get in touch if you can offer something.

Have a good summer.



From the chair

As I write this my first 'from the chair' column in mid-May, spring has really arrived in the countryside in my area. A recent visit to a local woodland saw several hundred Early Purple Orchids in full flower in one place, ranging in colour from white through shades of pink to purple. A few weeks earlier in the same wood there had been drifts of Bluebells and a short walk along the track from the orchids the ground was carpeted with thousands of Lesser Celandines. That, together with a good showing of Orange-tip Butterflies, got spring off to a good colourful start in my area. Hopefully spring has also been good where you live.

In January at the last meeting of the Nature Group committee, it was suggested that I look into the possibility of hosting a Natural History Advisory Day for Nature Group members considering applying for their Licentiate or Associateship Distinction with nature pictures. I duly contacted Andy Moore LRPS, the RPS Distinctions Manager, who advised me that Groups are no longer allowed to hold advisory days, these must now be organized either by the RPS at Bath or by one of RPS Regions. I discussed this with Judith Parry at Smethwick PS and was put in touch with Mike Sharples ARPS, the RPS Central Region organizer, who has kindly agreed to host the event under the Central Region banner. This is a great opportunity for Nature Group members working towards their Licentiate or Associate Distinction with Nature images to bring their work along and receive advice and guidance. Jill Packenham FRPS, a member of the Licentiate Distinctions Panel, will be advising on the L panels, and Roger Hance FRPS, Vice Chairman of the Natural History A & F Panel, will be advising on the Associateship panels.

I have been a member of the RPS Natural History A & F Distinctions Panel for the past 10 years, and during that time I have seen some excellent panels recommended for the Distinction. All too frequently though, a panel of pictures comes along that sadly, for one reason or another, fails to get the Panel's vote. Sometimes it was because print quality was below the required standard, other times it may have been that there was not enough diversity of subject matter, but whatever the reason the problem could have been pointed out in advance at an Advisory Day, so giving the candidate time to correct things before submitting their application. I strongly urge any Nature Group member who is considering applying for either their Licentiate (made up of at least 50% natural history subjects), or Associateship in

Natural History, (where the panel must be totally nature pictures), to take advantage of this event. It is always advisable to seek advice from a Distinction Panel member or to attend an Advisory Day prior to submitting your panel of pictures, you will be getting advice from someone who knows what the standards are, and your chance of gaining the Distinction will be greatly improved if you take the advice offered.

The event is also open for observers who may wish to come along and listen to the advisors' comments, and to see some recent successful panels. If you are working towards an L or A application, coming along to hear the advice given and see successful panels will give you a good understanding of the standard required. All will be welcome. If you wish to bring along your panel of pictures for commenting on, don't leave applying for a place to the last few weeks, as this event will be open to all RPS members and advertised in the Central regions newsletter as well as in the RPS Journal.

2016 will be the Nature Group's 40th Anniversary year and consequently I have brought forward my Chairman's Day event to this year so that the autumn of 2016 is free of other NG events. Full details of my Chairman's Day are on page 4 of this issue of *The Iris*. The morning session will start with Mike Lane FRPS giving his talk 'Wildlife Photography Home and Abroad'. Mike will also have a selection of his bargain priced wildlife photography equipment available for purchase. After a short tea/ coffee break Roger Hance FRPS will give his new talk 'Nature through a Viewfinder' an airing. This should be a great morning's entertainment.

In the afternoon I will give my own talk 'Projects' where I will show some of my own pictures taken whilst doing projects ranging from the recent years 'Wild Orchids of Bedfordshire' survey, to pond wildlife, and taking pictures of insects in flight. We also hope to have on display some recent successful A and F panels by Nature Group members. Hopefully I will see you at this event which takes place at Smethwick PS on Saturday October 24th, which is just before the clocks are put back, so your journey home can at least start during daylight. Unfortunately Smethwick P.S. can no longer provide a cooked meal, so you must bring your own lunch.



Chairman's Day 2015

Saturday 24th October 2015

10.30 hrs - 16.00 hrs

The Old Schoolhouse

Oldbury, West Midlands (nr Junction 2 of the M5)

Speakers:

| | | |
|-------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| Mike Lane FRPS | - | Wildlife Photography Home & Abroad |
| Roger Hance FRPS | - | Nature through a viewfinder |
| Chairman, Richard Revels FRPS | - | Projects and trips |

Recent successful Associate and Fellowship panels will be on display -
the authors will be present to answer any questions.

Cost for the day: £12. Please bring your own lunch.

The Bar will be open with tea, coffee and other drinks available as usual.

To obtain your tickets please send your cheque, made payable to 'RPS Nature Group',
plus a stamped self addressed envelope to:

Nature Group Chairman: Richard Revels FRPS, 73 London Road, Biggleswade, Beds. SG18 8EE

The Nature Group

Needs You!

Can you fill the role of Secretary

or

Editor of The Iris

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

Margaret Johnson LRPS the current Nature Group Secretary or

Dawn Osborn FRPS, the current Editor of The Iris.

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

Costa Rica

by David Cantrille FRPS

Costa Rica, a Central American country with over 50 years of peaceful democracy, has spectacular wildlife. A quarter of its land mass has been made into National Parks and eco-lodges abound. Nowhere else in the world are so many different habitats found in such a small area. We were able to sample several of them on our trip in 2013.

A small group of us flew to San Jose, the capital of Costa Rica, where our workshop leader, Greg Basco, and his equally knowledgeable driver, Jose, met us. Our first destination was the Boca Tapada area, close to the Nicaraguan border, where the climate was hot and humid. Here we found Toucans, which readily came to feeders and seemed to enjoy the attention. There were also many varieties of small birds around, flashes of red, green or blue. Whilst photographing these, we were caught out by the Great Curassow which wandered across in front of us and was too

large for our 300mm lenses. Amongst all the spectacular birds a few stood out: the magnificently named Montezuma's Oropendola, which gradually tips itself upside down when calling, the Collared Aracari, and perhaps most beautiful of all, the Shining Honeycreeper. It may appear strange that the national bird of Costa Rica is the Clay-coloured Thrush (below), a plain, brown, unremarkable bird, but it appears that it is one of the commonest, found in everyone's back yard, and familiar to all Costa Ricans which is why it was chosen.

A short night excursion from this lodge with a multi-flash set-up produced a few pictures of Long-tongued Bats.

Our second stop was near the Arenal volcano, somewhat less impressive these days than it has been, as eruptions stopped in 2010, though there



1



have been a few signs of minor activity again in recent months. Our stopover was only for two nights and the volcano was shrouded in mist all the time we were there. The main reason for our visit here was the Snake Park, where we were able to photograph indigenous frogs, toads and snakes.

A stick was placed at a certain distance from the snakes and we were told not to cross this stick in our enthusiasm, as most of the snakes are venomous, particularly the Bushmaster Rattlesnake and the Fer de Lance.



On the way to our next destination, we called in at a farm where the owner fed wild macaws. The Great Green Macaw is native to Costa Rica but increasingly endangered due to habitat destruction and the cagebird trade. Scarlet Macaws were taking advantage of the food provided at the farm too, so we were able to photograph both varieties.

Our third stop was in the cloud forest at a charming small eco-lodge called Bosque de Paz. Here we were able to follow paths through the forest and find orchids, spiders, frogs and a variety of birds. The lodge had its own orchid garden too, but at the time of year we were there (November) there were few





in flower. This was also where we photographed beautiful hummingbirds with the multi-flash units. A trip to a nearby restaurant with a garden of colourful flowers offered more opportunities to photograph hummingbirds, seven or eight varieties of them.

1. Clay coloured Thrush, Costa Rica's national bird
2. Marine Toad (also known as a Cane Toad)
3. Masked Frog in the rain
4. Red-eyed Leaf Frog
5. Long-tongued Bat
6. Montezuma's Oropendola in the rain
7. Coppery headed Emerald Hummingbird
8. Green-crowned Brilliant
9. Violet Sabrewing
10. Shining Honeycreeper
11. Mountain Gem hummingbird
12. Olive backed Euphonia (Euphonia gouldi)
13. Orange-chinned Parakeet
14. Keel-billed Toucan
15. Scarlet Macaw (Ara macao)
16. Great Curassow





13



14



15

Our last two nights were spent near the capital, San Jose, at a very good hotel with an enormous garden full of heliconias, strelitzias, varieties of ginger flower, bananas, bromeliads and many more kinds of tropical flower. A day was enjoyably spent here.

We thoroughly enjoyed our stay in Costa Rica and hope to return one day, perhaps to visit the coastal regions for different flora and fauna. The wildlife of the country is truly astounding and the photographic opportunities are endless.

Our trip was run by deepgreenphotography.com



16

Finnish Winter Wonderland

by Connor Molloy

With birds being my main photographic passion and specialised photography holidays becoming ever more accessible it's hard to resist the urge to indulge. My first journey this year took me to Kuusamo in northern Finland in the first week of March 2015. Why there? Well, the idea of photographing birds in the snow played as much a part in my thinking as did the species involved. Yes, we get occasional snowfall in the UK but nothing on this semi-permanent and vast scale and this together with the potential for getting images of Golden Eagles, Waxwings, Crested Tits and Great Grey Owls hunting tipped me into investing in a one week organised affair with Finnature. A glance at the Northern Lights would be an added bonus.

The first issue was getting there. I am not the most patient type; I hate hanging about. From Manchester there are limited flight options and the internal connections in Finland seem poor, so on arrival in Helsinki it's a five hour wait for a flight to Kuusamo and the same on the return journey. With airline weight restrictions I limited myself to a Canon 200-400mm plus a couple of landscape lenses for the northern lights.

You meet all sorts of photographers on these trips and I was accompanied by two charming couples from Germany and France with a Spanish photographer making up our group of six - thankfully their English language was excellent. It never ceases to amaze me how good the kit is of most of these photographers - top bodies, the best lenses and tripods and the fact that some of them have been all over the world taking brilliant bird pictures. There is something to be said for the grey pound keeping the economy afloat! The whole sphere has opened up incredibly in the world of digital where you know there can be a realistic expectation of capturing some great moments in nature, which makes the expense and time involved worth the effort.

Kuusamo is a winter wonderland with waist high deep snow and drivers who can go up to 80km per hour on hard ice with studded tyres. It snowed lightly every day but the temperature was unusually mild at only -1° for the whole week. I was thankful for that, as it

would have been a different experience at their usual -10 to -15. The cloudy conditions meant that I could kiss goodbye to any chance of seeing the Northern Lights, ruling that out at such an early stage was a bit of a disappointment but that's just the way it goes.

The good thing about this break was that you get multiple opportunities to do the same thing. This may sound tedious but it's not - you really do need the practice. For example, I made some mistakes on my first venture to the Waxwings - I was so preoccupied with exposure compensation and high ISOs that I failed to notice the shutter speed and ended up with too many unsharp images, luckily I had two more chances to put that right.

Olli, our guide took us to the Golden Eagle hide on our first morning, a 70km trek that ends with a short snow scooter ride to a heated hide (that was a first). Whilst

Golden Eagle





Crested Tit



Willow Tit



Siberian Jay



Siberian Tit

waiting for the Eagles it was a joy to take images of the smaller birds - Siberian Jay, Crested Tit, Willow Tit, Siberian Tit, Common Jay, Bullfinch, Woodpecker etc that were frequent visitors. When the pair of Golden Eagles arrived it was such a special moment - the atmosphere changed, hush descended. The female sat as a lookout on the far tree while the male gorged on the bait. You can sense these birds are hyper sensitive to slight movements and so every shift of the lens had to be done super slow. After about half an hour the female joined in the feast. They stayed for about an hour giving ample time for good photography and checking exposure settings. Such beautiful birds. We felt very lucky to see them, especially as they failed to show on our second visit later in the trip - that's wildlife.

Waxwings are up there in my favourite bird list, after the irruption in the UK in winter 2012-13 chances to capture them at home have been very rare. I thought they would be everywhere in Finland, but they were not - we only saw three! Apparently they had all flown further south in search of more berries. The trees where they feed are in the front garden of a very famous Finnish bird photographer and the birds are readily photographable with great backgrounds as they jostled over the few remaining berries.



Great Grey Owl

Across the road is another set of trees with Pine Grosbeaks and Arctic Redpolls feeding on the seeds - they felt like an added bonus but they were much too pretty for that. Our final visit for the Waxwings later in the week showed that even the three that we had seen previously had left - not one in sight.

I guess, for many people it will be the hunting owls that define the rationale for a visit to Finland. Here, we were really lucky to see both the Hawk Owl and Great Grey Owl out in the snow covered fields and frozen lakes. The Hawk Owl is super fast and the most difficult to photograph - at least 3500th sec we were advised. It came close to us twice and the failure rate for everyone's images was very high. I was thrilled to get three shots that were just a tad soft in focus and one that was truly sharp. Sometimes you have to be happy with just one.

In comparison the Great Grey Owl moves at slower speed - 500th sec is sufficient. Their hunting territory usually spans just a few fields so the guides know where to find them. They can sit on a tree well camouflaged for hours. To get to our position we have to wade through very deep snow which is waist high - I lost count of the number of times I stepped on the snow only for it to give way as I plunged full leg length knocking me off balance - so you do need some physical strength to haul yourself out of one hole after another but when you reach your position you can make a comfortable sunken chair in the snow and get set up very low to the ground. We take up our position, about 50 yards away in the middle of the field; the owl is unperturbed - obviously accustomed to the situation. We just have to sit and wait for the Owl to come hunting. Over four separate visits we were able to photograph about 10 hunting



Hawk Owl



Great Grey Owl



Great Grey Owl

manoeuvres, again getting ample time to correct any mistakes and get it right next time. Unlike the Hawk Owl, tracking the Great Grey with AIA Servo and the central focusing point was slightly easier but when snowflakes begin to fall they can mislead your autofocus and make it a lot more challenging.

Bird photography holidays are never comfortable affairs - average hotels with average food, soggy sandwich lunches, a sore neck and back carrying your gear around and trying to find good vantage points - you certainly have to suffer for your art especially in cold conditions, but ultimately success or failure is determined by your own view of the images you have captured - nothing else matters so much - and on this trip to Kuusamo I was very pleased. It was indeed such a pleasure and a privilege to be able to photograph these birds in their natural environment.



Great Grey Owl



RPS Nature Group Annual Exhibition 2015



Gold Medal Print (above)
Female and Male Adders
by Roger Hance FRPS

Gold Medal Projected Image (below)
Crows attacking Buzzard at bait
by Mike Wilkes FRPS





Bronze Medal Winners

1. Black-headed Gull plunge diving
by Gordon Follows ARPS
2. Early Marsh Orchid, by John Bulpitt FRPS
3. Yellow-stemmed Bonnet, by John Simpson
4. Banded Demoiselle on Convolvulus (male)
by Trevor Davenport ARPS (cover)





Selectors' Awards

1. Wilson's Plover with food, John Chamberlin FRPS
2. Two American White Pelicans,
David Wessely ARPS
3. *Brachythemis contaminata*, Nicholas Reuss ARPS
4. Schultz's Pipefish, Wendy Eve ARPS
5. Kunie's Chromodoris nudibranch,
Wendy Eve ARPS
6. Common Feather Duster Worm,
Wendy Eve ARPS





Selectors' Awards

1. Green Winged Orchids - normal colouration, Roger Hance FRPS
2. Lichen *Cladonia chlorophaea*, James Foad LRPS
3. Lady's Slipper, Sheila Weir ARPS
4. Italian Gladiolus, Ian McLean ARPS



The Nature Group Annual Exhibition 2015

Print Section

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|----------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Gold Medal | Roger Hance FRPS | Female and Male Adders |
| Bronze Medals | Gordon Follows ARPS | Black-headed Gull plunge diving |
| | John Bulpitt FRPS | Early Marsh Orchid |
| Selector Awards: | | |
| Kevin Elsby FRPS | Wendy Eve ARPS | Schultz's Pipefish |
| | Ian McLean ARPS | Italian Gladiolus |
| Richard Revels FRPS | Wendy Eve ARPS | Kunie's Chromodoris nudibranch |
| | Roger Hance FRPS | Green Winged Orchids - normal colouration |
| John Jones ARPS | Wendy Eve ARPS | Common feather duster worm |
| | James Foad LRPS | Lichen <i>Cladonia chlorophaea</i> |
| Highly Commended | John Bulpitt FRPS | Marbled Whites on Pyramidal Orchid |
| | John Chamberlin FRPS | Sandhill Crane in flight |
| | Gordon Follows ARPS | Kestrel with mouse |
| | Roger Hance FRPS | Military Orchid - Close Up Detail |
| | Ian McLean ARPS | Black-veined White on Vipers Bugloss |
| | Nicholas Reuss | Opening buds of the Butterfly Pea |
| | Ken Wade LRPS | Marsh Helleborine |
| Commended | John Chamberlin FRPS | Sandhill Crane landing |
| | Mike Rowe ARPS | Juvenile Ospreys simulating mating |
| | Ralph Snook ARPS | Snowy Egret strutting |
| | Ken Wade LRPS | Brown Hare |
| | Ken Wade LRPS | Parasol Mushroom |
| Accepted Prints | | |
| John Bulpitt FRPS | Early Marsh Orchid | Bronze Medal |
| | Common Spotted Orchids | |
| | Marbled Whites on Pyramidal Orchid | Highly Commended |
| | Banded Demoiselles | |
| | Larinioides Spider with prey | |
| | Chalkhill Blues | |
| Gill Cardy FRPS | Great Grey Owl sitting in snow | |
| | Lesser Kestrel stretching wing | |
| John Chamberlin FRPS | Sandhill Crane in flight | Highly Commended |
| | Sandhill Crane landing | Commended |
| | Willet reflected | |
| Martin Chapman ARPS | Barn Owl hunting | |
| | Robber Fly | |
| Sandie Cox ARPS | Polar Bear on ice flow | |
| | King Penguin in surf | |
| | Cheetah with cub | |

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|---------------------|--|--|
| John Cucksey ARPS | Hippopotamuses & Red-billed Oxpeckers Thornicroft's Giraffe | |
| Liz Cutting ARPS | Lesser Spotted Fritillary # 3 | |
| Roy Dorkins LRPS | Golden Eagles Nest with Male Golden Eagle and two chicks | |
| Wendy Eve ARPS | Schultz's Pipefish Kunie's Chromodoris nudibranch Common feather duster worm Pink Anemonefish | Selector Award Selector Award Selector Award |
| Brian Ferry LRPS | Nursery-web Spider & egg sac on orchid | |
| James Foad LRPS | Lichen Cladonia chlorophaea Mycena Sp. With Yellow Dung-fly (<i>Scatophaga stercoraria</i>) Great Willow-Herb (<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>) Bluebells (<i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>) Buff-tip Larvae (<i>Phalera bucephala</i>) Banded Demoiselle (<i>Calopteryx splendens</i>) | Selector Award |
| Gordon Follows ARPS | Black-headed Gull plunge diving Kestrel with mouse Spoonbill with catch Black-winged Stilt feeding | Bronze Medal Highly Commended |
| Thomas Hanahoe FRPS | Northern Marsh Orchid Boreal Forest Cotton Grass Brown Bear Running over wet ground Great Grey Owls facing up to each other | |
| Roger Hance FRPS | Green Winged Orchids - normal colouration Military Orchid - close-up detail Lady Slipper Orchid Female and Male Adders Soaking wet juvenile Green Woodpecker Red Squirrel | Selector Award Highly Commended Gold Medal |
| Bryan Knox ARPS | Osprey rising with a fish from the water Mallard Duck protecting her brood | |
| Eddy Lane ARPS | Iceberg Landscape, Svalbard Ice Cliffs, Svalbard Polar Bear cub and icicles, Svalbard King Penguins returning, South Georgia | |
| Pam Lane ARPS | Arctic morning Lone Tree, Namib Desert Namib Dunes from the air | |
| Barbara Lawton FRPS | Marsh Marigolds, (<i>Caltha palustris</i>) Common Dandelion, (<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>) Comfrey, (<i>Symphytum officinale</i>) Mycena Pura Mating Longhorn Beetles Male Orange-tip Butterfly Hoverfly feeding on Orange Hawkweed | |
| Kevin Maskell FRPS | Puffin landing with a beak overflowing with sandeels | |

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|-----------------------|---|--|
| Margery Maskell ARPS | Wren singing on bracken Clark's Nutcracker on rock | |
| Ian McLean ARPS | Italian Gladiolus Orchis italica in profusion Black-veined White on Vipers Bugloss Ascalaphid Owlfly resting European Hornet with Bumblebee prey | Selector Award Highly Commended |
| Richard Nicoll ARPS | Short-eared Owl hovering Reed Bunting feeding on reed Cuckoo flying with caterpillar Cuckoo eating grub | |
| David Osborn FRPS | Black Browed Albatross and chick Atlantic Grey Seals courtship | |
| Dawn Osborn FRPS | Little Blue Heron with Snake Eel Leaping Gentoo | |
| Ken Plumb | Thread-waisted Wasp (<i>Scelphron spirifex</i>) | |
| Ken Rasmussen ARPS | Artists palette fungus Lacquered Bracket fungus Newly emerged Six spot burnett moth | |
| Kay Reeve FRPS | Devil's Fingers Fly Agarics Parasol Fungi | |
| Nicholas Reuss | Opening buds of the Butterfly Pea <i>Desmodium capitatum</i> Chinese Mantis ambushing a Gold Dust Weevil | Highly Commended |
| David Robinson ARPS | Black-crowned Night Heron in flight Great Blue Heron courtship ritual | |
| Steve Rogala-Kaluski | Red Squirrel Spotted Hyena | |
| Mike Rowe ARPS | Juvenile Ospreys simulating mating Reddish Egret pursuing Double-crested Cormorant Little Blue Heron with Eel Reddish Egret Fishing | Commended |
| Stanley Saunders ARPS | Common Spotted Orchid (aberrant form) Yellow Iris Heron Purple Emperor Butterfly - Male White Satin Moths pairing | |
| Ralph Snook ARPS | Travertine Terrace Yellowstone Geyser eruption, Yellowstone Mineral patterns in thermal pool, Yellowstone Snowy Egret strutting Giant River Otter feeding | Commended |
| Sonja Thompson FRPS | Cotton Grass reflections | |
| Ken Wade LRPS | Marsh Helleborine Parasol Mushroom Brown Hare Sanderling with fish | Highly Commended Commended Commended |

The Nature Group Annual Exhibition 2015

Projected Images

Awards

Gold Mike Wilkes FRPS Crows attacking Buzzard at bait

Bronze Trevor Davenport ARPS Banded Demoiselle on Convolvulus
John Simpson Yellow-stemmed Bonnet

Selector Awards

Kevin Elsby FRPS Eddy Lane ARPS King Penguins, Salisbury Plain, South Georgia
David Wessely ARPS Two American White Pelicans
Richard Revels FRPS John Chamberlin FRPS Wilson's Plover with food
Peter Farmer Baobab and Milky Way
John Jones ARPS Nicholas Reuss ARPS *Brachythemis contaminata*
Sheila Weir ARPS Lady's Slipper

Highly Commended Pam Lane ARPS Iceberg, South Atlantic
Gordon Mills ARPS Red Kite
John Simpson Black-veined White on Butterfly Orchid
John Simpson Martagon Lily
John Simpson Tongue Orchid
Lesley Simpson ARPS White-legged Damselfly
David Wessely ARPS Reddish Egret at sunset

Commended Sandie Cox ARPS African Elephants in Aglaia
Liz Cutting ARPS Hoopoe tossing grub
Trevor Davenport ARPS Female Orange-tip with dew
Trevor Davenport ARPS Golden Scalycap (*Pholiota aurivella*)
Stewart Forbes *Ceratosoma nudibranch*
Ken Wade LRPS Parasol Mushrooms
Sheila Weir ARPS Fruits of Curled Dock

Accepted Projected Images

Jon C Allanson LRPS Meadow Cranesbill
Black Vanilla Orchid
Female Parsons Chameleon
Mike Bews LRPS *Anacamptis pyramidalis*
Dactylorhiza fuchsii
Robert Blandford LRPS Velvet Shank fungus
David Cantrille FRPS Coppery-headed Emerald #3
Red-eyed Leaf Frog
Long-tongued Bat
Dalmatian Pelican landing
Gill Cardy FRPS Golden Plover
John Chamberlin FRPS Wilson's Plover with food
Snipe calling
Martin Chapman ARPS Common Seal
Sykes' Monkey
Andrew Chu ARPS Grey Heron

Selector Award

| | | |
|-----------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Sandie Cox ARPS | African Elephants in Laikipia Cheetah portrait | Commended |
| John Cucksey ARPS | Bearded Seal | Commended |
| Liz Cutting ARPS | Hoopoe tossing grub | |
| Dick Daniell FRPS | <i>Gazania rigida</i> | Commended |
| Trevor Davenport ARPS | Golden Scalycap (<i>Pholiota aurivella</i>) Coral Spot Fungus | |
| | Banded Demoiselle on Convolvulus | Bronze Medal Commended |
| | Female Orange-tip with dew Common Blue Butterfly with dew Black-veined White with Pollinia | |
| Wendy Eve ARPS | Spine-cheeked Anemonefish Denise's Pygmy Seahorse | Selector Award |
| Peter Farmer | Baobab and Milky Way African Fish Eagle Wattled Cranes and Black Lechwe at dawn White Rhinoceros | |
| James Foad LRPS | Small Skippers (<i>Thymelicus sylvestris</i>) mating | |
| Gordon Follows ARPS | Soaptree Yuccas Hoodooos at Bryce Canyon Slot canyon shapes Pygmy Cormorant Ocean Sunfish <i>Mola mola</i> | |
| Stewart Forbes | <i>Ceratosoma nudibranch</i> Lionfish <i>Nembrotha nudibranch</i> | Commended |
| Thomas Hanahoe FRPS | White-tailed Eagle approaching a catch | |
| Roger Hance FRPS | Crested Cow-wheat Frog Orchid Jay bathing Red Squirrel Heron in flight Male Beautiful Demoiselle on Stinging Nettle | Selector Award |
| Margaret Hocking ARPS | Black-backed Jackal pup at den | |
| John Hunt ARPS | Long-eared Owl King Penguins undecided | |
| Koshy Johnson FRPS | Drongo and Spotted Deer | |
| Eddy Lane ARPS | Lilliehook Glacier, Spitsbergen King Penguins, Salisbury Plain, South Georgia Shy Albatross Landing, SW Pacific Eurasian Spoonbill displaying bill, Cyprus | Highly Commended |
| Pam Lane ARPS | Leaving Gritvyken, South Georgia Iceberg South Atlantic Polar Bear cub, Svalbard | |
| Maggie Manson ARPS | Elegant Sunburst Lichen Iceberg Leopard Ivory Gull Walrus Polar Bear on Sea Ice | |
| Sue McGarrigle LRPS | Sulphur Tuft Fungus Giant Polypore Fungi 7 spot Ladybird | |

| | | |
|------------------------|---|------------------|
| Ann Mead | Common Blue in evening light <i>Enoplognatha</i> guarding 5mm egg sac Fly on Woolly Bear Harlequin Ladybird eating aphid | |
| Richard Merritt FRPS | Manta Rays at Cleaning Station Scalloped Hammerhead Shark and Pacific Creole Fish Galapagos Shark Bull Sealion | |
| Gordon Mills ARPS | Red Kite Kingfisher, Yorkshire Burrowing Owls, Florida Snowy Egret, Florida | Highly Commended |
| Richard Nicoll ARPS | Stoat | |
| Dawn Osborn FRPS | Herring Gull feeding on crab watched by Turnstone Striated Caracara feeding on penguin chick Hungry Magellanic chicks and parent Surfing Gentoo | |
| Jill Pakenham FRPS | Eyed Hawkmoth Wing Female Orange-tip Great-crested Grebe Family Gannet with Seaweed Roe Deer | |
| Andrew Parsons ARPS | Emerald Damselflies paired Eyed Hawkmoth Larva Emperor Dragonfly in Flight Red Eyed Damselfly on Buttercup | |
| Ron Perkins ARPS | Bottlenose Dolphin Bald Eagles Red Squirrel | |
| Ken Rasmussen ARPS | Man orchid Rustgill Six spot burnett larva spinning cocoon Willet feeding | |
| Jane Rees ARPS | Morning Glory Pool | |
| Nicholas Reuss | Touch-me-not-Plant <i>Brachythemis contaminata</i> Male Frog Beetle The Banded Bush Hopper Red Weaver Ants | Selector Award |
| David Robinson ARPS | Great Blue Heron with Salamander | |
| Mike Rowe ARPS | Squabbling White Ibis Sandwich Tern with Fish | |
| Stanley Saunders ARPS | Nettle-leaved Bellflower with Hoverflies Bellardia - Mediterranean Common Spotted Orchid Birch Shieldbugs mating Common Blue Butterflies mating | |
| Ian Sayce LRPS | African Darter With Catch | |
| Shelley Shipton-Knight | Little Owl Portrait | |
| Paul Sievers ARPS | Pestle Puffballs Bloody Brittleghills Fly Agarics | |

| | | |
|----------------------|--|------------------|
| John Simpson | Tongue Orchid | Highly Commended |
| | Martagon Lily | Highly Commended |
| | Alpine Bellflower | |
| | Yellow-stemmed Bonnet | Bronze Medal |
| | Black-veined White on Butterfly Orchid | Highly Commended |
| | Brimstone nectaring | |
| | Shield Bug on Pulsatilla seedhead | |
| Lesley Simpson ARPS | Scalloped Oak | |
| | White-legged Damselfly | Highly Commended |
| | Elongate Spider feeding | |
| Judy Smith LRPS | Mating Adonis Blues | |
| | Benzoin Bracket, <i>Ischnoderma benzoinum</i> | |
| Mike Snelle LRPS | <i>Crepidotus mollis</i> | |
| Ralph Snook ARPS | Common Dolphins | |
| | Great Egret in evening light | |
| | Wood Stork with nest material | |
| Nigel Symington LRPS | Great Egret calling in flight | |
| | Parasol mushroom | |
| Jim Tarbox LRPS | Porcelain Fungi cluster | |
| | Shaggy Scalycap | |
| | <i>Polytrichum</i> Commune Moss | |
| Steve Taylor ARPS | Blue Throated Bee-Eaters and Fly | |
| | Plough Snails attacking stranded Medusa - South Africa | |
| | Painted Lady Butterfly | |
| | Lesser Antillean Bullfinch with nesting material | |
| | Parasol Mushrooms | Commended |
| Ken Wade LRPS | Marsh Helleborines | |
| | Common Spotted Orchid | |
| | Leaping Sea Trout | |
| | Curlew in flight | |
| Catherine Williamson | Pyramidal Orchid | |
| | Common Spotted Orchid | |
| John Weir ARPS | Dove's-foot Crane's-bill | |
| | Male Common Darter | |
| Sheila Weir ARPS | Lady's Slipper | Selector Award |
| | Fruits of Curled Dock | Commended |
| | Fragrant Orchids | |
| | Tutsan in Grike | |
| | Rose Chafer on Wild Privet | |
| | Cattle Egret | |
| David Wessely ARPS | Hover Fly | |
| | Two American White Pelicans | Selector Award |
| | Reddish Egret at sunset | Highly Commended |
| | Great Egret landing | |
| | Two Spoonbills | |
| Mick White LRPS | Goldfinch (<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>) | |
| | Red Deer Stag (<i>Cervus elaphus</i>) | |
| Mike Wilkes FRPS | Crows attacking Buzzard at bait | Gold Medal |
| | Robin taking berries | |

Natural History Distinctions Advisory Day

8th November 2015. 10.00 hrs to 16.00 hrs

**An LRPS and ARPS Advisory Day will be held at on 8th November at
Smethwick Photographic Society Club Rooms,
The Old Schoolhouse, Churchbridge, Oldbury, West Midlands B69 2AS**

The event is intended to provide guidance to RPS Members and Non-members who are considering applying for their LRPS (in which Natural History may form part) or ARPS in Natural History. The day will offer an opportunity to see successful LRPS and ARPS panels and receive personal guidance on your proposed panel and its preparation.

The advisors will be Jill Pakenham FRPS for LRPS submissions, and Roger Hance FRPS, Vice-chair of the Natural History Distinctions Panel, covering the Associateship panels. They will give an honest and unbiased assessment of your work.

You may attend as a spectator or as a participant. Participants should bring along the prints that they consider could form the basis for their panel. This will enable the Advisors to comment on the quality and content of the work and examine how the images may work together as a cohesive panel.

Those wishing to participate are asked to register and pay through the RPS website. In the event that there are any problems with this process, please contact the Regional Organiser or the Distinctions Department in Bath.

Tea and coffee will be available but please bring your own lunch

Location: Smethwick Photographic Society Club Rooms
The Old Schoolhouse
Churchbridge
Oldbury, West Midlands
B69 2AS

Tel: 0121 552 0279

Cost: RPS Member £15.00 Non Member £20.00 Spectators £8.00

**Contact RPS Central Region Organiser: Mike Sharples ARPS at:
central@rps.org or mike.sharples@virgin.net Mobile 07884 657535**



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Highly Commended

1. Kestrel with mouse, Gordon Follows ARPS
2. Reddish Egret at sunset, David Wessely ARPS
3. Sandhill Crane in flight, John Chamberlin FRPS
4. Red Kite, Gordon Mills ARPS
5. White-legged Damselfly, Lesley Simpson ARPS
6. Black-veined White on Viper's Bugloss
Ian McLean ARPS





Highly Commended

1. Black-veined White on
Butterfly Orchid,
John Simpson
2. Marbled Whites on
Pyramidal Orchid
John Bulpitt FRPS
3. Military Orchid, close-up detail,
Roger Hance FRPS
4. Tongue Orchid,
John Simpson
5. Martagon Lily, John Simpson
6. Marsh Helleborine,
Ken Wade LRPS
7. Opening buds of Butterfly Pea,
Nicholas Reuss





Commended

1. Juvenile Ospreys Simulating Mating, Mike Rowe ARPS
2. African Elephants in Laikipia, Sandie Cox ARPS
3. Female Orange-tip with Dew, Trevor Davenport ARPS
4. Sandhill Crane landing, John Chamberlin FRPS
5. *Ceratosoma nudibranch*, Stewart Forbes
6. Hoopoe Tossing Grub, Liz Cutting ARPS
7. Snowy Egret Strutting, Ralph Snook ARPS





1



2



3

Commended

1. Fruits of Curled Dock,
Sheila Weir ARPS
2. Brown Hare,
Ken Wade LRPS
3. Golden Scalycap (*Pholiota aurivella*),
Trevor Davenport ARPS
4. Parasol Mushrooms,
Ken Wade LRPS
5. Parasol Mushroom,
Ken Wade LRPS



4



5

Flowers of the Italian Dolomites

by Ken Rasmussen ARPS

Introduction

The Italian Dolomites came highly recommended. A member of my photographic club (a non-photographer who has been a member for over sixty years) said they were her favourite mountains. My wife and I like walking and so we started looking for walking holidays in the area. With June being a suitable time to go I thought it would offer me the opportunity to photograph the flowers as well. I was particularly keen to get some environmental shots showing flowers in their habitats, something I have tried but found difficult in the local reserves near home.

It was my wife who turned things upside down, suggesting that we go on a botany trip, instead. A suitable trip was being offered by the travel firm, Naturetrek. We are not expert botanists but the tour details said they welcomed novices and experts alike, so in June 2013 we set off for a week of wild flower hunting.

The trip

We flew to Venice where we were met with blue skies and warm sunshine. There followed a long drive up into the mountains with breaks for food and another to look for flowers. So, by the time we arrived at our hotel in the Rosengarten region of the Dolomites we had already been shown several species of gentian, globe flowers and birds eye primrose. We arrived at our hotel in the small village of Tamion (less than a dozen houses) and after a short break to freshen up we were exploring the meadow near to the hotel before the evening meal.

The locations it was proposed we visit were inspired by the book, *The Dolomites* by the botanist, Reginald Farrer. This book, first published in 1913 is still available!

Most of the following days followed a similar pattern. We would leave the hotel at about 9:30 to be driven to the start of our days walk. There would then follow a leisurely walk with the tour leaders





Gentians



Globe Flowers

looking for flowers and giving detailed explanations of what they had found and then giving us all time to examine them more closely. After our evening meal there would be a group discussion listing the species we (or rather someone) had seen during the day. This included not only flowers, but also insects, birds and mammals. We did have one free morning which we used to re-visit the local area and, of course, none of the walks was compulsory.

The tour leaders were excellent. They had been to the area before so knew what was likely to be appearing and where, though they were occasionally surprised as it had been a cold spring and many of the flowers were later than usual. This meant that we were lucky to find Spring Crocus and many Alpine Pasque Flowers, for example, but were too early for the famous Edelweiss, though some leaves of the plant were found. They were also patient, explaining the differences between very similar species, answering questions and providing background information. They were happy to stop and look at any flowers but were always keen to find rarities. Having run the trip for several years they knew just where to look. We were promised something special on our first day, for example. Near the end of our walk we were led along a road verge next to a steep slope where we found a sizeable group of Lady's Slipper Orchids. This was only one of nineteen species of orchid that we found.

The photography

Setting out after breakfast each day and not returning until early evening meant we were always out during the middle of the day, which is not the best time for photography. The weather, however, came to our rescue to some extent, as we had just about every type over the week. The sunshine at Venice gave way to patchy cloud in the mountains and as the week progressed the weather gradually got worse. We had sunshine, cloud, mist, some rain (though thankfully only one really heavy shower when we were out) and at the end of the holiday, snow. This meant that we rarely had contrasty sunshine and as it was summer there was usually plenty of light. We were also lucky that, perhaps because the mountains provided some shelter, the wind was usually quite light. I have found the wind in the UK much more of a problem than on this holiday.

I use Canon equipment and took two camera bodies, a 40D and a 400D as a backup with 150mm macro and 17-40mm wide angle lenses. I also took a tripod and an empty beanbag which was kindly filled with rice for me by the tour leaders. For the first couple of days I did not take my tripod on our trips

out as I was not sure whether the time involved in setting it up and taking images would hinder the progress of the group. Instead, I tried to rely on the beanbag often balanced on my camera bag to get a bit of height. It turned out that progress was quite leisurely and so, for the later part of the holiday I always used the tripod (with the tour leaders' permission). There was almost always an abundance of flowers, but when a particularly good specimen was found almost everyone in the group, including the tour leaders, wanted to photograph it. The equipment they used varied from digital SLRs through compacts to smart phones. I usually waited until everyone else had finished so that I had time to set up the tripod and prepare my photograph. Fortunately, although the group had often moved on by the time I had finished, I never had to run to catch them up again!

Inevitably, finding flowers was much easier than photographing them. Botanists are happy to find a species whereas we photographers want perfect specimens with clear backgrounds and in good light. The flower filled fields were very attractive but with so many flowers it was difficult to isolate single specimens. Going in very close was always an option and something I occasionally did, but I was looking for a more varied range of images. The habitat shots I had hoped for were also possible, but with so many flowers of different varieties, could easily become confused. Moreover, the grasses that are an essential part of meadows would often prove



Moscatel



Moss Campion



Military Orchid



Fragrant Orchid



Mountain Clover



Mountain Avena



Yellow Alpine Pasque Flower

distracting. If there was no distracting foliage around the plants it was because they were growing on rocks or hillsides making them difficult to reach. More than once I was lying down on a steep slope in snow and trying not to slide down the hill.

Some of our walks started higher up the mountains than our hotel and several involved gentle climbs. As we ascended flower numbers dropped making it easier to isolate flowers but the grasses were still a problem particularly as there was much dead dry grass which is especially distracting.

Experienced flower photographers may say this is normal. Getting a good wildlife image of any sort requires patience, effort and much waiting and looking for the right opportunity. So, in that respect, our Dolomites holiday was quite normal.

Conclusions

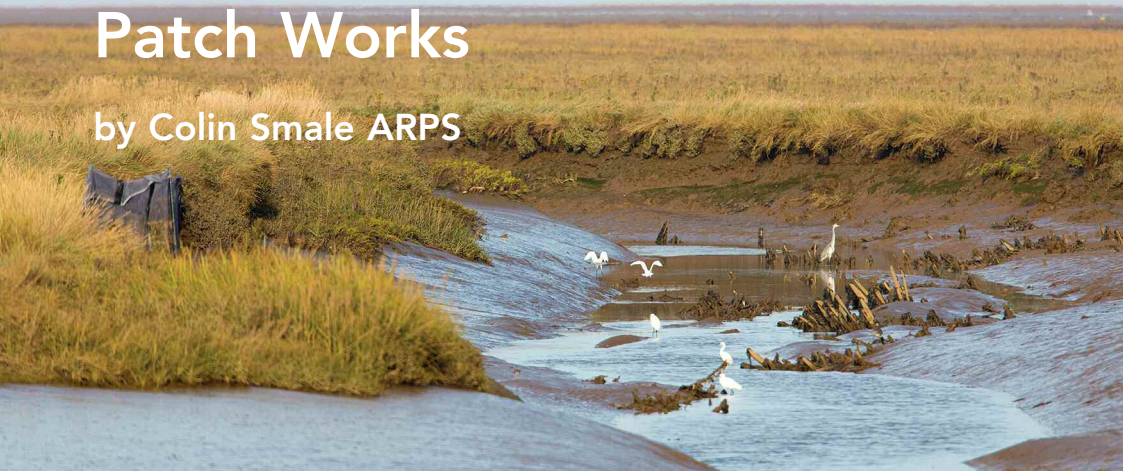
The total tally of subjects seen, or at least glimpsed by one of the group, was more than 300 species of wildflower, over 60 species of bird and 19 species of butterfly, only a small proportion of which I was able to photograph. Nevertheless, it was an enjoyable holiday on which I learned much and obtained some pleasing images. I did get some habitat shots though many more were of individual blooms. Strangely, perhaps my favourite habitat shot was of a humble dandelion and my best shot overall was of some ants! So perhaps the moral of the story is, as so often with wildlife photography, expect the unexpected and enjoy and photograph whatever comes along.



Round-headed Orchid

Patch Works

by Colin Smale ARPS



It's not Barbados or The Nile Delta, it's just a small unremarkable looking salt-marsh creek in North Lincolnshire, UK, but it's got plenty enough action and without all the cost and hassle of overseas travel.

Wherever you live in the world, somewhere near you there will be a 'patch' that you know well and which can be relied upon to deliver wildlife images at any time of the year; well as much as wildlife can be reliable.

Don't get me wrong, It's great to photograph abroad but for me, if I am lucky, that is just for a couple of weeks in the year and leaves fifty other weeks to fill in the UK, so it pays to have some sort of plan and mine is to decide which of the many or few good birding sites there are nearby, choose one and get a hide in there as a 'banker' (forgive the terminology!)

Yes I know, someone or something may trash your hide. My answer to that is to make a hide such as the one illustrated out of the tattiest materials possible. No one wants to steal it, at worst they or a particularly big high tide may damage it, but that's ok. If a hide or even a damaged hide is 'in the birds' patch' as a 'lump' it will soon be ignored,

which is just what we want eh? Arrive, repair it, get in and you will have a great day. However go there for the day and erect a fresh hide and although some wildlife may come near, most will be very wary of this new 'object'. It really does pay big dividends to leave a permanent hide up of some kind.

Where is your favourite local patch? It may be woodland, moorland, drinking hole or even a spot in the desert but wherever it is that is the place you can rely on all year round. Of course you will have other places but none as good or reliable as this one and that's my point. I live on the coast and my favourite patch is a salt-marsh creek. The tide comes in and out twice each day bringing fresh food and with it a good variety of birds. The variety of species changes with the seasons. Rare birds can turn up of course but I am not a chaser of rare birds, most of the time they are not very interesting to look at or photograph. Look at the Shelduck, common as anything but in my opinion, looks-wise, it can hold its own with any other duck in the world.

Shelduck





Little Egret



Redshank



Greenshank



Oystercatcher

I spotted Greenshank and Spotted Redshank there yesterday but the tides were wrong and so I will get down there in the next few days and try to get that Spotted Redshank, it is quite a stunning looking bird and happily it seems to want to stay in the same area my hide is at. That is the beauty of having your own 'patch' you get so used to it you know where certain birds should feed at certain times of the year and it is no accident that I put my hide there for waders. I have always had a hide of some kind here. I can also use the patch to experiment with hides such as pop ups, ghillie suits, camo nets, etc.

What to do when the first bird arrives

It is not normally a good idea to 'grab a quick shot' as soon as a bird comes anywhere near. It is very unlikely to look good from the get-go - the chances are that it saw your lens suddenly whip round and was spooked by the movement, so you probably got no shot at all. If you can, (and of course, you can) wait until it settles down and then squeeze just one shot off so it gets used to the sound of the shutter.

On a saltmarsh (in the UK) the first bird(s) to show up will almost certainly be Redshank. Now lots of things are suddenly going on in your mind especially the rash temptation to get that quick picture! The bird has landed fairly close but it is nowhere near in line with the lens, it is way off to the left or to the right so you put your eye to the viewfinder and pan to the left, bird still not there, pan a bit more, just a minute, was it left of the lens or right? You take another look out of the peephole only to discover that the bird has long gone.

Ok, now let's go back to the point just before the bird arrived and let's be prepared this time. The first thing to remember is birds spook very easily especially from movement. Moving the lens about will certainly spook them until they get used to its movements. When you settle yourself down in the hide and stick the lens out of the hole, (camera/lens on a tripod of course), pick a spot in the creek where you hope a bird may land, it might be a worm hole or a particularly obvious muddy ridge and lock the camera to this spot and wait. When that Redshank arrives, this time, before touching the lens, take a look out of the peep-hole, is the bird to the left or to the right of that spot? Knowing that prevents unnecessary panning and 'swishing' about. When that Redshank lands near you, don't touch your camera at all, not for a minute or two anyway. Just look through the peephole and watch what the bird does in those

first few seconds. Just like a child waiting to cross a road it stands, looks and listens, very carefully. Watch its head bobbing up and down, it is checking and re-checking, the slightest movement from your hide and it will be history. When you consider that it is prey for something and is out in the open wouldn't you expect it to stop, look and listen very carefully before it begins feeding? It might take a tentative step or two but it is still head bobbing. Suddenly you will clearly see it relax, almost like a deflating balloon. When it begins feeding is the time you can start thinking about photographing it because by then it has decided all is well.

If you have to swing the lens round onto it do it this way so as not to spook it. Watch it through the peephole not through the viewfinder, every time it turns its head away from you move the lens slowly in its direction while still watching it through the peephole. Once you are on it, wait for a nice shot with a good head turn and a catchlight, fire the shutter but only once and then sit very still while the bird checks what the sound was and that the sound wasn't any kind of a threat. (If you have one of the latest cameras with 'silent shutter' use it, in my opinion it is one of the best technical improvements to hit wildlife photography in many years). Do not touch/move the lens after that first shot. It's a heads up and wary few seconds, wait till the bird 'deflates' again and continues feeding. Two or three more single shots and it will start to ignore the sound of the shutter firing. Now you can enjoy the next few hours watching and capturing the secrets of the marsh. Other passing waders are more likely to come in when they see Redshanks feeding quietly in the creek.

Due to climate change UK coasts are brimming with that snow white beauty the Little Egret, they are even breeding here. In spite of taking many photos of them they always look so good and are so animated that I never tire of them.

What other birds/creatures will turn up, what will the unexpected event be? Perhaps a rival Redshank will encroach on this one's territory and try to fight for it; maybe an unexpected Raptor will appear or you might just watch the antics of incoming Mullet as they hunt the margins of the creek for shrimps which leap right out of the water to escape.

Those few hours of being invisible to wildlife while the wildlife cycles through its daily routine is one of the great joys of wildlife photography.



Brent Geese



Curlew



Spotted Redshank



Little Egret

Minutes of the 39th NATURE GROUP AGM

The 39th Annual General Meeting of the Royal Photographic Nature Group was held at The Old Schoolhouse, Oldbury, on Saturday 11th April 2015 at 2pm. It was chaired by Tony Bond and attended by 46 members.

Apologies

These were received from: Alex Birch, Joe Curtis, Trevor Davenport, Kevin Elsby, Gianpiero Ferrari, Michelle Gilders, Mark Godwin, Trevor Hyman, Ludi and Susan Lochner, Ian McLean, Sue McGarrigle, David O'Neill, David Osborn, Anthony Rowe, Geoff Trinder, Bev Ward, John and Sheila Weir, Eric Wright

Minutes of the 2014 AGM

The minutes of the 2014 AGM printed in issue 119 of 'The Iris' were accepted as a true and correct record of what then took place. This was proposed by John Bebbington and seconded by Richard Revels.

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

Chairman's Report - Tony Bond FRPS

The hot topic at the last AGM was the revelation in The Iris by Richard Nicoll of widespread cheating in the Nature sections of open exhibitions. Nor is this restricted to Nature as Travel is similarly afflicted and a high proportion of entries for this year's World Press Photo Awards were disqualified. What all three have in common is that they rely on factual recording and montages have always been expressly forbidden. FIAP acknowledge that there is a problem and the Society has responded by rejecting entries for its exhibitions from anyone on the FIAP red list.

No sooner had this been dealt with than out of the blue came the Definition of Nature Photography and another problem not of our making. Presumably this was a response to cheating by the PSA and was endorsed by The Society and FIAP. Unfortunately it appears that the views of nature photographers were not sought and if they had many of the difficulties

associated with the Definition could have been avoided. The most obvious one was a total ban on cloning. We have all seen over-gardened sites and insect photographers know the hazards of trying to remove distractions without disturbing the subject. Physical removal before exposure with the risk of environmental damage is permitted but cloning is not. Worse was to follow with the publication of the expanded Definition in the September edition of the PSA Journal. This stated that the cloning of a single blade of grass was sufficient to disqualify the image even though the same blade could have been removed physically before exposure. There were numerous inconsistencies which were revealed by Fiona MacKay in The Iris. Unfortunately silly titles are still permitted because banning them would result in fewer entries and a loss of income. The Definition has since been adopted by the PAGB and BPE, again with no consultation of nature photographers as far as I am aware. Our own exhibition is not sponsored by anyone and so the committee decided to stick to the existing rules which have evolved over time and have served us well.

On a more positive note, membership has continued to increase and earlier this week stood at 976 and we can claim that we have worldwide membership. I am expecting that the Treasurer will show that the finances are in good order following the decision to bring production of the exhibition CD in house.

The contributions made by Margaret Johnson, Margery and Kevin Maskell and Richard Revels have been recognised by Volunteer Service Awards with more to follow.

The Iris continues to set the standard for group publications but it can only do so with your contributions. In particular, Dawn welcomes articles consisting of text only as these enable her to fill the black and white pages.

Ralph Snook has fully taken over from Kevin Maskell as Exhibition Secretary. Entries this year were lower than in 2014 but similar to those of 2013.

David O'Neill has continued to represent the Group on the Advisory Board and has had the responsibility of giving presentations on what we do.

Barbara Lawton has taken over as Programme Co-ordinator from Richard Revels. At present there are only three field meetings planned plus two residential weekends. However, it is not too late to offer to lead a field meeting in the latter half of the year and if you need any support just ask.

Finally I wish to thank committee members for their support and hope that my successor, Richard Revels, gains as much satisfaction as I have over the last two years. I also wish to thank Smethwick PS and their team of helpers for hosting our meetings, not least my Chairman's Day.

Treasurer's Report - Margery Maskell ARPS Period 1st January – 31st December 2014

General Comments

The Balance Sheet is an overall summary of Receipts and Payments for the year. As some items 'straddle' year ends, it cannot be a detailed Balance Sheet for each item.

Subscriptions

The income is that credited monthly to our Cash Book Account during the current Financial year - (Subscriptions paid to the RPS for December 2013 through to November 2014).

The Life Members' subscription reimbursements are for 2013, as the 2014 reimbursement is not paid into the Nature Group account until sometime in January 2015.

VAT Returns

Detailed VAT Returns were produced for the first three quarters of 2014. So the VAT refunded/paid details are from the last quarter of 2013 and the first three quarter of 2014.

The Iris

Three editions of The Iris were published this year - #118, #119 and #120. The cost of production, and particularly postage, continues to rise, though subscriptions and adverts helped to offset some of the costs.

Events

One Event was held on the 31st May, and another event was held on the 9th November. My thanks to Geoff Trinder and Tony Bond for running these events, and making them a success.

Annual Exhibition

Even with the £478 for the production of 40 medals, the Exhibition still managed to make a small profit.

General Administration

This includes all running costs of the Nature Group [general postage, telephone, stationery and travel to committee meetings].

General Comments

Finances are in a lot better state now, as the Balance Sheet now shows an excess of Income over Expenditure. This is mainly due to the changes made to the annual exhibition, and to the increase to the annual subscriptions.

Secretary's Report - Margaret Johnson LRPS

The most recent list of members supplied by RPS HQ shows that we now have 976 members which is 208 more than at the AGM last year.

The membership lists supplied now show very few mistakes in them. but the lapsed members really do need a follow-up letter from me as they often do not realise their membership has lapsed - often this is the result of a failed direct debit.

I often receive communications from members following their receipt of a new or lapsed members letter and it is always a pleasure to hear from them. We now have members from all over the world, in 38 different countries.

I have been required to send 1 copy of The Iris to the Legal Deposit Office at Boston Spa. This has now changed and we are now required to send five copies to the Agency for Legal Deposit Libraries in Edinburgh.

It has been another very successful year even though there have been some difficulties but I do enjoy the contact I have with so many of our members.

Election of Officers and Committee

All the present officers were willing to stand for re-election and were elected without opposition. They are:

| | |
|---|-----------------------|
| Chairman: | Richard Revels FRPS |
| Secretary: | Margaret Johnson LRPS |
| Treasurer: | Margery Maskell ARPS |
| Vice Chairman: | Kevin Elsby FRPS |
| Immediate Past Chairman: | Tony Bond FRPS |
| The committee were willing to stand for re-election | |
| Editor of The Iris: | Dawn Osborn FRPS |
| Exhibition Secretary: | Ralph Snook ARPS |
| Programme Co-ordinator: | Barbara Lawton FRPS |
| Advisory Board Representative: | David O'Neill LRPS |

Other Committee Members: John Jones ARPS
Geoff Trinder ARPS
Sue McGarrigle LRPS

Any Other Business

Thomas Hanahoe FRPS said there was still a problem with the Definition in Nature sections of competitions. Tony Bond said that the Society is now committed to monitor at least acceptances within their own exhibitions to ensure that they conform with the new Definition by requiring that the entrant submits a RAW file which can be verified. If the RPS did not do this it would compromise their reputation. Tony had asked HQ if they had the resources to do this but had not received a reply. John Bebbington FRPS said that it was trying to find ways to counteract this but not everyone shoots RAW files. It should be possible to tell if JPEG files have been changed. The RPS set their own rules for their exhibitions and these must be followed. The Nature Group can have their own rules for their Annual Exhibition and therefore removal of minor distractions is still allowed.

The Nature Distinctions panel has its own problems in deciding whether any cheating has taken place. The Society seems complacent by saying that all panel members are experienced photographers and will spot any cheating. While this may be true they could miss any cheating if it was done well, particularly in the time available.

Gill Cardy said that it would be good to have more Advisory Days. Richard Revels replied that the Nature Group has no involvement with the Distinctions process and is not allowed to hold its own Advisory Days. We are however allowed to show successful panels at our meetings. The RPS limit the number of panel members permitted to offer advice at Distinctions Advisory Days. We will request that the

Distinctions Department arrange more Nature Distinctions Advisory Days.

Ralph Snook said that print entries had been down in the annual exhibition and would like feedback as to why. Tony Bond said that one reason could be that posting prints is expensive. Hermes was suggested as a cheaper alternative that members could use. More collection points around the country might also help. Margery said that she could request the RPS to email a reminder to our members when the closing date was getting near and that on-line uploading of entries and payment might help. These things will be set in motion. It was emphasised again that common English names should be used for entries or the scientific name if there was not an English name. Cute titles would definitely be disqualified.

Beverley Ward asked if it would be possible to consider weekends away at the end of July or early August instead of the beginning of June as she teaches and this would enable her to attend more.

Ludi Lochner thanked the office bearers for all the hard work they had done to make the Group the success it was and he was sure members were all very grateful for the time and effort spent on their behalf.

Both Dawn and Margaret expressed their intention to retire from their positions as Editor of The Iris and Secretary respectively by the AGM in 2017 and that members were needed to volunteer for these posts as soon as possible.

Richard Revels thanked Smethwick P.S. for hosting the event

Date & Time of the next AGM

The next AGM will take place at The Old Schoolhouse, Oldbury, on April 9th 2016.

The meeting closed at 2.09pm

Members' Galleries on the RPS website

Galleries on the RPS Website are a nice way to show your work. However if they appear in the Nature Group section the content should be nature.

For example - you have three galleries of images, one landscape, one nature and one of travel images. Within the gallery editing page is a list of the region and groups that you belong to - lets say you belong to both the Nature Group and the Travel Group. You should only put a tick if the gallery is relevant to the group you belong to. All three galleries will appear in your region's section, but only the gallery containing

nature images should appear in the Nature section. The travel images should appear in the Travel Group's section, but not in the Nature Group's. The landscape gallery should only appear in the Region and not in either of the two specialist groups.

Would all members check the content of galleries they have on the RPS website and please deselect them if they are not relevant to the Nature Group.

Thank you.

Margery Maskell ARPS, Nature Group Webmaster.

THE NATURE GROUP OF THE ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

Receipts and Payments Account for 1st January 2014 to 31st December 2014

Nature Group 'Cash Book' at RPS Bath

Year 2013

Year 2014

Receipts

| | | |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| 7,434.90 | Subscriptions | 9,992.16 |
| 679.52 | Life Subs. | 720.00 |
| 630.00 | Lectures & workshops | 1416.00 |
| 1,399.41 | Annual Exhibition | 1784.62 |
| 165.69 | Interest received (to Cash Book) | 0.00 |
| 106.11 | VAT refunded | 70.61 |
| 318.00 | IRIS Subs., Adverts, etc. | 252.00 |
| £10,733.63 | sub totals | £14,235.39 |

Payments

| | | |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| 7,403.98 | Printing The Iris, incl. postage | 7,465.98 |
| 500.00 | Lectures & Workshops | 1,020.80 |
| 1,118.72 | Annual Exhibition | 1,615.62 |
| 0.00 | VAT paid | 54.55 |
| 2,639.36 | General Administration | 2,564.56 |
| £11,662.06 | sub totals | £12,721.51 |

-£928.43

Receipts minus Payments

£1,513.88

Balance Sheet at 31st December 2014

Nature Group Cash Book

£

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Balance brought forward from 2013 | 7,382.43 |
| Cleared Cheques from 2013 | 0.00 |
| Uncleared Cheques from 2014 | 11.96 |
| Receipts minus Payments 2014 | 1,513.88 |
| Total | 8,908.27 |

Total Carried Forward to Financial Year 2015

8,908.27

M. Maskell

4th January 2015

Margery J Maskell (Hon. Treasurer)

Wildlife photography and Lyme disease

by Dr. Kevin Elsbey

As natural history photographers, we often wander into areas “off the beaten track” in pursuit of our subject. This can sometimes bring us into contact with ticks – especially when in heathland, woodland or moorland.

One possible consequence of a tick bite is Lyme disease. This is a bacterial infection which is transmitted by various species of ticks belonging to the family *Ixodes*. It is called Lyme disease because of the place in North America, Old Lyme in Connecticut, where the disease was first described, in 1975. The saliva of the ticks contains the organisms (*Borrelia* sp.) which cause the disease. In Europe the main vector is the tick *Ixodes ricinus*. This is a sheep tick, but places where deer occur also have high tick populations. For example the New Forest, Breckland, and the Peak District – all areas popular with wildlife photographers.

Lyme disease is the commonest tick-borne infection in the northern hemisphere. It is estimated that 65,000 people a year are infected in Europe, with a much larger number in North America. Lyme disease is important because it can have serious health consequences, so it is wise to know what you are dealing with.

Forewarned is forearmed.

The problems caused by Lyme disease can be best divided into those which occur quickly (acute), and those which take longer to materialise (chronic). The first sign of infection is usually a rash and an area of redness, which is outwardly expanding, known as *erythema migrans* (a classic ‘bulls eye’ rash, like an archery target – try Google for images online). This begins at the site of a bite about a week or so after being bitten. The rash is usually not itchy or painful. About a quarter of people do not develop a rash. There are various other symptoms associated with the rash, including fever, headache and tiredness. Left untreated, the organism can enter the bloodstream more widely and symptoms

can progress to involve, for example, weakness of one side of the face, and joint pains. Other manifestations include severe headaches, neck stiffness and heart palpitations. The chronic form can lead to repeated episodes of joint pain and swelling, months or even years after being infected.

Diagnosis of Lyme disease can be difficult, since its symptoms can mimic many other commoner conditions. However, being aware of the possibility of contracting it from a tick bite enhances the chance of the correct diagnosis. From the natural history photographer’s perspective, this means understanding the risk, and checking one’s body (and if necessary colleagues) for ticks after being in an area of likely habitat.

Because it can be difficult to diagnose, it is always worth bearing in mind the possibility of Lyme disease and should you become unwell or develop an unusual rash, it is prudent to visit your GP straight away and explain that you may have been in an area which could lead you to being bitten by ticks. Nowadays, this is a much better understood condition than it used to be, and most GPs will have some knowledge of Lyme disease. However, take nothing for granted and do mention Lyme disease to your doctor if he/she doesn’t.

To introduce a little perspective, I have been a General Practitioner for nearly 30 years in rural North Norfolk, a high risk area for ticks in the UK. Over that time I have seen less than 10 victims. I have a high index of suspicion and am also a wildlife enthusiast so I feel especially clued in to this condition.

Prevention is better than cure

Prevention is always best and so it is important not to be bitten by ticks in the first place. This might mean such simple measures such as wearing long-sleeved shirts and long trousers when you’re in the appropriate habitat, as well as tucking the trousers inside your socks. (Patrick Barkham considered me pedantic in this latter regard, in his book *The*



Butterfly Isles', when he met me photographing Silver-studded Blue Butterflies on Kelling Heath in Norfolk. However, as this article I hope has made clear, there were good reasons for such behaviour). In addition to this, it may be useful to use topical pesticides such as Deet. Removal of ticks can be achieved by using tweezers, and if you find a tick, keep an eye on the area in case you develop a rash subsequent to removing it.

Antibiotics are useful in treating Lyme disease, and the condition can be managed well, but this must be under the guidance of your GP, who may well take advice from the local hospital microbiology department.

In summary: –

1. Be aware if you are in habitat prone to ticks
2. Take steps to prevent being bitten, such as long-sleeve shirts and long trousers tucked into socks
3. Use topical pesticides
4. Inspect yourself for ticks at the end of the day, and remove cautiously with tweezers if found
5. Keep a watch on the area of the tick bite for the development of a rash
6. Present promptly to your general practitioner should you develop a rash and explain that you have been in a tick prone environment.

Stay safe and happy photography!





Nature Group
Exhibition 2015

Selectors' Award -
Baobab and Milky Way
by Peter Farmer



Highly Commended
Iceberg,
South Atlantic
by Pam Lane ARPS

Selectors' Award -
King Penguins,
Salisbury Plain,
South Georgia
by Eddy Lane ARPS

