David Osborn FRPS

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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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Cover shot: Banded Demoiselle on Convolvulus (male)
by Trevor Davenport ARPS
Bronze Medal 2015
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 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 get in touch 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.
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 Licentiateship 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 Licentiateship 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 Licentiateship (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.

Richard
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
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
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*
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
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.
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
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.
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. Wilsons 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

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 Cladonia chlorophaea

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
Common Spotted Orchids
Marbled Whites on Pyramidal Orchid
Banded Demoiselles
Larinoides Spider with prey
Chalkhill Blues
Bronze Medal
Highly Commended

Gill Cardy FRPS
Great Grey Owl sitting in snow
Lesser Kestrel stretching wing

John Chamberlin FRPS
Sandhill Crane in flight
Sandhill Crane landing
Willet reflected
Highly Commended
Commended

Martin Chapman ARPS
Barn Owl hunting
Robber Fly

Sandie Cox ARPS
Polar Bear on ice flow
King Penguin in surf
Cheetah with cub

The Iris - Summer 2015
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  Selector Award
Common feather duster worm  Selector Award
Pink Anemonefish

Brian Ferry LRPS  Nursery-web Spider & egg sac on orchid

James Foad LRPS  Lichen Cladonia chlorophaeae  Selector Award
Mycena Sp. With Yellow Dung-fly (Scatophaga stercoraria)  Selector Award
Great Willow-Herb (Epilobium hirsutum)  Selector Award
Bluebells (Hyacinthoides non-scripta)  Selector Award
Buff-tip Larvae (Phalera bucephala)  Selector Award
Banded Demoiselle (Calopteryx splendens)  Selector Award

Gordon Follows ARPS  Black-headed Gull plunge diving  Bronze Medal
Kestrel with mouse  Highly Commended
Spoonbill with catch  Highly Commended
Black-winged Stilt feeding

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  Selector Award
Military Orchid - close-up detail  Highly Commended
Lady Slipper Orchid
Female and Male Adders  Gold Medal
Soaking wet juvenile Green Woodpecker
Red Squirrel

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, (Caltha palustris)
Common Dandelion, (Taraxacum officinale)
Comfrey, (Symphytum officinale)
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
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

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 (Scelphron spirifex)

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
Desmodium capitatum
Chinese Mantis ambushing a Gold Dust Weevil

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

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

Sonja Thompson FRPS  Cotton Grass reflections

Ken Wade LRPS  Marsh Helleborine
Parasol Mushroom
Brown Hare
Sanderling with fish
## The Nature Group Annual Exhibition 2015

### Projected Images

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| Accepted Projected Images | Jon C Allanson LRPS | Meadow Cranesbill |
| | | Black Vanilla Orchid |
| | | Female Parsons Chameleon |
| Mike Bews LRPS | Anacamptis pyramidalis |
| | Dactylhoriza 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 |
Sandie Cox ARPS African Elephants in Laikipia Cheetah portrait Commended
John Cucksey ARPS Bearded Seal Commended
Liz Cutting ARPS Hoopoe tossing grub Commended
Dick Daniell FRPS Gazania rigida Commended
Trevor Davenport ARPS Golden Scaly Cap (Pholiota aurivella) Coral Spot Fungus Banded Demoiselle on Convolvulus Female Orange-tip with dew Common Blue Butterfly with dew Black-veined White with Pollinia Bronze Medal
Wendy Eve ARPS Spine-cheeked Anemonefish Denise’s Pygmy Seahorse Commended
Peter Farmer Baobab and Milky Way African Fish Eagle Wattled Cranes and Black Lechwe at dawn White Rhinoceros Selector Award
James Foad LRPS Small Skippers (Thymelicus sylvestris) mating Gordon Follows ARPS Soaptree Yuccas Hoodoos at Bryce Canyon Slot canyon shapes Pygmy Cormorant Ocean Sunfish Mola mola Commended
Stewart Forbes Ceratosoma nudibranch Lionfish Nembrotha nudibranch
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
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 Selector Award
Pam Lane ARPS Leaving Grityvken, 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

The Iris - Summer 2015
Ann Mead
Common Blue in evening light
Enoplognatha guarding 5mm egg sac
Fly on Wooly 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

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
Brachythemis contaminata
Male Frog Beetle
The Banded Bush Hopper
Red Weaver Ants

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 Brittlegills
Fly Agarics
John Simpson
Tongue Orchid
Martagon Lily
Alpine Bellflower
Yellow-stemmed Bonnet
Black-veined White on Butterfly Orchid
Brimstone nectaring
Shield Bug on Pulsatilla seedhead
Scalloped Oak
Highly Commended

Lesley Simpson ARPS
White-legged Damselfly
Elongate Spider feeding
Mating Adonis Blues
Highly Commended

Judy Smith LRPS
Benzoin Bracket, Ischnoderma benzoinum
Crepidotus mollis

Mike Snelle LRPS
Common Dolphins
Great Egret in evening light
Wood Stork with nest material
Great Egret calling in flight

Nigel Symington LRPS
Parasol mushroom

Jim Tarbox LRPS
Porcelain Fungi cluster
Shaggy Scalycap

Steve Taylor ARPS
Polytrichum Commune Moss
Blue Throated Bee-Eaters and Fly
Plough Snails attacking stranded Medusa - South Africa
Painted Lady Butterfly
Lesser Antillean Bullfinch with nesting material

Ken Wade LRPS
Parasol Mushrooms
Marsh Helleborines
Common Spotted Orchid
Leaping Sea Trout
Curlew in flight
Commended

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
Fruits of Curled Dock
Fragrant Orchids
Tutsan in Grike
Rose Chafer on Wild Privet
Cattle Egret
Hover Fly
Selector Award
Commended

David Wessely ARPS
Two American White Pelicans
Reddish Egret at sunset
Great Egret landing
Two Spoonbills
Selector Award

Mick White LRPS
Goldfinch (Carduelis corduelis)
Red Deer Stag (Cervus elaphus)

Mike Wilkes FRPS
Crows attacking Buzzard at bait
Robin taking berries
Gold Medal
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 Packenham 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
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 Bullett 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
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
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
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
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.
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 want to will 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
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 peep-hole 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 peep hole and watch what the bird does in those

Green Shank

Red Shank

Oystercatcher
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.
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 2013</th>
<th>Year 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Receipts</strong></td>
<td><strong>Receipts</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7,434.90 Subscriptions</td>
<td>9,992.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>679.52 Life Subs.</td>
<td>720.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>630.00 Lectures &amp; workshops</td>
<td>1416.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,399.41 Annual Exhibition</td>
<td>1784.62</td>
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<tr>
<td>165.69 Interest received (to Cash Book)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>106.11 VAT refunded</td>
<td>70.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>318.00 IRIS Subs., Adverts, etc.</td>
<td>252.00</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>£10,733.63</strong></td>
<td><strong>sub totals</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>£14,235.39</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 2013</th>
<th>Year 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Payments</strong></td>
<td><strong>Payments</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7,403.98 Printing The Iris, incl. postage</td>
<td>7,465.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500.00 Lectures &amp; Workshops</td>
<td>1,020.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,118.72 Annual Exhibition</td>
<td>1,615.62</td>
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<tr>
<td>0.00 VAT paid</td>
<td>54.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,639.36 General Administration</td>
<td>2,564.56</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>£11,662.06</strong></td>
<td><strong>sub totals</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>£12,721.51</strong></td>
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</table>

-£928.43 **Receipts minus Payments**

**£1,513.88**

## Balance Sheet at 31st December 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature Group Cash Book</th>
<th>£</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balance brought forward from 2013</td>
<td>7,382.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleared Cheques from 2013</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncleared Cheques from 2014</td>
<td>11.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receipts minus Payments 2014</td>
<td>1,513.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>8,908.27</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Carried Forward to Financial Year 2015**

8,908.27

4th January 2015

Margery J Maskell (Hon. Treasurer)
Wildlife photography and Lyme disease

by Dr. Kevin Elsby

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