



Goldeneye displaying

© Dawn Osborn FRPS

Meteorological spring is here and the days are getting longer but it has been a dreadfully mild winter for many parts of the UK. As I finish this issue many parts of the country are still under water, the the lives of people in those areas devastated due to structural damage and/or flooding to their homes and businesses. Storms Ciara, Dennis and most recently Jorge, left a lot of damage in their wake. It certainly has been a very wet and windy winter but signs of Spring are visible - Daffodils are in bloom and birds are singing - the Goldeneye drake above seems to think Spring is here already.

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Welcome to the eighth issue of the Nature Group eNews.

In this issue

Changes to the PAGB's Definition of Nature that could possibly result in the end of the honest presentation of nature images and a complete lack of truth in images accepted in National Exhibitions.

News of Field Meetings to come and reports with images, of Meetings that have taken place.

Request

As always, we are very grateful to those Members who have organised outings but we would like to spread the net wider. Would you share an

area that you enjoy with fellow Members? Please consider running an event yourself or give some thought to someone you know who might do so.

Contact Nature Group Programme Coordinator, Ann Miles, at: annmiles70@gmail.com.

eNews enables members to share information with fellow members - for example, sites of natural history interest, field meetings, natural history and photography book reviews, items of photographic kit for sale. Anything that might be of interest to you will almost certainly be of interest to your fellow Nature Group members.

Nature Group members travel all around the world in pursuit of new photographic opportunities, so why not share your trip experiences with your fellow members and see your images in print?

NG Editor, Gerald Griffin ARPS, is always on the lookout for articles for forthcoming issues of The Iris.

We both look forward to hearing from you soon.

Dawn Osborn FRPS eNews Editor

RPS Nature Group Spring Meeting 2020



Saturday 4th April 2020

**Smethwick Photographic Society
The Old Schoolhouse, Churchbridge, Oldbury,
West Midlands, B69 2AS**

for directions see below)

Programme:

10:00hrs

Doors open, tea and coffee available

10:30hrs

Welcome and Introduction

10:40hrs

'A Year in the Life of a Yorkshire Wildlife Photographer', Steve Race

11:40hrs

Break for Lunch and to view the accepted Exhibition Prints on display.

Please bring your own packed lunch as lunch will not be available.

There is a dining area.

Tea, coffee and drinks will be available at the bar.

13:45hrs

44th Annual General Meeting of the RPS Nature Group

Agenda:

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes of the 43rd AGM 2019 (printed in Issue 134 of 'The Iris')
3. Matters arising
4. Chairman's Report
5. Treasurer's Report
6. Secretary's Report
7. Any Other Business
8. Date and Venue of the 45th AGM 2021

14:15hrs

Opening of the 2020 Exhibition

Presentation of the Awards

Projection of the accepted images

16:15hrs

Close

The accepted prints of the 2020 Exhibition will be on display throughout the day.

Directions:

From Junction 2 of the M5 follow the signs for the A4034 north towards West Bromwich.

Once on the A4034 stay in the left hand lane and after about 1/3 mile turn left at the first set of traffic lights into Park Street.

At the end of Park Street turn right into Churchbridge (cul-de-sac).

The Old Schoolhouse is the last but one building on the left.

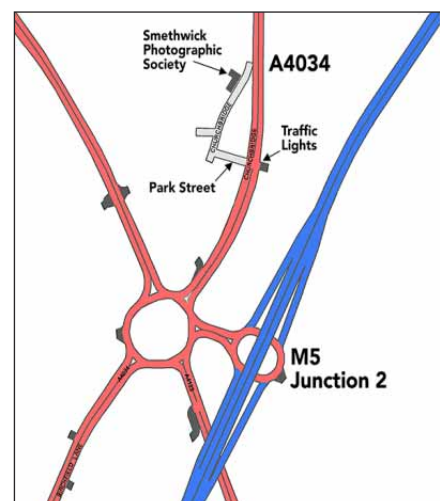
If you have SatNav use postcode: B69 2AS

Google Maps Coordinates: 52.497771, -2.019776

Although the long running road works between Junctions 1 & 2 of the M5 were due to be finished before the end of 2019, some may still be ongoing.

There are also ongoing roadworks on the A14 and also between the Junction of the A14/M6 and Birmingham.

Members using these roads are advised to check the status of road works before travelling and allow extra time if necessary.



News - PAGB Amend their Definition of Nature

While not governed by the PAGB, many Nature Group members will also belong to a Photographic Society or Camera Club in their area. These clubs will most likely be affiliated to their regional Photographic Federation (EAF, MCPF, NEMPF, etc.) which in turn are members of the Photographic Alliance of Great Britain (PAGB).

The PAGB's 'What We Do' page on its website says that:

"The Photographic Alliance of Great Britain (PAGB) is a membership organisation that co-ordinates activities for photographic Clubs in England, Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland (including the Channel Islands and Isle of Man). It does this through 15 geographical Federations.

"The PAGB organises photographic events for its Federations and Clubs. It offers services such as Recorded Lectures and its own photographic Distinctions, known as Awards for Photographic Merit.

"The PAGB has strong links with similar organisations. In the UK, it has cross-representation with the Royal Photographic Society. It liaises throughout the world via its membership of FIAP (The International Federation of Photographic Art)."

Back in 2014, the the rules for entering International Photographic Salons were set by the Photographic Society of America (PSA) and FIAP and were:

PSA: "No techniques that add to, relocate, replace, or remove pictorial elements except by cropping are permitted."

FIAP: "Any manipulation or modification to the original image is limited to minor retouching of blemishes and must not alter the content of the original scene."

In 2014, Nature Group member Richard Nicoll ARPS wrote a couple of articles for The Iris - these appeared in issues 118 and 119 and concerned nature images that did not adhere to the rules for these Exhibitions. The images in question were created by authors who deliberately misrepresented the original scene by "cloning elements from one place to another and/or from one or more other images."

PSA and FIAP replaced their individual definitions with a single joint 'Definition of Nature' that came in to force in January 2015 and was, at the time, supported by the RPS albeit without any consultation with either the Nature Group or the RPS Nature Distinctions Panel. This Definition was adopted by PAGB and published in PAGB e-news 136 (April 2015). It begins:

Nature photography is restricted to the use of the photographic process to depict all branches of natural history, except anthropology and archeology, in such a fashion that a well-informed person will be able to identify the subject material and certify its honest presentation.

The joint Definition was flawed and in 2017 members of the Nature Group attempted to effect changes to it. Unfortunately, the RPS withdrew from patronage of Exhibitions and therefore seem to have had no further interest in the Definition that they had agreed to.

In February 2018, the PAGB released their own less restrictive version of the Definition of Nature - some might say too relaxed - allowing cloning of image defects and minor distractions including overlapping elements when these did not distort the truth of the photographic statement.

"Processing of the captured image, by cropping, exposure adjustment, colour correction, noise minimisation, dodging/burning, HDR, focus stacking and sharpening is permitted, as is cloning of image defects and minor distractions including overlapping elements.

When questioned, a member of the PAGB Executive Committee defined overlapping elements as, for example, 'a blade of grass across a bird's eye". Not quite what I would have considered a minor distraction!

During the Spring of 2017 concerns were raised by Nature Group members about a suspected montaged nature image that had won awards at two BPE Exhibitions. The complaints were investigated and despite the excuses given by the author, he was eventually banned from entering PAGB events, but only for two years.

The PAGB Executive have just announced further changes to their General Conditions for PAGB Events (Inter Club, Inter Federation, GB Cup & GB Trophy) and their Definition of Nature:

Montage is permitted, provided that the finished image looks natural and has not been manipulated 'artistically'."

It is sad that PAGB have permitted the use of montaged nature images in its photography events - effectively they have just legitimised cheating! Affiliated clubs may find themselves obliged to use 'altered' or 'montaged' images if they are to have any chance of doing well in PAGB events and many honest nature images may fail to achieve recognition in favour of those that have been created in a computer.

PAGB's reasoning states that *'The object is to make compliance by entrant federations, clubs and photographers easier to understand, and so reduce problems arising between entrants and event organisers.'*

However, this seems to be an attempt to further reduce the number of nature images being used by competing clubs in the PAGB's Events. For many years there has been a restriction on the number of nature images competing clubs are allowed to use in the Interclub and Interfederation Events.

Continued on page 5

Proposed Changes to the RPS Nature Group Members' Exhibition.

The Nature Group Committee is presently considering two important changes to the Members' Exhibition and will present them for consideration and agreement to the Annual General Meeting on Saturday 4 April 2020.

First, it is proposed that a new category be included within the Exhibition to provide for those photographers aged 17 years or younger on the closing date for entry. The Conditions of Entry for the Nature Group Young Photographer's Category will be presented for consideration and agreement by Members at the AGM and if agreed will then be incorporated into the RPS Nature Group's Exhibition.

Second, there have been some recent changes to the 'Definition of Nature' by the Photographic Alliance of Great Britain http://www.thepagb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/nature_definition.pdf and it is likely that some camera clubs and photographic societies may likewise amend their exhibition rules and regulations with respect to Nature photographs. Consequently, the Committee has reviewed the Nature Group's Exhibition Conditions of Entry. The revised Conditions of Entry are detailed below and will be presented to the AGM for consideration and agreement. For clarity proposed changes to the existing Conditions of Entry are underlined. These proposed changes to the Nature Group's Exhibition will be of significance to Members and the Committee hopes that you will be able to attend the AGM and support them.

RPS Nature Group Members' Exhibition - Conditions of Entry

Entry is restricted to Members of the Nature Group of the Royal Photographic Society.

General Conditions

- All entries must be titled with the correct English name. Scientific names should only be used where there is no appropriate English name. Trivial or cute titles are not acceptable and will result in disqualification.
- All images must convey the truth of what the author saw at the time of the taking. Any image manipulations must be confined to adjustments of relative exposure, luminosity and/or colour and the removal of minor blemishes and distractions such as dust spots, dead pixels or other elements that are created by the camera. Neither the removal of image elements nor the insertion of any elements into the image are permissible.
- Images which show any of the following are not acceptable: pets, farm animals, captive animals (including animals in zoos and captive creatures at photographic workshops, wildlife centres or parks) or cultivated plants.
- Images which have been obtained using live bait are not acceptable.
- The final image must have been produced from a single negative, transparency or digital recording and must not be a combination of images. The only exception to this Condition of Entry is focus stacking which captures the picture by changing only the focal point in a series of otherwise identical images.
- Work accepted in previous Nature Group Exhibitions will not be eligible regardless of which Section entered (ie: prints should not have been submitted as slides or digital images; nor digital images as slides or prints). This also applies to near duplicates of previous acceptances.
- Authors of accepted images may be asked to supply evidence with respect to the veracity of their image: raw files (eg: CR2, NEF, ORF, PEF), original untouched JPEGs, original transparencies or original negatives may be required for authentication. DNG files are only permitted if this is the native raw format of the camera.
- Acceptance of entries will be notified by report cards which will be emailed or posted to all entrants.
- Successful entries to the Exhibition may be used to promote the Nature Group by inclusion in for example, the Exhibition DVD, The Iris, the RPS Journal and the Nature Group's section of the RPS website. Copyright of all images remains with the author.
- Whilst every care will be taken with all entries the Nature Group does not accept any responsibility or liability for loss or damage however caused.
- Entry into the Exhibition confirms acceptance by the entrant of all the above Conditions of Entry.
- Failure to comply with the Conditions of Entry will result in your entry being rejected.

Print Section Conditions

- Prints from UK entrants must be mounted within a size of 50cm x 40cm. Please keep the thickness of the mount to a maximum of 3mm. Mounts too thick may not be hung at exhibition venues. Please note that any print mounts that are not of the above size, or have velcro pads, peeling tape, or any sticky substance on the back that could damage other prints, will be disqualified.
- Prints from overseas entries can be sent unmounted and packages should be clearly marked on the outside: 'Photographs for Exhibition only - to be returned to sender. No commercial value'.
- The back of each mount or print must bear the name and address of the author, together with the number and title of the entry, corresponding with the entry form. The author's name must not appear on the front of the mount or print.
- Entry into the Exhibition is normally via the on-line entry system with the prints being sent by post to the Exhibition Secretary. Alternatively, instead of an on-line submission, entrants may send by post to the Exhibition Secretary a CD/DVD containing digital files of their prints and the entry form along with their prints. (Please see the notes below relating to the format of digital files on the CD/DVD.)
- Accepted prints will be retained for display in a number of venues. These prints will be returned after the Exhibition has been completed.

- All prints that are not accepted into the Exhibition will be returned as soon as possible after the opening of the Exhibition but only if the correct return postage has been paid in advance. The prints will be returned in their original packaging so please ensure that it is adequate for this purpose.

Digital Section Conditions

- Maximum image size is 1600 pixels horizontally x 1200 pixels vertically. Files must be in jpeg format, in the sRGB colour space and with a resolution of 300 pixels per inch. Please do not add a background fill as the projection software will do this automatically.
- If, instead of using the on-line entry system, a CD/DVD is used it should be clearly labelled with your name and distinctions and contain a folder with up to 16 image files.
Folders should be named as:
Name and RPS Distinction. (eg: Joe Blogs ARPS).
Files should be named as: Category and number corresponding to the details on the entry form, space, and title. (e.g. PA1 Common Seal, DB1 Oxeye Daisies).
Please use both upper and lower case, as in the examples above.
Burn as a Data CD/DVD. Do not use options to write 'Session' or 'Multi Session'. All CDs/DVDs will be destroyed after the close of the Exhibition.

Continued from page 3 ...

However, this restriction did not have the desired effect and nature images were given pictorial titles and cloning so that they were not eligible in the nature category. In Feb 2018, PAGB revised their Definition of Nature and at the same time ruled that 'if an image looks like nature then it is nature'. We can only surmise that this latest revision has been brought about due to those who have sought to further abuse the rules with nature montages.

You could take the view that if, PAGB had changed the rules to read that competing clubs must use at least 3 images each of nature, sport, creative/composite, landscape, portraiture, etc., there would have been no need to change the definition of nature.

The PAGB Cup for Nature (PDI) and Trophy for Nature (Prints) are just for nature images, the only restriction being a maximum of three images per author. It is even more difficult to understand the reasoning behind allowing montaged images into these competitions.

Will it filter down to National Exhibitions? Yes, it could. However easy it may be to spot an image which looks suspicious, it is much more difficult to prove it and requires a lot of extra work on the part of the Exhibition's Organisers - some are already considering whether or not to use the new definition in next year's Exhibitions. Hopefully they will stick with the 2018 version.

This revision to the PAGB's 'Definition of Nature' is ill thought out, misguided. It weakens the truth of all nature images not just those in PAGB Events.

I would urge you all to email the President of your Federation and complain that they did not vote against this revision. I can't promise you that doing this will have any effect but we shouldn't just accept it without expressing our concerns.

Dawn Osborn FRPS

News of forthcoming Field Meetings & Events

Saturday March 21st -

Stour Wood & Estuary and Mistley Walls.

An outing for wading birds, spring flowers and general nature photography. In spring, Copperas Wood (part of the Stour Estuary Reserve) is a mass of Wood Anemones and other spring flowers while at Mistley Walls you can get close views of the Waders especially if we have an incoming tide to drive them up the beach. Mute Swans and Gulls are fed here by locals and offer good flight photography opportunities.

Details and Booking:

<https://rps.org/events/groups/nature/2020/march/visit-to-stour-wood-and-estuary-and-mistley-walls/>

Sunday March 22nd -

Public Trip on an Original Thames Barge

The emphasis of the cruise is on bird watching plus a walk along sea wall. This is a public event that you book with TopSail. Details of the day:

<https://rps.org/events/groups/nature/2020/march/public-bird-watching-sail-walk/>

Nature Group Advisory Day

Saturday 18th April 2020, 09.30 hrs - 16.30 hrs

Smethwick Photographic Society .

(doors open at 09:00)

All available ARPS and FRPS Advice places are now booked but there are still places available for observers.

RPS/non RPS members (£20/25)

Nature Distinction Advisors in attendance:

Mick Durham FRPS

Kevin Elsby FRPS,

Gianpiero Ferrari FRPS,

Saturday May 2nd -

Pasque Flowers, Royston, Hertfordshire.

If it is a 'good' year for the Pasque flower, an area of the chalk downland is carpeted in purple Pasque flowers. If you would like help with flower photography, then this would be an ideal outing for you to come along and learn / practise techniques. Because of the delicate nature of the habitat, details will be given to those booking on the outing rather than open advertising

Wednesday May 27th -

Christopher Cadbury Wetland Reserve, Upton Warren

Leader Jeff Steady

This fabulous wetland nature reserve will not disappoint. Owned by Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, it comprises two sets of pools - the northern freshwater Moors Pools and the southern saline Flashes pools. Upton Warren is Worcestershire's premier bird reserve and alive all year with large numbers of birds. Further details and booking:

<https://rps.org/events/groups/nature/2020/may/christopher-cadbury-wetland-reserve-upton-warren/>

Saturday June 6th -

Field Meeting at Ainsdale Dunes

Leader: Trevor Davenport ARPS

Ainsdale Dunes is a fascinating and ever-changing habitat with many photographic opportunities throughout the seasons; however, early summer is usually a period when the dunes are richly rewarding for both botanic and entomological subjects.

Dr. Phil Smith, MBE, has kindly agreed to join us again for this field meeting; Phil is a noted expert on the Sefton Coast and author of 'The Sands of Time' and 'The Sands of Time Revisited'.

<https://rps.org/events/groups/nature/2020/june/field-meeting-to-the-ainsdale-dunes/>

Wednesday June 10th -

Martin Down for Orchids and Butterflies

Leader: Duncan Locke LRPS

Martin Down is a 350 hectare lowland grassland reserve and is one of the largest areas of uninterrupted chalk downland in Britain. It is home to an exceptional collection of plants, animals and butterflies associated with chalk downland and scrub habitats, including a number of rare or threatened species.

<https://rps.org/events/groups/nature/2020/june/martin-down-national-nature-reserve-hampshire/>

Sunday June 21st - RSPB Lakenheath Fen

details will be available on the Nature group website area under Events: <https://rps.org/groups/nature/>

June 25th-29th - Nature Group Summer Residential Weekend to Wales

(See page 7)

Thursday August 20th - RSPB Snettisham Spectacular

Leader: Nick Bowman

From late summer onwards, tens of thousands of wading birds gather on the mudflats where they roost overnight. During an incoming tide, these birds are pushed closer to the beach and on a high spring tide vast flocks of Knot, Dunlin and Oystercatchers take to the air en masse as the high tides cover the mudflats. The commotion of thousands of wingbeats, excited calls and swirling flocks creates an exhilarating nature spectacle.

<https://rps.org/events/groups/nature/2020/august/rspb-snettisham-spectacular/>

October 16th-19th - Nature Group Autumn Residential Weekend to the New Forest.

(See page 8)

RPS Nature Group

Summer Residential Weekend

Wednesday 24th June to Monday 29th June 2020

Pembrokeshire & Margam Discovery Centre.

Wednesday 24th June. Participants will arrive at their chosen accommodation on Wednesday 24th June in order to take part in the activities planned for Thursday and Friday.

Participants are responsible for booking their own accommodation close to Martin's Haven (a list of nearby accommodation can be supplied by the organiser, James Foad).

Thursday 25th June - Field Trip to West Williamston Nature Reserve.

This will be open to all Nature Group members to attend and advertised separately

Friday 26th June - Skomer Island

A visit to Skomer Island has been planned, weather and tide permitting.

There is a separate cost of £11 for this and the visit is only open to participants of the Residential Meeting.

Following the trip to Skomer, participants will head to Margam Discovery Centre for the remainder of the Residential Meeting.



Photo by Brett Lewis

Costs are as follows

The cost for Margam Discovery centre including Bed, Breakfast, Evening meal & packed lunches is £175.77.

To secure your place a deposit of £75.77 in the form of a cheque made payable to the Field Studies Council is required upon booking.

We will have the use of the Centre's Minibus for which there is a small charge to cover mileage.

Cost for the visit to Skomer is at a reduced rate of £11 as we are booked through Dale Fort Field Study Centre and will pay separately

Please contact the organiser James Foad LRPS for further details

Email: jamesfoadlrps@inbox.com

Tel: 07834 810430

RPS Nature Group Autumn Residential Weekend

Foxlease, New Forest.

Friday 16th - Monday 19th October 2020



James Foad LRPS, organiser of this event, is now accepting bookings on a first come first served basis for the

2020 Autumn Residential Weekend

to be held at

**Foxlease Girl Guiding Activities Centre,
Lyndhurst, Hampshire.**

Foxlease combines the classic charm of a Georgian manor house
and the beauty of the surrounding area of the New Forreest.

The cost for a Single room is £310.00
A deposit of £125.00 is required to secure your place.

For further details please contact the organiser:
James Foad LRPS Tel: 07834 810430
E-mail: jamesfoadlrps@inbox.com

Please include "Nature Group Autumn Residential Weekend 2020" in the Subject line.

Reports of Past Events

November 4th - Epping Forest

(joint with East Anglia Region)

Around a dozen Members gathered at High Beech for a ramble through Epping Forest searching for fungi. The wet conditions had been very beneficial for fungi and those attending the meeting were rewarded with sufficient fungi and suitable lighting .

December 8th - Macro Workshop near Cambridge.

15 Members spent a day in Scotsdales Garden Centre concentrating on Macro photography, especially Focus Stacking. We were unfortunate that one advisor was taken ill, so the event lacked a software expert. We also found that the floor was sprung so long exposures were difficult. We will look for another location as Macro and Focus Stacking are areas where exchanging expertise is very valuable.

December 31st/January 1st Hunstanton/Titchwell

(joint with East Anglia Region).

Ten Members, partners and friends spent the day photographing the many species present at Titchwell amidst crowds of bird watchers there to start their 2020 new bird lists

January 8th Starlings - Ham Wall

Nature Group Member, Annette Beardsley, led a party of 5 Members to view the starling murmuration at Ham Wall in Somerset on a less than ideal day. Annette reported that they were advised that the Starlings were on the move and likely to roost across the road at Shapwick Heath, so we relocated and were rewarded with a superb display. Conditions for photography were far from good but everyone enjoyed the spectacle.

February 15th - Welney Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust.

A dozen Members of the Nature Group from many parts of the country visited Welney WWT on Saturday 15th February. With wind speeds already high as storm Dennis approached and the light very poor quality, we had to adapt how we worked but Members produced some excellent results

You will find further details of these past meetings complete with lots more images by going to the News Section of the Nature Group's site:

<https://rps.org/search/?content=News&groups=e40858b3-8db8-480a-8c7d-8d1e7f5cabf1>

More images from Welney on the following page



Mute Swan by Duncan Locke



Pochard landing by Ann Miles



Long-tailed Tit by Christine Holt



Preening Whooper by Christine Holt



Whooper portrait by Clive Ward



Whooper Swan stretching by Steve Parrish



View of Welney by Mark Gillett

Whooper Swans at Welney WWT.



Swan Movement by Maggie Bullock

Nature Group Field Meeting: West Williamston Nature Reserve, Pembrokeshire, Wales. Thursday 25th June 2020

Meeting place and time:

Car park at 09.30am for a 10.00am start

Grid Reference:

O.S. Explorer map OL36 South Pembrokeshire. Site centre: SN033058

Directions:

Follow Signs to West Williamston village, when in the village look out for a red phone box and take the lane that leads behind it. Continue down this lane until you reach the reserve car park, just before the cattle grid. Do not pass this point as the road leads to a private residence.

Leaders:

Duncan Locke LRPS and James Foad LRPS

Cost: £0**Main Subjects of Interest:**

Insects, Flora and Birds, this reserve has one of the Largest colonies of Brown Hairstreak. Also among the plants of note are Bee Orchid, Fragile Glasswort, Hairy Rock-cress, Hairy Violet and Yellow-wort. Birds include: Curlew, Little Grebe, Grey Heron, Shelduck, Mute Swan, Cormorant and Oystercatcher.

Further species present in the woodland include:

Tawny Owl and Wren.

Items to bring:

Allergy medications/cream and other medications as required. Waterproofs, waterproof walking boots or wellingtons. Packed Lunch, flask/hot drink. Camera kit including tripod, shutter release and memory cards.

Additional information:

This Field trip is open to all members, not just those booked on the Residential Weekend. Please note that one leader may change before the day. There are no facilities on this reserve so you are advised to bring some cash money with you in case you should need to use a pub toilet.

For further Information please contact:

James Foad LRPS

Tel: 07834 – 810430 or

E-mail: jamesfoadlrps@inbox.com



*Brown Hairstreak (Thecla betulae), female, basking.
Image copyright of John Bebbington FRPS 2020*

Some Thoughts on the New (2020) PAGB Nature Definition

In February 2020, the Photographic Alliance of Great Britain (PAGB) issued a new Nature Definition - for PAGB competitions only - that included the paragraph: *“Montage is permitted, provided that the finished image looks natural and has not been manipulated ‘artistically’”.*

This new paragraph has created a very heated debate in photographic circles, especially amongst those photographers who enter the Nature sections of photographic exhibitions and competitions. It has caused alarm amongst these photographers for a variety of reasons: e.g. it gives license and free rein for those that are adept in manipulation to ‘cheat’; it is completely against the spirit of Nature Photography; it is a definition that has been made without consultation with the Nature Photography fraternity; it will put undue pressure on the selectors chosen to judge the competitions that will allow this definition, and that the definition has been made without any stated purpose other than most nature images are already ‘manipulated’ by utilising software to change tones, soften backgrounds and include photo stacking.

Let me declare at the outset that I am a Natural History photographer, and that I have been entering national and International exhibitions and competitions for many years. The new definition may not affect me unduly since I am probably nearing the end of my photographic journey, however, it’s the ramifications of this ruling that concerns me - and many others -greatly.

This Definition, in my opinion, denigrates the real purpose of Natural History Photography, and in doing so, reinforces the growing concern amongst many, that “anything goes” in this particular genre.

We appear to have completely lost touch with the real purpose of Nature Photography which is - again in my opinion - the study of natural objects, especially in the field, from a scientific or observational point of view; and to record these objects photographically in strict accordance with the Nature Photographers’ Code of Practise.

Many photographers who are not members of the Nature Group, even some who consider themselves Nature Photographers, may question “what is the Nature Photographers’ Code of Practise”? The Nature Photographers’ Code of Practise was produced by The Nature Group of The Royal Photographic Society. It was revised in 1997 and 2007 in consultation with the RSPB and the three Nature Conservation Councils from that time. The Code is in the form of a published leaflet of eight pages. I consider that many of the images we now see in exhibitions would fall foul of this Code of Practise.

The principle tenet of The Code states:

*“There is one hard and fast rule, whose spirit must be observed at all times. **The welfare of the subject is more important than the photograph.**”*

The Code is quite strict in its coverage of photographing birds at the nest, mammals and birds away from the nest, specially protected animals, invertebrates, plants and fungi. It has a section called The Truth of the Final Image, which states:

A nature photograph should convey the essential truth of what the photographer saw at the time it was taken. No radical changes should be made to the original photograph, nor additions made from any source, whether during the processing in the darkroom, or through digital/electronic manipulation. The removal of minor blemishes or distractions is permissible.

In 2014, The Royal Photographic Society, the Photographic Society of America and the International Federation of Photographic Art ((FIAP) (*Fédération Internationale de l’Art Photographique*), worked together to produce a joint definition of ‘nature’ which aimed specifically to reinforce the requirement that images should not be manipulated. These august bodies had collectively recognised that ‘cheating’ in nature images was becoming widespread through the use of clever manipulation which radically changed the truth (and hence the impact) of the original image. These organisations began to produce a list of ‘miscreants’ who were to be banned.

Sadly, this definition was, once again, produced without consultation with nature photography organisations, and was contentious and confusing, as well as being overzealous. Subsequent “relaxations” by The PAGB have now gone totally full circle so that now we have a charter for potential cheats as they were defined in the original 2014 PSA/RPS/FIAP definition.

In addition, the RPS/PSA/FIAP Definition, which came into force on January 1st, 2015 was supposed to be used by all International Exhibitions recognised or patronised by any or all of these organisations. The definition was to apply to all Nature, Wildlife and Nature Theme sections of exhibitions recognised by PSA, RPS and FIAP that closed on or after 1.1.2015.

The new PAGB definition has, of course, really thrown a spanner into the works of the PSA/RPS/FIAP definition by specifically stating that:

“Montage is permitted, provided that the finished image looks natural and has not been manipulated ‘artistically’”.

Chaos now reigns supreme. PSA, RPS and FIAP say one thing; yet the PAGB, in its' new definition, appears to be saying the diametrical opposite.

Without wishing to be too facetious and start citing examples of Polar Bears chasing Penguins or Tigers hunting Zebra on the plains of Africa, the opportunity now exists, clearly, to put the odd insect into a bird picture, or pop a berry into a Waxwing's mouth etc, when these things were not part of the original image. The flood gates, which were partly ajar, have now been fully opened, and, as stated earlier: anything goes!

As I grow ever older, it seems to me that we now live in a world where the lowest common denominator is quite acceptable and rules that were once enforced for the good of the majority, can now be broken with impunity to the point where the rule is cancelled and it becomes a free for all. As Cicero is reputed to have said "who benefits"? In this instance, not the genuine Nature Photographer who still tries to abide by the original - and well meaning - Code of Practise. Nor will the selectors and judges benefit when they have to ponder on what is real and what is faked. The photographer who enters FIAP and PSA Exhibitions may now wish to keep separate registers of their images so that a 'montage' doesn't end up in one of theirs and they then become a cheat and banned.

My added concern is that the welfare of our flora and fauna appears to be very low on the list of nature

photography thinking these days. By relaxing definitions as above we could be implying that it is acceptable to do whatever it takes to get a good picture. By association this could mean that plants could be moved and animals subjected to constant messing about with in studios and so much more. Where does it end?

Well it probably ends here for me since I will have probably shot my bolt with PAGB and, in all probability with my local federation. Also, I will not be entering any BPE Exhibition that uses the new PAGB definition. This is probably no great loss to them really, but, for what it's worth, it may have ended my BPE career and it has depressed me. In conversation with a number of fellow Nature Photographers, my understanding is that I am not alone.

I shall still go out with my camera and seek butterflies, invertebrates, flowers and fungi to photograph in their environment; and I shall enjoy it. As far as I'm concerned being there is what it's all about - coming home with a good photograph is a bonus. Nature Photography is my hobby and it has given me countless hours of pleasure and reward over a very long period of time. I can't allow an unwise and injudicious definition to jeopardise all that.

Trevor Davenport ARPS DPAGB ABPE
February 28th, 2020.

News

Facebook

The group now has a Facebook Group that you are all welcome to join and to contribute posts and images. Go to the Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/188690442327099/> and request to join – you will be asked to supply your RPS Membership number and confirm you are a Member of the Nature Group

Workshops

We already have plans for a Processing Day to help you get the best from your images but please feel free to make suggestions for other events that you would like to see in the programme.

New Website

Ralph Snook ARPS has done a great job getting the Group set up with a presence on the new website while Ann Miles FRPS has looked after the Events and News side to keep it updated. It is hoped that this is to members' liking. We are certainly one of the Groups/Regions with a good presence on the website as the usage statistics for the groups/regions shows.

We are aware of the problems experienced by some members when trying to find the Nature Group section of the site. The RPS have been made aware of this.

You may copy the link below to your browser and save it to your favourites:
<https://rps.org/groups/nature/>

Announcements & For Sale

Dates for your diary

Entries Invited

Forthcoming BPE National Exhibitions and International Salons with Nature sections :*

South Birmingham P.S. Image 20 Exhibition

Closes 8th March 2020

www.southbirminghamphotographicsociety.co.uk/exhibition

Cheltenham International Salon of Photography 2020*

Closes 1st April 2020

www.CheltenhamCameraClub.co.uk

Neath & District P.S. UK Salon

Closes 18th April 2020

www.neathphotographicsociety.org

Robin Hood Open Exhibition 2020

Nottingham & Notts P.S.

Closing 25th April 2020

www.robinhoodexhibition.co.uk

Rushden Open Photography Exhibition

Closes April 2020

www.rushdenopen.co.uk

Winchester National Exhibition

Closes June 2020

www.winphotosoc.co.uk

Beyond Group

Closes July 2020

beyondgroup.org.uk

Dingwall National Projected Image

Closes September 2020

www.dingwallcameraclub.com

Shrewsbury Open Photography Exhibition

Closes September 2020

photocompentries.net/?=ShropshirePS

Frome Wessex Salon of Photography

Closes October 2020

www.fromewessexcameraclub.com/salon.html

Members are advised to check details of entry requirements, rules and closing dates on Salon websites before preparing their entry.

For Sale

Nikon D7200 DSLR with battery

Nikkor AF-S 80mm-400mm f/4.5-5.6 G ED lens

LowePro tele lens case -

takes camera with above lens attached.

All in mint condition having been rarely used.

For sale as a single kit - will not be split.

£1300 for all items

(lens alone now costs £1990)

**Contact: John Myring at 01384 878066 or
email: one@1jhm.uk**

For Sale

**Lenscoat™ protective lens cover to fit
Sigma 150-600 f/5-6.3 Sport lens**

Realtree Advantage design

**Purchased new two years ago, never used and
still in its original bag.**

Cost: £99.99 when new.

Selling for £50.00

Contact: Dawn Osborn FRPS

naturegroup_enews_editor@btinternet.com

For Sale

**If you have items of photographic equipment
that you no longer need or use, why not
advertise them for sale in eNews?**

It costs members nothing to advertise and the
advert will be read by over 800 members of the
Nature Group.

**To advertise your items contact the Editor at:
naturegroup_enews_editor@btinternet.com**

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All contributions should be submitted to the Editor at: naturegroup_eneews_editor@btinternet.com. Any item of interest to nature photographers is welcomed, including reviews on equipment and relevant books. Copy should be submitted as .txt or .doc files by email. Please do not send hand written copy.

Digitally captured photographic images should be supplied as flattened 8bit sRGB tif or jpg files, 6" x 4" at 300 pixels per inch. Please do not email larger images.

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The views expressed within Nature Group eNews are solely those of the contributor and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editor or the Nature Group Committee.

Distribution:

eNews is available to members as a download from the Nature Group Members section of the RPS website. An RPS Bulletin advising members of its availability will be emailed to Members using addresses supplied by them to the RPS Membership Department in Bristol. Please update them if you change your email address.

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Hon. Treasurer of the Society;
Chairman of the Nature A & F Distinctions Panel

* Members please note:

David O'Neill is currently acting as Nature Group Hon. Treasurer. He cannot continue to perform this role indefinitely on top of his other commitments to the Nature Group. If you have the necessary experience, please help the Nature Group by volunteering for this very important role. Please contact David O'Neill for further information. Email: david.oneill_nh@outlook.com

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, E-mail: rpsngexsec@btinternet.com

