



RPS Nature Group – Minutes of the 46th AGM 9th April 2022

The 46th Annual General Meeting of the RPS Nature Group was held on Saturday 9th April 2022 at Smethwick Photographic Society starting at 1315hrs. It was attended by 25 Members.

The AGM Agenda, Minutes of the 45th AGM 2021, Officers' Reports and Programme Coordinator's Report were made available in advance of the AGM and remain available on the RPS website under:

<https://rps.org/groups/nature/agm-reports/>

Welcome and Apologies for Absence:

David O'Neill LRPS, Chair of the RPS Nature Group welcomed Group Members to the Meeting.

Apologies for Absence had been received from: Margaret Beardsmore, John Bebbington, Maggie Bullock, John Curgenvin, Moira Ellice, Thomas Hanahoe, Roger Hance, Christine Holt, Margaret Johnson, Patricia Kreyer, Dawn Osborn, Claire Pettingale, Nicholas Reuss, Richard Revels, Colin Smith and Tracy Marshall-Grant (RPS Development Director).

Minutes of the 45th AGM 2021 (printed in Issue 140 of The Iris, Summer 2021 and available on the RPS Nature Group Website):

There were no corrections to the Minutes and it was proposed by Trevor Davenport and seconded by James Foad that the Minutes be approved.

Matters Arising:

None.

Chair's Report – David O'Neill LRPS:

Firstly, I would like to welcome Nick Bowman and Christine Holt onto the Committee.

Events – Field Trips and Zoom: Ann Miles continues to organise an impressive number of Field Trips with new events planned in several parts of the country.

She would like to extend this to as many counties as possible and in order to achieve this, we are hoping to encourage many more Members to offer to host events in their local areas. All suggestions and support will be welcome.

We are also looking for Zoom speakers so that we can continue to offer a variety of talks that are available to all Members regardless of geographical location. Please contact Ann or any other Committee Member if you have any suggestions.

Nature Group Advisory Days: the RPS is now encouraging the Nature Group to run Advisory Days, which will allow us to build on the success of our last one in 2020.

All the places for Advice on the first of these on 26th March have been filled, but there will be another later in the year, when we hope to be able to include prints.

The Iris: the new A4 version of the Iris has received a lot of very positive feedback from Members, regarding both the printed and electronic versions and I would like to congratulate Dawn Osborn for her excellent work.

The larger size makes it more flexible for organising the content and layout of articles. It also allows more space for Members' images to be shown at a more suitable size to showcase the photographer's work.

The feedback also suggests a need to support both printed and electronic versions and we already have a system in place for anyone who prefers to receive electronic copies instead of a printed magazine. We can also monitor and report on the take-up of an electronic version.

Feedback from Members is always welcome and we also hope that you will be inspired to submit articles to Dawn for future editions.

Members' Photography Competition: we are also planning to launch a Members' photography competition this summer and this will be announced as soon as we have the arrangements in place to support it.

Young Persons Exhibition / Competition: with the support of our new RPS Development Director Tracey Marshall Grant, we have recently held a meeting with Education Manager, Liz Williams, and Young Persons Engagement Officer, Elise Wootten, to discuss a Young Photographers Exhibition / Competition for the Nature Group.

It will take time for the Society to gather the information necessary to support this, so the most likely outcome in the short term is a competition for the families of Members.

Nature Group - Code of Practice: Duncan Locke is currently working on updating our Code of Practice which will be covered in more detail in his report.

Environmental and Social Responsibility: we have been approached by the Chair of the RPS Environmental and Social Responsibility Committee (Martin Hancock ARPS) and have agreed to work with him to devise a policy for the Nature Group.

The Landscape and Travel Groups have draft policies documented, but there appears to be no commonly agreed standard for this at the moment, although it is a relatively new initiative that will undoubtedly change in the coming months.

Our current approach is to be mindful of the environment and make common sense decisions to reduce our impact, such as encouraging more local events to reduce travel and increased use of Zoom for both Committee Meetings and online talks for Members.

Treasurer's Report - Peter Ward:

This is included at the end of these Minutes.

Secretary's Report – Duncan Locke ARPS:

Committee: since last year's AGM on the 24th April 2021, we have had six well attended Zoom Committee Meetings plus a number of shorter ones to discuss particular issues. Committee Meetings will continue to be held on Zoom at about 6 to 8 weeks intervals unless there is an opportunity for the Committee to meet face-to-face, such as following the AGM. As noted previously, the use of Zoom for Committee Meetings has resulted in a considerable financial saving for the Group as well as reducing our carbon footprint.

There have been two changes to the Committee during the year. Gerald Griffin stood down as Editor of The Iris at the end of September 2021 and Julia Andrew left the Committee in mid-November 2021 due to pressure of work and family commitments. I would like to thank them both for the tremendous amount of hard work that they put into the running of the Group. Dawn Osborn has again taken on the role of Editor of The Iris with the consequence that we have ceased publication of eNews.

At full strength the Committee should have twelve Members and with the departure of Gerald and Julia it was reduced to just eight. I have two roles as Vice Chair and Honorary Secretary and Ralph Snook is both Exhibition Secretary and Webmaster. Going forward, I am very pleased to say the Christine Holt and Nick Bowman have agreed to join the Committee with Christine taking on part of the Secretary's role and Nick helping Ann Miles with Field Meetings. We are also aware that we have some specialist roles on the Committee and long term will have the difficult task of filling these.

Changes to The Iris: with the change of Editor, the Committee decided that The Iris, which almost since its birth as the Nature Group Newsletter in March 1976, has always been in A5 format would double in size to A4 format. As you will be well aware, photography and magazine design have changed massively over recent years and the existing A5 format of The Iris was proving very restrictive. Moving to A4 format proved very popular with the membership and the Committee received close to 60 very positive comments from Members following the publication of the Winter 2021-22 A4 issue of The Iris.

Another change which arose from discussion at last year's AGM is that we now offer Members the option of not receiving a paper copy of The Iris through the post, but instead reading it electronically on the RPS website; at present 22 Members have taken up this option.

Nature Group Membership: I act as Membership Secretary in that I monitor the number of Members in the Group and send a welcome letter and a copy of the latest issue of The Iris to each New Member. The membership of the Group as of the 1st March 2022 was 960 as compared to 919 Members on the 1st March 2021, so I am very pleased to report that there has been a healthy 4.5% increase in membership during the year. Over the period 1st March 2021 to 1st March 2022, 183 New Members joined the Group and 138 Members left so there continues to be a high turnover of Members.

As of the 1st March 2022, the Group had 890 Members in the UK, Eire, the Isle of Man and Channel Islands plus 70 overseas Members. The biggest overseas Group is in the USA, where membership has roughly doubled over the past year to 23 Members.

Code of Practice: the Nature Photographers Code of Practice, which is an internationally recognised and highly respected document produced by the Nature Group was last revised in 2007 and is now out of date in many respects. I have been working on revising it, firstly to ensure that it is fully up-to-date and secondly to simplify some of existing rather old fashioned language to make it more accessible and also more understandable to overseas photographers whose first language is not English.

I still have to check and update some of the detailed factual content and I am aware that it should make reference to changes in technology such as the use of drones. I also believe that a summary document that could, for example, be sent to Wildlife Trusts would make it more accessible. My plan is to complete the revision work within the next two months.

What Do Nature Group Members Want? As I said at last year's AGM, I believe that the aim of the Group is to inspire and educate its Members into taking better images of the natural world and so we must organise events for Members to get together and develop their nature photography. We now have an ever growing programme of Field Meetings, Workshops and Residential Weekends. It would be very helpful if you could let Ann Miles or any other Committee Member know what events you would like the Group to organise.

Programme Coordinator's Report - Ann Miles FRPS:

The Nature Group organised many events through 2021 and into 2022 with a series of Zoom lectures and technique talks and a wide variety of Field Trips. All events are listed on the Nature Group home page when ready for booking and News items and Galleries are created after the events. The talks were excellent and many thanks to those who have helped provide this service to Members - if you missed any of these, recording of almost all of these can be found from the Nature Group home page under Event Recordings. Mick Durham (Chair of the Natural History Photography Distinction Panel) gave us a very interesting and comprehensive explanation of the Natural History Distinctions. We have run one online Advisory Day last month and are hoping to run a 'live' Advisory Day at Smethwick in the autumn so that those long-neglected prints can be viewed and commented on.

As you will have seen from The Iris, we have run a great number of Field Trips since the last AGM and have many more planned. Thanks to all the people who have run or offered to run events. We have had lots of fun on the outings and occasionally taken a decent photograph.

We are still looking for Volunteers to help organise events so we can spread the locations out over more of the country. I have emails from Northern and Scottish Members wishing the events were not so far away, so it would be great if anyone in the more northern counties were willing to share their favourite locations – you do not have to be an expert in any field, just have an enthusiasm for a locality and its wildlife.

We would also love to hear your suggestions for events – do you want more Zoom events and what topics; more practical workshops and topics; ideas for Field Meetings.

Any Other Business:

Ann Miles reminded Members that there is a Nature Group Facebook page and at present about 20% of Group Members have joined the Facebook Group. It is administered by Julia Wainwright, who should be contacted if you wish to join.

Date and Venue of the 47th RPS Nature Group AGM 2023:

The 47th Annual General Meeting of the RPS Nature Group will be held on Saturday 1st April 2023 (date to be confirmed) at Smethwick Photographic Society, The Old Schoolhouse, Oldbury, B69 2AS or on-line on Zoom.

The AGM forms an important part of the Nature Group Spring Meeting. Another key component is the showing of the prints accepted into the Annual Exhibition, which works well at Smethwick Photographic Society. The Committee recognises, however, that an online AGM on Zoom would enable many more Members, both in the UK and overseas to attend the AGM, and so will give careful consideration to the format of future Spring Meetings to ensure that as many Members as possible can be involved.

The AGM closed at 1342hrs.

Treasurer's Report for AGM 2022

Peter Ward

Report for the Year Ended 31st December 2021

Cash Book Summary:

Current Account Balance:	31 st Dec 2020	£ 26,584.70
Income for 12 Months to 31 st Dec:		£ 20,994.48
Expenditure for 12 Months to 31 st Dec:		(£ 19,209.37)
Closing Balance:	31 st Dec 2021	£ 28,369.81
Bank Account Balance:	31st Dec 2021	£ 28,369.81

Income and Expenditure Summary:

	Income:	Expenditure:
Members Subscriptions:	£ 16,997.74	
Deposits	£ 1,905.00	
Admin:		£ 1,271.94
Exhibition:		£ 48.25
Events in Year:	£ 2050.00	£ 480.38
Printing & Distribution (Iris):		£ 9,479.46
Distinction Days:		£ 894.74
Residential		£ 6,884.60
Talks and donations		£ 150.00
Other Income	£ 41.74	
Totals	£ 20,994.48	£ 19,209.37

Notes:

1. Income up by 35% and expenditure up by 53% but still managed a surplus of £1790
2. Income increase driven by an additional £4310 in membership subs.
3. Main reason in expenditure increase was accounted for by paying the deposits for the residential trips put back because of COVID. The income for these trips had been taken in 2019/20

Summary:

Income has increased this year, but expenditure has also increased significantly. This increase can be viewed as a one off caused by Covid and the phasing of the income and the expenditure for the trips.

Peter Ward
1st April 2022