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Issue No. 149 / Summer 2024

THE IRIS



Celebrating ARPS Distinction Successes



Associate Panels

Page 10 'My Long Path to ARPS' by Hazel Gwatkin ARPS
1. Western Honey Bee (*Apis mellifera*)
2. Dark Green Fritillary (*Speyeria aglaja*)

Page 30 'A Highland Panel' by Sheila McKenzie ARPS
3. Southern Hawker (*Aeshna cyanea*)
4. Reed Bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*)



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- Copy should be sent as .txt or .doc files by email. Please do not send typed or hand written copy.
- Digitally captured photographic images to support your article (whether vertical or horizontal) supplied as 8bit tif or jpg files, 216mm (2555 pixels) on the longest edge, at 300 pixels per inch, quality 12, file size approx 5 MB. Please send images via WeTransfer.
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Cover Image:



Small Apollon on Bearded Bellflower
by Gianpiero Ferrari FRPS

Inside Front Cover:
Images from successful ARPS Nature Panels featured in this issue



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Nature Group Exhibitions

CDs/DVDs of Nature Group Exhibitions are available for purchase by camera clubs/photographic societies for use in their programme.
Please contact the Exhibition Secretary, details above.

Editorial

Late June - Summer Solstice is past - can you believe it! I can't. I'm just back from an overseas trip and it's too hot in my study to be able to go through the images I took. Mustn't whine though - it's my own fault that I made so many exposures.

Do you have a project you are working on this Summer? Perhaps some of you might be working towards a Nature Distinctions submission. If so there are two successful ARPS panels featured in this issue that will be of interest. Also, if you haven't already, check out the 'Working Towards ARPS' groups on the Nature Group's own website. You could also attend the Zoom Advisory Day organised for Saturday 10th August, at 09.30 hrs. Booking is via the rps website but if you experience any problems, email natureprog@rps.org

If you missed the Spring Meeting, AGM and the opening of the 2024 Nature Group Annual Exhibition this issue contains images of all the award winning entries plus a full list of all the acceptances. Important but not so visually interesting, the Minutes of the AGM appear from page 37 onwards.

This issue also contains a report by Mick Durham FRPS of his trip to Antarctica and includes some very nice pictures. A Southern Elephant Seal turned up in South Africa, a long way from home. David Wilson LRPS tells us all about it. Also, there is part 3 of my piece on the Penguins of the Falkland Islands.

We are always looking for interesting stories, trip reports, project reports, kit/book reviews and successful Nature Distinction submissions. If you have something of interest, please do get in touch.

Finally, just in case you missed it. The Nature Group need volunteers to host Field Meetings as well as to help run the group, including someone to moderate/administer our Facebook Group. If you feel able please get in touch with a committee member.



Dawn Osborn FRPS - Editor

From the Chair

It is early July and despite a few warm spells of weather, I am still waiting for summer to arrive in the UK! Nevertheless, this has not stopped Group Members producing great images – do have a look at our Facebook page and website Galleries. I particularly enjoyed the Residential Weekend organised by James Foad on the Yorkshire Coast, though I must try harder at photographing diving Gannets!

Spring Meeting and AGM:

Just under 40 Members attended our Spring Meeting and AGM at Smethwick on the 20th April. In the morning Robert Thompson FRPS gave an excellent and wide ranging talk on 'Photographing the Natural World'. This generated considerable interest (so much so that he almost didn't get any lunch!).

After lunch the Nature Group Annual General Meeting was held. This was followed by the opening of the 2024 Annual Exhibition, the presentation of awards and a viewing of the accepted digital images. The accepted prints were on display throughout the day.

Congratulations to all Group Members who had their work accepted and particular congratulations to the award winners. All are listed elsewhere in this issue of *The Iris*. Thanks also to Ralph Snook for all of his hard work in organising the Annual Exhibition.

Websites:

Over 300 Members are now registered on the Nature Group website. It is an excellent place enabling us to run our Monthly Competition, to host Galleries of Members images and to provide access to the accepted images from our Annual Exhibition.

The Monthly Competition continues to be very popular and I must congratulate Kevin Pigney, who was the overall winner of the 2023-24 Competition.

I would like to thank Greg Lovett ARPS for putting a tremendous amount of work into developing the Lightbox section of the website to provide constructive critique of Members' images, particularly for those working towards ARPS and FRPS.

Group Membership:

I am very pleased to report that the Group membership continues to remain steady at about 950 Members.

RPS Developments:

The main news is that the RPS is to sell RPS House in Bristol. This should not have a significant impact on the Group although I do have concerns about how the RPS is going to manage Distinctions in future. The plan is, quote 'to utilise venues around the UK' for assessments. How much extra work and cost will this entail?

RPS Transformation Plan

Two initiatives that form part of the RPS Transformation Plan will affect the Group:

Firstly, the Group now has new 'Terms of Reference' to govern its operations. The main effect is that your Committee will in future serve for three years as compared to the present two. This will come into effect from our 2025 AGM.

Secondly, the RPS is planning to charge each Special Interest Group for the services that it provides to that Group. Details of the amount, the start time of this charge and the levels of service to be provided by the RPS, are still being discussed.

Field Meetings, Residential Weekend and Workshops:

Ann Miles has put together another excellent programme of UK Field Meetings this year and I will attend as many as I can. As I said above, I attended the Residential Weekend on the Yorkshire Coast and I must thank James Foad for all of his hard work in organising it.

We are running a Macro Workshop at Welney in early July for 15 Members. I am very keen to build up our programme of workshops to help Members develop their nature photography skills. Please let me have any ideas for topics and venues.

Distinctions:

Congratulations to Hazel Gwatkin ARPS and Sheila McKenzie ARPS, whose successful panels appear elsewhere in this issue. More will follow in the next issue of *The Iris*.

Enjoy your Nature Photography,



Duncan Locke, Nature Group Chair

Antarctica – A wildlife photographer's dream

by Mick Durham FRPS

I am a wildlife photographer with a passion for photographing cold climate wildlife, be it mountain hares on the Cairngorm Plateau in winter or elk and hawk owls in Arctic Finland. Working as a wildlife photography guide I have been lucky enough to visit Arctic Scandinavia on a number of occasions but I've never been further north. Greenland and Svalbard are on my wish list and so too was Antarctica.

However this year I was fortunate enough to be able to join the Naturetrek tour, visiting the Falklands, South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsular. We flew out from Heathrow on the overnight flight to Buenos Aires (where we spent a very hot afternoon birding in the Costanera Sur Ecological reserve) and then the next day down on to Ushuaia, the starting point for most Antarctic cruises. After a long morning in the Tierra del Fuego we joined our ship, the MV Ortelius late in the afternoon and soon we were sailing down the Beagle Channel. Our Antarctic expedition had begun!

It wasn't long before we started seeing a variety of sea birds and by the next morning, when we were out into the infamous Drake's Passage, Black-browed Albatross and Giant Petrels were our constant companions. Whilst many of the group were scanning the seas in search of new birds to add to their life lists, I was looking for good photographic opportunities. Every bird I saw on the trip was new to me and although I am not a great lister, more focussed on photography, this trip certainly gave me lots of opportunities.

With so many birds flying around the ship I spent my time looking for shots where the lighting was a little different, or where the waves gave an interesting backdrop. (Images 1 and 2)

By early morning of Day Three we had arrived at the Falklands and our first experience of getting into the zodiacs and making a landing. The sun shone while we



spent the morning exploring Carcass Island with its Magellanic and Gentoo Penguins and a host of smaller birds. There is a small community living on Carcass Island and before we returned to the ship we were treated to tea and cakes. Wonderful.

The ship sailed on to Saunders Island for an afternoon visit and my first views of King Penguins, a bird I was very keen to photograph. It felt surreal watching them waddle past grazing sheep! We also enjoyed the Rockhopper Penguins mixed in with breeding Black-browed Albatross. Down on the shore, where the beach met the rocks, the Rockhoppers were living up to their name as they crossed the rocks to reach the sea – a perfect opportunity for photography, allowing me to get images that were a little bit different to straight portraits. (Image 3)

The next day we spent the morning in the capital, Stanley, before heading back out to sea on course for South Georgia. This took most of two days sailing but there was always plenty to see from the ship as well as morning and afternoon lectures by the Naturetrek guides and the Oceanwide Expedition team. We began to spot Whales, mainly Sei and Fin whales at this stage, and of course plenty of Albatross, Prions, Antarctic Fulmars and Black-bellied Storm Petrels. And then we arrived at South Georgia. Wow!





Right Whale Bay and thousands of King Penguins, Antarctic Fur Seals, including a rare 'blond' adult all seen from our zodiac cruises. What an experience. Then we moved into Salisbury Plain Bay – more Kings, and then more and then a few more!! Everywhere you looked there were King Penguins against a backdrop of mountains and glacier. We spent some time slowly sailing across the bay and then as we headed out to sea, fur seals leapt round the ship and prions took off from beneath our bows. As late afternoon became evening we slowly sailed on to our next destination – the old whaling station of Grytviken. (Images 4 and 5)

Like many people I was up early and on deck as we sailed into Grytviken, eager to see the remains of the whaling station in its very dramatic setting. The Oceanwide team soon had all the zodiacs on the water and we were ferried ashore to wander around the museum, the church and the brown rusting remains and old whale bones which told their own gruesome story. I spotted a young





Antarctic Fur Seal curled up asleep on an old whale bone. For me this is just the sort of photograph I like to take as it told a story. The bone representing the years of horrific decimation that the whalers carried out and the fur seal, now with a population of about one million showing nature's resilience. (Images 6 and 7)

The visit to Grytviken was very moving because of its past, and there was more to come. We sailed on and into Stromness, another old whaling station with its own history. In 1916 Ernest Shackleton and a small crew landed on the unpopulated southern coast of South Georgia and then trekked for 36 hours across mountains and glaciers to reach Stromness and safety. Thanks to the brave endeavours of these men, all of the rest of his crew, left on Elephant Island, were rescued.

After leaving Stromness we spent some time at a Macaroni Penguin colony and then it was back out to sea and heading for Antarctica. The trip across the



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Southern Ocean to the Antarctic Peninsular was filled with so many amazing experiences – our first icebergs then the amazing iceberg that is A23a (one of the largest bergs in the world at over 1500 square miles); a ship's cruise along the coast of Elephant Island, looking at where Shackleton left most of his men when he set sail for South Georgia; a rather wet visit to half Moon Island on the South Shetland Islands...the list goes on. (Images 8 and 9)

As we got closer to the Peninsular new species of birds were found, Humpback Whale sightings became more and more frequent and soon we were sailing amongst more and more icebergs and true Antarctic scenery. Magical days. We had sun, we had snow, we had rough water and calm, we visited Charlotte Bay, Danco Island, Foyen Harbour, Pleneau Island, we sailed down through the Lemaire Channel, we landed on the Antarctic continent and some brave souls even went for an Antarctic plunge!! And the wildlife was superb.

Early morning, zodiac cruising around the misty Foyen Harbour was one of my highlights. Humpbacks were everywhere, blowing, diving, bubble feeding and gliding past our zodiacs almost at touching distance. Lots of memories, lots of photos. Then there were the Snow Petrels, ghostly white against the sea ice, not always easy to see. Certainly not easy to photograph but one afternoon we found three, flying around floating ice and icebergs. I watched one as it drifted in front of a rather attractive iceberg. I focussed, locked on and followed it. As it flew past the ridges of the iceberg I took a burst of shots and got what I consider to be one of my best images of the trip. (Images 10, 11, 11a and 12)

Then there was Pleneau Island and the 'iceberg graveyard' – a wonderful place for zodiac cruising. I happened to be in a zodiac with Mike, one of the Naturetrek guides. As we glided gently along looking at the Gentoos up on the rocks, he suddenly became quite animated and, pointing to a very large looking penguin said "Look – I think it's an Emperor!" And of course he was right. As Emperors breed much farther south and a long way inland, seeing one on the Peninsular is a rare thing. Our zodiac driver radioed all the other zodiacs, telling them the news and soon everyone had enjoyed distant but very good views of Antarctic's largest penguin. (Images 13 and 14)



And the last afternoon on the Peninsular drifting through the ice, humpbacks blowing and breaching, a leopard seal resting on a small floe, stunning scenery. This to me, was the essence of Antarctica. (Images 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18)

But the trip wasn't all about wildlife. The barbecue and subsequent disco in the snow up on the heli deck was an unexpected treat. So too was sailing past Cape Horn with the ship's horn sending out a deafening blast.

We were incredibly well looked after both by the Naturetrek guides and also the Oceanwide staff – captain and sailors, the hotel staff and the Expedition Team. The last afternoon before we left the Peninsular and set sail for Ushuaia, we were served hot chocolate heavily laced with alcohol by the Captain and crew, in that amazing setting. As we left there were tears in my eyes. This was what I had dreamed about for so many years. Will I go back? Who knows! I do hope so. (Image 19)



My Long Path to ARPS

by Hazel Gwatkin ARPS

My interest in photography began when I purchased a second-hand Kodak Brownie camera with my pocket money at a local jumble sale - I was 7 years old. It let in light and the photographs all had big white blobs, but I loved it. Everything with the Brownie camera was automatic making it pretty well fool-proof. My Grandmother dutifully took my films to the local chemist to be developed. I think it may have been because she was fed up of seeing the flaws on the photographs that I'd taken but she bought me a new Kodak Instamatic for my birthday and that's when my interest in photography really started. To have a camera which could take flawless photographs with the added bonus that it could use flash cubes allowing me to take photographs indoors as well seemed like amazing progress.

The films were black and white and only allowed twelve exposures on each. My parents insisted that I must make a film last in the camera for at least a couple of weeks. My first colour film was a special occasion for our summer holiday. With strict limits I was only allowed to take one photograph a day with that one. I'm not a collector or a hoarder of many things but I've kept nearly every photograph I've taken over the years pre-digital and they take up a lot of space in their albums now.

Like so many other people, despite wanting to pursue photography as a career my parents had other ideas and I ended up going to secretarial college and worked as a secretary for several years. I continued to take lots of photographs and a few years later decided to enrol on an A-level photography course at evening classes. That led on to a foundation course at Hereford Art College. I remember carefully unspooling the film from the spiral after the development process, revealing a strip of negatives. Each image, latent and waiting, held a promise. Watching them emerge as I hung the wet photographs to dry felt like an eternity, but the anticipation was part of the magic. The darkroom became my sanctuary - a place where creativity and chemistry converged.

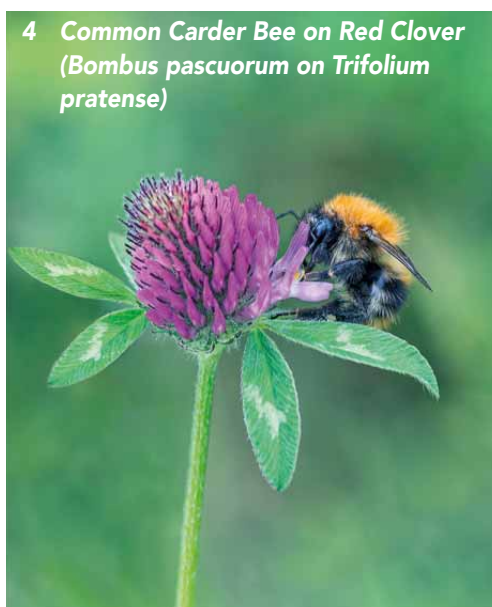
After completing my college course, the bathroom at home became my makeshift darkroom. I'd hang a blackout blind over the window, hoping no one would inadvertently switch on an electric light in the house and ruin my film. Scanning the negatives through a scanner, I transformed them into digital files.



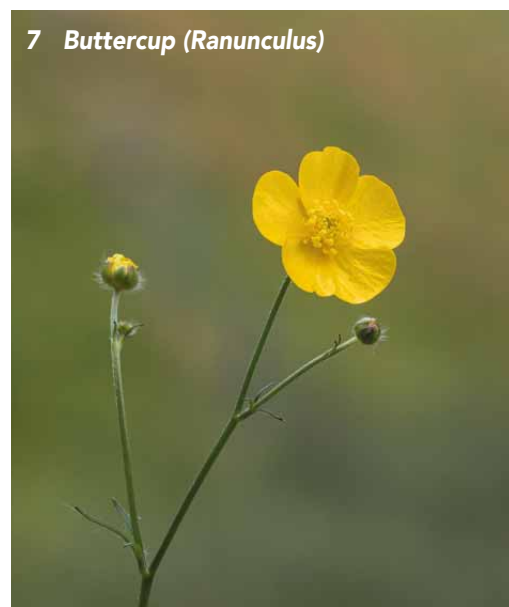
1 *Small tortoise brush footed butterfly (Nymphalidae)*



2 *Lesser Knapweed (Centaurea nigra)*



4 *Common Carder Bee on Red Clover (Bombus pascuorum on Trifolium pratense)*



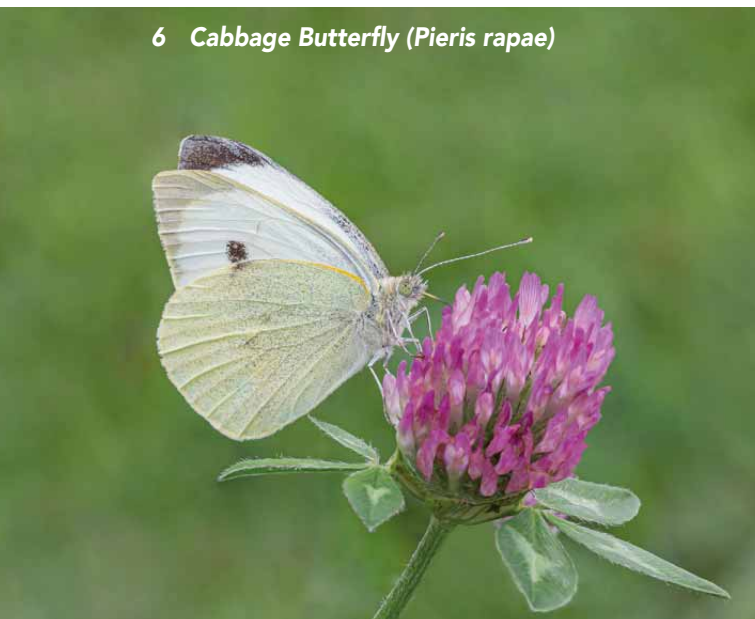
7 *Buttercup (Ranunculus)*



3 Cow Parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*)



5 Dark Green Fritillary Butterfly (*Speyeria aglaja*)



6 Cabbage Butterfly (*Pieris rapae*)



8 Red Admiral Butterfly (*Vanessa Atalanta*)

I submitted my LRPS panel just after finishing at college using images taken on infrared film. There was no requirement to submit multiple genres for the assessment then so all my photographs were black and white landscape images. I attended the assessment in Bath and failed due to the prints having colour pigmentation in them. Disheartened, I left it a couple of years before reapplying and did not attend the assessment, so I was very pleased to receive an email later in the day saying that I had gained accreditation.

Apart from my infrared film, the rest of my photography was digital. Work started coming in without really looking for it and I began to photograph weddings and pet portraits which I really enjoyed doing. I often used to spend Sundays photographing at motorsport events and set up a website to display the photographs for sale.

I still enjoyed using film and decided to go for my ARPS in the Visual Art category about 10 years ago, again using infrared film. I went to an advisory day in Bath and

the comments were quite promising so I applied for the qualification. I attended the assessment in Bath with my big black print case in my hand and met up with several other people walking up the road carrying the same receptacle, all looking as nervous as I felt. The assessment didn't go well for me. The comments from the first panel member were really encouraging but the second assessor wasn't so complimentary and his views must have been shared by most of the panel because I failed. It seemed that the general consensus was that film was a thing of the past and looking back, I guess it was.

I intended to reapply for the ARPS distinction at some stage and started to put together a portfolio of artistic flowers for the Visual Art category. It was one of those things that I picked up and put down so many times and 10 years later I still hadn't got it how I wanted.

During Covid restrictions there was less photography work and I had more time for walking my dog along the lanes and in the woods close to home. The grass verges and hedges had not been cut and it was lovely to see the

Associate Panel Layout



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flowers in bud and then, a few days later, when they were in full bloom. By the time they had started to die off more flowers were blooming. I began noticing butterflies and other insects that I wouldn't have noticed previously when out walking; the opportunity to stand and watch for half an hour or more if needed, hoping they would pose for me or fly off in the right direction. I had time to go back to the same flower several times during the day just to get the lighting right. There were so many opportunities to take images of nature, all so close to home. Although I'd been taking photographs for a long time, I'd mostly used shutter speed or aperture priority and often auto focus for my images. Photographing closeup really made me concentrate on getting the best from my camera, using manual settings for everything. I learnt so much during that time, using my camera to its full potential and even more so of nature.

I had probably taken most of the Images used in my panel before I thought about applying for an ARPS distinction in Natural History. I still had the Visual Arts category in mind but the natural beauty of wildflowers and insects didn't need enhancing, they were just perfect subjects in their own right. The images that I'd taken during the Covid lockdown were of things that I really loved to see and photograph. It wasn't until after I'd taken the images that I thought with help from an RPS Advisor maybe I could submit a successful panel.

A one2one session with Mick Durham FRPS helped so much in getting my panel together. He pointed out that my biggest problem was the amount of noise in the images and he showed me ways of rectifying it. He also suggested a few images I should replace. I left it about a year before applying then decided to enrol on an Advisory Day before finally submitting my panel. That

9 *Honeysuckle*
(*Lonicera periclymenum*)



12 *Western Honey Bee (Apis mellifera)*



14 *Self Heal (Prunella vulgaris)*





10 Harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*)



13 Dog Rose (*Speyeria aglaja*)



11 Ornate-tailed Digger Wasp (*Cerceris rybyensis*)



15 Common Banded Hoverfly (*Syrphus ribesii*)

day was invaluable. So many things I hadn't considered, both with the images and Statement of Intent. I made some changes based on the advice I was given and submitted my panel for accreditation. I then convinced myself I should have selected different images and that everything I'd submitted had flaws.

I didn't attend the assessment but watched it online. My submission was the last of the day, it must have been one of the most nerve-wracking days I can remember. When critiquing the images the assessors were highlighting things I hadn't thought of and when they said it was a successful panel I couldn't quite believe it.

I recently found my old college portfolios in the attic and looking through them I found that nearly all the photographs I'd taken for my final project in my A-level course had been macro images of flowers and insects. That really had been my favourite genre even then. So my photography has gone a complete circle. Nowadays whenever there is potential for a closeup photograph of a plant or an insect then my camera with a macro lens affixed is never far away.

Statement of Intent

My panel seeks to show the beauty of the countryside when it is left undisturbed by human intervention.

During Covid Lockdown the grass verges on lanes and footpaths weren't mowed and as a result wildflowers were able to reclaim their place in nature with insects and butterflies enjoying them.

I walked every day along the overgrown footpaths and had the chance to stop and look at things in more detail, seeing the colours and patterns of the wildflowers and the tiny creatures on them.

Using a macro lens I have captured the small details that are naturally visible to the eye if you actually stop and look at things but are so easy to go unnoticed in the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

All the photographs were taken within half a mile of my home.

Southern Elephant Seals

by David Wilson, LRPS

Seals and Sea Lions have always held a great attraction for my nature photography and I've travelled to some wild and woolly places such as Arctic Norway, the coast lines of Alaska and also the more temperate climates of California and the Galapagos, but despite decades of doing this I have always managed to miss one of my favourite seal species – the Elephant Seal.

Early on 5th February I was woken early by an alert on my Whatsapp . To my great surprise, an Elephant Seal had come ashore on Onrus Beach, Hermanus, within walking distance of my house. I grabbed my camera bag and waded through the shallow waters of the lagoon. Sure enough Buffel, a ten year old male, blind in one eye, had come ashore for his annual summer moult.

Why this unexpected visitor should choose this very popular beach, a well known surfing location for both National and International events, is rather strange although the profile of the beach was changed by a storm in late September 2023. That being said Buffel had chosen a location at the foot of one of the best known restaurants in Hermanus.

Admittedly this was a Southern Elephant Seal (*Mirounga leonina*), lacking the full extent of the prominent nose that names the species. Nevertheless, the southern species is bulkier than the northern and males frequently weigh from 1,500 to 3,700kg (3,300 to 8,200lb) and grow to 4.2 to 5.8m (14 to 19ft) in length. Females on the other hand weigh 350 to 900kg (770 to 1,980lb) and only 2.6 to 3m (8.5 to 9.8ft) in length.

Despite their bulk, the males can move quite rapidly propelling themselves as fast as 8 km/h (5.0mph) for short-distance travel such as returning to water, to catch up to a female, or chase an intruder.

They are of course denizens of the deep and males can dive up to 2,000m (6,600 feet) making them the deepest diver of all marine mammals other than whales. They do not have echo location facilities and they seek their prey (mainly the squid family) by sight using their prey's bio luminescence at times. At other times their very sensitive face whiskers assist.

All this doesn't explain why Buffelis has decided to seek a location some 600km north of the normal range of the South Atlantic population of these seals. But what a sight to see. He has shown up on the beaches of South Africa periodically during the last ten years, ranging from Buffels Bay (hence his name) in the East to Hout Bay in Cape Town to the west but the first time for some years and the first time for Onrus. That being said, Buffels appearance was covered in all the National media and for once knocked politicians off the front page and made the lead story in news bulletins.

Rushing out I had picked up my standard "to go" equipment - a Nikon Z5 with a Tamron 70-300mm f4.5-6.3 Di III RXD A04 Lens but this enabled me to get close up and panoramic shots without changing lenses despite the 6m stand back barrier that was later increased to 20m as crowds gathered. I set the ISO at 100 and still managed to get shutter speeds of more than 1/500th.

My camera is always ready to go because for six months of the year - from June to November - Hermanus becomes the Whale watching Capital of the World with up to 200 Southern Right Whales coming close in shore to give birth. And by close I mean sometimes dispensing with a telephoto and reaching for a wide angle lens!

For the rest of the year the locals have to be content with Orcas, Humpback, Finn and Bryde's Whales, as well as Great White Sharks, African Penguins, Cape Fur Seals and pods of Dolphin. As added attraction we have the Whale Festival held from 28-30th of September 2024.



Nature Group Annual Exhibition 2024

Gold Medal Image - Digital Section



Richard Kay FRPS Blue Morph Arctic Fox shaking Gold medal

Bronze Medal Images - Digital Section

Jason Boswell Marbled Whites at roost Bronze Medal



Martin Vaughan FRPS Cowslips Bronze Medal





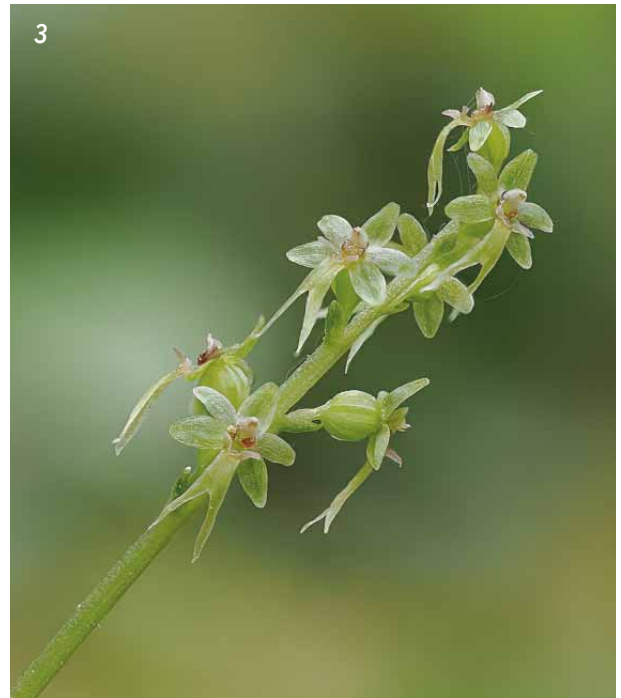
1

Selector's Awards Digital

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 John Kirkelionis | Fieldfare |
| 2 Russell Millner LRPS | Polar Bear family on Baffin |
| 3 Jane Rees ARPS | Lesser Twayblade |
| 4 Tim Downton ARPS | Shaggy Scalycap |
| 5 Martin Vaughan FRPS | Snowdrop Shedding Pollen |
| 6 Darron Matthews FRPS | Male Poplar Hawk Moths |



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5



6

Acceptances - Digital Class A

Author	Title	Award
Jon C Allanson LRPS	Sparrowhawk mantling	
Paddy Beck ARPS	Pin-Tailed Wydah	
David Belton ARPS	Large White Caterpillar protecting <i>Cotesia glomerata</i> Larvae	
Mat Bingham LRPS	Dipper Reed Warbler	
James Black ARPS	Four-Spotted Chaser	
Jason Boswell	Male Sparrowhawk preening Marbled Whites at roost White Throated Dipper	Bronze Medal
Bob Breach	Meadow Pipit in song	
Colin Brett	Blue Tailed Damselfly Broad-Bodied Chaser Rock Dove takes flight	
Maggie Bullock ARPS	Purple Heron Female Stonechat with Caterpillar	
John Bulpitt FRPS	Crane-flies (<i>Emphyliodora dispar</i>) Grey Seals play-fighting	
Janice Clark ARPS	Cheetah on the prowl Fox in the Rain Majestic Lion	
Robin Claydon ARPS	Charging Grizzly Bear European Bee-eater Grey Heron Grizzly Bear Cub with Salmon	Highly Commended
Trevor Clifford ARPS	Feeding Sanderling	
Michael Cook	King Penguins and a juvenile	
Sue Critchlow ARPS	Sibling Brown Bear Cubs Battle of Caracara Marching Buzzard	Highly Commended
Liz Cutting ARPS	Fox Cubs playing Water Vole, scenting	
Gary Dean LRPS	Juvenile Gannet dive Basilisk Lizard	
Kathleen Dodds	Sanderling	
John Draper	Curlew	
Mick Durham FRPS	Grasshopper leg stretch Starling at nest	
Christine Ellison ARPS	Owlfly portrait	
Wendy Margaret Burton Eve ARPS	Cuthona Kanga Nudibranch Nudibranch <i>Hypselodoris bullocki</i> laying eggs	
Gianpiero Ferrari FRPS	Roosting Wood Whites Sally-Light-Foot Crab on alert Variable Longhorn Beetle Oryx Grazing on the dunes	Highly Commended
Rosemary Gillies ARPS	Shrimp on Anemone, Bonaire Lionfish on Sponge, Philippines	Highly Commended
Terry Godber ARPS	Spotted Hyena cubs	



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34

Highly Commended Digital Images

- 1 Darron Matthews FRPS
- 2 Russell Millner LRPS
- 3 Sue Critchlow ARPS
- 4 Gordon Mills ARPS
- 5 Lesley Simpson ARPS
- 6 Duncan Locke ARPS
- 7 Tim Downton ARPS

- Parasitic Wasp
- Polar Bear sleeping before the next long swim
- Sibling Brown Bear Cubs
- Squabbling Chaffinches
- Green Winged Orchid
- Early Spider Orchid
- Common Spotted Orchid

- Highly Commended
- Highly Commended
- Highly Commended
- Highly Commended
- Highly Commended
- Highly Commended
- Highly Commended



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Keith Gypps ARPS	Reeling Grasshopper Warbler	
Thomas Hanahoe FRPS	Waxwing feeding a Rowan Berry to another Waxwing	
Roger Hance FRPS	Long Tailed Tit in flight	
	Starlings scrapping	
Alan Hartley ARPS	Chocolate Tip Moth	
	Striped Shieldbugs on Wild Carrot	
	Orange Tip Male	
Ann Healey FRPS	Ruby-Tailed Wasp	
Mark Hetherington LRPS	Kingfisher	
Christine Holt LRPS	Mating Robber Flies	
	Mating Soldier Beetles	
David Hughes ARPS	Male Ionian Bright Bush-Cricket	
	Dew Covered Heath Fritillary on grass seed head	
Mark James	Dew Covered Click Beetle with landscape reflection	
Koshy Johnson FRPS	Bittern Taking Off	
	Open Billed Stork with Snail	
Paul Yealand Kalfayan ARPS	Purple Emperor Butterfly feeding on dead Mouse	
Rohit Kandoth	Woodpecker	
	Maya fearless walk	
Richard Kay FRPS	Blue Morph Arctic Fox Cub	
	Blue Morph Arctic Fox shaking	Gold Medal
Sarah Kelman ARPS	Polar Bear	
	Courting Black-tailed Godwits	
Eileen Kershaw	Yellow and Black Plant Bug	
John Kirkelionis	Fieldfare	Ann Miles's Choice
	Waxwing	
Bryan Knox ARPS	Polar Bear jumping from one ice flow to another	
Adrian Langdon ARPS	Musk Ox grazing on Lichens	
	Portuguese Man O War	
Greg Lovett ARPS	Black-headed Gull with Vole	
Caroline Ludford LRPS	Lion's Mane Jellyfish	
	NZ Bellbird	
	NZ Tui	
	Little Owl	
Ita Martin LRPS	Red-necked Falcon with Babbler	
	Lions Mating, Botswana	
	Male Lion teaching the cubs to eat	
Darron Matthews FRPS	Parasitic Wasp	Highly Commended
	Male Poplar Hawk Moths	Mike Rowe's Choice
	Brimstone Moth on Fern Leaf	
	White Ermine on Red Campion	Highly Commended
Malcolm McCamley ARPS	Lynx Spider with Cinnamon Bug	
Ann Mead	Green Shieldbugs Paired	
Mallory Mercer LRPS	Leopard with kill	
Russell Millner LRPS	Polar Bear and cub on iceberg	
	Family on Baffin	Sandie Cox's Choice
	Polar Bear sleeping before the next long swim	Highly Commended
Gordon Mills ARPS	Squabbling Chaffinches	Highly Commended
	Little Egret feeding	
	Sparrowhawk and prey	

James Moir ARPS	Courting Razorbills	
John Nash ARPS	Argid Sawflies Mating	
	Green Leaf Beetles mating and fighting	
	Hoverfly Pooing	
Andre Neves ARPS	Golden-bloomed Grey Longhorn	Highly Commended
Sarah Newton ARPS	African Rock Python and Lesser Flamingo	
	Elephant Mudbath	
Dawn Osborn FRPS	Hungry King Penguin chick and parent	
	Little Blue Heron and prey	
Chris Pepler ARPS	Dancing Mimic Octopus	
Claire M. H. Pettingale	Bank Vole	
	Black-backed Jackal	
Kevin John Pigney ARPS	Little Owl backlit	
Keith Polwin ARPS	Globetail Hoverflies Mating	
	Great Crested Grebes with fish	
	Short-eared Owl	Highly Commended
Somdutt Prasad	Tiger with kill	
Jane Rees ARPS	Snakefly	
Jeremy Richards ARPS	Gentoo Penguin drinking	
	King Penguin and chick	
	Southern Sea Lion with Magellanic Penguin	
John Scholey	Barn Owl	
Lesley Simpson ARPS	Gannets pair bonding	
	Silver Studded Blues mating	
Peter Smith	Roseate Spoonbill in the rain	
Sonja Thompson FRPS	Monarch Butterflies resting on tree in Mexican Forest	
Martin Vaughan FRPS	Jays in aerial combat	
	Water Rail hunting in reeds	
	Woodpecker landing in snowstorm	
Mary Venables LRPS	Cattle Egret	
Karin Wilson ARPS	Bee-Eaters courting	
	Young Painted Dogs playing	
	Six-spot Burnet Moths mating	
	Green-crowned Brilliant Hummingbird feeding	
Peter Yendell LRPS	Yellow Baboon wound grooming	

Acceptances - Digital Class B

Author	Title	Award
Jon C Allanson LRPS	Wall Pennyworts	
Wendy Ball	Venus Fly Trap	
David Belton ARPS	Mycena	
	Devil's Fingers	
James Black ARPS	Hoar Frost	
	Teasel	
Bob Breach	Geysir Dome - El Tatio Geysir Field	
	Variable Oysterling	
Graeme Clarke ARPS	Chicken of the Woods on Rowan	



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Highly Commended Digital Images

- | | | |
|---|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 | Keith Polwin ARPS | Short-Eared Owl |
| 2 | David Hughes ARPS | Milking Bonnet Mushrooms |
| 3 | Darron Matthews FRPS | White Ermine on Red Campion |
| 4 | Gianpiero Ferrari FRPS | Variable Longhorn Beetle |
| 5 | Robin Claydon ARPS | European Bee-Eater |
| 6 | Paul Yealand Kalfayan ARPS | Delphinium Gracile, White Form |
| 7 | Andre Neves ARPS | Golden-bloomed Grey Longhorn |



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Tim Downton ARPS	Mycena Bonnet Cluster Shaggy Scalycap Common Spotted Orchid Mycena Bonnet	Mike Rowe's Choice Highly Commended
Gianpiero Ferrari FRPS	Porcelain Fungus Himalayan Cowslip (<i>Primula sikkimensis</i>) Hot Lips (<i>Psychotria elata</i>)	
Roger Hance FRPS	Fly Orchid Pine Cone Fungi	
Ann Healey FRPS	Vipers Bugloss	
Margaret Hocking ARPS	Sea Lettuce	
Christine Holt LRPS	Orange Fly Agaric Puffballs Bonnet Mushrooms	
David Hughes ARPS	Fairy Inkcap Mushroom with resting fly Puffball Mushroom with fly Milking Bonnet Mushrooms Bulbous Honey Fungus	Highly Commended
Paul Yealand Kalfayan ARPS	<i>Delphinium gracile</i> , white form Military Orchid <i>Orchis prisca</i> , Crete	Highly Commended
Eileen Kershaw	Fungi	
Adrian Langdon ARPS	Bog Asphodel Porcelain Fungus	
Duncan Locke ARPS	Early Spider Orchid Purple Jellydisc Fungi	Highly Commended
John Nash ARPS	Candle Snuff Fungus Coral Fungus Shaggy Scalycap	
Andre Neves ARPS	Common Spotted Orchid	
Dawn Osborn FRPS	<i>Cerastium latifolium</i> Inflorescence of Fragrant Orchid	
Chris Pepler ARPS	Magnificent Feather Duster Worm Radiole	Highly Commended
Claire M. H. Pettingale	Kei Cycad Trunk Detail	
Keith Polwin ARPS	Bonnet Fungus 1	
Jane Rees ARPS	Lesser Twayblade Pasque Flower seed head	Sandie Cox's Choice
Paul Sievers ARPS	Common Puffball Fungi Turkeytail Fungi	
Lesley Simpson ARPS	Northern Marsh Orchid with Fly Early Marsh Orchid Green Winged Orchid	Highly Commended
John Simpson ARPS	Southern Marsh Orchid	
Martin Vaughan FRPS	Cowslips Wood Anemone Snowdrop shedding pollen	Bronze Medal Ann Miles's Choice
Karin Wilson ARPS	Emerging Mycena on rotting log	

Gold Medal - Print Section



Bronze Medals - Print Section





Selector's Awards - Prints



- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 Ian Mitchell ARPS | Mountain Hare |
| 2 Kevin John Pigney ARPS | Short-eared Owl |
| 3 Lesley Simpson ARPS | Marsh Helleborine |
| 4 John Scholey | Dryad's Saddle |
| 5 Rosemary Gillies ARPS | Pink Anemone Fish,
Philippines |
| 6 Bob Breach | Coastal Rock Formations,
Cornwall |



Print Acceptances - Class A

Author	Title	Award
Wendy Ball	Dipper	Highly Commended
Bob Breach	Bison stare Water Rail on ice	
Liz Cutting ARPS	Arctic Fox in a blizzard Scarce Chaser on Yellow Flag	Highly Commended
Gary Dean LRPS	Green Turtle	
Christine Ellison ARPS	Brown Bear shaking Golden Oriole feeding young	Highly Commended
Gianpiero Ferrari FRPS	Small Apollos on Bearded Bellflowers Six-Spot Burnet on Yellow Rattle seed pods Green Turtle returning to sea	
Rosemary Gillies ARPS	Goby on Coral, Philippines Lizardfish waiting for prey, Bonaire Pink Anemone Fish, Philippines	Mike Rowe's Choice
Keith Gypps ARPS	Marbled White's roosting at sunset	
Thomas Hanahoe FRPS	Arctic Fox on a pebble beach Polar Bear on cliff side rocks Waxwing tossing a Rowan berry	Highly Commended
Roger Hance FRPS	Cuckoos` Mating Kestrel and Jay fighting Water Rail	
Martin Hancock ARPS	Water Vole eating dragonfly Kestrel chicks	Highly Commended
Kevin Harwood LRPS	Black-backed Jackal territory battle	
Stewart Haynes ARPS	Lilac-breasted Roller with frog Broad-bordered Bee Hawkmoth Siberian Tit Praying Mantis	Highly Commended
Ann Healey FRPS	Pallas Long-Tongued Bat with Banana flower Squabbling Nutcrackers	
Christine Holt LRPS	Ground Hornbill with tiny Tortoise Hummingbird Moth on Salvia	Highly Commended
Koshy Johnson FRPS	Peregrine fledglings	
Paul Yealand Kalfayan ARPS	Marbled Fritillary on Bramble Blossom	Highly Commended
Rohit Kandoth	Dotty's Cub - at the end of the day	
Richard Kay FRPS	Blue Morph Arctic Fox in Iceland Red Deer Stag with hind	Highly Commended
Sarah Kelman ARPS	Mating Red-necked Phalaropes	
Bryan Knox ARPS	Willet with Crab Wolverine taking a fish back to den	Highly Commended
Adrian Langdon ARPS	Common Tern dispute Short-Eared Owl in flight	
Duncan Locke LRPS ARPS	Zebras fighting Raft Spider	Highly Commended
Greg Lovett ARPS	Short-eared Owl hunting Wax Wing Berry toss Crested Grebes feeding young	
Darron Matthews FRPS	Female Green Drake Mayfly on Meadow Buttercup Male White Ermine Moths on White Campion Male Blood Vein Moth on fern Cinnabar Moth on Salad Burnet	Highly Commended Gold Medal

Dave McKay ARPS	European Bee Eaters passing food	
Ian Mitchell ARPS	Mountain Hare	Sandie Cox's Choice
	Juvenile Pine Marten	Bronze Medal
	Short-eared Owl	
	Great Crested Grebe family	
James Moir ARPS	Lapwing landing	
	Snow Bunting	
	Male Goldeneye displaying	
John Nash ARPS	Alderfly laying eggs	
	Gasteruption Jaculator perching	
Kevin John Pigney ARPS	Brown Hares boxing	Highly Commended
	Kestrel	Highly Commended
	Short-eared Owl	Ann Miles's Choice
John Scholey	White-tailed Sea Eagle catching fish	
Richard Sheldrake LRPS	Arctic Fox with a Goose egg	Highly Commended
	Bee-eater, eating a dragonfly	
	Lone King Penguin, Saunders Island	Highly Commended
Lesley Simpson ARPS	Immature Bearded Tit with snail	
	Mating Gannets	
Peter Smith	Frangipani Caterpillar	
Sonja Thompson FRPS	Anxious Bear Cub climbing tree	
	Sri Lankan Leopard strolling through bush	
Mary Venables LRPS	Violet Sabre Wing Hummingbird	

Print Acceptances - Class B

Author	Title	Award
Wendy Ball	Orange Birch Bolete	
Bob Breach	Coastal Rock Formations- Cornwall	Sandie Cox's Choice
	Travertine Terraces in winter - Mammoth Hot Springs	
Graeme Clarke ARPS	Common Bonnet	
	Velvet Shank	
Christine Ellison ARPS	Single Poppy	
	Wild Poppies	
Gianpiero Ferrari FRPS	Puffball releasing spores	Highly Commended
	Goldenroot in habitat	Highly Commended
	Bee Orchid and Moth Larvae	
James Foad LRPS	Yellow Loosestrife - <i>Lysimacia Vulgaris</i>	
Roger Hance FRPS	Lizard Orchids	Highly Commended
Ann Healey FRPS	Birds Nest Fungi	
	Common Spotted Orchids	
Paul Yealand Kalfayan ARPS	Four-spotted Orchid	
	Bird's-Eye Primrose	Highly Commended
Bryan Knox ARPS	Group of Common Spotted Orchids	
Darron Matthews FRPS	Candlesnuff Fungus	
Andre Neves ARPS	Bird Vetch	Bronze Medal
John Scholey	Dryad's Saddle	Mike Rowe's Choice
Lesley Simpson ARPS	Southern Marsh Orchid	
	Marsh Helleborine	Ann Miles's Choice
	Northern Marsh Orchids	
Sonja Thompson FRPS	Fruiting Bodies of Jelly Rot Fungus growing in tree trunk	



Highly Commended Prints

- | | | |
|---|------------------------|---|
| 1 | Kevin John Pigney ARPS | Boxing Hares |
| 2 | Ann Healey FRPS | Squabbling Nutcrackers |
| 3 | Richard Sheldrake LRPS | Arctic Fox with goose egg |
| 4 | Darron Matthews FRPS | Male White Ermine Moths on White Campions |
| 5 | Richard Sheldrake LRPS | Lone King Penguin, Saunders Island, F.I. |





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Highly Commended Prints

- | | | |
|---|------------------------|--|
| 1 | Kevin John Pigney ARPS | Kestrel |
| 2 | Wendy Ball | Dipper |
| 3 | Gianpiero Ferrari FRPS | Small Apollos on
Bearded Bellflowers |
| 4 | Gary Dean LRPS | Green Turtle |
| 5 | Rosemary Gillies ARPS | Lionfish on Sponge,
Philippines |
| 6 | Chris Pepler ARPS | Magnificent Feather Duster
Worm Radiole |



6



Highly Commended Prints

- | | | |
|---|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | Gianpiero Ferrari FRPS | Puffball releasing spores |
| 2 | Paul Yealand Kalfayan ARPS | Bird's-Eye Primrose |
| 3 | Roger Hance FRPS | Lizard Orchids |
| 4 | Gianpiero Ferrari FRPS | Goldenroot in habitat |



A Highland Panel - My ARPS Journey

by Sheila McKenzie ARPS

I was a child when my mother first took my brother and I to an old walled graveyard overshadowed by trees and untended. It was springtime and we watched the birds feeding nestlings in the bushes. I remember the wildflowers in the dappled light. That was the day I started to become interested in wildlife. That was seventy years ago.

The village I grew up in always had a flower show in the summer. Classes in the children's section included a bouquet of wildflowers and a panel of mounted leaves. My mother encouraged us to enter these competitions. And so we learnt to identify species along the way.
















I was given a camera when I was a teenager. This was used mainly for family photos, dogs, friends, outings and holidays. The prints were duly mounted in an album, which I still have. Although I bought a cheap camera after I started work, it wasn't until I was given a 'proper' one for a retirement present that I became interested in photography.

In 2017 I accompanied a friend to the East Sutherland Camera Club and was immediately hooked. My passion before photography was gardening. A friend suggested that I should start my new hobby by taking images of flowers and gave me an online series of workshops by the American, Kathleen Clemens. This was a great move as I learnt about techniques which I could apply to subjects on my doorstep. That summer I bought a Nikon 500 before travelling with friends from the camera club to Harris and St Kilda. Soon after I bought a long lens and started to photograph birds.

I almost always photograph on my own as I take a long time to get things right. It would be very boring for even a sympathetic companion. As every wildlife photographer knows, there is a lot of hanging about in sometimes cold and wet conditions. I spend a lot of time on my hands and knees trying to get the right angle for small flowers and, of course 'gardening'. I've been asked many times if I'm OK or if I need a hand. Focus-stacking of flowers on even the stillest of days is rarely successful for me and countless stacks have been wrecked by imperceptible movement. Getting it right is a work in progress.

THE ARPS
ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

ASSOCIATE Presentation Layout

 01	 02	 03	 04	 05
 06	 07	 08	 09	 10
 11	 12	 13	 14	 15

All my photography takes place within 15 miles of my home in East Sutherland, in the Highland area of Scotland. There is a huge variety of habitats, from sandy coast, salt marsh and links, to inland woods and ponds. This allows me to return to sites for repeat attempts. For example, I went to the far end of Dornoch Beach several times during a very cold February to catch the migrant Snow Buntings, which move constantly and rarely settle for long. I have come to know these sites very well, what to find and where. For the wildflowers it means I can check what stage of development has been reached and return when I think the flower will be at its photographic best. The only images in my panel which were first time shots are the goose and the hovering dragonfly. Serendipity has its role!

My interest in RPS Distinctions came when a member of the ESCC was successful gaining the LRPS. I wondered if I could aim for this too. I had become more competent and confident and had some successes at the local competitions. He agreed to be my mentor. I spent a year preparing for this but was unsuccessful on my first submission, mainly because of poor post processing. But with help from my one-to-one advisor, Hazel Frost, I was successful the second time in 2021.

Then I became a real enthusiast! I wanted to prepare a panel of exclusively wildflowers. It seemed to me at the time that flora were poorly represented in the panels I viewed online as well as in regional competitions. I wonder if this is because they demonstrate little anthropomorphism and movement, characteristics which more readily engage the observer. Flowers were subjects I was interested in and had a lot of practice photographing. However, I misunderstood the guidelines and read that subjects should be photographed 'in their environment', which if course they were, but very few of my images actually 'included' their environment, which I learnt was what was wanted. When I presented my



1 Brent Goose (*Branta bernicla*)



2 Reed Bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*)



3 Snow Bunting (*Plectrophenax nivalis*)



4 Linnet (*Linaria cannabina*)



5 Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*)



7 Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*)



8 Fringed Water Lily (*Nymphaoides peltata*)



6 Common St John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*)



9 One-flowered Wintergreen (*Monesis uniflora*)



10 Flag Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*)

efforts to my club, they suggested I should submit my images to the Fine Art section! My very patient one-to-one advisor, Ann Miles, said the same. This was just before winter and the end of the flowering season. I realised that my earlier on-line course, which focussed on blooms rather than the whole plant and its context, had influenced my style. I felt quite downhearted and started to prepare a panel of birds. I should have taken advice at the time about considering a mixed panel. My one-to-one advisor was surprised that I had changed tack and since there were problems with some of the images of the birds I agreed to change my mind.

My advisory day was very encouraging. One image was considered unworthy. I was delighted to have found a dragonfly emerging from a nymph and of course thought I'd captured it well. The panel thought otherwise. One judge thought I should have waded into the water to move back surrounding reeds and get a better angle! I had compliments about my statement of intent and helpful suggestions on improvements to other images. The chairman considered it was a strong panel.

My final panel has three formats in different order on each of three lines. Measuring the window sizes to achieve good alignment of the mounted prints was a real headache. I had to ask a friend for help. I found a firm which cuts each mount to measurements which you dial in. This was done quickly, cheaply and to a high standard.

On the assessment day, I sat with two family members in front of my computer linked to a TV. My panel was the second of the day. I was really heartened when the first judge said she was pleased to see images taken in the UK. Everyone was complimentary. Two reservations



12 Emerald Damselfly (*Lestes sponsa*)



14 Common Blue Damselfly (*Enallagma cyathigerum*)

about the range of tones on the bottom line and a question about why I had chosen 'migrant' birds with the residents. No reservations about the flowers! Then they told me very quickly that I had been successful! I was ecstatic!

I am honoured and delighted to have been awarded the ARPS. As a retiree I have had both the time and opportunity to develop my hobby, I've made many good friends along the way and had a lot of fun. And I notice more.

This is for my mother who encouraged my interest in wildlife.



11 Southern Hawker Dragonfly (*Aeshna cyanea*)

Statement of Intent

My aim is to present images of a selection of coastal birds, wild flowers and pond life found in east Sutherland, where I live.

The birds are resident, except for the Snow Buntings which are winter migrants. Their behavioural characteristics include social grouping, flight take-off, and bearing and carrying food.

The wild flowers were found in both dry and damp woodland and were photographed across the flowering season.

The insects were photographed at a reeded pond, except for the blue damselflies which were at a fresh water loch. Behaviours of the damselflies and dragonflies include hovering, mating and grasping. The frogs are courting.



13 Common Frog (*Rana temporaria*)



15 Four-spotted Chaser Dragonfly (*Libellula quadrimaculata*)

Penguins of The Falkland Islands

Part 3 - Southern Rockhopper - *Eudyptes chrysocome*

by Dawn Osborn FRPS



Rockhoppers returning at low tide - Saunders Island.

The Southern Rockhopper is a diminutive species of penguin, their standing height measuring only 13 to 14 inches. Typically they are found on Subantarctic islands but three differing subspecies not usually found in the Falklands also exist. The *Eudyptes* family includes three other distinct species - the Macaroni, Royal and Erect-crested. The latter two of these are classed as rare and vagrant in the Falklands, although many years ago I was lucky enough to photograph an Erect-crested on Pebble Island. Macaronis are found more frequently these days but not in large numbers, usually one or two pairs mixed in with the Rockhoppers. Although numerous around the Falklands archipelago, Southern Rockhoppers are nevertheless regarded as a 'vulnerable' species.

As their name suggests, Rockhoppers climb or hop up rugged cliff faces to reach their breeding colonies at the top. The colony at Sealion Island is 67ft above sea level - the cliff face constantly pounded by the Southern Ocean, but Rockhoppers are hardy little individuals.

Rockhopper colonies are crowded noisy places with frequent raucous calls and displaying as partners return to the nest. They're not particularly friendly towards their fellows and will frequently attack other Rockhoppers who pass by as they come and go from the colony. Despite this, they can often be found nesting alongside Imperial Cormorants or Black-browed Albatross, who they largely seem to ignore.

Rockhoppers feed mostly on Lobster Krill and small fish in the cold deep waters of the Southern Ocean. The breeding season begins in early October when the males return to the colonies. The females arrive 10-14 days later and egg laying usually takes place in early November, the chicks hatching about four weeks later. The timing of this isn't precise and varies somewhat north to south as well as season to season. Usually two eggs are laid but frequently one will be stolen by constant harassment from Striated Caracaras, Skuas or Gulls. The harassment increases when the chicks hatch, the birds nesting on the

The ecstatic display



Young Rockhoppers with a parent

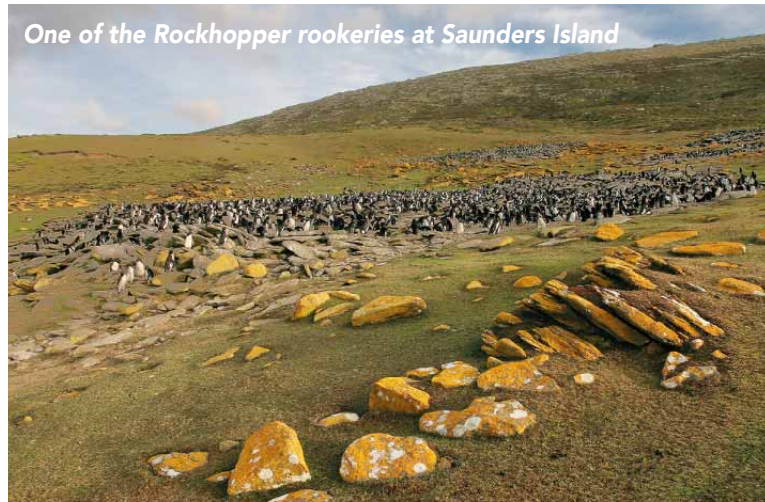




67ft high cliffs at Sealion Island



Coming ashore in a rough sea at Bleaker Island



One of the Rockhopper rookeries at Saunders Island

outer edges of the colony being most at risk of losing their eggs or a chick.

Chicks grow fast and by the end of December are formed up in creches as their parents both need to go to sea to feed them. Even in large groups they are still vulnerable. By January they are beginning to moult out their down, making way for feathers. Towards the end of January many will be making their way down the cliffs and by the middle of February most will have left the colony; the adults will be feeding at sea in readiness for the time when they will return to land to complete their annual moult. When that is completed all the birds will return to the ocean until Spring when it all begins again.



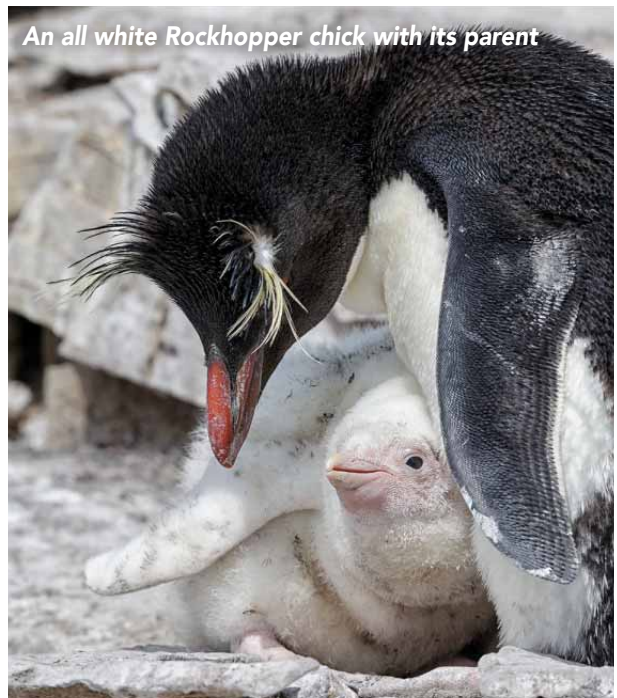
Yours truly with Rockhoppers at Sealion Island



Adult Rockhoppers make their way up the cliffs at Saunders



Smart Rockhopper at the cliff top



An all white Rockhopper chick with its parent

Rockhoppers are tough and they need to be - ascending a cliff up to 60 times your own height would be tiring for the best of us and all they have to help them is the claws of their feet. There are places in the rocks where you can see deep gouges made by the claws of thousands of feet that have made the journey for who knows how many years. Occasionally there are fatalities but as Rockhoppers usually return to the sites from where they originated the paths up to the nesting sites are well known to them.

Macaroni Penguins (*Eudyptes chrysolophus*) are quite easy to pick out amongst the Southern Rockies. Not only are they much bigger, standing about 18 inches tall, they have a larger much more robust bill and very distinctive plumage on the head - see picture on the back cover. They also have a much louder and different call which can aid in locating them amongst a large colony of noisy Southern Rockhoppers. Occasionally they have been known to interbreed with their smaller relatives, the hybrid locally known as a Rockaroni or Macahopper!

More pictures on the back cover.



Two chicks just beginning their moult



Skua pair with Rockhopper chick



RPS Nature Group Spring Meeting 48th Annual General Meeting Opening of the Annual Exhibition

Saturday 20th April 2024
Smethwick Photographic Society
The Old Schoolhouse, Churchbridge, Oldbury,
West Midlands, B69 2AS

Minutes of Annual General Meeting

The 48th Annual General Meeting of the RPS Nature Group was held on Saturday 20 April 2024 at Smethwick Photographic Society, The Old Schoolhouse, Oldbury, B69 2AS starting at 13:50hrs. It was chaired by Duncan Locke ARPS and attended by 36 Members. The AGM Agenda, Minutes of the 47th AGM 2023, 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/>

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence:

Duncan Locke ARPS (DL), Chair of the RPS Nature Group welcomed Group Members to the Meeting. He thanked his fellow Committee Members for all the planning that had gone into making this event possible.

2. Apologies for Absence:

Apologies for Absence had been received from the following Group Members: Julia Andrew, Margaret Beardsmore, Dave Belton, Maggie Bullock, John Curgenvin, Moira Ellis, Christine Holt, Christine Hunt, David O'Neil, Dawn Osborn, Kevin Pigney, Peter Range, Ken Rasmussen, Robert Reynolds, Jeremy Richards, Colin Smith, Peter Smith and Martin Vaughan.

3. Approval of Minutes:

Minutes of the 47th AGM 2023 (originally appearing in Issue 146 of The Iris, Summer 2023) remain available on the RPS Nature Group Website. There were no corrections to the AGM Minutes and it was proposed by Ralph Snook and seconded by Bruce Kendrick that the AGM Minutes be approved. They were adopted by the Members.

Minutes of the EGM that took place on Saturday 23 September 2023 (notified to Group Members by email on 26 September 2023) remain available on the RPS Nature Group Website. There were no corrections to the EGM Minutes and it was proposed by Mary Venables and seconded by Bill Venables that the EGM Minutes be approved. They were adopted by the Members.

4. Matters Arising:

None.

5. Chair's Report - Duncan Locke ARPS (DL):

5.1. Committee:

DL began by thanking all of the Committee for their hard work over the last year to maintain and improve the services provided to our Group Members. There have been three Committee changes during the year. In June 2023, Julia Wainwright resigned from the

Committee after four years and DL thanked her for all of her work including setting up our extremely successful Facebook Group. In November 2023, Ian Wilson joined the Committee as Web Administrator and in January 2024, Bruce Kendrick joined to help with Field Meetings in the north west of England and Group Publicity.

5.2. Nature Group Membership:

DL was very pleased to report that the membership of the Group as of the 1st March 2024 was 948 as compared to 899 Members on the 1st March 2023, so there has been a 5.5% increase in membership during the year. Based on figures from the RPS, at the end of 2023, the Nature Group is now the third largest of the RPS Special Interest Groups.

As of the 1st March 2024, the Group had 875 Members in the UK, Eire, the Isle of Man and Channel Islands plus 73 overseas Members. The biggest overseas Group is in the USA, with 11 Members.

The Group continues to have a high turnover of Members to keep our membership Secretary, Christine Holt, busy.

5.3. Relationship with the RPS:

As some of you may be aware the RPS is implementing a Transformation Plan to assure its long term financial viability. As Chair of the Group, DL sits on the Members Committee (MemCom) and two RPS initiatives that form part of this Plan and will affect the Group have been discussed at length by MemCom. Firstly, the Group now has new Terms of Reference (ToR) or Regulations to govern the operation of the Group. The new ToR limit the total number of Officers and voting Committee Members to seven (at present we have ten) and the term of office of the Committee will become three years as compared to our present two years.

The change in the size of the Committee will have little effect on our operations as the Committee will remain as it is, albeit with some non-voting Members. Subject to confirmation, DL was expecting the term of office change to be implemented when the present Committee, which was elected for two years, comes up for re-election at our 2025 AGM.

Secondly, the RPS is planning to charge each Special Interest Group for the services that it provides to that Group. Details of the amount and the timing of the start of this charge are still to be finalised and are dependent on the RPS providing as a minimum a working Event Booking System.

As many of you may recall, at the 2023 Group AGM, a motion was unanimously passed by the Members

present expressing strong dissatisfaction with the performance of the RPS in three areas: The RPS Journal; the RPS website and RPS financial control.

DL has discussed these with Dan Jones, RPS CEO and thinks that it is fair to say there has been very little progress. The, now quarterly Journal, still has very little coverage of Members' interests and Dan is well aware of this. Despite promises, the website saga seems to go on and on. On a more positive note the Group is now receiving Members' Subscriptions on time.

5.4. EGM 23rd September 2023:

DL was pleased to say that the 84 Members attending the EGM held on Zoom on the 23rd September 2023 approved the motion to increase the Group Annual Subs to £18 by a clear majority. Implemented from the 1st January 2024 it will enable the Nature Group to continue to provide a good service to its Members

When the RPS introduces charges for its services, our Treasurer, Peter Ward, and the Committee will have to consider carefully their impact on the Group's financial position.

5.5. New Group Website

The Group now has its own website separate from the RPS. DL thanked Ian Wilson for setting this website up and continuing to ensure that it is kept up-to-date. DL commented that we already have 285 Members registered on the site.

The new website provides us with an excellent place to advertise Group events, report on past events and share Group news with our Members. In addition it has enabled us to provide new services for our Members and improve on existing ones. In particular:

- **Lightbox:** Greg Lovett is in the final stages of developing this as a place where Members, particularly those working towards a Distinction, can get constructive criticism on their images
- **Galleries:** this provides an easy to use place for Members to share images from successful Distinction Panels, Field Meetings, etc.
- **Exhibition:** this provides a place for Members to view the accepted images in our Annual Exhibition
- **Competitions:** this has enabled us to provide a Monthly Competition, something we have wanted to do for several years.

5.6. Monthly Competition:

We launched the Monthly Competition in October on the basis that the competition year would run from April to March; this to fit in with our AGM in April. There would be a winner each month and based on the accumulated scores there would also be an overall winner for the year with a prize presented at the AGM. This Competition has proved very successful with over 105 Members entering at least one image. On average 48 Members have entered each month and 54 have scored the images.

5.7. Group Activities:

Ann Miles continues to coordinate a very large programme of Field Meetings, Zoom talks and Distinction Advisory Days. Those for the last year are listed in her Programme Coordinators Report. Earlier this year DL counted up of the number of events that the Group organised in 2023 and it was well over one a

week, in fact we were close to one Field Meeting a week. All thanks to hard work by Ann and others.

This summer we are planning to start running Workshops to help Members improve their photographic skills. Our aim is to keep the cost low and to gradually build up the number of Workshops on a number of topics, based on demand, across the UK.

DL also thanked James Foad for organising an excellent Residential Weekend in South Wales including Skomer Island in June last year and went on to thank Ralph Snook for continuing to organise the Group's Annual Exhibition.

5.8. International Members:

Late last year the RPS launched an initiative to better serve its International Members. As part of this, a quarterly International Journal is now being produced. The Nature Group has produced a short video on its activities that has been put on YouTube with those from other Special Interest Groups for International (and other) RPS Members to watch.

5.9. Members' Questionnaire:

Between mid-December and mid January, we asked you to complete a Member's Questionnaire. This was put together by David O'Neill and many thanks to the over 150 of you who responded. We have analysed the results, which have provided much useful information.

Notably, and thanks to the excellent work done by Dawn Osborn the Editor, The Iris Magazine stood out as being very popular with our membership. There was also enthusiasm for Regional Sub Groups, so this is something we are looking into.

5.10. Going Forward:

As DL said at last year's AGM, he believes 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 excellent and ever growing programme of Field Meetings and Workshops and 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.

6. Treasurer's Report: Peter Ward

Peter Ward presented his report as Group Treasurer, a copy of which is included at the end of these minutes.

7. Secretary's Report - Greg Lovett ARPS (GL):

7.1. Meetings

GL reported that the Committee meet bi-monthly, all meetings being undertaken by Zoom. We have therefore had six meetings since the last AGM. Committee meetings generally last a couple of hours on a Friday evening. I must thank the members of the Committee for their diligence in making the effort to prepare and attend Committee meetings and in particular to turn up on time. While there are inevitably occasional absences, the members of the Committee have all done their level best to attend.

7.2. Committee Changes

During the last 12 months GL explained that there had been various changes in the make up of the Committee.

Sadly, Julia Wainwright had to resign as Facebook Administrator. That role is now temporarily being delivered by Ann Miles and I try to help out as an additional Administrator.

Dawn Osborn has announced that she will be stepping down as Editor of The Iris next year. Dawn has a long involvement on the committee, being its longest serving member. While she joined in 1993 and was Chair between 2001 and 2003, she has been the Editor of The Iris since 2003. She has done such an excellent job that she is a hard act to follow. But that said, we do need to find her successor. We would be keen to hear from members with appropriate skills who would like to take on the Editor's role.

One of the concerns consistently raised by members in recent years has been to do with the well publicised problems with the RPS web site. In an effort to overcome some of the practical problems that this has caused the group, Dr Ian Wilson was co-opted onto the Committee as the Nature Group's Web Administrator. He has been responsible for the excellent new Website that we hope all our members have now explored. Thanks to Ian not only does this new site allow us to provide members with a single source of information for events (directly addressing one of the failings of the current RPS main web site) it has also enabled us to produce galleries from Field Trips, a monthly Competition and the new Critique Facility.

Most recently in January 2024, Bruce Kendrick also joined the Committee to help with Field Meetings in the north west of England and with Nature Group Publicity more generally.

7.3. Constitutional Changes

Very recently, the Trustees of the RPS have approved the introduction of some new Terms of Reference, this is the document that sets out how the Nature Group (and all the other Special Interest Groups) are governed. These changes will be fully in force by the time of the next AGM in 2025.

At that stage you will be asked to vote for an elected committee of 7 individuals (who will each stand for a 3 year term):

- Group Chair
- Group Finance Officer
- Group Secretary
- Group Engagement and Events Officer
- Group Communications Officer
- 2 further Ordinary Committee Members

This is a smaller committee than we're used to operating with, but we are allowed to delegate responsibilities to individual volunteers or to teams of volunteers to assist in the execution of committee duties or in delivery of Group activities.

As a result, your current committee do not consider that these changes will adversely affect the benefits that the Nature Group currently is able to offer to its members.

7.4. Image Critique Forum

As some of you may have seen from the New Section of the Nature Group's web site, we have recently set up the "Towards Associate" image critique forum aimed at those members of the Group who are working towards the Associate qualification and who would like to receive feed-back on individual images. This is separate

from the existing Advice Days and One to Ones (which look at panels of images) but is intended to be complimentary to them.

Our aim with the "Towards Associate" group is to provide a forum for those taking part to provide feedback which will, over time, help them recognise what constitutes images that meet the criteria needed for inclusion in a panel of images at Associate level. The facility will allow those taking part to upload images for positive critique by other members of that closed group. The group will include some individuals who have already achieved either Associate or Fellowship distinctions, who will be able to offer advice and guidance.

At this stage we have formed an initial group from those who respond first, although we hope to be able to extend the initiative to everyone who is interested, in time.

8. Programme Co-ordinator's Report - Ann Miles FRPS

Members were referred to the Programme Co-ordinator's report:

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

The Nature Group has organised many events since the last AGM with a series of Zoom lectures, two Distinction events and a wide variety of Field Trips. Our biggest change has been the availability since August 2023 of a dedicated website to display our events quickly and attractively with the facility for Members to upload their own images to Galleries and a Lightbox for comments after the event. All events are still accessible from the main RPS Nature Group home page but the work load for displaying, monitoring and reporting on Field Trips is a fraction of the previous method.

The Zoom talks by Ian Wilson, Mick Durham, Andrew McCarthy, Chris Gomersall and David Tipling were excellent and many thanks to those who have helped provide this service to Members. If you missed any of these, recordings of most of these can be found from the Nature Group home page under Event Recordings. As predicted, the estimated cost of running a face-to-face Advisory Session was too high, so both our Advisory Sessions were by Zoom, held in August and January and were both fully subscribed.

We have run a great number of Field Trips since the last AGM (see below) and have many more planned. Thanks to Duncan Locke, Peter Ward, Bruce Kendrick, David O'Neill, Ken Rasmussen, Nick Bowman and Steve Parrish who are helping to run events. Several of these are offered as 2-day events with Members booking their own choice of accommodation. Number of participants varied with a maximum of 15 to a couple where I braved very bad weather alone!! Hopefully those attending have enjoyed the events, got the occasional pleasing image and made new friends.

Galleries and News Items can be found for most of the trips that we organise on the our website.
<https://www.rpsnature.org.uk/>

We are still looking for Volunteers to help organise events so that we can spread the locations out over more of the country especially in the Southern, Northern and Scottish areas, so it would be great if more Members 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 – we are adding Workshops to our list for this year – there will be a charge for these as we have to cover overheads, but we will keep these well below commercial prices as a benefit of your membership of the RPS Nature Group.

9. Q&A Session for Group Members with the Group Committee

In response to various questions from the Group Members present, there was a short discussion over the cost of The Iris (both postage and publication). Some members present felt that the time may have come to consider a digital version. The committee agreed to consider the alternatives and seek further views from members.

Members continued to express concerns that management of the RPS were out of touch with the interests and needs of members.

10. Date and Venue of the 49th AGM 2025

The 48th Annual General Meeting of the RPS Nature Group will be held on Saturday 12th April 2025 (date to be confirmed) at Smethwick Photographic Society, The Old Schoolhouse, Oldbury, B69 2AS.

11. Thanks and Close of the AGM

The AGM closed at 14:42hrs.

Greg Lovett ARPS
Honorary Secretary RPS Nature Group

Treasurer's Report for AGM 2024

Peter Ward

Report for the Year Ended 31st December 2023

Cash Book Summary:

Current Account Balance:	31st Dec 2022	£ 21,906.98
Income for 12 Months to 31st Dec:		£ 32,840.42
Expenditure for 12 Months to 31st Dec:		(£ 29,785.07)
Closing Balance:	31st Dec 2023	£ 24,962.33
Bank Account Balance:	31st Dec 2023	£ 24,962.33

Income and Expenditure Summary:

	Income:	Expenditure:
Members Subscriptions:	£17,071.00	
Printing & Distribution of The Iris:		£14,850.00
Publications	£186.00	
Annual General Meeting:		£1,016.00
Exhibition:	£147.00	£465.00
South Wales Residential:	£7,004.00	£7,338.00
Yorkshire Coast Residential:	£5,467.00	£4,635.00
Salisbury Plain Field Meetings:	£1,440.00	£1,440.00
Distinction Days:	£713.00	
Events in Year:	£95.00	
Talks:	£10.00	£150.00
Zoom Fees:		£160.00
Prior Year VAT Adjustment:	£467.00	

Summary

1. We had a surplus of £3055.35 for the financial year. However, due to RPS updating the membership software, in 2023 we received £3953.29 of Members' Subscriptions that were originally paid during 2022. If this was relocated collectedly we would have had a deficit of £897.94.
2. The next biggest income was from the South Wales Residential. We aim to generate a small surplus from these activities and the South Wales Residential generated a surplus of £381.46. It cost £7338 to lay on the weekend and tickets sales generated £7004 in 2023 and £715 in 2022.
3. The Yorkshire Coast Residential generated a surplus of £832, but there will be expenditure charged against this when the event takes place later in 2024.

4. Comparison of Member's Subscriptions and the cost of The Iris:

Year:	Subscriptions:	Cost of The Iris:
2019:	£7,276.00	£7,418.00
2020:	£12,850.00	£9,018.00
2021:	£15,842.00	£6,147.00
2022:	£12,236.00	£13,297.00
2023:	£13,118.00	£14,850.00

The impact of changing The Iris from A5 to A4 format at the end of 2021 has increased our cost and is the main reason for the imbalance. However, the increase in Members' Subscriptions from the 1st January 2024 of approximately £3600 should cover this.

Peter Ward 20th March 2024

Obituary

George McCarthy FRPS

I have just received the sad news that George McCarthy passed away recently following a long illness.

George will have been well known to many members of the Nature Group for his workshops (e.g. adders, fungi) and for his time served on the Nature Distinctions fellowship panel for nature photography.

George will be remembered as an excellent wildlife photographer and workshop leader. His book: *The Wild Mushroom* (1996) is still possibly the best collection of photographs of British fungi and I frequently refer to it during the fungus season.

A brilliant all-round naturalist, I consider it a great privilege to have spent many days with George in the field (often with our mushrooming friend Ann) often at his favourite site at Ebernoe Common in Sussex. Never short of an anecdote or three, George made a wonderful field companion, never tiring of sharing his prodigious knowledge.

Adrian Davies

Images from George's book, *The Wild Mushroom*. The image at top right shot on film in his favourite wood - Ebernoe Common in West Sussex.





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Images continued from page 36:

- 1 Adult Macaroni Penguin. Bleaker Island.
- 2 Parent greeting chicks. Sealion Island.
- 3 Striated Caracaras feeding on a Rockhopper chick. Saunders Island.
- 4 Five Rockhoppers reach the top of the cliff.
- 5 Rockhopper taking a shower before continuing up the cliffs. Saunders Island.
- 6 Yours truly photographing a Rockhopper while another waits his turn. Sealion Island.



6