

THE IRIS



MAGAZINE OF THE NATURE GROUP OF THE RPS

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All contributions should be submitted to the Editor. Items covering any aspect of nature photography and/or natural history are welcomed, including reviews on equipment and relevant books.

Copy should be sent as .txt or .doc files by email or on CD, or printed using double line spacing on one side of the paper only.

Digitally captured photographic images are preferred but scanned transparencies are also acceptable. Images should be supplied on CD as RGB Tiff files, 6" x 4" at 300 ppi (1800 x 1200 pixels, file size approx 6.17MB). Original transparencies may be submitted, however, the Editor cannot specify how long they may be away from the author.

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

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Nature Group Exhibitions

Copies of Nature Group Exhibitions dating back to 2000, are available to book for camera clubs/photographic societies. If you would like to book one of these or the current or next years' Travelling Exhibition, please contact the Exhibition Chairman, details above.

Editorial

I do hope that you all enjoyed the Christmas festivities and I wish you a Happy New Year. I wonder how many of you were very good last year and received new photographic kit via Santa? I must have been a very bad girl!

I have been very busy since Christmas, with a variety of Nature Group projects, including this issue of *The Iris*. However, I did allow myself the luxury of a day out yesterday. It was a wonderful day - the weather was positively glorious. I met up with friends, Tony and Anne Bond, at Chirk Castle, just off the A5 on the Welsh border. At this time of year, the woodlands there are carpeted with Snowdrops - it is a beautiful sight to behold, but photography was anything but easy. The light on the woodland floor was moving fast and what was nicely lit one minute was in shadow the next or vice versa. Nevertheless, I managed one or two 'valid images'.

This is quite a special issue of *The Iris*. In fact this is our 100th edition. Quite a milestone! So to mark the occasion we have articles from past and present chairmen, past and present editors, as well as members who are successful professional photographers but still find the time to share their knowledge with their fellow members. I do hope you enjoy it.

By the time you read this, the new website will be live - read all about it on page 32 - the Annual Exhibition will have been selected and those of you who entered should know whether your images were accepted. I do know that we received something in the region of 700 entries in total, so congratulations to those of you whose work was accepted. Whether you have images in the exhibition or not, why not come along to the opening and see the accepted prints, slides and digital images for yourself. The opening of the exhibition takes place on the same day as the Spring Meeting and Annual General Meeting. The speaker at this year's meeting is Mike Wilkes FRPS. Many of you may have taken safaris with Mike - he is an excellent photographer and I am certain that those of you who are able to attend will enjoy a splendid day.

Until next time, enjoy the Spring.



From the chair

Where does the time go? I can hardly believe that this is the third 'From the Chair' I have written, which means I am half way through my term as your Chairman. When I wrote my last 'From the Chair', my wife and I were preparing to visit Yellowstone National Park for the first time. Having heard so much about it, I have to say it lived up to all my expectations. The wildlife was superb, the highlight being a female Grizzly and her cubs crossing the road between about fifty people who were standing only thirty yards apart. Because of the number of people I didn't manage to get a decent picture of the adult but managed to get some passable pictures of the cubs. This was one of fourteen sightings of bears during our three weeks - the best pictures I managed were of black bear cubs in a tree towards the end of one day. Although they were some distance away and the light was fading, I was pleasantly surprised that my flash was able to cover the distance and produce a good exposure. I confess that, due to the problems with hand luggage on planes and to reduce weight, for the first time ever, I left my film cameras at home and only took digital cameras on the trip! But, going back to the bear cubs and the flash, because I was using a digital camera, I suppose that even if the images had been under exposed, I could have sorted out any problems with Lightroom upon my return home! Before anyone says it, the answer is "no - I haven't given up using film and have no desire to do so!"

It was not just the bears that made the trip so memorable but all the other mammals from Bison to Coyote and a couple of very tame Red Fox. One slight disappointment was the number of bird species, or to be more correct, the lack of birds. There were two noticeable exceptions, a pair of Trumpeter swans on the Yellowstone River and a Great Grey Owl which posed beautifully.

For some reason I find smaller mammals such as Squirrels and Prairie Dogs fascinating and I was aware that there was a Prairie Dog town in Montana about sixty miles north of Yellowstone and according to the book *Wildlife Watching in Montana*, this was one of the best sites in America for photographing Black-tailed Prairie Dog. It turned out to be everything that the book had described and even surpassed itself when, while taking pictures of the prairie dogs, an American lady in a passing car pointing behind

me said, 'Isn't that Badger really cute.' Whether the description 'cute' is the right one I'm not sure, but the badger allowed me to move the car closer and get some pictures which were a real bonus and completely unexpected.

My Chairman's Day has been and gone (see report elsewhere in this issue) and seems to have been well received. While on the subject of Chairman, can I report that Tony Wharton has just been confirmed as Chairman of the Nature A and F panel. Congratulations Tony, I am sure it will flourish under your guidance and I look forward to seeing you at future meetings of the Nature Group Committee.

Can I remind you all that we are always in need of members to host field meetings. This is an important function of the Nature Group and allows members to meet up and visit new areas for photography. If you have a site that you feel would be suitable for a meeting please contact Colin Smith FRPS and let him have the details.

I hope you have sorted out images for the annual Exhibition; this is always one of the major highlights of the year and helps to enhance the reputation of the group nation-wide. This will be the last year that Peter Jones ARPS and his partner Susie will run the exhibition, so it is a good time to say thank you to them both for all the hard work they have put in over the years. Thankfully we now have some members who have come forward to take their place and when the committee has finalised the new appointments they will be announced in *The Iris*.

If you haven't booked in for the Nature Photographers' Joint Convention at the Hayes Conference Centre on October 3rd-5th, 2008 then you better hurry because it has filled up fast, please contact John Tinning, details are repeated in this edition of the *Iris*.

I hope the New Year provides everyone with many opportunities to photograph nature whether it is close to home or in some distant and exotic location.



The 32nd Annual General Meeting, Spring Meeting and Exhibition Opening

of the RPS Nature Group will be held at:-

Smethwick Photographic Society

The Old Schoolhouse, Oldbury, West Midlands

(for directions see below),

Saturday 19th April 2008

Timetable

10.30hrs Assemble for 11.00hrs. start

11.00hrs A presentation by Mike Wilkes FRPS

12.30hrs Break for lunch.

Light lunches will be available in the clubhouse (ploughman's or jacket potatoes).
There is also a dining area if you wish to bring sandwiches.

14.00hrs 32nd Annual General Meeting.

Agenda

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Minutes of the 31st AGM 2007, printed in issue 98 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 33rd AGM

14.45hrs Opening of the 2008 Annual Exhibition

Presentation of the Awards

followed by a showing of the accepted projected images.

Accepted Prints will be on display for the duration of the day

Directions:-

Leave the M5 at Junction 2 and get into right hand lane. At roundabout (with traffic lights) approximately 200 yards from motorway take A4034 right towards West Bromwich and immediately get into left hand lane of dual carriageway. At first traffic lights (approx 1/3 mile) turn left into Park Street. After a hundred yards or so turn right into Churchbridge (cul-de-sac). The Old Schoolhouse is last but one building on left.

Chairman's Day

by Geoff Trinder ARPS

When I was appointed Chairman of the group, one of my first tasks was to organise a Chairman's Day. My main concern was that the programme needed to be varied and also of a high enough standard to attract as many members as possible so that it did not make a loss. I needn't have worried about the latter because, as usual, members of the group turned out in good numbers to support the event. As far as speakers were concerned I decided that it would be a good idea to get some people in who had not previously given a presentation to the group. Everyone I approached to give a talk at the event willingly agreed to my request. All that then remained was to advertise the day, collect the bookings and worry about my own presentation.

The day eventually arrived and as usual there was lots of chatter as everyone gathered for coffee. Following the introductions I gave my talk on reptiles and amphibians. I had decided to concentrate on this group of creatures because they don't appear to feature to the same extent as other groups of fauna and flora. Whereas frogs appeal to a wide range of people, the minute you mention snakes the reverse is the case and many people shudder with a totally irrational fear and loathing, believing them to be wet and slimy and to attack without any provocation! In fact they are dry, incredibly muscular and very shy and secretive, usually retreating into the nearest cover when approached. It is obvious that the venomous species can be dangerous and even life threatening if you do not treat them with caution and respect and to me, it is this aspect which makes them all the more fascinating. I have to admit, getting up close and photographing them gives me quite an adrenalin rush! The talk seemed to go down quite well so then I was able to relax and enjoy the rest of the day.

Alan and Susan Parker ARPS then took us on a birding trip to North-west Spain. This was their first visit presentation to the group and I am sure it won't be their last. The scenery in the area is stunning as is much of the bird life, all illustrated with some superb photographs. They explained the way in which they used the car as a hide for most of the bird photography, mounting their 600mm lens on a window mount and often even attaching

a 2x converter to achieve the results they wanted. Having tried this myself I can only admire how sharp their images were. Having given details of the area and the main sites visited I am sure they will have inspired members of the group to put this down as a place to visit in the future.

John Jones ARPS then took us to a place much nearer to home as he described and illustrated the incredible variety of orchids to be found in the Derbyshire Peak District. John has an intimate knowledge of the area having visited it over many years and has studied many colonies of orchids, monitoring how they have changed and developed. It was the way he put across his knowledge coupled with some stunning images that made this such an enjoyable and fascinating presentation.

Following John, a lunch break was taken and Judith Parry and her team provided an excellent lunch. As usual we owe Judith a vote of thanks as she always looks after us well when we hold meetings at the Smethwick PS clubrooms.

During the lunch break Dawn Osborn FRPS put up her Fellowship Panel which featured the Wildlife of the Falkland Islands after which she opened the afternoon session with a presentation of Falklands Wildlife. Unlike the morning session, when slides had been used for the presentations, Dawn showed digital images. She has visited the Islands on a number of occasions and, as you would expect from Dawn, the wildlife was illustrated at its best with some stunning images.

The day was rounded off with another digital presentation, this time by John Tinning who was visiting the group for the first time. John, a well travelled and highly respected photographer, took us on a month by month tour of the best places for wildlife photography around the world. Africa, Australia and North America were among some of the destinations that he transported us to; the quality of the images left you with a wish list of places that you just had to visit.

All that remains for me to do is thank all the members who supported me on the day and to thank Alan and Susan Parker, John Jones, Dawn Osborn and John Tinning for making it such an enjoyable and entertaining day.

The more things change, the more they stay the same

by John Myring

Or, as the French would say; *"Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose"*.

At a brief glance there can have been no greater change from the very first 'Newsletter', produced in March 1976, text only, A4 cyclostyled sheets, to the 'The Iris' produced by our current editor. A truly excellent, quality printed, A5 magazine liberally scattered throughout with colour photographs.

Look more closely though through the entire one hundred issues; read all the articles, look at the photographic subject matter and you will see that everything has, at heart, stayed the same.

■ Issue 98, just two issues ago, had an article on moth light traps. Issue No. 2 [back in 1976] invited members *'to offer their opinions as to the ethics of using a portable light trap, for collecting nocturnal insects, to obtain photographic subjects'*.

■ What was to become a perennial item [problem?], requests for volunteers to lead field meetings and other events, appeared in the first year of the group's existence.

■ On page 19 of Issue No. 12 the Editor, in replying to a letter of criticism wrote: *'It is encouraging to get any reaction to the Newsletter content.'*
A sentiment every one of his successors will have experienced!

■ Issues, too numerous to list, have contained requests from every editor for more articles. Over the years though there has been a continuing range of excellent articles, entertaining, informative, humorous and instructional. Apropos the latter, consider a 'Ground crab' and the query 'Have you tried a Gooseneck'. The former was a home made camera support, not a species of land crab. The other, far from being a culinary delight, a home made flexible flash bracket.

■ Summer 1983 and the Editor wrote apologising to NG members who had not received their news-letters, *'...due to problems in the Membership Department at Bath'*. Almost every editor since has needed to use the same apology, some more than once.

■ Over the years there have been re-occurring complaints about the high volume of bird photographs compared to other subject matter. Perhaps the trend was set in Issue 7 when the first published picture was a monochrome picture of 'A pair of Whinchats' by Dennis Green ARPS which appeared on the cover.

Changes there have been, but mainly in production. Heather Angel FRPS wrote in Issue 79 [celebrating the Group's 25th anniversary] of when, as Editor, she used to clear the dining room floor in order to cut and paste items onto A4 sheets, which she then joined to make a horizontal A3 page. The printing company then reduced each A3 page to an A4, printed on both sides with A5 pages. Compare that cumbersome process to nowadays sitting at a computer using DTP software. Not that I am belittling recent editors efforts; far, far, from it.

As technology has improved [and the quality of magazines on newsagents shelves] so have members' expectations increased regarding the overall quality of The Iris, especially with regard to photographic reproduction. Today's, and future, editors face different challenges.

I was going to write that there have been other changes but perhaps 'a variation on trends' is more accurate. It is difficult to say precisely what influences such variations, nor are they noticeable when you look at just a few issues. They are there though when you browse through the previous ninety nine issues. I don't mean changes such as a new cover design, or the introduction of colour pictures; no, something more elusive. Caused, perhaps, by

incoming editors; each subconsciously bringing their own style and interests more to the fore. Certainly the 'Editorials' differ in style, with some editors being more 'confrontational'. Occasionally 'spats' between Editor and Member or Member and Member, appeared in Members' Letters.

There was a run of earlier monochrome issues which contained some delightful, simple, line sketches whilst features such as 'Inventors' Corner' came and went. 'Members Letters' would appear for a few issues, and then disappear only for this cycle to keep repeating itself. Once I received a letter complaining that I did not allow sufficient space for this item; I explained that I would gladly allow the space if I had the letters to print. Another critical letter I received late in my editorship led to an amicable exchange from which I learned much. I could never be more grateful to the writer for making me realise how stupid I had been in using gimmicky effects in an effort to try and make the magazine 'stand out'; they did but for all the wrong reasons! The result was issue number 81 onwards and I only wish I had learned that lesson at the beginning of my Editorship.

'*Plus ça change ...*' also applies to Nature Group members and their varying attitudes to The Iris, which all editors have experienced. Some are totally supportive of editors and tolerant of their occasional shortcomings. Others expect an omniscient being that must devote every waking hour to the magazine, thus ensuring that every issue arrives absolutely perfect in every aspect, down to the last jot and tittle. Something every editor would love to achieve consistently.

One of the most difficult of tasks facing editors is how to deal with submitted articles/pictures which fall woefully short of The Iris standard. Occasionally the photographs and articles fall so far short that one wonders whether the submitter has read previous issues. If so, how they can suppose their item meets the standard? Should the editor pretend, in order to avoid embarrassment, that it was never received? Another ploy could be to claim that the issue was over subscribed; this though then precludes a plea for more articles in the same, or next, issue. Alternatively explain, tactfully, why the material was not used and hope this does not result in a cancelled membership.

Hazard a guess as to how many editors there have been in thirty years since the first newsletter? Only seven [two of which covered some eight years each] in chronological order:

Howard Ginn; Heather Angel FRPS; Gordon Dickson; Edwin Engelstaff ARPS; Louis Rumis ARPS; myself, John Myring ARPS and currently, Dawn Osborn FRPS. This list omits an important name, that of a modest man, Martin Withers FRPS. Martin was never an editor but for many years worked tirelessly behind the scenes producing The Iris and contributing to its success as much as any editor.

What of The Iris in the future; will there be changes? Possibly, but more in the way that it is published I suspect, rather than content. Heather Angel's far ranging article [see above] mentioned the possibility of 'on-line' magazine saving both printing and postage costs. An equally feasible alternative would be to produce the magazine as a PDF file, burn to a CD and post to each member. Commercial equipment capable of burning 700 odd CDs in a short period could be purchased for no more than one year's printing costs.

Personally I hope that neither of these changes occurs; I sit in front of my computer long enough. Part of the enjoyment in reading The Iris is to relax in a comfortable chair, savour the text and study the photographs at leisure.

What would I wish for the future of The Iris? What else but, "*The more things change, the more they stay the same*".

The Nature Group

by Heather Angel, Hon FRPS

Congratulations

Congratulations on the production of this the 100th issue of The Iris – a fine achievement by everyone involved in the production over the years.

When the Nature Group was formed in 1975, as the founder Chairman I was eager to achieve two goals from the onset – a group Newsletter and field trips. I well remember an elderly member of the RPS approaching me when the Society was based at South Audley Street in London saying

'I gather you are having field trips – very adventurous!'

In those days an evening lecture was the conventional group activity. We started with day outings, then expanded to include weekends.

Initially, the Nature Group 'Newsletter' was a very modest affair – simply A4 cyclostyled sheets. Not long after, when I became Editor, the format changed to A5. This was created by typing (long before we had computers) on A4 sheets and joining two pages together to make an A3 sheet. Each of these was reduced by the printer to A4 and folded to the A5 format. The Newsletter was assembled by laying out the pages on our dining room floor. This process allowed for no colour reproduction but we did have some line drawings.

The launch of The Iris was therefore a big step forward and much welcomed by Nature Group members. Similarly, the NG website going live in 2005 was another landmark, providing a great way for members to network amongst themselves.

Since the Nature Group was formed we have seen many advances in the way that images of the natural world are captured. I began using a Benbo tripod in the late 1960's and a decade later it would be rare to find any other tripod on a Nature Group outing. Arguably it is still the most versatile of all tripods for the nature photographer – I can recall an advert in a North American magazine quoting it had more positions than the Kama Sutra!

Air travel

Now that every gram counts when travelling overseas, my Benbos are confined to the UK and I take a Gitzo carbon fibre tripod abroad. I made six trips to China in 2007, where there is a limit of only 20kg for checked baggage on all internal flights, but they don't bother to weigh hand baggage which is a huge advantage. So, once I set foot in China, I carry not only my photopack but also a capacious handbag for carrying all the books I buy en-route, plus my notebooks for writing articles (this was written on the way out to Shanghai).

Increased security at airports in the last decade has made travelling overseas much more difficult for everyone – notably photographers. Not only do regulations vary between one country and another but also between airlines. I no longer take a laptop abroad with me to edit and convert some of the RAW shots, to ease the workload when I return, because with only one piece of hand baggage allowed out of the UK, there is no question I would rather jettison a laptop for an extra lens.

Before leaving the UK I make sure all allen keys and watchmakers' screwdrivers are placed in my checked baggage, but when rushing to get an internal flight it is all too easy to forget. Not long ago I was leaving Alice Springs, where a roll of black electrical tape was discovered and confiscated (on the grounds it might be used for tying up hands!). As my tape had baled me out more than once – notably by repairing a crack in an F5 body which crashed onto a rock – I asked if I could check it, but was told it was too small. Undeterred, I returned to the check-in desk where I begged a large tough plastic bag used for packing damaged cases and in it went and resurfaced on the carousel.

Digital capture

Digital capture has brought huge advantages and some disadvantages. Carrying 4GB cards weigh next to nothing compared to hundreds of films on a long trip. Gone are the days of battling to get a hand search on hand baggage to reduce the risk of repeated X-rays on trips involving many flights.

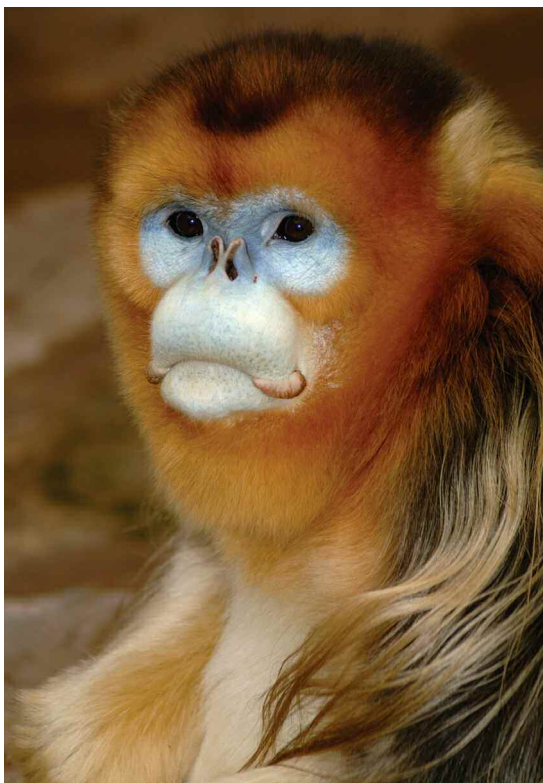
Being able to change the ISO rating on any frame is a huge asset. It is also a great boon to be able to check you have the image before you move on – especially when taking action shots of animals. But you have to check whether electricity is available to recharge not only camera batteries but also downloaders and mobile phones. I always carry recharging leads plus a universal plug adapter in my hand baggage, so I can top up charges whilst waiting at airports. Should baggage go astray, I can live without a change of clothes but a camera is useless without a charged battery.

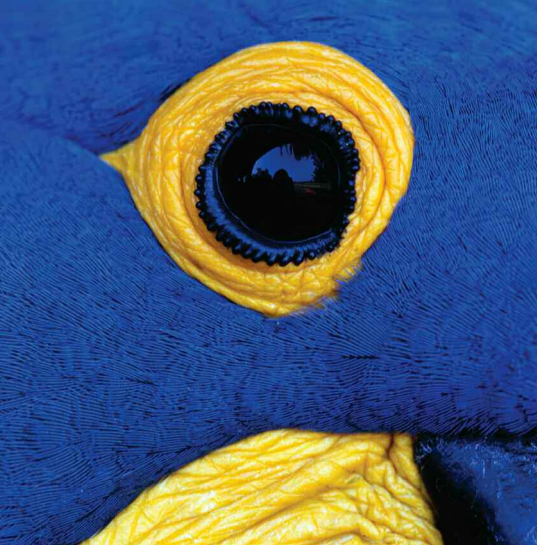
Film and processing bills may have evaporated but the biggest downside to working with digital is just how labour intensive it is after shooting. Pre digital days, after returning from a trip, the films would be sent off for processing and returned unmounted. Each film was laid out on a lightbox, the 'keepers' marked with red stickers for mounting. By working flat out, a whole trip could be marked up in a day and the one-off action shots sent off for duping that day. Mounting was slotted in each day. Now, when I return from a 4-5 week trip I have some 80GB to edit, make any adjustments to the RAW files before converting them to tiffs, not forgetting to add all the metadata in the IPTC fields – admittedly now helped somewhat by working on batches in Adobe Bridge. Before archiving the tiffs, jpegs have to be made for uploading onto our website. Our new site, launched in 2007, only accepts images with the IPTC data completed.

A change of direction

When the Nature Group was formed over three decades ago, pin-sharp, well-lit portraits were the goal we strove to achieve. As travel became easier and more affordable, package tours were offered to exotic locations, so more and more photographers extended their range of subjects beyond readily accessible British wildlife. When the prestigious Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition introduced the category Composition and Form, artistic interpretations became acceptable, so the approach to nature photography became as fluid as the photographer's imagination.

Now that the world is awash with good images of nature and so many are available via the internet, photographers are having to become more and more imaginative about their approach and style if their pictures are to stand out from the crowd. However hard I work on a trip, I regard myself lucky





to have half a dozen images which I know will sell consistently and end up paying for the entire trip. It is hard to pinpoint the key factors, but stunning lighting or action shots are high on the list, alternatively eye-to-eye portraits of mammals or the cute factor with baby mammals helps a lot. Shallow depth of field is an effective way of isolating a subject from the background and is now in vogue for many commercial close-ups.

We can all learn from the experience of others – whether it be about a productive location, the optimum time of year or day to visit a site, or even a particular gadget. Perhaps an ongoing short feature on a gadget you can't live without might stimulate other NG members to contribute similar short pieces about their kit.

Here's to the next 100 issues of The Iris!

Heather's websites: www.heatherangel.co.uk
www.naturalvisions.co.uk

Heather's most recent books include:
 Macro through a Nikon Lens, CWP (2007)
 Puffins, Evans Mitchell Books (2007)
 Panda, David & Charles (April 2008)
 Green China (July 2008)

South West USA

by Geoff Trinder ARPS

Arizona and the states that surround it are in the south west of America and are often referred to as Indian country. My wife and I have visited this area on two occasions with a gap of seven years between the trips. The last visit was a twenty four day stay during late April and early May of this year. We flew to Las Vegas, a direct flight from Manchester, stayed one night and headed out as quickly as possible the following morning!

During the time there we covered 4,000 miles and visited southern Utah, calling at Zion and Bryce Canyons, before heading east to north west Arizona where we visited Monument Valley, the Grand Canyon and then south to The Painted Desert before moving further south into the Sonoran Desert area round Tucson. From Tucson we went to Portal, a small town in the extreme south east of Arizona which we had visited on our previous trip, then back to Tucson, and from there west into California where we spent a day in the Mohave Desert before returning to Las Vegas and the flight home.

The whole area offers superb opportunities for photography, from landscapes to historic Indian sites and of course wildlife. I took the opportunity to photograph as many aspects as possible but for this article I am going to concentrate on just the reptiles and small mammals. Starting at Bryce Canyon one of the mammals I wanted to see and photograph was the Utah prairie dog which, after much help from one of the wardens, I eventually found on a site close to the road and was able to photograph from the car with a 500mm lens using a bean bag as support. They are reasonably common in the area and not difficult to observe with the aid of binoculars but dive underground with little provocation so, to find an area where they could be seen close to the road was vital.

There are larger animals that can be seen and photographed at Bryce including mule deer and pronghorn, we also got distant views of coyote and red fox but the golden mantled ground squirrel was the second small mammal I was able to

Arizona Black-tailed Rattlesnake





Eastern Cottontail



Coues Deer, endemic to Arizona.

photograph. This appeared at one of the viewing areas overlooking the canyon and was very obliging, allowing the use of a 70-200mm lens to be used as it posed on top of the fence and posts of the viewing area. I went back on two more occasions hoping to get more pictures but, apart from a fleeting view, it didn't put in an appearance.

In southern Arizona the most common small squirrel in the desert regions is the Harris' Antelope Squirrel. They are easily seen in the desert close to Tucson but I also came across them in Portal in a garden where there are many bird feeders and anyone can sit, watch and photograph the birds and other wildlife which visit. This is where this particular species was photographed as they ran around under the feeders and also where, to my amazement, we regularly saw a Western Diamondback Rattlesnake. There was even a warning below one of the feeders saying 'Beware Rattlesnake' and it appeared that this particular snake made a habit of lying in wait for potential prey whether mammal or bird. On one occasion a family of Gambel's Quail were feeding when the snake approached and, rather than retreat, the quail held their ground and it was the snake that retreated, unfortunately this all happened out of range of the camera. A bit like the fisherman's tale of the one that got away!

It was also in Portal where I saw and was able to photograph Eastern Cottontail. These rabbits are the most common species in the USA and were quite numerous here although they are nearing the edge of their range in the east of Arizona. In the grounds of a complex of holiday chalets were more bird feeders with a good range of species as well as some very tame Coues Deer; this is a dwarf subspecies of the White-tailed Deer and is endemic to Arizona. One of the reasons for returning to Portal was to go and see Barney who we had met on our first visit when he had been kind enough to let me photograph some of his rattlesnakes. At that time he had a large collection from which he extracted venom for use in research. Since that first visit he had been bitten by a Mojave Rattlesnake and only just survived the experience, being unconscious by the time he arrived at the hospital! As a result he has cut down on the number of rattlesnakes he now has but he was still kind enough to set up a couple of species for me to photograph, including Western Diamondback and Prairie Rattlesnake. Over the years the BBC and National Geographic photographers have visited Barney to take pictures.

It was on my first trip to Arizona that I photographed my first wild rattlesnake; this was a Mojave Rattlesnake in Organ Pipe National Park which is situated on the Mexican border in the south west of Arizona. I had intended to visit the park again this year but time ran out and a warden in another park said much of the area had been closed by the border patrol; I later found out that this was not the case!

Before returning to the Tucson area we visited Ramsey Canyon Preserve, a canyon famous for its Humming Birds and, like many other sites, with an array of bird feeders that are used by many American bird photographers. As well as attracting birds they also attract mammals and in this case two species of squirrel were also very obliging - I was able to photograph both the Arizona Grey squirrel, which has a really thick bushy tail, and the Rock Squirrel which is easier to see and photograph in the grounds of The Sonoran Desert Museum. This is situated to the west of Tucson and is well worth a visit, more of that later. During this part of the trip we stayed for a few days in Sierra Vista and by chance discovered Gray Hawk

Nature Centre which was a superb establishment run by a lady called Sandy. The centre is in the desert on the outskirts of the town and has a fantastic collection of reptiles. Sandy is a larger than life character whose main aim in life is to educate people of all ages about the importance of desert wildlife, in particular rattlesnakes, and the need to protect them.

The centre is run as a charity and she welcomes photographers, the week before I was there the BBC had been filming and the week before that a French photographer had visited. My wife, who is terrified of snakes, and I spent a magical morning with Sandy who went out of her way to set the various species up in the desert to photograph. I actually photographed six species of rattlesnake during my visit, including Black-tailed, Speckled and Rock Rattlesnake, using a variety of lenses ranging from 17mm wide angle to a 105mm macro. A fee is charged for this which goes towards the running of the centre.

Speckled Rattlesnake





Round-tailed Ground Squirrel



Utah Prairie Dog

Back to Tucson and the Sonoran Desert Museum where there are a great number of captive species in natural enclosures which are suitable subjects to photograph including several more species of rattlesnake. These are all behind glass and a flashgun is necessary to take pictures of them but it does mean you can take extreme close ups in complete safety. I wasn't sure how these would come out so I used my digital D200 and the built in flashgun; I have included a close up of a sidewinders head to illustrate the possibilities. Before entering the museum there are some open air compounds containing a variety of native lizards which, with patience, can produce useful pictures. The grounds themselves give ample opportunities to photograph numerous wild and free species. I was able to photograph Cactus Wren nesting at the side of the path and several other bird species as well as the rock squirrels.

We visited San Xavier Mission, an interesting and historic building, south of Tucson where on the previous trip we had seen and photographed Road Runners, this time no Road Runners but a species I had been searching for during the whole trip

suddenly put in an appearance. After standing perfectly still for a ridiculously long time and using the 500mm lens on a tripod (it was impossible to get the car close enough) I got pictures of the Round-tailed Ground Squirrel. Although this was the last small mammal I was able to get pictures of on the trip there were other species which space does not allow me to include.

I may have given the impression that I spent my whole time photographing captive creatures but in fact only two days were given over to this, in fact landscapes, numerous bird and plant species made up the majority of the trip. I just find rattlesnakes fascinating and awesome creatures and so when the opportunity arose to get pictures of them I couldn't resist! In the next article Robert Hawkesworth covers many other aspects of the photographic delights of a trip to Arizona.



Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel

Deserts and Canyons of Arizona

by Robert Hawkesworth FRPS



I imagine we all have a list of places and countries that we wish to visit and for many of us that list is probably longer than we may sensibly have time for, "time and tide etc...". However in the spring of 2007 my wife, Barbara, and I did manage to tick off one on our list - Arizona.

Deserts have a fascination for us; the manner in which living creatures have successfully adapted themselves to such a harsh environment is one of the wonders of the living world. Water is one of the essentials of life and to discover some of the ways in which plants and animals manage to use what little is available is certainly of great interest. Not only that, but living as we do in a temperate and constantly changing climate, the landscapes of the deserts are quite different from anything of which we have experience.

We knew that it would be hot of course and we were correct - even in the first half of May temperatures reached 30-40°C with low humidity, at times your throat dried up within moments of stepping outside. Northern Arizona is essentially a plateau approximately 7,000ft high - at this altitude such high temperatures could have implications for anyone with a heart and/or breathing condition, so in such circumstances it would be well to seek advice from your doctor. My wife and I both have mild angina and we suffered no ill-effects at all, unless you count seeming to think slower than usual an ill-effect!

Twelve friends gathered at Heathrow on 5th May for our flight to Phoenix and considering recent events, it is worth noting that BA managed not to lose any of our luggage! The first part of the holiday, or perhaps I should more accurately say, expedition, was to be spent in Southern Arizona; firstly at Gila Bend (HEE-la) to give us access to the Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument on the Mexican border and then on to Tucson for the two Saguaro (sah-WAR-oh) National Parks to the east and west of the city and the Sonora Desert Museum.

The most noticeable features of the landscape are the Saguaros (*Cereus giganteus*) and the Organ Pipes (*Cereus thurberi*). The Saguaros are the commoner by far, and indeed the Organ Pipes grow in only a few places and then only in the Organ Pipe N.M. The Saguaros grow 30-50ft tall and have beautiful white flowers worn like coronets at the tops of their stems, occasionally at quite a jaunty angle and I noticed Cactus Wrens feeding on the nectar of the flowers. The Organ Pipes are multi-stemmed and grow to about 20ft. The other group of cacti which impressed themselves upon us, in more ways than one I might add, were the Chollas (CHOY-uh). Both the Teddy Bear Cholla (*Opuntia bigellovii*) and the Chain Fruit Cholla (*Opuntia fulgida*) are very densely spined and their joints detach very easily so that you have only to brush one very lightly and you find that you have picked up a passenger. They are well named 'Jumping Chollas'. Removing the joints was not easy and metallic objects were about the only



thing they would not stick to. Most of us managed to pick up one or more! The Cactus Wrens (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus*) actually nest in them, usually the Teddy Bears or at least in our very limited experience. The flowers of the Chollas we found to be very beautiful indeed varying from white through yellow and orange to reds of different shades all depending on the various species. Barrel Cacti and Hedgehog Cacti were well named and as in our country, where we give local names to plants, so it proved in Arizona, thus Fish-hook Barrel (*Ferocactus wislizenii*) or Strawberry Hedgehog (*Echinocereus engelmannii*), not forgetting the very beautiful Claret Cup Cactus (*Echinocereus triglochiatum* var. *melanacanthus*). It was quite challenging attempting to name them, not to mention photographing them, but with twelve of us on the go we probably got there in the end.



Of course there were plants other than cacti and one such was the Ocotillo (Oh-ko -TEE-oh) (*Fouquieria splendens*) with long canes up to 20 feet tall, very spiny and bearing leaves which it sheds when conditions are very dry, its strange orange-red flowers are borne on the very tips of the stems; you would be forgiven for imagining it to be a cactus. There were even some trees, or perhaps shrubs would be a better description, the yellow flowered Paloverde (*Cercidium microphyllum*) and the Desert Willow (*Chilopsis linearis*), not a willow at all of course but its linear leaves are reminiscent of willows, its flowers are lovely, whitish tinged with pinks, lavenders and yellows. The smaller herbs were often yellow with as expected greyish leaves although the Colorado Four o'Clock was different being purplish red or rose in colour.

Returning one evening a rattlesnake crossed the path of our vehicle; we stopped and carefully approached it, but it continued as if quite unaffected by us and finally curled up under some cactus scrub, looking rather like a fat Cumberland sausage. It proved to be the Western Diamondback (*Crotalus atrox*). Given the fading light, I was happy with my photographs, about 1/30 second at f5.6, with a 300mm lens - I was grateful for image stabilisation. I didn't fancy erecting a tripod! The Sonora Desert Museum has a living collection of Arizona's mammals, reptiles, birds and plants housed, or growing, in appropriate habitats with plenty of space so that very natural looking photographs may be made. Mountain Lion (*Felis concolor*) also named Puma or Cougar, Bobcat

(*Lynx rufus*) and Ocelot (*Felis pardalis*) are all accessible for photography, as are Mexican Wolves a sub-species of the Grey Wolf (*Canis lupus*). These mammals have either been rescued for one reason or another or have been captive bred. The next day we visited the Eastern Saguaro National Park. I was keen to find the cristate form of the Saguaro. In some specimens the top of the stem fans out beautifully, it is certainly a type of fasciation but so far it has defied explanation. It is a rare occurrence and we were fortunate to be given good information from the Rangers in the visitor centre. Even so it took us some time to locate a suitable specimen.



From Tucson it was a long drive north to Holbrook which was only a short drive from the Painted Desert. Our first view of the area was from a high viewpoint and what an amazing view it was. Spread out before us was a country washed with a palette of brightly coloured minerals and many conical striped hills. The whole area is formed from rocks called the 'Chinle Formation'. Mostly soft fine-grained mudstones, siltstones and claystones; but also beds of much harder sandstones and conglomerates as well as some limestones. The views and colours continued to impress us as we journeyed through the area. The Saguaro cacti were gone - botanically this area was quite different.



The Petrified Forest National Park is a huge area preserving a dense assemblage of fossilised logs from the Triassic Period (225 million years ago). The colours in the fossilised logs were beautiful and varied and provided good photographic opportunities. Amongst the plants we photographed were the Desert Mariposa (*Calochortus kennedyi*) a beautiful yellow flowered member of the Lily Family, Hedgehog type cacti, Yuccas, Prince's Plume (*Stanleya pinnata*) an attractive yellow flowered member of the Mustard Family and Yellow Bird of Paradise (*Caesalpinia gilliesii*). We were also able to photograph Jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*) and Roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*) one of the latter with a lizard in its bill. We then moved on a short distance to Flagstaff, from where we visited Sunset Crater and the Wupatki National Monument. Space does not allow for a detailed description of the volcanic area nor of the Native American stone dwellings dating back to the time of the eruptions. Nor does it allow for our visit to the Sedona Red Rock Area of Oak Creek Canyon.



Our final stop was the Grand Canyon. Words cannot really describe this area, it is a place of superlatives, a place to astonish and humble all. Officially 277 miles long, 4 to 18 miles wide and up to a mile deep. Gauged out by the Colorado River in relatively recent times geologically speaking - within the last 6 million years or so. The rocks visible at the bottom are 2 billion years old, those at the top a mere 245 million years old. Photographically I found it very challenging, to do it justice was extraordinarily difficult. We had good views of the California Condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*), but at the time my camera was fitted with a 28-135mm, about as much use as a chocolate teapot! Later I did better with a Raven (*Corvus corax*)! Hardly a satisfactory alternative! Plantwise apart from some lovely opportunities with Junipers and Pines of various species with the canyon as a backdrop.

Finally a sunset visit, perhaps not a classic for those who able to visit regularly, but pretty good for us, and brought to a fitting end what had been a fabulous two weeks.

Over the past 25 years I have run many of my own Nature Photography Holidays and I know just how much work has gone on behind the scenes when one runs as effortlessly and seamlessly as this one did. A great many thanks go to Martin Withers FRPS and all at Hosking Tours for ensuring we all had such a wonderful vacation.



- Page 15 Saguaro Desert
- Page 16 Organ Pipe Cactus
Beehive Cactus
- Page 17 Teddy Bear Cholla
Prince's Plume
Painted Desert
- Page 18 Petrified Wood
Petrified Logs
Grand Canyon Sunset



Insect action close-ups - the digital way.



by Richard Revels FRPS

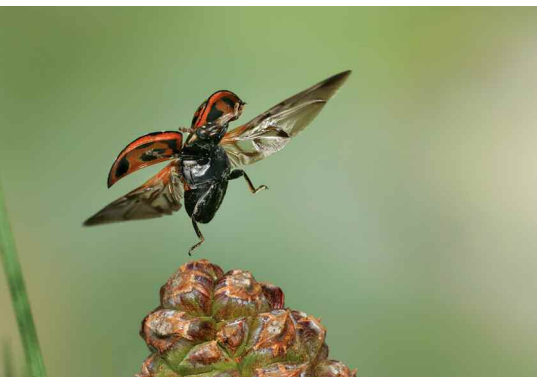
The pros and cons of digital capture versus film have been expressed several times within the pages of *The Iris*, and there are good arguments on both sides, depending on what you want to do with your images. For me turning digital has given my close up photography in particular a new lease of life, with the freedom to take large numbers of pictures at little or no cost. This has lead to me being much more experimental in my photography, trying different and more difficult techniques where sometimes success is likely in only a small percentage of the pictures taken. With film I was always conscious of cost, so was less inclined to be experimental with new ideas that involved taking large numbers of pictures with little or no guarantee of success. Another advantage of using digital cameras is that the results can be viewed quickly, enabling me to adapt my technique if necessary, and try again. By the time film had come back from processing the opportunity to retake pictures had long gone.

The main down side of digital photography for me is sitting in front of a computer monitor for hours sorting out the best pictures from the rest. Despite this, the move to digital has definitely meant a giant step forward in my photography.

Because of the inevitable large failure rate, I rarely attempted photographing insects in flight when I was using film, but since changing to digital cameras I have tried, with a varying degrees of success.

The equipment I use varies according to what I am attempting to do. For most of my insect action shots I use my Canon 1D Mk11 camera with either the Canon 100mm f2.8 macro lens or the 180mm Sigma Macro lens, and a range of Canon Speedlite flash guns. The number of flashguns used depends on what I am trying to photograph and the location. When I am out roaming the countryside for pictures, I won't normally have more than two flash units and a flash bracket with me. However if I am setting up to photograph insects in flight in a set location, I may use up to 6 slave flash units on stands all controlled by a master unit or the Canon Speedlite Transmitter ST-E2. The reason for using a number of flash units linked together is to produce very brief, but powerful flashes that will overwhelm the ambient light (to avoid 'ghosting') while freezing the action of insects in flight.

One of my recent projects has been



photographing Saxon Wasps *Dolichovespula saxonica* coming and going from their football sized nest which they constructed on the inside of my garage / workshop door. This wasp was only added to the British species list in the mid 1980's, when it extended its range from mainland Europe into southern England. Although this wasp looks similar to the Common and German Wasps *Vespa vulgaris* and *V. germanica* in that they are all yellow with black bands and markings around their bodies, it has a longer face which is distinctive when you know what to look for. It is also considered to be the least aggressive of our social wasps, seldom attacking people unless their nest is under attack. When I first discovered the nest in early May it was only the size of a tennis ball with only a few worker wasps coming and going. After I identified the species as the Saxon wasp I decided to leave the nest there unless they became aggressive, which I am pleased to say they did not, despite at times tolerating 6 flashguns and my camera set up within about 15 inches of their nest. It was not too difficult getting pictures of them from the side flying to and from the nest, and I achieved a number of very acceptable images. However when I tried to get them flying head on towards me, my success rate dropped dramatically too perhaps only one or two in 500. Compared to photographing birds in flight, these wasps were at least 100 times more difficult!!!

Out on location I have been photographing the solitary Bee Wolf wasp *Philanthus triangulum* flying around their hillside nesting habitat. This once rare species has in recent decades extended its range to cover much of England and lowland Wales, breeding in loose colonies of perhaps several hundred individuals, in areas where there is a sandy soil. Each individual female wasp excavates a tunnel in the sand in which they store paralyzed honeybees on which their larva will feed. For this project I needed to be mobile with my camera, so could use only two flashguns; a master flash on the camera hot shoe, with a slave on a flash bracket. Even this set up was rather heavy and awkward to handle. An added problem was that I had to lie on the ground, as I needed a low viewpoint that would enabled me to photograph them as they came in to land near their burrow. Many of these wasps were just patrolling the area, and were probably males searching for mates. Sometimes however a female would fly in carrying a paralysed Honeybee *Apis mellifera* clamped in its

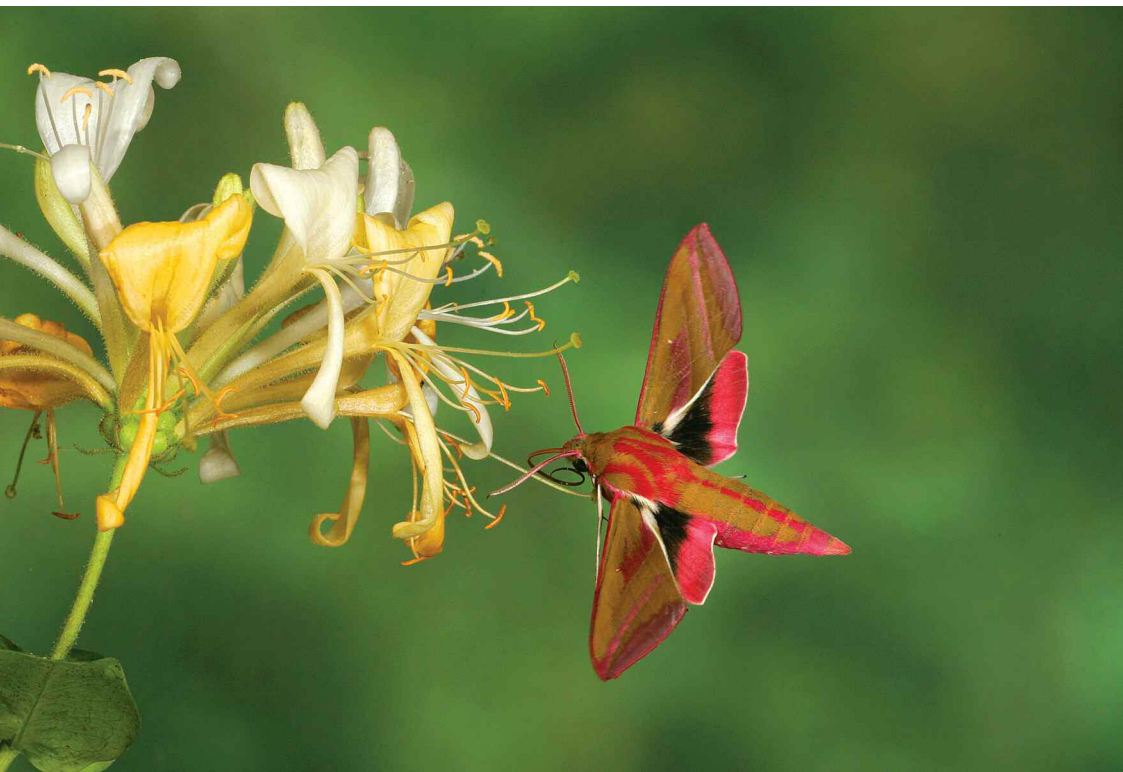
legs below its body. Photographing these wasps proved to be a major challenge, but I eventually managed to achieve a reasonable degree of success.

Back home in my conservatory / photo studio, I have been photographing various Beetles and other insects in flight as they take off from a leaf or other object. This type of action photography is somewhat easier. I construct a set up which looks natural, a twig, leaf or other object from which I hope the insect will take flight. The main problem this time is guessing in which direction the beetle is going to fly, if indeed they fly at all! The Cockchafer beetle *Melolontha melolontha* is a slow and clumsy insect and an easy one to start with. Several years ago they were quite plentiful in my area, and when 3 turned up in my moth trap one morning I boxed them up for a photo shoot. Four flashguns on stands were used to do this, with two each side of the camera. Although much smaller Ladybirds are another good subject for anyone wanting to have a go at this kind of photography, and the 7 spot Ladybird *Coccella 7-puncta* can be found in almost every garden, so is a good species to start with.

Photographing day flying insects as they nectar



can be achieved in the field using a similar technique to that used for the Bee Wolf wasp. However when I bred through several Hummingbird Hawk moths *Macroglossum stellatarum* from larvae I had found in 2004 feeding on Ladies Bedstraw, I decided to have a photo session with them before releasing them into my garden. I built a flight cage for this purpose and clamped 5 flash units into position inside. A backdrop and some flowers for them to nectar on were placed in the cage, and when they decided to feed I photographed them using my 180mm Macro lens. Was it that easy? Well yes and no, the main problem this time was waiting for these day flying moths to fly and to feed. Once they do its fairly straight forward, but you can waste many hours





waiting. I use a similar set for photographing Butterflies in flight, but they are much more difficult, as they do not hover, but success can be yours if you are prepared to put in plenty of time. For night flying moths such as the Elephant Hawk moth *Deilephila elpenor* I use a slightly larger flight cage so I can fit in a beam breaker. The adult Elephant Hawk moths start nectaring at dusk, and continue at intervals throughout the night. One of their favourite nectaring flowers is Honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum*, so some of these flowers were placed in a pot of water overnight in the cage, with the beam of the beam breaker set just to one side of the flowers. Each time a moth visited the flowers it would take its own picture. This was fairly successful and one of the resulting pictures has been used as the cover picture of two magazines.

No flash is needed when photographing Dragonflies



in flight, just patience and picking the right species and the right location. For these insects I use a telephoto, either my Canon EF 500mm f4L IS lens mounted on a tripod, with a fluid action pan and tilt, or the Canon EF 300mm f4L IS lens which I hand hold. By far the easiest Dragonfly to photograph in flight is the Migrant Hawker *Aeshna mixta*, as it often patrols close to the bank around the reed beds, and sometimes even hovers in one place for several seconds. I find most other dragonfly species much more difficult as they seldom hover long enough in one place to find them in the viewfinder, let alone get them in focus to take a picture.

Many of the pictures I take of insects in flight are discarded because they are either not in focus or sometimes not in the picture at all. The use of digital cameras has reduced the cost to almost nothing, just a few pence for recharging batteries and of course your time. The reward for success will be pictures that are very different to those you have achieved before.

So this summer have a go at getting something more exciting than just a portrait of a creature sitting still on a leaf or flower. Once you do, you will find static shots look rather boring to you.

Page 19 Hummingbird Hawkmoth nectaring on Buddliea. Canon 1D Mk11 camera. 1/250th @ f20, 180mm Macro lens and 5 flash units.

Page 20 Bee Wolf wasp with Honeybee prey. Canon 1D Mk11 camera 1/250th @ f18, 180mm Macro lens and two flash units. Eyed Ladybird lift-off. 100mm Macro lens and four flash units.

Cockchafer beetle in-flight. Canon 1D Mk11 camera, 1/250th f16, 100mm Macro lens plus four flash units. Page 21 Elephant Hawkmoth visiting Honeysuckle. Canon 1D Mk11 camera, 1/250th @ f16, 100mm Macro lens, five flash units and a beam-breaker. Migrant Hawker Dragonfly in flight X 2. Canon 1D Mk11 camera, Canon EF 500mm f4L IS lens with extension tube @ f4.

Page 22 Saxon Wasp leaving nest. Canon 1D Mk11 camera 1/250th @ f18 180mm Macro lens, and six flash units were used to get this shot. Marbled White butterfly in flight. Canon 1D Mk11 camera 1/250th @ f18, 100mm Macro lens, and six flash units.

Members who would like to learn about action close up photography should contact Richard at: 01767 313065 or visit www.revelsnaturephotos.co.uk

Rent a Hide

by Mike Lane FRPS



The emergence of digital photography has seen a huge increase in the numbers of people interested in photographing wildlife. Wherever one goes today meeting someone else armed with a large telephoto lens is common place. This in turn has led to the growth of a brand new industry, 'paid for wildlife photography' or 'rent a hide'.

Whether you want to photograph Golden Eagles or European Brown Bears, there is someone out there waiting to take your money to make it happen. Unheard of a few years ago there are more and more companies or individuals offering their services.

The internet is, as ever, the place to seek them out. Keywords such as 'wildlife', 'photography', 'workshop', 'tour', plus the name of the country you are interested in will often reveal something of interest.

In Spain, Boletas Birdwatching Centre www.boletas.org/phototours has been running photo tours for many years now. The main interest for photographers has been the Great Bustard. Without local help this is a bird quite impossible to photograph. They are very shy, wary birds therefore there is a need for hides that they are well accustomed to being permanently in place. Even more difficult is the fact that to attempt photography of Great Bustards you need a Licence from the

Spanish authorities and they do not grant them readily. Reportedly the police are very active in ensuring the licensing scheme is adhered to. Boletas take care of the licence as well as accommodation and transfers from the airport. All you have to do is face a 12+ hour stint in the hides from before dawn to after dark. There are half a dozen hides to choose from but no guarantee the birds will come close to the one you are in, but it is likely they will approach one of them. You just need to be lucky. Over the week you get 3 days in the bustard hide. The other days are filled with Lesser Kestrels, from the top of an old mill, and there is usually a Hoopoe nest or two. The same company also offer Lammergeier from a hide in the Pyrenees along with possible Griffon Vulture and Golden Eagle.

Bulgaria is a country infrequently visited by bird photographers, but the North Black Sea Coast has as much to offer as the popular Greek island of Lesbos. www.cometobg.com It is worth a self drive holiday, but there is much to be said for joining Emil Enchev a leading Bulgarian wildlife photographer working in conjunction with Spatia Wildlife Ltd. A spring visit is likely to be the most productive. The birds on offer vary, but Emil has been satisfying visiting photo-graphers for some years now with hides on Avocet, Little Terns, Woodpeckers, Pratincoles, Wrynecks and much



more. He also has a drinking pool, which can be very productive. In the winter a number of hides baited for Golden Eagles are available in the mountains. Any bird such as this requires long spells in the hide, from pre-dawn to dusk, but all transport and accommodation is arranged for you. Late winter sees large numbers of Red-breasted Geese arrive on the Black Sea and Spatula Wildfowl have hides to get you close to these wonderful geese too.



Hungary is a difficult country to just turn up in and take pictures. You really need the inside knowledge of Bence Mate www.matebence.hu Not only a master photographer, but a master hide builder too. Based in the Puszlaszer National Park his fantastic hides are mostly at drinking pools spread throughout the forest. One has a bore hole 39 metres deep to bring water to the pool. Additionally there is a large tower hide and a wader hide. It is easy to spend a week here and the list of birds you will photograph is large, especially in the spring. Goshawk, Bee-eater, Roller, Hawfinch, Nightingale and Kestrel are just a few you are likely to get. Accommodation and transport is again provided.



Scandinavia is really the hub of much of the hide renting business. Sweden has been the place to go for Common Crane pictures for some time now. Lake Hornborgasjön sees thousands pass through on migration during April. It is a spectacular sight that attracts birdwatchers in large numbers too, but the dedicated photographer is also catered for. There are a number of wooden 2 man hides in the meadows, which can be rented out. A pre-dawn entry is required and you stay in the hide until collected at night, when the cranes have gone to roost. The cranes come within a few feet of the hides and are not disturbed by lens movement or sounds from within. To book contact the local tourist board at turistbyran@falkoping.nu. Car hire and accommodation must be booked separately.

Checkout Magnus Carlssons web site in Sweden too. www.taigavision.com Magnus works in the forestry industry when not out taking his own pictures and offers a number of hides to other photographers. In early spring Capercaillie and Black Grouse leks attract many customers to him. Capercaillie is very rare in Scotland so going to Scandinavia is the best way to photograph them. It means an all night session in the hides which are actually tents, so sleep is possible. The Black

Grouse leks have over a hundred birds attending, an incredible experience. Later in the year he also offers Red-throated Divers from floating hides.

Finland offers the best opportunity to photograph fishing Osprey. At the Pohtiolamoa fish farm there are 3 hides at ground level and a tower hide for flight shots. The Osprey grab fish very close to the hide and it can be spectacular. The owner does not speak English so booking is best done by email when translation can be done at leisure. jouko.alhainen@pp.inet.fi Accommodation is available on site, but no transport, so you need to rent a car.

Finland also offers hides for European Brown Bear. Martinselkosen is a small hotel on the border with Russia with a long established feeding station for bears. There are two large hides for the general public and others designed for photography, where the settings are much better. It is another long night in a hide, but worth it to be within a few feet of wild bears in good light. The bears often arrive within minutes of entering the hide at about 1700 hours. www.martinselkosenerakeskus.com

Kingfisher is a bird everyone wants to photograph and in Sweden it is possible to get shots of the birds diving into the water catching fish using high speed flash. Take a look at www.biofokus.com The same site has hides for eagles too.

The ultimate place to go for White-tailed Eagles is Norway. Ole Dahle has been feeding them from his small boat for many years and is expert at getting photographers into the perfect position as these large eagles grab fish from the surface of the water. Ole also has hides for many other species including Black Grouse, Capercaillie and other woodland birds. He can also arrange accommodation and transport from the airport. www.norway-nature.com

There are other companies out there too. Finnature is one of the better known Scandinavian companies offering photography services. The long list of species they can provide for can be seen at: www.lintukuva.fi/uutiset/finnature For Wolverine and bears try www.wildbrownbear.fi For a variety of raptors at feeding stations look at www.svartadalen.nu/eng/attractions/raptor. Also take a look at www.northernbirding.com who have various hides including a Great Snipe lek. Not too many British photographers have experienced this!



This listing is not comprehensive and only covers mainland Europe. Worldwide there are enough hides available to provide an active wildlife photographer with holidays for years and years!

Pictures:

Page 19 - Golden Eagle, Spatia Wildlife, Bulgaria

*Page 20 - Brown Bear, Martinselkosen, Finland
Capercaillie, Magnus Carlssons, Sweden
Goshawk, Bence Mate, Hungary*

*Page 21 - Osprey, Pohtiolamoa fish farm, Finland
Hawfinch, Bence Mate, Hungary*



Size Does Matter!

by Tony Wharton, FRPS

Sooner or later, photographers with a penchant for taking serious close-up pictures will think in terms of acquiring a 'proper' macro lens, rather than settle for extension tubes, supplementary screw-in lenses or other devices, in order to get in close enough to achieve the image sizes they need. Such specialist lenses make the whole process of close-up photography much easier, and they are, after all, computed to perform best at close range, whereas the various other means of getting in close are compromises to some extent. Used properly, however, most of these compromises will give perfectly adequate results, although perhaps not quite up to the standard of those from macro lenses. Apart from giving their very best performance at close range, macro lenses offer certain other facilities too. Virtually all have a magnification scale engraved on the barrel - a very useful feature! In addition, most can be used as 'normal', non-macro lenses, so there is little point in owning, say, both a normal and a macro lens of the same focal length. For example, the majority of macro lenses of 100 mm or longer make excellent lenses for portraiture. It shouldn't be

thought, however, that a macro lens will make a close-up or any other shot look significantly different, because it won't. The focal length of a lens, be it a macro lens or not, is the only thing that determines the look of a photo. The words I most associate with macro lenses of any focal length is 'convenience and superior performance'.

I went through the rather expensive process of buying, successively, 50mm, 100mm and 200mm macro lenses, each of these being better than its predecessor - not necessarily in terms of its ability to resolve detail but in several other important respects. I still have all three lenses, although I never use the 50mm and rarely use the 100mm, except when weight and bulk are at a premium, such as when I'm clambering up and down mountains, or when I know I have a long walk in front of me. It follows, of course, that the vast majority of my close-up work - and I do a lot - is done with my excellent Pentax 200mm ED lens. This is a real workhorse of a lens, which, if I had to restrict myself to a single lens for the rest of my life, would be my No 1



choice. There are, of course, many lenses of similar specifications available, both from the major camera manufacturers such as Canon and Nikon, and from independent lens manufacturers such as Sigma, which are usually less costly but compare quite favourably with their more expensive counterparts in other respects.

So what are the advantages of using a longer macro lens over using a shorter one? The most obvious one is that you can work further away from your subject, thereby lessening the chances of disturbing your subject or impinging on the light falling onto it. Most people involved in wildlife photography understand this and many take it into account when they buy a macro lens.

What many wildlife photographers - and indeed others - fail to realise is that there is a far greater advantage in using a longer macro lens than the one mentioned, significant though that is. This advantage lies in the fact that the greater the focal length of a lens, the narrower its acceptance angle. In other words, it takes in less of the back-ground, just as a wide-angle lens takes in more of the background. This means that, if you use a longer lens, it is much easier to achieve one of those attractively diffuse, poster-like backgrounds that enhance images of subjects photographed in close-up.



It is, of course, perfectly true to say that the aperture set influences the depth of field of a picture, thereby affecting the appearance of the background, a smaller setting giving greater depth of field, and therefore more background detail, than a large one. What it is not true to say is that, in this context, a longer lens will give less depth of field for a given aperture than a short one. You often hear this said or read it in books and, more particularly, in popular photo magazines, but it is only rarely explained that, for a given aperture and a given image size, depth of field is the same, whatever the focal length of the lens. The change in depth of field for a given aperture, which you get when using lenses of different focal lengths, takes effect only when the lenses are used at identical subject distances and this, of course, gives different image sizes.

Another great advantage that longer macro lenses have over shorter ones is that most of them have a tripod bush, which enables the lens to be mounted on a tripod, rather than the camera body. This usually



means that the camera/lens combination is positioned above the centre of gravity of the complete set-up, which is rarely the case when the camera is mounted directly onto the tripod. A sharper picture should be the result - in theory at least!



So, are there any disadvantages to be endured as a result of going longer? Of course there are! All macro lenses, but the longer ones in particular, are quite a lot more expensive than their non-macro equivalents. Heavier too! They usually have a maximum aperture which is smaller than that of their non-macro counterparts - clearly a slight disadvantage - but they may also have a smaller minimum aperture as well. Many have an aperture of f32, some stopping down to f45. You don't often need such small apertures, even for close-up work, but they're useful to have for use on rare occasions when you really need them - but beware of a bit of image impairment as the result of diffraction, if you do stop down as much as that.



It's perhaps a good idea to point out that different macro lenses, the longer ones in particular, achieve their magnification in different ways. Some increase their physical length when they are focused closer. This increase in extension means, of course, that the brightness of the picture, as seen in the camera viewfinder, decreases slightly, theoretically making focusing a little more difficult. In practice, however, I've never actually noticed this and don't see it as a real disadvantage. Other macro lenses have internal focusing, which obviates the slight light loss, while others use a combination of partial internal focusing, together with some increase in extension.

Finally, it ought to be made clear that, when you use longer macro lenses, any subject or camera movement is magnified, just as the image is magnified. If you find you've taken an unsharp picture when using a macro lens, particularly one of the longer versions, don't be in too much of a hurry to blame the lens. You're almost certainly to blame! Used efficiently, with full care and attention being paid to the various possible causes of unsharp pictures - and there are many, most being avoidable - modern lenses, especially macro lenses, give first class results.

Over to you!



Picture details:

Page 26 Marbled White on Pyramidal Orchid - the soft, diffuse background was easily obtained with my 200 mm macro lens.

Page 27 Pair of Mated 6-spot Burnet Moths on a Fragrant Orchid - the soft, poster-like background was achieved with my 200mm macro lens.

Grass Snake are much less likely to be disturbed if you work with a 200 mm macro lens as I did.

Page28 Lime Hawkmoth - when the background is close behind the subject, as in this shot, it makes very little difference which macro lens you use, as the background perspective will stay very much the same.

Flowers of Red Maple - the background to shots of botanical subjects, such as this one, can easily turn out very 'fussy'. The use of a longer macro lens helps to obviate this.

King Protea - I had quite a long walk to get this shot and didn't particularly want to carry a longer, heavier lens, so I used my 100mm macro lens

Page 29 Cotton Grass in Typical Habitat - my 200mm macro lens was ideal for this shot .

American Fairy Water Fern - photographed from directly above, using my 200mm macro lens.

Forest Shieldbug - photographed with a 100mm macro lens. A similar result would have been had if I'd used my longer lens, but I could have worked from twice as far away.

Stick Coral Fungus - taken with a short zoom, fitted with a 3-dioptre close-up lens, but a long macro lens would have made the shot a lot easier to take.



The Nature Group and me

by Dawn Osborn FRPS

Compared to many, I am a relative newcomer to both the Nature Group and the RPS having been a member of the group for only sixteen years.

During my teenage years I was interested in both photography and nature but it took nearly twenty years for the two to combine into a passion for nature photography.

In my early twenties I enjoyed travelling around the Med and used my camera to record the splendour of ancient Greece, mediaeval towns & cities and landscapes. Looking at some of those old slides - many taken over thirty years ago - I am amazed at how many of them were of the unfamiliar plants I came across on my travels. Indeed my A panel, 'Wild Flora of the Mediterranean', contained a shot taken in Greece twenty years earlier.

In the late 80s I returned to the UK after living overseas for several years. I enrolled as a member of the RPS a year later, achieved my L in 1990 and

joined the Nature Group in 1992. My first issue of *The Iris* arrived that Winter. Louis Roumis was the editor of the day. The pictures were superb and the articles they supported interesting and informative. There was also a notice on Page 5 - an appeal for a volunteer to take on the role of Secretary. I called the current secretary, Pat Jerrold for information. As it turned out, three people volunteered for the post and, perhaps fortunately, I did not get it, but I was voted on to the committee at the 1993 AGM and I have been involved ever since.

My first 'active role' was writing regular reports on Nature Group activities for The RPS Journal. The Committee meetings almost always took place at The Octagon in Bath on the same day as the A & F Distinctions Assessments, offering an opportunity to attend the distinctions assessments. Heather Angel was Panel Chairman at that time. It was immensely interesting to attend and I learned a lot from seeing so many submissions and hearing the comments of the panel members. Eventually, by September 1994,



I had put together my own A panel. I think I held my breath the whole time that my slides were being spoken about but finally the Chairman, by then Brinsley Burbidge, announced that I had succeeded and I could breathe again.

My Father and Brother had become Nature Group members during my sojourn overseas, and both of them had already achieved their Associateships in Nature before I joined the group. Back in the mid 90s, it was still possible to attend the assessment of Fellowship panels and I was able to attend the assessment of my brother David's Fellowship application in September 1996. His panel of images of wildlife of the coast of North Norfolk was successful and I remember how happy I was when I phoned him to say that he could now spell photography with an 'F'.



By the time Issue No. 80 came out in Summer 2001 I had become the group's Chairman. Mostly this involved writing the obligatory 'From the Chair' for each issue of *The Iris*, chairing the AGM and opening the Annual Exhibition, there was not much more to it - but this was in no small part due to the excellent support I received from the committee.

In Summer 2003, when John Myring announced that he was stepping down as Editor, I gladly volunteered my services. My 'daytime job' was that of desktop publisher/artworker, so producing *The Iris* was a task I felt capable of handling. My first issue was No. 87, Winter 2003. I confess, I suffered pre publication jitters while I waited to see how it would be received by members. I received several appreciative emails and letters from members, so all was well.

During the years of my membership of the Nature Group I have had the pleasure of meeting some extremely nice and interesting photographers, some of whom I am privileged to now call friends. I enjoy being Editor and the contact with other members which that allows me. My involvement in the group has been a most rewarding experience and long may it continue.

The Nature Group has a new home - www.rpsnaturegroup.com


The new website will be launched by the time you receive this issue of The Iris.

As promised, our new look website contains details of this year's Field Meetings and other events, Successful A & F Distinctions panels, images from Nature Group Exhibitions, Galleries of members images, plus articles from past issues of The Iris. There is also information on the committee, a contact page, guest book and a page with links to other member's websites, the RPS, etc.


Development of the website will be ongoing and updating will happen on a regular basis. There are no 'members only' sections and no password is required to gain access.

Primarily the site will be the 'public face' of the Nature Group - a showcase of Nature Photography on the worldwide web which can be viewed by anyone with access to the Internet. It will also enable Nature Group members outside of the UK to have more contact with the group and hopefully may inspire other nature photographers who are not already members to join us. Additionally the site should prove to be a useful tool for keeping members up to date with news on upcoming events plus other items of interest.

We hope that you will enjoy browsing the new site and will visit regularly.



Nature Group



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The Nature Group was founded in January 1976 by a group of people under the Chairmanship of Heather Angel FRPS. It had as its aim,

"to bring together photographers, naturalists and biologists who will encourage each other, by a cross fertilisation of ideas and techniques, to broaden their approaches to this branch of photography".


From that beginning, the Nature Group has grown to become a group with a membership of around six hundred, largely in this country but with members from the four quarters of the globe. Today the Group comprises the whole spectrum of abilities ranging from some of the most eminent and well-known professionals; respected natural history authors with several books to their name; contributors to magazines; lecturers etc., to those who are just starting out.

You will be made most welcome by our Group, irrespective of the level of your photography. Many members who had little photographic ability when they joined have subsequently obtained a Distinction, often working their way through to a Fellowship of the RPS. You do not need to have detailed natural history knowledge, all that is required is that you have a genuine interest in, and respect for, nature. The Nature Group has always been an extremely friendly group, with members always willing to share their knowledge with others.


The Group's activities include:

- a full colour magazine, *'The Iris'*, published three times a year
- a programme of field meetings
- a biennial convention
- an annual exhibition
- a monthly on-line Portfolio providing the opportunity to enjoy the images of fellow members while also obtaining helpful comments on your own work from other fellow members.


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Sunday 24 Feb 2008



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 Search [rpsnaturegroup.com](http://www.rpsnaturegroup.com)

000135

UNPENDING

In Praise of Sir Joseph Whitworth (1803-1887)

by Tony Bond FRPS

"The ease with which distinct parts of the machinery can be united with the firmness with which they are held together and the facility with which they may be separated are conditions of the utmost importance."

Sir Joseph Whitworth, 1841.

Sir Joseph Whitworth's contribution to photography has never been recognised by the Society even though his legacy still exists. Anyone who has ever attached a camera to a tripod, and this must include every member of the Nature Group, owes him a debt of gratitude.

He was born in Stockport in 1803 and his engineering skills soon became apparent. After working for several employers in the Manchester area, he set up his own works in Openshaw in 1833. He manufactured lathes and machine tools which were renowned for their precision and high quality. At the time, the manufacture of nuts and bolts was chaotic, with every blacksmith down his own thing. In 1841, Whitworth presented a paper to the Institution of Civil Engineers

"A uniform system of screw threads"

which proposed just that. The railway companies recognised this blinding flash of common sense, soon followed by other engineers. It was natural that the British camera industry (yes, there was such a thing!) should adopt a Whitworth thread for tripod bushes. This was where the trouble started as the Brits chose 1/4" and the pesky foreigners settled on 3/8". Anyone who has attached a 5" x 4" Linhof to a tripod will understand why.

The dichotomy exists to this present day and is still causing problems. An expensive, well engineered tripod head of the sort likely to appeal to members of the Nature Group, is likely to come with a 3/8" bush. I can attach my French and Italian heads to my elderly Mk I and Baby Benbos without difficulty as they have 1/4" and 3/8" bolts at opposite ends

of the centre column. However, my Trekker came with 1/4" bolts at both ends. Why anyone should be considered to need the same thread at both ends defeats me. At least this is better than the current Trekker's hook at one end, which will not screw into anything.

You may say that this is not a problem as those nice people at Alton will be pleased to supply you with an adaptor of your choice. This ignores the fact that all these adaptors fail at the most inopportune of moments, as I found to my cost on my first morning in the Falklands. My troublesome Trekker now has a 3/8" bolt at one end thanks to a friend of mine whose vintage cars are held together by British Standard Whitworth.

Alas, the Whitworth thread is largely regarded as obsolete except among those hardy individuals who restore old cars, steam locomotives and traction engines. It amuses me that the very latest high-tech offering from Japan has an essential component embedded in the baseplate which Sir Joseph would have recognised. He is still remembered in Manchester through the University of Manchester Whitworth Building, The Whitworth Art Gallery and Whitworth Street in the city centre.

So the next time you attach your *Canik D550 MkV* to a tripod, spare a thought for a great Victorian engineer, the likes of which we no longer seem to produce. And if cameras and lenses continue to get bigger and heavier, we may have to admit that perhaps the Germans, French and Italians got it right after all. And let us hope that no one proposes going metric!

Nature Group Travelling Exhibition

Venues for the 2008 Exhibition

Date	Camera Club	Town	Contact	Telephone
3/4/08	Poulton-Le-Fylde PS	Blackpool	Peter Guy	01253 899135
29/4/08	Guernsey	Guernsey	Marguerite Fewkes	01481 265052
1/9/08	Sileby PS	Sileby	M Sherrington	01509 211724
5/9/08	Foose CC	Leicester	Mary Strapps	01455 824039
26/9/08	Leicester & Leics PS	Leicester	Peter Jones	See page 2
14/10/08	Sutton Coldfield PS	Sutton Coldfield	David Grounds	0121 3532167
28/10/08	St Leonards CC	Stafford	Graham Argent	01785 660039
30/10/08	Shirley PS	Shirley	Christine Mallett	0121 7425019
20/11/08	LVNP	Waltham Abbey	Margaret Welby	01992 710506
2/3/09	Taunton CC	Taunton	Bob Pearson	01404 841171
16/3/09	Ashton & Erdington PS	Erdington	Bob	0121 313 0400

RPS Nature Group Residential Field Meeting

Friday 16th to Monday 19th May 2008

The Kingcombe Centre, Toller Porcorum, Dorchester, Dorset DT2 0EQ

A few places are still available on this Residential Field Weekend.

Cost: £165 to £191 per person for three nights, depending on accommodation.

Price includes full board, packed lunches, accommodation and VAT at 17.5%.

Members familiar with Kingcombe Centre, will, I'm sure, be pleased to know that with the completed conversion of the Cowshed, 10 additional en-suite and two private rooms will be available.

For full details of the event please refer to the Winter edition of The Iris, Issue No.99, page 6.

To apply for a place on the course together with a brochure and booking form, please contact:

Kath Bull ARPS, 'Segsbury', St John's Road, Crowborough, East Sussex TN6 1RT.

Tel: 01892 663751. E-mail: kath.bull@virgin.net

Nature Group Field Meetings 2008

Tuesday March 11th 2008, 10am

Martin Mere & Marshside RSPB (Southport)

Meeting place: Martin Mere WWT, Burscough, Merseyside at 10 am.

Grid ref Sheet 108 430 142

Leader Colin Smith FRPS

Cost Entry fee into Martin Mere (free for RSPB Members). Negotiating Group entry fee.

Subjects of interest:

Morning: Whooper swans, pink-footed geese plus a wide variety of ducks and waders from the hides.
Afternoon: Drive to Marshside approx 20 minutes away. Two hides overlook the marsh but can only accommodate a few photographers at a time, so be prepared to wait your turn. Black-tailed godwits, redshanks, golden plovers and large numbers of water birds which could include avocets.

Items to bring: Stout shoes and a packed lunch or buy a sandwich at Martin Mere's café.

Contact: Colin Smith 01257 271981

Saturday June 21st 2008, 10.30am

Kenfig NNR, Mid Glamorgan

Meeting place: Main car park at 10.30 am

Grid ref Sheet 170 801 804

Leader John Hankin LRPS

Cost nil

Information and subjects: Coastal habitat with some marshy areas as well as sand dunes. Flora include a number of orchid species with, hopefully, fen orchid. Butterflies and damselflies.

Items to bring: Waterproofs and waterproof footwear, packed lunch.

Contact: John Hankin LRPS 01285 643823

Email: hankinjw@hotmail.co.uk

Wednesday July 2nd 2008, 10.30am

Location: Miller's Dale and River Wye

Meeting place: Miller's Dale station car park

Grid ref Sheet 119 SK 138 733

Leader Robert Hawkesworth FRPS

Cost £3.00 and up for parking (depending on length of stay).

Subjects of Interest The Derbyshire meeting is scheduled three weeks earlier than last year to offer a different array of summer limestone flowers, dragons, damsels and butterflies. Possibly dipper and grey wagtail on the river.

Items to bring: Stout shoes/boots, packed lunch and waterproofs.

Additional: Disabled access to the Trail both north and south from the station.

Contact: Robert Hawkesworth Tel: 0115 928 1050
Please use this number to book for the meeting
Mobile (for use on the day only) 07960 177291

Saturday 5th July 9.30am

Ryewater Nursery nr Sherborne, by kind permission of Clive Farrell. Off the A352 at ST665106.

Meeting Place: in the car park at 0930.

Subjects: Butterflies, dragonflies, wild flowers.

Other information: Level ground, easy access. Numbers limited to 15 - prebooking essential.

Contact: John Bebbington Tel 01458 253027 for further details.

Tuesday July 8th 2007, 10.00am

Acorn Farm (Meet at my house not at the farm)

Meeting Place: The Lodge, 43 Main Street, Sutton on Trent, Newark, Notts. NG23 6PF Sutton on Trent is a mile from the A1 between Newark & Retford.

Leader: Andrew Parsons ARPS

Cost: nil

Subjects: Summer flowers, dragonflies, damselflies and butterflies

Items to bring: strong footwear, waterproofs and packed lunch.

Contact: Andrew Parsons Tel 01636 821768
Email: andrewparsonarps@aol.com or
or more details: www.acornfarmvisits.co.uk

Saturday September 27th 2008, 10.30am

Mere Sands Wood, Rufford, Merseyside.

Meeting place: Reserve car park at 10-30 am

Leaders: John and Sheila Weir

Cost Car parking £1.00

Subjects of interest: Fungi

Items to bring: Stout shoes/boots, packed lunch and waterproofs.

Additional: Disabled access around the Reserve.

Contact: John & Sheila Weir, Tel 01524 762210
Email boletus@arnside.eclipse.co.uk

Due to the unpredictability of the appearance of fungi it would be wise to contact the leaders a couple of days before the meeting.

Saturday October 11th 2008, 10.00am

Ebernoe Common NNR (West Sussex)

Grid ref. SU 976 278

Meeting place: Car park next to Ebernoe church.

Leader: Chris Wood

Subjects of interest: Ancient woodland with 600 recorded species of fungi.

Items to bring: Wellies and packed lunch.

Contact: Chris Wood Tel 01932 750597

E mail: cjwood2000@hotmail.com or

Adrian Davies Tel 01372 815653

Due to the unpredictability of the appearance of fungi it would be wise to contact the leader a couple of days before the meeting.

Thursday October 16th 2008 at 10-30 am

Padley Gorge Woodlands & Longshore Estate.

Meeting place: Marked roadside parking on the B6521 adjacent to the two stiles into the venues.

Grid ref: On two sheets, 110 and 119, the latter shows marginally more of the area. SK 258 800

Leader: Robert Hawkesworth FRPS

Cost: None

Interest: 2007 was the worst year in my memory for fungi, surely we can't have two such years? The Longshore estate is usually good for fungi, as are the Padley Gorge Woodlands. Good waterfalls also are a feature in the Padley Gorge.

Items to bring: Stout shoes/boots, packed lunch and waterproofs.

Additional info: No wheelchair access to either site but possible with great care on arm crutches. Cafe at Grindleford Railway station.

Contact Robert Hawkesworth: Tel 0115 928 1050 Please use this number to book the meeting.

Mobile: 07960 177291 For use on the day only. Due to the unpredictability of the appearance of fungi it would be wise to contact the leader a couple of days before the meeting.

Saturday October 18th 2008 at 11am

Location: Dunham Massey (National Trust).

Meeting place: At the membership and enquiries kiosk near the car park.

Grid ref. Sheet 109 SJ 735 874. Follow the signs from junction 7 of the M56 or A56 Altrincham.

Leader: Tony Bond FRPS.

Cost: Car park £4.00 (2007), N.T. members free.

Subjects of interest: Fungi, fallow deer.

Items to bring; Stout shoes, packed lunch (restaurant on site).

Contact: Tel: 01942 674773

Due to the unpredictability of the appearance of fungi it would be wise to contact the leader a couple of days before the meeting.

Nature Taster Courses

Two Residential Nature Photo Courses, May 18-24 and September 14-20 2008 Field Study Centre, Kindrogan, nr Pitlochry

These courses will be run by Margaret & John Sixsmith and will cover the many techniques required for successful nature photography.

They are aimed at those new to nature photography but photographers with more experience are very welcome.

For further info contact Margaret on 0151 678 2350 or msix@talktalk.net.
or book direct at Kindrogan FSC on 01250 870150 or kd@field-studies-council.org

The Nature Photographers' Joint Convention

October 3rd – 5th, 2008

**The Hayes Conference Centre,
Swanwick, Derbyshire DE55 1AU**

The Nature Group has been invited to join the Nature Photographers' Portfolio, the Nature Photographers' Society and the Zoological Photographic Club to hold a Joint Convention. The Hayes Conference Centre is very close to J28 on the M1. The package is all-inclusive and non-negotiable. All rooms are of a high-quality with ensuite bathrooms. All meals from afternoon tea on Friday, October 3rd, to Sunday lunch on Sunday, October 5th, are included. The convention will enjoy exclusive use of a conference hall, with two small attached meeting rooms. The centre is set in its own spacious and beautiful grounds with ample parking adjacent to the accommodation. John Tinning of the NPP and ZPC has agreed to organise the event and you are advised to book before 30th April 2008.

Those of you who are also members of one or more of the NPP, NPS and ZPC may already have booked for this event and will already know that these Conventions are thoroughly enjoyable and well attended. For those members of the RPSNG who do not belong to one or other of them may I say that you cannot fail to enjoy this event which has the full backing of our Chairman, Geoff Trinder, and our Committee.

Robert Hawkesworth FRPS and NPP Member

Booking Form

Name:

Address:

.....

..... Postcode:

Telephone number: Email:

Accommodation Required [Please tick one box only]

I wish to book a room for two persons @ £140 per person i.e. £280 all-inclusive. ☐

Name of partner / guest. ☐

I wish to book a place in a shared twin-bedded room @ £140 per person all-inclusive ☐

I would be willing to share with ☐

I wish to book a room on a single-occupancy basis @ £160 all-inclusive ☐

I wish to attend as a non-residential delegate @ £85 incl all meals except breakfast ☐

Confirmation of your reservation and an outline programme will be sent by email or 'snailmail' to the address provided. Please note that no monies can be refunded for cancellation after 01/06/2008.

Special Requirements

Dietary? [Please specify]
.....
.....

Disabled access / room required? ☐

Any other requirement? [Please specify]
.....

Exhibitors

My presentation will be digital images ☐

My presentation will be slide images ☐

I wish to show 50 images. [10 minutes maximum] ☐

I wish to show 25 images. [5 minutes maximum] ☐

Please Note. All digital images should be in Jpeg format, sized 1024 pixels (horizontal) or 768 pixels (vertical) on the longest side, at a resolution of 96 pixels per inch. It would be helpful if they were in the form of a Powerpoint presentation. They should be stored on a CD or memory stick, which should be handed to the person in charge of digital projection upon arrival at the convention.

Photographic Outing on Saturday afternoon

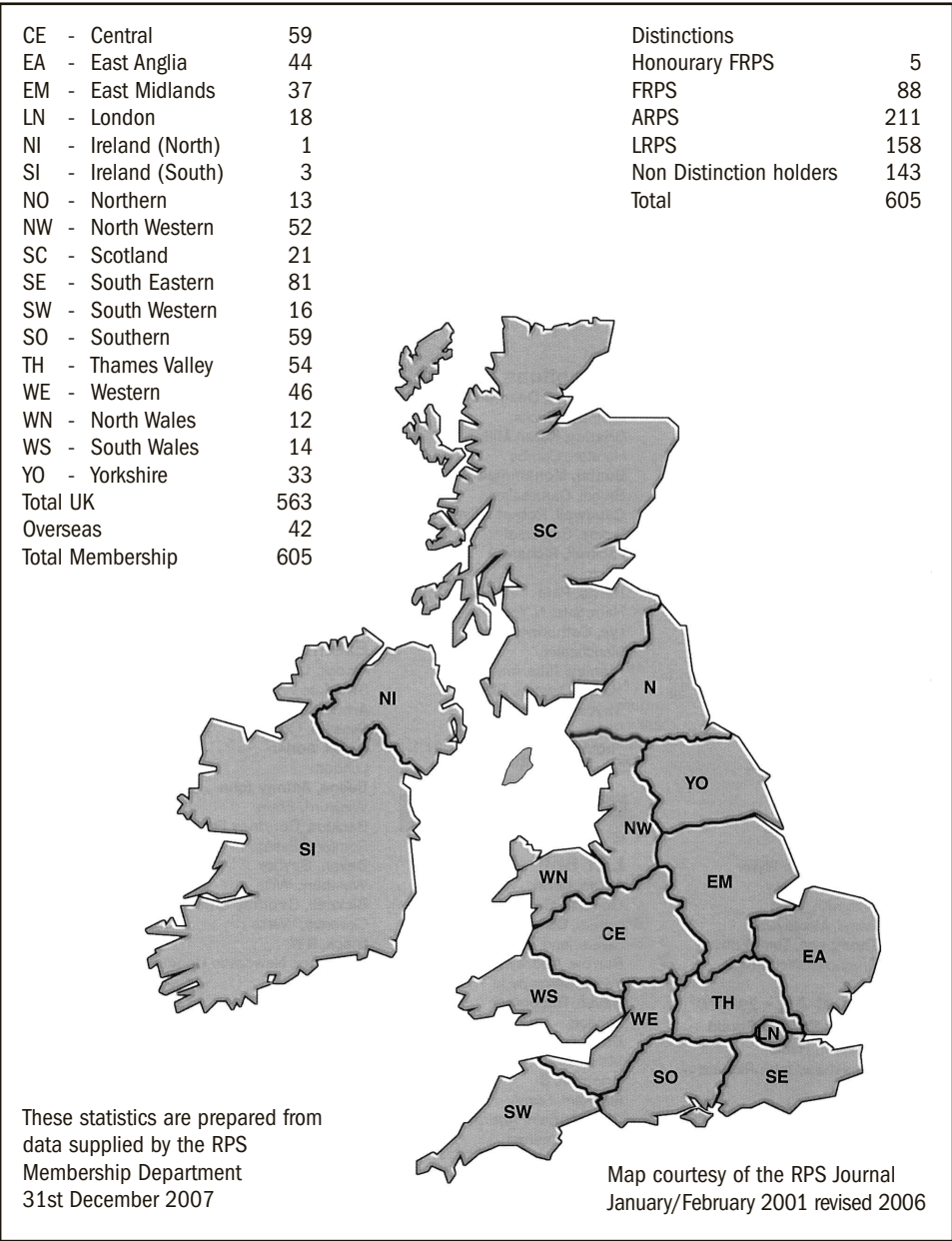
I wish to reserve _____ places on the field trip to a local site to photograph fungi etc.

You are advised to book as early as possible for this event. Please return this form with your cheque for the full amount due, made payable to "The Nature Photographers' Convention", to

The Convention Organiser,
John Tinning,
Brockwood House, 21 Ervin Way,
Queniborough,
LEICESTER, Leicestershire, LE7 3TT

Regions

Shown Below are Nature Group members per RPS region together with regional codes and other statistics



QUIZ

The following may require some gentle research, I expect the Internet will enable some of you to complete it very quickly. Whichever route you choose I hope that you enjoy the challenge.

Please post your entries to me (address at the front of The Iris) to arrive before 1st May 2008

A prize of Book Tokens to the value of £20 will be given to the first correct solution opened.

Robert Hawkesworth FRPS

1. An 'irritation' of mosquitoes is an example of a collective noun which I have made up. Do you know the accepted collective nouns for the following birds?
 - a) Crows,
 - b) Larks,
 - c) Goldfinches,
 - d) Owls,
 - e) MagpiesIn reverse, which animals do the following describe?
 - f) Gang,
 - g) Wilderness,
 - h) Covey,
 - i) Cete,
 - j) Business
2. In 2002 Plantlife International conducted a survey across the country to discover favourite wild flowers. From the following lists can you match up flowers and counties?

Flowers:-
Bloody Cranesbill, Clustered Bellflower,
Foxglove, Hop, Jacob's Ladder, Pasqueflower,
Primrose, Snowdon Lily, Spring Gentian,
Summer Snowflake.

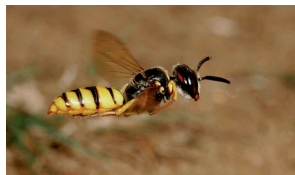
Counties:-
Argyll, Berkshire, Caernarvonshire,
Cambridgeshire, Derbyshire, Devon, Durham,
Kent, Northumberland, Rutland.
3. Here are some anagrams of birds on the British list. Can you solve them?
 - a) Hanging tile,
 - b) I can't trace,
 - c) Cow lures ten,
 - d) Green tub din,
 - e) Bred lard for wart
4. Burnet moths are day flying, but one of the following is not a moth, which one is it and more to the point, what is it?
 - a) Transparent Burnet,
 - b) Great Burnet,
 - c) Six-spot Burnet,
 - d) New Forest Burnet,
 - e) Five-spot Burnet.
5. The following are accepted British names. Can you say to what group of living organisms each belongs?
 - a) Common Shark,
 - b) Devil's Matchsticks,
 - c) Jelly Babies,
 - d) Moschatel,
 - e) Wryneck,
 - f) Blinks,
 - g) Verdigris Navel,
 - h) Uncertain,
 - i) Dragonet,
 - j) Leafy Brain,
 - k) Miller's Thumb.
6. Denys Watkins-Pitchford was both an artist and one of our finest writers on wildlife and the countryside of the twentieth century. He died in 1990. Are you able to answer the following questions about him?
 - a) Under what pseudonym did he write?
 - b) Which rare butterfly did he rescue from near extinction and re-introduce to Salcey Forest near to his home, entirely by his own efforts?Here are the incomplete titles of some of his best known books, can you complete them? c)
 - _____ the Sky Gipsy (5)
 - d) _____ to the Isles (6,4)
 - e) Confessions of a _____ (4,6)
 - f) _____ Alone (1,5)
 - g) The Quiet _____ (6).Finally,
 - h) in what year was he born, and
 - i) at which Public School did he teach Art for some years?

Nature Close up Workshop

A Close-up Photo Workshop by Richard Revels FRPS
Venue: Bedford Museum, Castle Lane, Bedford, MK40 3XD

Date: Sunday May 18th 2008. 10.00am to 4.00pm.

Cost: £80 which includes tea / coffee and Lunch.



Learn the techniques used by Richard to take close up pictures, including the use of flash to freeze insects in flight and supplement the ambient light in flat lighting conditions.

A variety of Butterflies, Moths and other creatures will be available to photograph during the afternoon practical session, so bring along your camera, a macro lens and flash units. Digital users may wish to bring along a Laptop to view their results.

Availability is limited to 10, so early booking is advised. For further information or a booking form telephone Richard Revels at 01767 313065 or Chris Andrew at Bedford Museum 01234 353323



Now Available - Version 3.0 - revised and rebuilt CD ROM

'An Interactive Guide to Obtaining your Nature Associateship'



Over two hundred copies of this interactive CD have been sold since its conception. Now thoroughly revised. The whole interface has been rebuilt to incorporate:

- A non-distracting grey background with 'anti-glare' off-white text pages for easier reading.
- Information panels are now static, taking less time to load.
- The screen resolution size is increased to 1280 x 1024, with automatic monitor adjustment.
- A new section with advice on problems seen in many digital applications, print and projected images.
- The core features of earlier versions including successful applications and interactivity.
- The 'Guide' is best run by copying the file from the CD to your hard drive.
- Covers every aspect that needs to be considered, before preparing your application!

Queries regarding the full content, or using the CD, should be directed to John Myring at:
jhmdigital@barnetts.eclipse.co.uk

The CD-ROM (PC only) costs £10 incl p&p. Cheques payable to 'RPS Nature Group' should be sent to:
Trevor Hyman LRPS, 3 Northcourt Lane, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 1QA.



Pictures:

*Left: Pine species,
Robert Hawkesworth FRPS*

*Above: Rattlesnake flicking tongue,
Geoff Trinder ARPS*

*Below: White-tailed Eagle, Norway
Mike Lane FRPS*

