

THE IRIS



MAGAZINE OF THE NATURE GROUP OF THE RPS

Issue No. 105
Winter 2009/2010



Smooth Newt (male) *Triturus vulgaris* by Richard Revels FRPS

Distinction Congratulations

The following members received their distinctions in the Nature category.

Associateships

Kevin Elsby ARPS
Gianpiero Ferrari ARPS
Geoff Hughes ARPS
Ajit Huilgol ARPS
Ron McCombe ARPS
Ian McLean ARPS
Ron Perkins ARPS
Stan Saunders ARPS
David Wessely ARPS

September 2008

Norwich, Norfolk
Loughborough, Leics
Bath, Somerset
Bangalore, India
Coldstream, Berwickshire
Ormskirk, Merseyside
Oxford, Oxon
Sandy, Bedfordshire
Windsor, Berkshire

Associateship

Paul Beastall ARPS
Alan Bull ARPS
Christopher Coates ARPS
Bob Johnson ARPS
Fiona Mackay ARPS
David Peate ARPS
Sheila Weir ARPS
David Williams ARPS

March 09

Huntingdon, Cambs
Coulson, Surrey
Uckfield, East Sussex
Chigwell, Essex
Edinburgh, Midlothian
Birkenhead, Wirral
Carnforth, Lancs
Barnard Castle, Durham

Associateships

Joe Curtis ARPS
Mark Monckton ARPS
Ron Evans ARPS
Susan Jones ARPS
J Kaplonek ARPS
Jonathan Ashton ARPS
C V Chandrashekar ARPS

September 2009

Naul, County Dublin
Croydon, Surrey
Menai Bridge, Gwynedd
Huntingdon, Cambs
Eastleigh, Hampshire
Wirral, Merseyside
Bangalore, India

Fellowships

Richard Duckett FRPS

September 2008

Henley-on-Thames, Oxon

There were no Fellowships awarded in March 2009.

If you would like your successful A or F panel displayed on the Nature Group website, please email the Editor for details.

Now Available - Version 3.0 - revised and rebuilt CD ROM

'An Interactive Guide to Obtaining your Nature Associateship'



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

- Covers every aspect that needs to be considered, before preparing your application!
- 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.
- Information panels are now static, taking less time to load.
- The screen resolution size is increased to 1280 x 1024, with automatic monitor adjustment.
- The 'Guide' is best run by copying the file from the CD to your hard drive.

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

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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 - please do not send hand written copy.

Digitally captured photographic images are preferred but scanned transparencies are also acceptable. Images should be supplied on CD (no DVDs please) 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.

No payment will be made for material used and whilst every care will be taken, neither the Editor, the Nature Group or the Printers can accept liability for any damage that may occur to photographic material submitted.

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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Smooth Newt (male) *Triturus vulgaris*.

A widespread species commonly occupying garden ponds.

Richard Revels FRPS.

Inside back cover:

Common Frogs *Rana temporaria* spawning

Richard Revels FRPS

Back cover:

Images from Sheila Weir's successful Associate panel.

Tri-coloured Heron fishing

Reddish Egret fishing

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Chairman of the Nature A & F Distinctions Panel

Nature Group Exhibitions

Copies of Nature Group Exhibitions dating back to 2000, are available to book for camera clubs/photographic societies. 2000 to 2007 are available in slide format. Since 2008 a CD of the Exhibition has been produced and is available for purchase. For more information please contact the Exhibition Secretary, details above or go to our website: www.rpsnaturegroup.com

Editorial

As I write this, the days are shortening at an alarming rate and will get shorter still when the clocks change back to GMT at the weekend. On the bright side - the dark evenings do give me an opportunity to look through and process some of my own images taken this year. Some will undoubtedly find their way into Exhibitions, including our own Nature Group Exhibition, an Entry Form for which you will find in this issue. Please use it and enter yourself.

Since I put the Summer issue to bed, I have moved to rural Norfolk. Rain has certainly been in very short supply since I moved here three months ago. About a week ago I took a trip out to a local woodland hoping to find some worthwhile specimens to photograph but confess that there was very little. A little rain has brought forth a few nice clumps of Honey Fungus and Shaggy Ink Caps, but nothing else really exciting. I do hope that in other parts of the country, where there has been more rainfall, you will have found interesting subjects for your cameras. There is time yet - I'll keep my fingers crossed, but not hold my breath!

This issue contains articles from near and far away places. We kick off with Anne Owen's account of her visit to Midway Island in the Pacific, followed by Richard Revels in his own back garden. Then two successful ARPS panels which may inspire you to try your hand at an Associate submission. The Nature Group's own CD 'An Interactive Guide to Obtaining Your Nature Associateship' is available for guidance if you fancy giving it a go. You can also check out the Nature Group website - a variety of successful panels are there for you to browse through and there are links to download the latest RPS Distinctions publication.

Where have you been this summer? The next issue needs articles about those interesting places you have visited. I look forward to receiving your emails.

Finally, may I be the first to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year filled with all the photographic opportunities you could wish for.



From the chair

First the good news: Membership has increased slightly since my first report. This is great and I hope that membership will continue to increase. I sincerely believe that the Nature Group is one of the best wildlife photographic organisations around.

In my last report I said I hope to attend many of this summer's field meetings. I very much regret that I have found myself unable to attend any. Unfortunately I have either been away or the meeting has clashed with some other commitment. However, I do hope to have met some of you at the Sherwood Pines meeting.

I'm not sure how good the Fungi will prove to be due to the recent lack of rain, in fact at the time of writing, here at Bilsthorpe, we have had no rain for over a month now until today and then for only a couple of hours. Nevertheless, I have no doubt that Robert Hawkesworth and our other Fungus Foray leaders will have found us all something to photograph and have kept us entertained.

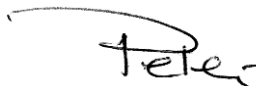
Members, please do your best to support the Field Meetings - your fellow members organise them for your enjoyment. It's at this time of year when our Programme Co-ordinator, Colin Smith, would like you all to consider organising a Field Meeting in your area. We bang on about this every year, but it really can be a worthwhile thing to do. You do not need any special knowledge and you are not expected to offer any instruction. All you need is a sound knowledge of your chosen location and what might be found there. So why not organise a Field Meeting in 2010? The form is on page 32 of this issue. Remember, it's your group and you make it what it is today. Please try to join in these events.

Chairman's Day is on Sunday November 8th at Smethwick PS. Tickets which are inclusive of lunch are now sold out. However, if you would still like to attend and don't mind bringing your own packed lunch, there are a few seats available at £7.50. The full programme was given in the last issue of *The Iris*. Speakers include Heather Angel FRPS and Gianpiero Ferrari ARPS. I am looking forward to meeting as many of you as possible on the day.

Administering the Annual Exhibition is a huge undertaking for one person and following my retirement as Exhibition Secretary your committee tried sharing the responsibility for the exhibition by delegating different sections to different people. Unfortunately this didn't work too well for a number of reasons including their geographical locations. So we have now gone back to having just one person. Sue McGarrigle now has total responsibility for the exhibition - hopefully this will make sending your entries easier and less confusing. Please do your bit and make it easy for Sue by reading the new entry form carefully and completing it correctly. All changes to the conditions are shown on the new entry form which can be found in this issue or downloaded from the website.

I wish to thank all members who entered the 2009 Annual Exhibition and helped to make it the best so far. I have received many messages saying so. Please support the exhibition again in 2010. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Tremaine Cornish for producing such an excellent disc of the exhibition which has sold so well. Unfortunately Tremaine is unable to continue this work and consequently we find ourselves looking for someone who can help by creating the CD show of the 2010 Exhibition. Please contact any committee member if you think you can help. If you would like a CD of the 2009 Exhibition for yourself or your club, please contact Margaret Johnson. Cost is only £10.00.

The date of the combined Spring Meeting, AGM and Annual Exhibition Opening has been fixed for the 24th April 2010 and will once again be held at The Old Schoolhouse, Smethwick PS. clubrooms. The speaker will be Mr Hemant Mehta FRPS. Please make a note in your diary - it promises to be another great Nature Group day.



Obituary - KODACHROME - 1935-2009

by Tony Bond FRPS

News of the death of Kodachrome which reached the dizzy heights of the BBC 10 o'clock News should have resulted in a twinge of sadness among those members of the Nature Group who can still remember what a 35mm cassette looks like.

The complicated history of Kodachrome starts with George Eastman luring a young British scientist, Kenneth Mees, to Rochester, NY., to set up the Kodak R & D laboratories. It came to Mees' attention that two classical musicians, Mannes and Godowski, were doing research into a new type of colour film, totally different to the additive films such as Lumiere Autochrome which were then on the market. He offered them laboratory facilities at Rochester and the result was the launch of Kodachrome in 1935. The unique feature of Kodachrome was, and still is, that the colour couplers were incorporated in the processing solutions, not the film as with films for E6 and C41 processing. This gave Kodachrome unrivalled sharpness and permanence. The penalty was a processing schedule which was the most complex known to man and eventually proved to be the Achilles heel.

From the early days, Kodachrome was marketed in cine formats which persuaded many new dads to buy an 8mm camera. Events in Europe and beyond soon cast their ugly shadow but some Kodachrome production must have continued. The US Army set up a film unit to record the final stages of the war from Normandy to Berlin, recruiting some of Hollywood's finest to do so. Kodachrome was the only colour film suitable for use in cameras under battlefield conditions. The result was a testament to the permanence of Kodachrome.

During the 50s those people with the money for foreign holidays and able to circumnavigate currency restrictions always took Kodachrome with them. Their slides showed them with amazing tans in a setting of azure skies and cobalt seas. Then, in the early 1960s, Kodachrome II was launched with the amazing speed of 25ASA (or was it still Weston?). I remember the scientists and engineers with whom I was then working being amazed at the construction of the film with its large number of very thin layers. The diehards were less impressed

and stocked up their fridges with the original Kodachrome.

The 70s and 80s were perhaps the heyday of Kodachrome with the introduction of no less than three versions, K25, K64 and K200. An earlier ISO 64 version, Kodachrome X, was unloved and died a natural. Once again, the diehards considered K25 to be inferior to Kodachrome II and stocked up their fridges. K64 developed a following amongst nature photographers who needed a faster film, such as for birds and mammals. K200 was the film everyone loved to hate. It could certainly get you out of jail but was accused of being grainy (justified) and inconsistent (probably not).

The golden era of Kodachrome coincided with the formation of the Nature Group thanks to the well-known K25 enthusiast, Heather Angel. In those pioneering days everyone seemed to use K25. However, those of use who photographed fungi on K25 had to use mental gymnastics to compensate for the reciprocity characteristics. Gordon Dickson, editor of the predecessor to *The Iris*, published a graph which made life much simpler. A mounted and laminated copy of this went with me everywhere for many years. It was also a time of great change on the camera front with the introduction of TTL metering, automatic exposure and motor drives. The camera of choice in the Nature Group became the Pentax Spotmatic. If you were out in the field and saw someone take a Spotmatic out of their Billingham with a K25 carton end showing and then attach the camera to a Benbo, you could be almost certain that he or she was a fellow member of the Nature Group. A cottage industry developed in manufacturing brackets to enable two or even three small flashguns to be attached to a camera. This enabled us to stalk insects using K25 and the aperture remained the same irrespective of distance. Some of us also found that by printing K25 transparencies onto Cibachrome, we could make prints with colour saturation and sharpness which previously had only be available from medium or large format cameras. And the prints are as fresh and sparkling now as they were when they came out of the Wilkinson drum.

continued on page

Midway - a long way from anywhere

by Anne Owen FRPS

Midway Atoll is a long way from anywhere. To reach this remote speck in the Pacific, a traveller must first fly to Honolulu in Hawaii, then board a rather small, elderly turboprop plane and fly another 1250 miles, northwest along the archipelago, touching down long after dark to minimise the risk of bird-strike.

I travelled to Midway in April 2009 with a small group of photographers led by Perry Conway, who had visited the atoll several times before. Our arrival was other-worldly. As the plane taxied, we could see the ghostly white shapes of hundreds of albatross, lining the runways, apparently undisturbed by the noise and the propeller wash. We were transferred to our accommodations in a convoy of golf carts which had to thread their way past white adult birds and their fluffy grey chicks, resting anywhere that they could find space, even on the unpaved roadways. At Charlie Barracks, we had to step over half dozen or so adolescent albatross that had chosen the front entrance as an ideal spot to roost. Having settled in, we went to sleep to the haunting whistles and beak-clacking of albatross beneath our windows.

It might be reasonable to suppose that such a remote place would be pristine. Alas, nothing could be further from the truth. Sand Island, the largest in the atoll, is about 1200 acres, and there is not a solitary square inch that has not been radically impacted by man in the last hundred years or so.

In the late 1800s, Midway's islands were low-lying expanses of sand with light vegetation, visited from time to time by egg collectors. In the early 1900s, employees of the Commercial Pacific Cable Company became the first permanent residents, as they set up a station on the first round-the-world communications cable. They brought with them 9,000 tonnes of soil and many species of non-native trees and shrubs, thereby starting a transformation that continues today. Next to arrive was Pan American Airlines, who established an operation supporting their transpacific Flying Clipper seaplane route, including hangars, streets, piers and a hotel.

Then, in the run up to World War II, the US Navy constructed a Naval Air-station, together with submarine and sea plane bases, which brought





further profound changes. The Battle of Midway in 1942 proved to be the turning point of the War in the Pacific, explaining why the name is familiar to many. Right through the Cold War, Midway remained an active, strategic location. At it's height, 5,000 people lived on Sand Island.

Throughout this period, the needs of the native inhabitants of the atoll – mostly seabirds, which use the atoll for breeding – were disregarded. The albatross were dubbed 'gooney birds' and ridiculed for their somewhat ungainly take-offs and landings.

In 1988, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service started the process of establishing a National Wildlife Refuge on Midway and the painstaking work of restoring its biological diversity and conserving threatened and endangered species got underway.

Today, many of the buildings from the 1950s have been torn down, but other structures are preserved as historical monuments. Predatory species, especially the rats that wrought havoc on the ground-nesting seabird eggs and chicks have been eliminated. There is an on-going struggle to control alien plants, including brilliant yellow-flowering *Verbesina* and ironwood trees that reduce the open ground needed for successful albatross nests. In the intense sun, chicks rely on a cooling wind from the sea to avoid over-heating and the tall-growing non-native species kill the breezes.



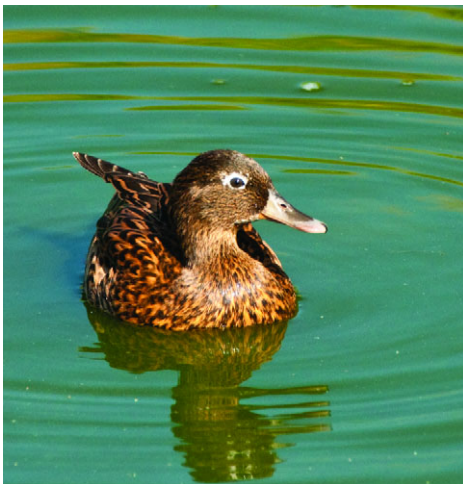
Seventeen seabird species nest on the atoll each year, numbering around two millions birds. Colonies of Laysan and Black-footed Albatross are the biggest in the world, while endangered Short-tailed Albatross are occasional visitors. Other nesting species include Red-tailed Tropicbird, White, Gray-backed and Sooty Tern, Black and Brown Noddy, Red-footed and Masked Booby and Great Frigate birds. Underground nesters include Bonin Petrel and Wedge-tailed Shearwaters. A few pairs of endangered Laysan Duck have been moved from nearby Laysan Atoll to Midway in the recent years in an effort to preserve the species by providing new habitat and they seem to be acclimatising well.

The photographic experience is terrific, assuming of course, that you like birds! From first light, adult albatross start taking to the air and throughout the day, there are countless opportunities for shots of birds in flight, birds at the nest and groups of adolescents that are not yet breeding. The birds are

relatively approachable, especially if the photographer is willing to get down to ground level and crawl slowly forward. The Laysan Albatross in particular are rather curious and will peck gently at clothing or even the front of a lens! Black-footed Albatross, which are less numerous, also tolerate a close approach. This affords a great view when they feed their chicks, by transferring a gullet full of squid. A long lens however is required to capture the Short-tailed, or "Golden" Albatross, if you are lucky enough to encounter one. Their endangered status means that approaching closer than 100 feet is forbidden.

Wherever you go on the island, it is important to stay on the marked paths and trails. The sandy ground is riddled with the nest tunnels of petrels which will cave in easily under the weight of a human foot. One a tunnel has collapsed, the nest is lost and any trapped birds will die. During daylight hours, the petrels feed out at sea. At dusk, for a short time, the air is filled with the returning birds as they rapidly locate their burrows and disappear underground. Photographing these birds requires a torch to find the burrows and flash to acquire an image. The rangers discouraged this pretty strongly as being very intrusive to these shy birds.

White Terns don't build a nest at all. These amazing flyers simply lay a single egg on a small flat patch on a tree limb and incubate it in situ. When the chick hatches, it hangs on with huge feet, never straying far along the branch. We were on the atoll just before most of the White Tern eggs hatched but there was one chick right outside the barracks.



Most other bird sightings were chance encounters. The Laysan Duck had paired up and were wandering the island looking for suitable nest sites, so their whereabouts were unpredictable. Bristle-thighed Curlew, Ruddy Turnstone and Pacific Golden Plover actually nest in the Arctic and were 'vacationing' in Midway to escape the snowy winter further north.

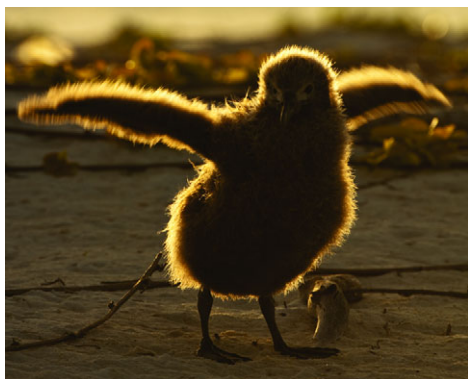
While we spent most of our visit on Sand Island, we did visit nearby East Island for one day. East Island too is dominated by abandoned runways, but today there is no human habitation. The mix of nesting birds is somewhat different and includes Great Frigatebirds, and Red-footed and Masked booby. Again, this was a place mostly suited to long lens photography, though since there is no transport and no shade, we were also advised to travel light!

In the lagoon between the islands we saw a pod of Hawaiian Spinner Dolphins and on the shore, endangered Hawaiian Monk Seals and Green Sea Turtle. Since all of these are protected species, close approach is not permitted and only snatch shots were available.





It certainly takes a lot of effort to travel to Midway and for a variety of reasons, there are limited opportunities for visitors to get there. I found it to be a place full of tragedy and hope. The tragedy for me was the huge impact that the atoll has suffered through the depredations of man in the last 100 years. The hope is that the resilience of the natural world combined with the restoration efforts that are being made will preserve this wonderful place for its rightful inhabitants - the birds.



Pictures:

Page 5 Black-footed Albatross & chick

Page 6 Laysan albatross

Laysan Albatross chick

Page 7 Red-footed Booby

Laysan Duck

Page 8 White Tern pair

White Tern chick

Laysan Albatross chick at sunset

Pictures from a Garden Pond.

by Richard Revels FRPS

For those Nature Group members who do not have a garden pond or easy access to a small pond, you are missing out on a fascinating world of nature pictures. When I moved to my current home in the mid 1980's making a garden pond was one of my first projects. Although it is not a large pond, over the years it has provided me with plenty of aquatic wildlife pictures ranging from frogs and dragonflies on or above the surface, to the many creatures that live underwater. Pond dipping will reveal a range of different creatures that live there unseen, but remember if you put a mixed pond dipping catch in a container the numbers will diminish quickly, as just about everything will be trying to eat anything smaller than its-self.

It is amazing how rapidly wildlife moves into a pond. Frogs and Smooth Newts were breeding there in the spring, and a bit of pond dipping revealed the wealth of underwater bugs, beetles and other creatures that had also taken up residence. Waterweeds from a friend's pond undoubtedly brought in some creatures including the water snails, while winged insects such as the dragon and damselflies, bugs and beetles just fly in. As this was to be a wildlife pond, fish were not introduced, as they seriously reduce the wildlife value of a pond.

My first pond is in a rather shaded position and did not bring in as many breeding dragon and damselflies as I had hoped, so early last spring I decided to create another slightly larger pond further down my garden in a more open situation. This pond was designed with photography in mind, allowing access with a camera from all sides. Waterweeds from my original pond were put into the new pond and this would have introduced some water creatures, but that was the extent of any introductions, the rest would have to find their own way there. So far this year I have seen the Large Red and Azure Damselflies, and Broad-bodied Chaser and Common Darter Dragonflies egg laying in the pond. Perhaps a little disappointing that more have not started breeding there yet, but there has been several other dragonfly species patrolling around my garden, so maybe there is time to add another breeding species to the list before the 2009 summer ends.

Over the years I have taken hundreds of pictures of creatures from my garden pond, many of which have been reproduced in books and magazines, but besides being a source for aquatic wildlife pictures for my Photo Library, a pond will benefit a range of local wildlife. Birds bathe in and





drink from them, and many other creatures will visit them, but please ensure that there is an easy escape route for any hedgehog or other wildlife that falls in. I have several concrete slabs leading into the pond that allow an easy means of entry and escape, and birds frequently use these slabs to bathe on. Also remember that small children can drown in quite shallow ponds, so a fence to keep toddlers away may be needed. You have been warned!

Although my own garden ponds are used for most of my aquatic pictures, I will also visit any other pond that offers the possibility of pictures. Several friends let me visit their ponds for a photo shoot, and a recent visit to the Redgrave and Lopham NR saw me on my knees in the mud around the small ponds that contain the rare Fen Raft Spiders, and I was rewarded with some nice pictures. In such places you mustn't mind getting a bit muddy if you want the pictures!



Even if you don't have space to have your own pond, I am sure that there will be the opportunity for you to do some pond photography somewhere next year.

Equipment

No special equipment is needed for photographing pond wildlife. For the frogs, dragonflies and damselflies I use either my Canon EF 300mm f4L IS lens, usually with an extension tube fitted to enable closer focusing, or my 180mm Macro lens. However a good quality medium to long zoom lens should do the job just as well.

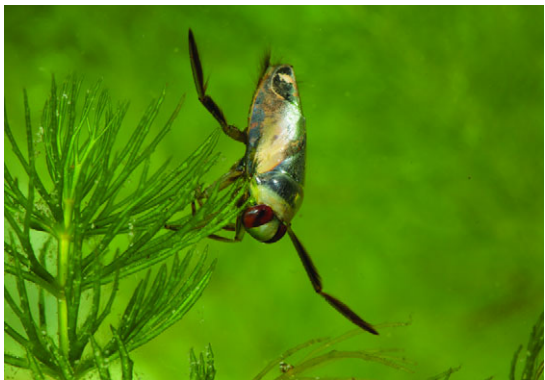
I am keeping all sides of my new pond clear of tall vegetation so that a beanbag or tripod can be placed anywhere around it, thus allowing pictures to be taken from any height and direction.

To photograph the underwater creatures an aquarium will be needed. Aquariums are inexpensive and available from most pet shops and fish centres. I have several of different sizes, the larger ones I have purchased ready made, while the smaller ones I tailor make myself, cutting glass to whatever size I want and using a glass-bonding adhesive that is available from DIY stores to glue them together. I divide the larger aquariums into two sections with a pane of glass separating the front inch or two from the rest. In the front section will be small amount of well washed waterweed and the subject I want to photograph, while the main body of the aquarium will hold more waterweed, with a natural looking backdrop placed just behind the aquarium. It's best to leave a freshly filled aquarium for a few days before a photo shoot to enable the air bubbles to disperse.

For lighting I mostly use two flash units mounted on stands, one from each side and pointing down. This avoids reflections from the flash showing up on the aquarium front. My camera fitted with 100mm Macro lens is mounted on a tripod with the end of the lens poking through a hole in a matte black sheet of thin card. This reduces the risk of getting reflections showing up on the front of the aquarium, and spoiling the picture.

One of the advantages of using a digital camera is that you can do a trial shot and immediately see the results. This enables me to correct any lighting or other problems strait away.

It is wise to have a holding aquarium or other container for creatures that are in line for the photo shoot. I return the various water creatures' back to the pond soon after I have finished photographing them. Remember, they will need feeding if you keep them from the pond for several days .





Winter is the ideal time to construct a new pond, so if you have space available why not get out your spade and start digging. You will, I am sure, be pleasantly surprised with the wildlife that visits a garden pond, and one of the big advantages will be that its only a few paces away from your back door.

Since being a member of the RPS A & F Nature Distinctions Panel, I cannot remember seeing a panel of pond life pictures. There is plenty of scope to get a Distinction with a series of pond life pictures, and it would make a pleasant change from seeing yet another set of bird pictures that now seem to make up around 90% of the submissions. So if you are looking for a new challenge or a theme for your Distinction attempt, take a serious look at what's in your local pond, or better still, create one of your own in your garden.



Recommended reading.

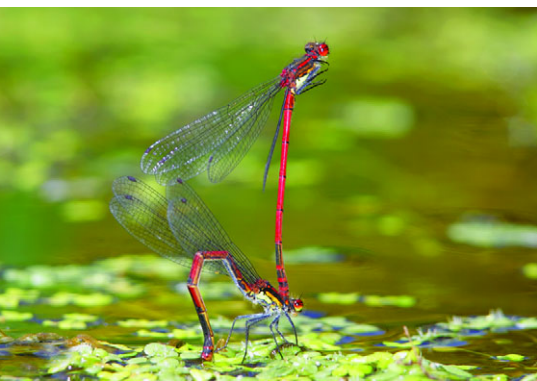
The Wildlife Pond Handbook by Louise Bardsley.

Publishes by New Holland. £12.99

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To see more of Richard's pictures visit his website:

www.richardrevelsphotography.com



Picture details:

Inside back cover & page 12: Common Frogs *Rana temporaria* spawning in my pond. On a good year there are around 150 frogs in the pond at spawning time. The frenzy only lasts about a week, although a few frogs are usually present all through the summer and into autumn.

Page 9: This 4 Spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata* was photographed sitting on a sedge leaf growing in a friends pond. Ponds in different situations may vary in the species that they attract. This species only occasionally comes into my garden although it is a common species in my area. Canon 1D Mk3 camera, EF 300mm f4L IS lens.

Page 10: A male Smooth Newt *Triturus vulgaris*, this widespread species commonly occupies garden ponds and there are no licenses required to handle or photograph this species. In my garden pond they are plentiful and a major predator of frog tadpoles.

Page 10: Male Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus*. This is Britain's largest and rarest newt, although it can be common where it occurs - it is a fully protected species and a licence is required from Natural England before handling or photographing this species (even from your own pond).

Page 10: Male Broad-bodied Chaser Dragonflies *Libellula depressa* visited my new pond a number of times during June and July and this male posed well for me on several props that I put around the pond edge. Canon 1D Mk3 and 180mm Macro lens.

Page 10: A Southern Hawker Dragonfly *Aeshna cyanea* photographed egg laying on logs around my new pond. Canon 1D Mk3 camera with Canon EF 300mm f4L IS lens hand held.

Page 11: Smooth Newt eggs. You will need to set up an aquarium to photograph the life history of a Newt. Canon 5D Mk2 Canon 100mm f2.8 Macro lens.

Page 11: A Smooth Newt tadpole, note the external gills which it will loose as it matures. Canon 5D Mk2 Canon 100mm f2.8 Macro lens.

Page 11: The Common Backswimmer Bug *Netonecta galuca* will soon fly into any pond. This bug preys on small pond creatures, and if handled it can give a nasty bite, so beware! Canon 5D Mk2 Canon 100mm f2.8 Macro lens.

Page 11: Rather than take a normal picture of this Pond Snail *Lymnaea stagnalis* I decided to photograph this one's lip and mouth as it moved across the front of my aquarium.

Page 12: The Azure Damselflies *Coenagrion puella* are probably the most common blue damselfly that



breeds in gardens ponds. I photographed this pair are egg laying in my new pond using my Canon EF 300mm IS f4L lens and an extension tube. I used a beanbag as a camera and lens support.

Page 12: The Water Scorpion *Nepa cinerea* is another predator bug that soon fly's into garden ponds, and feeds on small creatures that it catches with its pincers. The spike projecting from its rear does not hold a sting, but is only a breathing tube. Although this bug cannot sting, it can bite if handled. Canon 5D Mk2, Canon 100mm f2.8 Macro lens.

Page 12: To photograph this rare Fen Raft Spider *Dolomedes plantarius* I had to visit its only habitat in East Anglia at Redgrave & Lopham Fen nature reserve in Suffolk. They live in small shallow ponds on that reserve which are similar in size to garden ponds. Canon 5D Mk2, Sigma 180mm lens

Page 12: Large Red Damselflies *Pyrrosoma nymphula* egg laying in my new garden pond. These are normally the first damselfly to be seen on the wing, and are usually seen flying from late April to early July. I photographed this pair using my 300mm IS f4L lens and an extension tube, resting on a beanbag.

Page 13 top: My original Garden pond - quite small but full of aquatic wildlife, with over 150 frogs at spawning time.

Page 13: My new garden pond allowing ground level access all around the perimeter.

The Nature Group Annual Exhibition

Don't delay - prepare your entry now!

Remove the centre pages from this issue, these make up the 2010 Entry Form. Put them on your desk, in your diary, with your pc, your prints, slides, or anywhere that will remind you to enter. The closing date for all entries is 19th February 2010. Please read the Conditions of Entry carefully - failure to comply may result in your entry being rejected.

Images of accepted prints and projected images will be copied to CDs which are sold to Photographic Societies and Natural History groups around the country. If your club does not currently feature the Nature Group Annual Exhibition in its programme, ask your programme secretary to order a copy. An order form is available on page 2 of this entry form. The CD can be ordered now and will be dispatched as soon as it is available.

All accepted entries will be included on the CD of the Exhibition **provided that a digital copy of the entry has been submitted**. Award winning entries will be included in The Iris and on the website wherever possible. Please remember to include a CD of your prints and/or slides with your entry to ensure inclusion on the Exhibition CD, The Iris and the Nature Group website. Please save your images as follows:

- Size should be 1500 pixels on the longest edge and the resolution set at 300ppi
- Saved in TIF format. The file name should include the category, number and title corresponding to the details on the entry form, followed by the author's name plus honours where appropriate (eg A01 Common Seal - Fred Bloggs LRPS).
- Images should be in folders titled with the section and your name (eg Prints - Fred Bloggs LRPS).
- If you are entering the digital section you may include all your images on a single disc, however, please ensure that the folders are clearly marked Prints or Slides.

Prints and Projected Image entries

- There will be two separate sections - **prints** and **projected images** (slides and digital images)
- There will be two categories in each of the two sections -
 - Category A:** All creatures - birds, mammals, reptiles, marine life, insects, etc.
 - Category B:** All plant life (including fungi, lichens, etc.) and all other subjects - including geological, microscopy, creative (i.e. pattern, design and form found within nature, etc.)
- Please ensure that you list entries for Category A before Category B
- Each category will be selected separately.
- A Bronze Medal will be awarded to the top entry in each category of both sections.
In addition the Selectors will give personal awards in each section/category.
- A Gold Medal winner will be selected from one of the category winners in each section and a new category winner will be selected to replace the entry which has been awarded the Gold Medal.
- Entrants may enter up to six entries in each of the two sections in any combination of the two categories. Maximum number of entries is therefore 12.
- Failure to comply with the Conditions of Entry may result in your entry being rejected.
- All entries should be sent to the Exhibition Chairman, Sue McGarrigle LRPS, 2 Pumping Station Cottage, Thelsford, Charlecote, Warks, CV35 9EL. any query regarding this exhibition should be emailed to sue@suemcgarrigle.co.uk

Equipment Review:

Giotto's MTL8361B carbon fibre tripod

by John Bebbington FRPS

I have been a Benbo 1 fan since the 1980s – platform stability, versatility and ease of use (after a few sessions practising on the rug by the living room fire, much to my wife's amusement!) are all legendary. The Benbo 1 revolutionised my insect and flower photography and was carried around the Swiss Alps, the Eastern Pyrenees and the Dordogne.

However, I have become less and less inclined to carry my Benbo Mk1 around the countryside, whether while walking the dog or on longer photographic outings, especially with my Pentax K10D DSLR body, Manfrotto 454 focusing rail and Sigma 180mm APO macro lens on it!

At the beginning of this year I began to investigate carbon fibre tripods and, after reading several reviews, contacted Manfrotto, Gitzo and Giotto's. Fairly quickly Daymen UK, the distributors of Giotto's tripods, contacted me and after a few questions generously loaned me a model MTL8361 carbon fibre tripod with a pan-and-tilt head.

Although it took me a while to become familiar with using the tripod at low level, the Giotto's method of lifting the centre column and making it horizontal seems to me to be simpler than those of the Gitzo or Manfrotto tripods I've seen in use. Unfortunately the pan and tilt head provided was simply not adequate for the weight of camera and was quickly replaced with the Uni-loc and small Novoflex Magicball heads.

The weight advantage over the Benbo is enormous. With the largest Uni-loc ball head the Benbo Mk 1 weighs 4.5kg; Giotto's weighs 2.8kg with the Uni-loc head and 2.2kg (lighter than the Benbo Trekker) with the small Novoflex Magicball, which has proved to be quite adequate except in damp conditions when the ball slips, on these occasions I have had to use the Uni-loc head.

In summary, the tripod is excellent; it is very light and has proved to be vibration-free, even with the 180mm macro lens and focusing rail on the camera. I have used it for exposures from 1/250 sec up to 15 sec (with bellows and reversed standard lens) and the images are as sharp as I had hoped.

- very stable and vibration-free
- light, but rigid

- capable (with the right ball head) of supporting a heavy lens/camera body
- easy to lift and angle the centre column
- maximum working height 1.66m (OK for me!)

In short, I'm delighted with the tripod and would strongly recommend it for use in close-up and landscape work. It has 3 predetermined leg positions, 2-section legs with an excellent quick-release mechanism and a built-in spirit level.



Progress to a Successful Digital A Panel

by Sheila Weir ARPS

I have always been interested in natural history. Almost ten years ago, I briefly accompanied my husband whilst he was on one of Tony Wharton's photography courses at Blencathra FSC. It was this that gave me the incentive to extend this interest to include nature photography. The following year I too joined the course. After a brief period using a discarded Minolta SLR and macro lens I soon acquired a Nikon F80 (film based) with Tamron 90mm macro lens – a first-rate lens which I am still using. I concentrated on flowers, fungi, lichens and the occasional cooperative butterfly and dragonfly.

A move to digital in 2005 with the purchase of a Nikon D70 (soon progressing to a D80 and, most recently, a D90) eventually opened up further possibilities. These more compact camera bodies are fine for my small arthritic hands, and likewise I am not keen to try out the long heavy lenses. However, my Nikon F2.8 70/200mm VR lens gives excellent results with a converter up to 1.7x which, together with the digital crop factor, has a maximum effective focal length of over 500mm. With this and a Nikon F4 300mm lens which can take a 1.4x converter I felt ready to try bird photography.

Having already enjoyed several trips to Europe with David Hoskins' company to photograph flowers and butterflies, in 2006 we decided to join one of his tours to Florida. This is certainly a wonderful place to begin bird photography and the trip proved so successful and enjoyable that we returned in 2007 and again in 2008, both times with David Osborn. I used the VR lens hand-held, but often found that the light intensity in Florida resulted in such short exposures that the VR facility was not needed. Both lenses, with or without converters, were used on a tripod and the purchase of a Wimberley Sidekick made handling of the long lenses easier.

I joined the RPS and Nature Group in 2006 and began to enter work in the annual exhibition with some success. This prompted me to aim for a distinction. I collected together images obtained over several years and finally chose to select a panel of Florida birds, in particular shots which illustrated some aspect of bird behaviour.

After some thought I decided to submit these as digitally projected images.

I am one of the many digital photographers who use computer software such as Photoshop to process their images. This is an activity which I find both challenging and rewarding. I have always shot in RAW format and use Adobe Camera Raw (ACR) converter for processing in 16 bit colour. Since the RAW file is never permanently altered, it can in future be returned to as the software is developed. I have benefited from this when preparing some of my earlier images for inclusion in my panel. In addition, the ability to correct the white balance of a RAW file is an advantage which should not be underestimated.

From advice given on the Nature Group Interactive Guide and also from conversations with other members of the group, it is clear that the most common faults in images entered in exhibitions or submitted for distinctions are poor contrast control and consequent loss of detail in the highlights, over-saturation and over-sharpening.

After adjusting for exposure ACR often produces images, particularly those with significant areas with high tonal values, which appear too bright even though not overexposed. Many of the images in my panel are of birds with large areas of essentially white feathers where it is important to bring out the original detail. I achieved this by reducing the brightness followed by local curves adjustment, both in ACR. (Note that the brightness control in ACR acts in much the same way as the mid-tones slider in Photoshop levels.) I prefer to use curves in the raw converter since it is claimed to be less likely to introduce colour changes. Surprisingly, with images for digital projection, the maximum tonal values in all channels had often to be set well below 240. This aspect of the processing is especially important when preparing images for digital projection and the one which I found the most difficult to judge correctly.





Over saturation might be a consequence of incorrect room lighting (maybe too bright) and a natural human preference for a colourful image. I find that the best plan is to try to recall what the bird (or flower etc.) looked like when I photographed it and to try to replicate this. The aim is to produce a true rather than a dramatic effect. Perhaps the only answer is restraint.

Images for projection or the web require less sharpening than those for a print. Any necessary resizing must, of course, be done before sharpening. And, since every image needs different treatment, I always sharpen on a layer with opacity usually set initially at 85%. This makes it easier to fine tune the degree of sharpening until the desired level is obtained.

The next step was to view the images using our digital projector which had been calibrated just using a step wedge. Projection is very important since images may then appear very different from when viewed on the PC monitor. I noted any further adjustments to be made in my processing and chose 15 for my panel, later arranging them with the advice given on the Nature Group CD in mind.

Colin Smith FRPS had kindly agreed to give me advice on my submission so I sent off a CD of my chosen panel plus six additional images for his comments. His judgement of the overall quality was favourable, the main criticism being that two or three still appeared to be too contrasty and/or bright. He also identified one (not in the selected 15) which was not of the same standard. I substituted one image where the beak was a bit soft and further reduced the contrast and brightness where needed. After one more viewing with the projector for a final check I prepared the CD with my submission and posted it to Bath.

On the Assessment Day several digital panels were viewed before mine and comments were soon made about loss of detail, over-saturation and over-sharpening in a few images. When my turn came I was pleased to see that my images appeared just as they had on our screen at home. I was delighted when my panel received unanimous approval, even more so when one of the judges commented favourably on the amount of feather detail shown on the birds.

Finally, I should like to thank Colin for his helpful comments and advice, and also my husband who has helped and encouraged me in all aspects of my

Bird Activity in Florida

photography.

Image titles

- 01 Great Blue Herons at nest
Ardea herodias
- 02 Wood Stork feeding
Mycteria americana
- 03 Royal Terns courtship
Sterna maxima
- 04 Brown Pelican in flight
Pelecanus occidentalis
- 05 Great Egret in flight
Casmerodius albus
- 06 Ring-billed Gull with Crab
Larus delawarensis
- 07 White Ibis feeding
Eudocimus albus

- 08 Willet with Crab
Catoptrophorus semipalmatus
- 09 Double-crested Cormorant gaping
Phalacrocorax auritus
- 10 Osprey with Fish
Pandion haliaetus
- 11 Laughing Gulls courtship
Larus atricilla
- 12 Great Egret displaying
Casmerodius albus
- 13 Short-billed Dowitcher feeding
Limnodromus griseus
- 14 Reddish Egret fishing
Egretta rufescens
- 15 Tricolored Heron fishing
Egretta tricolor



01 Great Blue Herons at nest



02 Wood Stork feeding



03 Royal Terns courtship



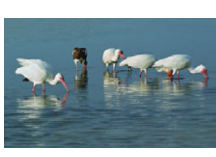
04 Brown Pelican in flight



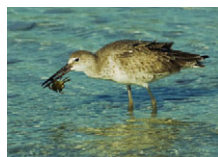
05 Great Egret in flight



06 Ring-billed Gull with crab



07 White Ibis feeding



08 Willet with crab



09 Double-crested
Cormorant gaping



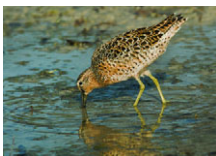
10 Osprey with fish



11 Laughing Gull
courtship



12 Great Egret
displaying



13 Short-billed Dowitcher
feeding



14 Reddish Egret fishing



15 Tricolored Heron fishing

Gaining my Associateship in Nature

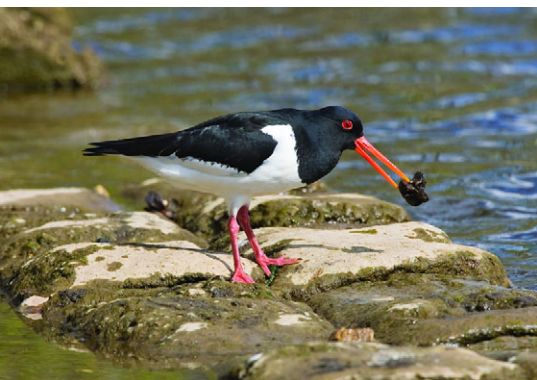
by Kevin Elsby.

I am a full time GP in Norfolk and have had an interest in natural history since childhood. I have been a photographer of wildlife since the early 1980s. I consider myself very lucky - when I am not working as a doctor, I lecture on wildlife on cruise ships and am also a tour guide for Naturetrek, a leading UK wildlife holiday company. Both of these 'pastimes' have given me excellent opportunities to not only visit some of the best wildlife places on earth, but also opportunities to take wildlife images. In 2008 I enrolled on a one day macro photography course run by Richard Revels FRPS at Bedford. I had been photographing insects and flowers for some time and wanted to improve my techniques, especially with flash, as well as compare my work with others in the field. I discussed my photography with Richard (who was not a member of the September 2008 Distinctions panel) and he suggested I should think about submitting for my Associateship. I therefore got thinking as to what subjects I could use. I bought a copy of the excellent CD 'Gaining your

Associateship in the Nature Category', which I found extremely helpful. I also had the opportunity to speak to David Osborn FRPS who was a Distinctions panel member for 2008. After this I trawled through my many digital images (I switched to digital in 2000), and selected about 20 which I showed to Richard and David. It was clear I needed to improve on my selection, as many of the images, although good in themselves, showed perching birds which were too 'static'. I was advised to select birds 'doing things'. Back to the drawing board. I concentrated on trying to capture birds in action and after a while I felt I had images which were more suitable. I had purchased an A3+ printer and was confident in my ability to print a good image. I was relieved when it was suggested I had the right sort of images to submit. Now it was a case of weeding out the ones I would not use and I began the process of whittling my images down to the final 15. To do this, I chose as my theme 'Birds in Action', in three different environments - Air, Water and Land, and my statement of intent indicated

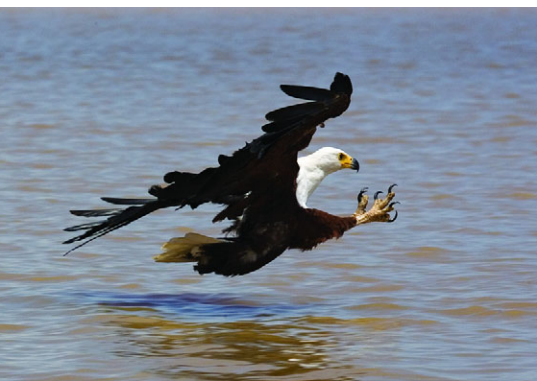
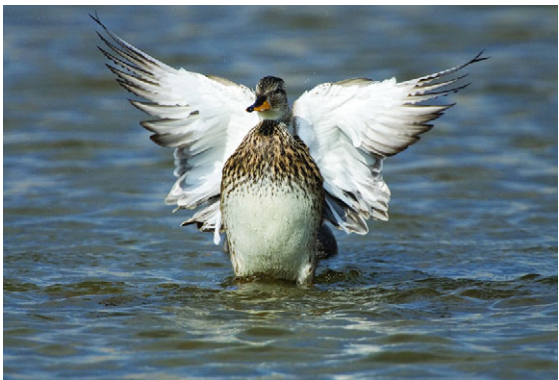






this. I composed my panel with three rows of five images. Arranging the panel was, in many ways, the hardest part of all for me, as not only did each image have to be worthy of being in the panel in its own right, it had to also fit in with the other images. Being colour blind didn't help either! Finally, I made my selection and submitted my application for the September 2008 distinctions assessment. I took a day off work and attended the assessment at Fenton House in person, accompanied by my wife. It was a long day, and my panel was not viewed until almost the end, in the afternoon. At last, I was delighted to hear that I had been awarded my Associateship. It had been a very interesting and enjoyable experience and I feel I learned a great deal during my time in preparing for my submission. I discovered that birds in action were more likely to 'catch the eye' than static portraits. I also learned the finer techniques of image preparation (using Photoshop CS2), printing and mounting. I am now looking forward to submitting my Fellowship application one day. However, I am under no illusions. This is, rightly, a much higher hurdle to overcome, but if you don't try, you'll never know!

My website address is:- www.wildlifeontheweb.co.uk



Birds in Action

Kevin Elsby

September 2008



01 Booted Eagle



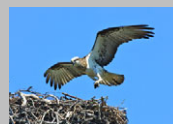
02 Griffon Vulture



03 Arctic Terns fighting



04 Kittiwake in flight



05 Osprey



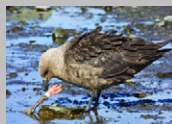
06 African Fish Eagle



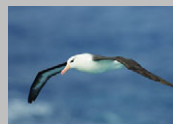
07 Oystercatcher



08 Gadwall



09 South Polar Skua with
Penguin foot



10 Black-browed Albatross



11 Blue-footed Booby



12 Marabou Stork and
Wildebeest carcasses



13 Barn Owl hunting



14 Pheasants

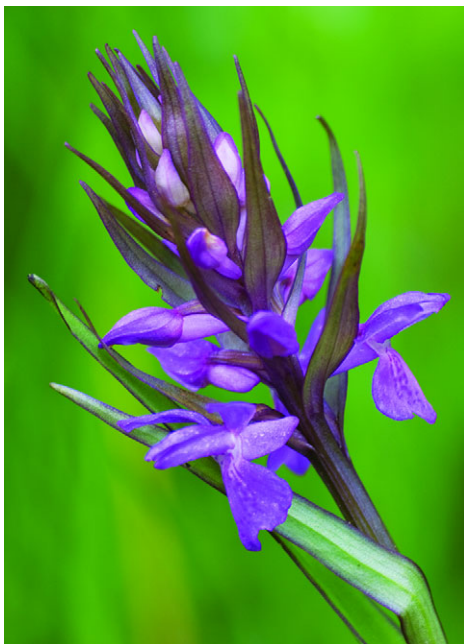


15 Black Vulture with Turtle

The panel

Most of the images were taken using a Canon EOS 1D MkII camera body and Canon 500mm f4 IS L lens or 100-400mm f5.6 IS L lens. Some were taken with a Nikon D100 body and Nikon 80-400mm f5.6 VR lens.

1. Booted Eagle, Coto Donana, Spain. Taken soon after dawn from a car window using a bean bag.
2. Griffon Vulture, Extremadura, Spain. A regular place to see this species.
3. Arctic Terns, Farne Islands, UK. I am particularly pleased with this image. I visited the Farnes to photograph Arctic Terns in flight, using fill flash. I had photographed several individual birds when I spotted two together. They briefly collided almost overhead. I pressed the shutter and was rewarded with this, my best image of the day.
4. Kittiwake, Heimaey, Iceland. Taken from a sightseeing boat trip around the volcanic island.
5. Osprey, Yepoon, Australia. The nest was over 100 feet up on a man made pylon. I used a 1.4x and 2x extender with a 500mm lens.
6. African Fish Eagle, Lake Bogoria, Kenya. Taken from a canoe surrounded by crocodiles. The bird was about to grab a Nile Perch.
7. Oystercatcher, Wroxham, Norfolk - an opportunistic shot, taken one lunchtime.
8. Gadwall, Cley, Norfolk. I saw this female preening herself and waited until she rose out of the water to shuffle her wings before pressing the shutter
9. South Polar Skua and Gentoo Penguin foot, Antarctica. A typical image showing 'nature red in tooth and claw'.
10. Black-browed Albatross, Drakes Passage, Southern Ocean. Albatross are a favourite group of birds for me.
11. Blue-footed Booby, Espanola, Galapagos. In typical 'dance' mode on this island at the Equator.
12. Marabou Stork and Wildebeest carcasses, Mara River, Kenya. The smell of the carcasses was almost too much to bear. I could only stand it for a couple of minutes before I had to move on.
13. Barn Owl, Blickling, Norfolk. A lovely species to have in my local area.
14. Pheasant, Blickling, Norfolk. Another local shot.
15. Black Vulture with Leatherback Turtle hatchling, Trinidad. These birds wait on the beach in large numbers for the hatchling turtles as run the gauntlet to get to the safety of the sea.



Captions:

Top left: Azure Damselfly

Top right: Barry Freeman in action

Centre left: Getting in close

Centre right: Marsh Orchid

Bottom: Four Spotted Chaser

Our first day out with the Nature Group

by Phil Smith

I first came to hear of the day at Wicken Fen via the RPS East Anglia Group Newsletter and as I had met Patricia Kreyer at an EAF judges training day some years ago I contacted her and got more information on what promised to be an excellent day out with some excellent photographic opportunities.

This was to be my second visit to the Fen but it was a first ever visit for Jim (a fellow member of Ipswich & District Photography Society), plus it was also his first attempt at nature photography. This was my second attempt and also the second time only using my new D300 (much different from my old Fuji S9500). So you can see, we both were natural history virgins when it came to capturing half decent shots of insects.

We departed from Ipswich at 7.45am approx with the temperature rising all the way. We were both looking forward to photographing dragonflies. I knew too well how hard this task would be from my previous visit but Jim had all this to learn.

On arrival at the Fen it was plain to see it was going to be an extremely hot day, so it was on with the sun block and mosquito spray. Once we had walked from the car park with cameras, lenses tripods and all the other paraphernalia, we arrived at the entrance of the Fen where we received a warm welcome and a brief introduction about the 'Dragonfly Project' from Patricia.

After this introduction Jim and I headed into the reserve and started looking for subjects to photograph. The first subject I photographed was Barry Freeman (IDPS print section chairman) he was creeping up. I don't really think this shot of Barry would fit into the category of natural history so that one will have to be just a record shot.

It was soon plain to see Jim and I were going to have a great day as the insects, flora & fauna were now coming out to greet us. I was amazed to see so many wild orchids, it was the first time I had ever seen one, let alone photograph one. By now the dragonflies were becoming active and Jim with his strong Belfast accent was sharing his excitement with everyone around him as you could hear him saying 'here's another' and at one point I had to prevent him from falling into a dyke whilst he was trying to photograph a Four Spotted Chaser (*Libellula quadrimaculata*). As you can see, I have

even started to use the scientific names to identify species (thanks Patricia and Google).

By now we were both really getting into the day. Jim's Canon 50D was heard firing away and I'm sure, like me, he could not wait to upload his images. However, in this case patience had to be a virtue as we still had so much of the day ahead, but wait just a minute, on inspection of our watches it was getting close to lunch time. I must say, for me not to notice it was time to top up my ever increasing waistline was a miracle - that is one thing of which I usually do not need a reminder. I'm sure this was caused by all of nature's happenings and taking in all the beautiful things both Jim and I were seeing. We headed back to the car park for a much deserved lunch and to top up my pain relief as by now, my back and hips were causing me some discomfort.

After lunch it was plain to see I would not be able to walk around the Fen as I was suffering from stiffness. However, not wanting to give in to my condition and desiring to carry on taking pictures, both Jim and I visited the man made pond area to take yet more photographs of dragonflies and damselflies - this was after visiting the excellent on site café for an ice-cream.

We managed a further hour in this area but by then the heat of the day had become far too much for us and we made the decision to call it a day and travel back to Ipswich. As you can imagine, the conversation in the car was good and we both agreed how hard it is to photograph natural history in all it's glory, we also came to the conclusion that if any judge should be heard to say "oh no, not another bird or insect" we would suggest that they get out there and give natural history photography a try, as it's far harder than they think

Finally, as new boys to this style of photography, Jim and I were very impressed with the friendliness and helpfulness of Nature Group members and from a disabled persons perspective I found the Fen very accommodating place which I have recommended on the Disabled Photographers Society website.

The good thing about this day was that we both met great people, enjoyed being out in a natural environment while trying to take good photographs. Thanks to this day I have now joined the RPS Nature Group and Jim is even considering joining the RPS.

Field Meeting Report

Sherwood Pines, Wednesday 7th October 2009

It seems as if I have been reporting poor fungus seasons in the East Midlands for a number of years and I'm afraid that so far, and I write these notes the day following the Meeting, this season will be yet another. Of course there is still some way to go this year and things may change, who knows? The ways of the fungal world are certainly not fully understood.

Nonetheless fourteen of us arrived at Sherwood Pines ever hopeful. I must say that the members have supported me well over the years and many travel considerable distances, a couple of hundred miles round trip is not uncommon, and I thank you all, you are a grand lot.

The woodland is part Sherwood Forest and part Forestry Commission Plantation and provides a good mix of habitats. In a good year the car park offers many opportunities for fungal photographs but not so this year, apart that is from a few groups of Sulphur Tuft *Hypholoma fasciculare*. The surrounding woodlands proved a little more interesting and some found Slippery Jack *Suillus luteus*, a bolete which is quite common on this site. In a broad-leaved part of the site there were some good opportunities for fallen Sweet Chestnut fruits, their densely packed spines showing well in the cross lighting. This particular spot is good for Tawny Grisette *Amanita fulva*, but in spite of a good search we could not locate any, they may have appeared earlier since I did find a few on a previous recce.

A number of members resorted to more artistic autumn photography, the lighting was pretty good and I suspect that many backlit bracken fronds will appear in club competitions during the next week or two!

After lunch, (the café on site does a great bacon bap), the members were off again. A few of us explored the open area below the visitor centre, which can produce waxcaps and fairy rings, but not on this occasion. We did find one or two good groups of Brick-caps *Hypholoma sublateritium* which are quite common and not always easy to distinguish from the Sulphur Tufts. Just as we had decided to give up I found a few lovely groups of Orange Peel Fungus *Aleuria aurantia* in a very young state, not rare of course but at least something a little different.

Robert Hawkesworth FRPS

Kodachrome Obituary

continued from page 4

However, those people who make film in green boxes had been active on the sidelines. They worked the old Japanese trick of finding out what people want and then providing it. They eventually came up with two very similar films, one the professional version and the other with a name which sounded more like a sex aid. These offered a warmer, brighter colour palette than K64 and were 2/3 stop faster. Also, they could be processed anywhere in the world. And when push came to shove, and exhibition judges were sorting through the 15s, the brighter colours usually came out on top. And the fungus hunters found that these interlopers did not suffer from reciprocity failure as long as your exposures were shorter than 128 seconds!

And then, those clever Japanese, pulled an even more fiendish trick by giving us a film we did not even realise we wanted, in the form of Velvia. However, for nature photographers it was a very mixed blessing. You could forget about colours being true to nature, particularly greens. But it added punch to subjects with dull colours. Sharpness was on a par with K25 and the pot hunters loved it.

Kodak's response was via the Ektachrome brand, not Kodachrome. Having recently examined my fading Ektachromes from the 1990s, I am relieved that I took the green box option. Kodachrome processing laboratories began to shut – first Hemel Hempstead, then Germany and Switzerland. Now there is but one lab in the world capable of processing Kodachrome, and that is located in the USA.

Despite the competition and the digital onslaught, Kodachrome still has its adherents. A few weeks ago I was participating in a private photo shoot at the magnificent Beamish open air museum when I noticed that the photographer standing next to me was reloading with K25. Some would say that the setting was appropriate!

We should be thankful that Kodachrome's distinctive technology provided us with a medium for the recording of the wonders of nature for so long. Now, anyone for cloud computing?

"I love to take a photograph,
So Mama don't take my Kodachrome away"
Paul Simon.

The Nature Group Annual Exhibition CD



Order your copy of the 2010 Exhibition CD now*. Only £10 including postage and packing.

**CDs will be dispatched as soon as they are available.*

Cheques should be made out to 'RPS Nature Group' and forwarded with this form to:

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Please send a copy of the 2010 Nature Group Exhibition CD to:

Name: _____

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Volunteers needed to host Field Meetings

"Why aren't there more field meetings in my region?"
A question frequently asked to members of the Nature Group committee.

Committee Members' time is often fully occupied with other Nature Group work and therefore it is just not possible for all of us to host field meetings, although several do host such events and they are normally well attended. However, it is not practical to expect anyone to host a field meeting at a site which is far from their home and involves a great deal of travelling. Consequently, every year, we ask members to volunteer to host a field meeting in their region of the country.

Hosting a field meeting requires no special knowledge. All that is required is a familiarity of the area and what subjects of interest are likely to be found there. Volunteers are not expected to instruct in photography, be experts at identification or be experienced naturalists. A genuine interest in nature and a desire to meet and share ideas with like minded individuals are the only criteria required for hosting a meeting.

If you are familiar with a wildlife park, nature reserve or woodland in your area, please consider volunteering. The meeting does not have to be held on a weekend - indeed, many of our meetings are held during the week and are very popular with retired Nature Group members.

If you are unsure about the suitability of your choice of venue, please contact the Programme Co-ordinator, Colin Smith FRPS - address and phone number overleaf - who will be pleased to discuss your idea with you.

So, the answer to the question "Why aren't there more field meetings in my region?" is this: 'Do something about it and volunteer.' You won't regret it!

RPS Nature Group - Field Meetings 2010

Location _____

Meeting Place _____

Grid Reference _____

Leader(s) _____

Day & date _____

Cost (eg car parking) _____

Main subjects of interest :-

Items to bring (tick as applicable and add any other necessary items below).

Stout Shoes ☐ Wellingtons ☐

Waterproofs ☐ Packed Lunch ☐

Additional information:-

Name _____

Address _____

Tel No: _____

E mail: _____

Please return this form as soon as possible/or to arrive not later than 18th January 2010

Colin Smith FRPS

3 St Hilda's Close

Chorley

Lancs, PR7 3NU

Tel: 01257 271981

E-mail: colin-smith@foto-wizard.fsnet.co.uk

Photographing the Patterns of Nature

**a course tutored by
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**A course to open your 'seeing eye'
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For more details contact:
Halsway Manor

Tel: 01984 618274

email: office@halswaymanor.org.uk

Website:

<http://www.halswaymanor.org>

RPS Nature Group Residential Weekend

FSC Blencathra Centre, Cumbria.

Friday 28th – Monday 31st May 2010

John Bebbington FRPS, the organiser of this event, is now accepting bookings for the Residential Field Meeting 2010 to be held at the Blencathra Centre. The Centre is run by the Field Studies Council in partnership with the Lake District National Park Authority, and occupies a spectacular position overlooking St Johns in the Vale.

For details of the Centre or to make a reservation for the weekend, please contact

John Bebbington FRPS

Email: john.bebbingtonfrps@ukonline.co.uk;

Tel: 01458 253027.



Common Frogs *Rana temporaria* spawning - Richard Revels FRPS



Images from Sheila Weir's successful Associate panel.

Above: Tri-colored Heron fishing

Below: Reddish Egret fishing

