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THE IRIS



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THE **RPS**
ROYAL
PHOTOGRAPHIC
SOCIETY





Nature Group Annual Exhibition 2022

Award Winning Prints



Above:

Bronze Medal Print

**Kilauea Lava Flow at Dawn
by Kirsten Asmussen ARPS**



Left:

Selector's Choice Print

**Detail of Rivulets from
Icelandic Glacier Delta
by Kirsten Asmussen ARPS**

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

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Nature Group Exhibitions

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

Editorial

Welcome to the Summer and the 143rd edition of The Iris. Spring is almost a distant memory; it seems such a short time ago that the birds were in their breeding plumage and actively courting whereas now, some of them are looking extremely dishevelled having been kept very busy feeding young. In my part of the country we experienced a long dry spell with unseasonably hot temperatures - sadly the Spring flowers didn't stand a chance - and May saw records of both hot and cold days being broken. Swifts, Swallows and House Martins seemed very late arriving and their numbers seem much lower than last year.

We're now enjoying that time of year when insects will be in abundance and also when many of us will be taking a vacation - perhaps to some far away place or maybe a 'staycation'; perhaps a wildlife photo tour or workshop; a walking/camping trip or a holiday with family. Whatever type of vacation you're taking, if you're anything like me, no matter where you are, you can't help but be distracted by wildlife that you feel you just have to photograph. Please, don't keep those images to yourself, share them with other Nature Group members on the pages of The Iris. You just need to write an account/story of your experiences - where you went, what you saw and photographed, the kit you used, etc. You can contact me at natureeditor@rps.org and I look forward to hearing from you.

The Summer issue always features the Award Winning Images from our very own Annual Exhibition plus a list of all accepted images - digital and prints. Additionally, Robert Thompson FRPS has provided a very in depth report on the different types of bellows available and the benefits of using them in your macro work. There is also a report of Robert Galloway's six year study into the behaviour of the Pine Martins that visit his garden. Last, but not least, the report from the Annual General Meeting that was held in April.

I do hope to hear from some of you about future articles. Don't be shy!



Dawn Osborn FRPS

From the Chair

Introduction

The annual Spring Meeting is held prior to the AGM. This year we had an excellent and informative talk from Mike Lane FRPS on shooting wildlife videos with an SLR. Mike's talk and the videos he showed, introduced us to the capabilities of SLRs and he also gave practical advice on editing the videos and adding sound.

The AGM went very well, but attendance was low and we only just met the requirements for a quorum. We may have to consider our options regarding the use of Zoom to make the AGM more accessible to members. Hosting a dual Live/On-Line event is complex and one suggestion put forward at our last committee meeting was to hold a Zoom based AGM on the Friday evening, preceding the Spring Meeting and Annual Exhibition.

Nature Group Exhibition

It was nice to get back to Smethwick for the Exhibition and awards ceremony and I would like to thank everyone who attended, making the day a success for all involved. I would also like to congratulate all of our award winners.

Gold Medal Winners: Peter Hudson and Peter Smith

Bronze Medal Winners: Kirsten Asmussen ARPS (x2), Mick Durham FRPS and David Keep ARPS.

Selectors Choice Awards: Kirsten Asmussen ARPS (x3), Kevin Elsby FRPS, Simon Jenkins ARPS, David Keep ARPS, Kevin Pigney ARPS, Lesley Simpson ARPS, Stewart Haynes ARPS, Ann Miles FRPS and Mike Rowe FRPS (x2)

Highly Commended & Commended: Kevin Day ARPS, Jean Dixon, Tim Downton ARPS (x2), Mick Durham FRPS, Malcolm Hancock ARPS, Ajit Huilgol ARPS, Roger Hance FRPS (x2), David Keep ARPS (x3), Kevin Pigney LRPS, Ian Mitchell ARPS, Richard Nicoll ARPS, Lesley Simpson ARPS (x2), Ken Rasmussen ARPS, Peter Wyles LRPS, Stewart Haynes ARPS, Ann Miles FRPS, Kirsten Asmussen ARPS and Mike Rowe FRPS (x3), Malcolm Blackburn ARPS, Gavin Bickerton-Jones LRPS and Godfray Guilbert.

The Tony Wharton Award for Best Entrant:

Mike Rowe with 13/16 Acceptances.

Advisory Days

The Nature Group is hosting its next Advisory Day for Associate & Fellowship on Saturday September 10th at Smethwick. This will be for prints and the advisers for the day are Mick Durham FRPS and Ann Miles FRPS. Mick Durham has also given excellent Zoom talks on gaining a distinction - the event recordings are still

available on the website and recommended for anyone wishing to attend. We also have a very active Nature Group Facebook page, which includes comments and examples of both successful and unsuccessful applicants for both ARPS and FRPS. We would still like to hear from members working towards a distinction about what other events would help them on their journey.

Events – Field Trips and Zoom.

Ann Miles is now assisted by Nick Bowman. They continue working to extend our range of events to as many counties as possible and we hope to encourage many more members to offer to host events in their local areas.

We are also looking for Zoom speakers to enable us to continue offering a variety of talks available to all members regardless of geographical location. Please contact Ann, Nick or any other committee member if you have any suggestions.

The Nature Photographer's Code of Conduct

Duncan Locke is currently updating the Code of Conduct, which will be published on the Nature Group website when it has been completed.

Competition for Members & Young Persons

We are still intending to launch a members' photo competition and this is now in the early stages of planning and organising.

We are also continuing to work with RPS Education Manager Liz Williams and Young Persons Engagement Officer Elise Wootten to discuss a Young Photographers Exhibition/Competition for the Nature Group. However, it will take time for the Society to gather the information necessary to support this, so the most likely outcome in the short term is a competition for the families of group members. Once the competition for members is up and running, then we can consider extending this to create a young persons version.



David O'Neill LRPS

Novoflex Universal Bellows Systems

by Robert Thompson FRPS

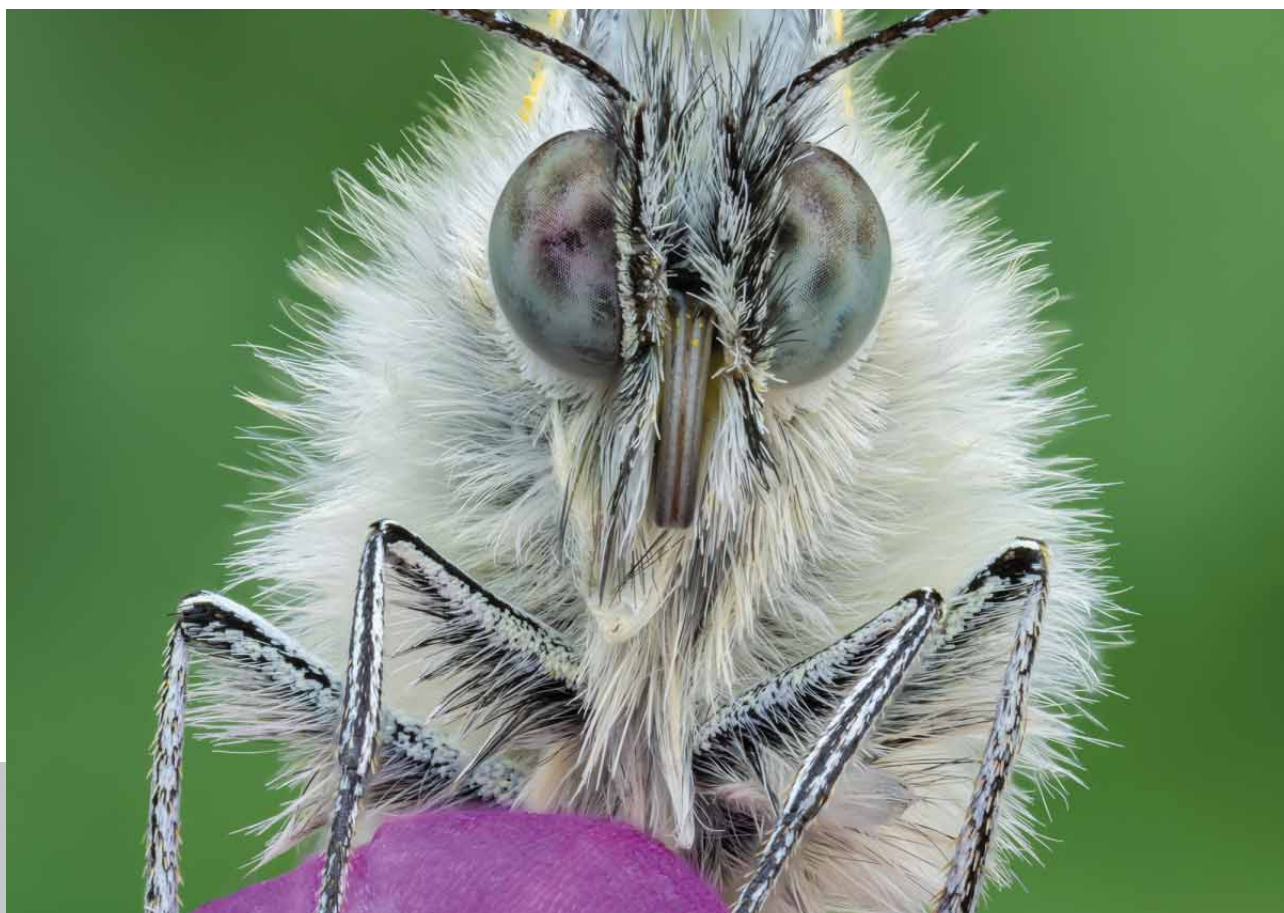
Introduction

There are many ways to enter the world of macro photography. The conventional approach is using a dedicated macro lens. However, if you don't own one, extension tubes and close-up lenses are the most frequently used alternatives. One of the downsides of using extension tubes is having to assemble and disassemble them to achieve the desired magnification, which can be a real inconvenience in the field. Also, the reproduction level is not continuous, but dictated by the extension tubes configurations, therefore you cannot achieve a continuous, variable magnification. Close up lenses are another option, but they are limited in most cases to lower magnifications also, the optical quality is not on par with a dedicated macro lens, extension tubes or bellows.

Historically, extension bellows were used generally by the macro fraternity for routine Photomacrography. They were a popular solution pre-digital for obtaining magnifications up to and above life-size (1X). During

the analogue era, some major camera manufacturers included extension bellows in their macro line-up. Post-digital, they are less often used for several reasons, the most important being, changes in equipment priorities, with virtually all the leading camera manufacturers dropping them and other important accessories from their macro line ups. Providing no digital alternative left a huge gap in the photographic industry for photographers who need the capability of working at magnifications beyond 1:1 (life-size). However, in shifting their priorities, the professional industry has been left to resolve the shortfalls in specialised equipment themselves. It is also true that this area in macro photography is a niche market therefore, the R+D does not justify the return when the market in this area is small. Thankfully Novoflex, and companies like them, fulfil an essential role having taken it upon themselves to research, develop and support the photography industry by providing a wide range of specialised equipment that is manufactured to very high standards.

Below: Green-veined White Pieris napi. Photographing insects is always challenging and often a frustrating experience. Working early in the morning or in the evening when they are less active is usually more successful. Nikon Z 7II, Nikon EL 50mm enlarger lens BAL-F bellows, 2X.



Why use Bellows?

With virtually all the modern macro lenses capable of 1:1, some might ask why would it be necessary to exceed this since most digital sensors are relatively high resolution? You could crop into the area you want to enlarge and get an acceptable image; this is a question that has often been put to me. The simple answer is, you can't resolve any more detail from the image other than what has already been recorded. Cropping a section will only enlarge what you can already see. It is not going to show you the finer details of the subject. To resolve greater detail, you need to work at a higher magnification which will reveal information that you cannot see or extract from the digital file. Hence the need to have the ability to photograph at greater magnifications; bellows is the ideal tool to achieve this.

Extension Bellows are essentially a large, variable extension mechanism that is placed between the camera and lens. Using conventional lenses in combination with a bellows unit opens a whole new world of subjects and possibilities with the ability to photograph and achieve magnifications well beyond those of a dedicated macro. One of the major advantages of using bellows is you have continuous, variable magnification and much greater versatility.

As a professional natural history photographer, I have to cover a wide range of subjects. Macro is one of my specialist fields. Most of it is routine and within the range of a typical macro lens. However, some are not and require additional specialist equipment. Over the last couple of years, I found myself having to do a lot more macro photography which involved greater magnifications beyond 1X. Some of it is related to specific photographic commissions and projects that I'm currently working on. I had been using other techniques (which I describe in my latest macro photography book) to achieve this but found myself looking for a more systematic approach with more predictable outcomes. I was given the opportunity a while back to test the bellows systems manufactured by Novoflex, the BAL-F, which is used mainly for the majority of 35mm camera systems, and the larger universal BALPRO 1, which is primarily aimed at medium format users, although it can easily accommodate both camera formats.

Novoflex is a well-respected German manufacturer of high quality photographic equipment. They are known throughout the industry for their expertise in the design and the



Alstromeria stamens Nikon Z 7II Nikon EL 50mm enlarger lens, BAL-F Bellows Castel XQ rail 1:5X.

fabrication of many important camera accessories, especially in the field of macro. The company have designed a series of bellows systems that are compatible with a wide range of camera brands preserving all the automatic functions via the appropriate adapters. The information given here is based on my experience of using both bellows systems in the field for some time now in combination with different lenses that I have used with them to achieve higher magnifications. You can find cheap bellows on the internet however, I must emphasise that these are, in my opinion, not suitable due to their flimsy design and lack of functionality in many aspects. If you are serious about your work then buying into the right system will not only save you time but alleviate much of the grief and hassle, allowing you to focus on achieving great imagery knowing that the equipment you are using will deliver the results you expect.



*Large Red Damselfly Pyrrhosoma niphula
An extreme close-up of the head and mandibles.
Nikon Z 7II, Nikon EL 50mm bellows lens 2X.*

Novoflex Universal Bellows Series

As a Nikon shooter for almost 25 years, I have been using the Nikon Z7 II and the D850 for my bellows macro work. I use the BAL-F and BALPRO 1 on both systems. The BAL-F is ideal for mirrorless cameras and where weight is a factor to consider. To preserve all automatic functions between lens and camera you can purchase the appropriate Retro Reverse Adapter for your camera brand. It's the heart of the bellows system, providing full automation when using the correct camera and lens adapters. Novoflex have a fully automated Retro Reverse Adapter for the Nikon Z system, however the F-mount is manual only but it's not a major inconvenience. Many bellows or flatfield lenses are manual anyway.

Retro Reverse Adapter

The Novoflex Retro Reverse Adapter also allows lenses, especially zooms that are normally used for conventional photography, to become improvised macros. When reversed it's possible to produce magnifications greater than most macro lenses. Magnifications of 2X and higher are possible depending

on the lens used, giving excellent results. Shorter fixed focal length lenses can also be used producing greater magnifications. However, the downside with these lenses is the reduced working distance between lens and subject, making lighting much more challenging. The advantage of using the Retro Reverse Adapter is twofold. First, it can be used with any lens on its own. Second, it can be used with any of the bellows' systems. Greater magnifications are possible while maintaining all the camera/lens functions including the transfer of all metadata. The Retro Reverse Adapter connects via the appropriate coupling adapter rings for a range of different camera systems.

Universal BAL-F Bellows

The most compact of the two bellows systems is the BAL-F which can be used with virtually any combination of camera/lens system via the appropriate adapter rings. The BAL-F was launched back in September 2019 and is the most popular bellows system among 35 mm photographers. It's highly versatile and has the capability to accept many different lenses and configuration setups.



(Left) Nikon Z 7II and the BAL-F bellows. (Right) Nikon Z 7II connected via the appropriate adapters to the BALPRO 1 bellows. Both units fitted with the Schneider APO-Digitar 90mm macro-Lens which delivers superb sharpness and colour contrast with minimal distortion and chromatic aberrations.



(Left) Retro Reverse Adapter for Nikon Z cameras. The 24-70mm is reversed allowing for a range of different magnifications. The lens and adapter can be used with or without the bellows unit. All automatic functions between lens and camera are maintained. (Right) Adapter fitted on to the BAL-F bellows unit.

The maximum extension of the BAL-F when fully racked out is 116mm. the minimum extension when fully collapsed is 29mm. The aluminium framework is solid, well designed and most importantly stable when the camera assembly is attached to it. The finely geared focusing rail is smooth and a full rotation of the bellows knob advances the camera assembly 15mm. You can add a larger diameter fine focus knob which will give you greater control over focus advancement should you require it. The focus action is very precise and the level of resistance during movement is controlled by a smaller knob on the opposite side of the front bellows standard. With the camera assembly in place, there is no detectable play in any part of the equipment; an extremely important aspect when focus stacking and shooting high magnification imagery. The travel distance of the bellows is marked in millimetres. The 80mm rail in this case is more than adequate and allows for a wide range of magnifications.

The BAL-F is the ideal bellows unit for the 35mm format. If used in combination with a macro lens it's capable of magnifications well beyond 2X. Despite the bellows unit being light, it is extremely stable when connected to either the Novoflex ClassicBall 3II or 5II; the advantage of these ballheads is the ability to use pre-set friction control to balance the weight of the camera assembly. Also, the Arca Swiss dovetail unlike some other universal brands fits precisely with the Novoflex Q=Clamp ensuring there is no movement whatsoever. The adapter rings for individual camera brands are not included in the price of the bellows and must be ordered separately.



Nikon Z 7II BALPRO 1, Nikon EL 50mm enlarger lens 2X. Supported on the Novoflex PRO75 with the shorter legs and MagicBall.

Novoflex BALPRO 1 Bellows

The BALPRO 1 is primarily designed to accommodate medium format systems. However, having said that, 35mm formats work equally as well with this unit, but with the added advantage of accommodating larger camera bodies and longer focal length macros. It has a long, established reputation and was launched back in 2002. The BALPRO 1 is Novoflex's flagship system being robust enough to stand the rigours of professional use. It can accommodate virtually any camera lens combination with relative ease.

The maximum extension, when fully racked out, is greater than the BAL-F at 192mm with a minimum extension of 40mm. The bellows framework is naturally solid, well designed and extremely stable with camera assembly in place. It is more than capable of producing very sharp, repeatable results for focus stacking at higher magnifications. Focusing is smooth and precise with no play in any of the components. Both the BAL-F and BALPRO can be used without a focusing rail if needed although bellows are generally best used with one which makes the process of alinement and focusing much easier. However, unlike most other bellows units, the Novoflex BAL-F and BALPRO series have an elongated Arca Swiss plate that extends the length of the rail; this allows for easier placement and framing, which can be fine-tuned with the bellows extension knob. Having an overall larger diameter and being slightly heavier, the BALPRO 1 produces a more balanced weight when longer focal length lenses are attached. The bellows can also be used in manual mode if you don't have the appropriate Retro



Bee Orchid Ophrys apifera

Reverse Adapter. All you need is the correct fitting for your camera and the correct adapter ring for the lens you are using. Working through Live View you can employ the stop-down metering technique by setting the aperture and shutter speed manually. However, be aware that none of the camera's settings and metadata will be transferred to the digital image file.

Lenses for Bellows

Many different lenses can be used on bellows. The ones outlined here are those which I have tested with these bellows systems. They will also work on most other camera brands as well.

To have a better understanding between conventional and true macro lenses it is worth pointing out the optical differences between both. A macro lens will allow you to focus much closer to the subject than a conventional lens. However, the optical characteristics are also different in how the lens is constructed. Two main points to consider are flat-field and curved-field lenses. Conventional lenses are mainly curved-field while the majority of macro lenses are flat-field. So, what is the difference and how might this affect the image quality? If you were to photograph a two-dimensional subject for example, a drawing or a document which has a flat surface with a curved-field lens. The centre of the subject would be sharp but there would be a noticeable fall-off in sharpness towards the edges of the frame, especially at wider apertures. To overcome this, you would stop the lens down, but diffraction could become an issue and it's still not going to be as sharp as the central area. Flat-field macro lenses have flattened front elements and deliver edge-to-edge sharpness with

virtually no distortion and vignetting. You could say that photographing three-dimensional subjects has little bearing on this since the subject occupies the centre of the frame and depth of field fall-off would render the edges of the frame out of focus anyway. That is true to a point however, a lot depends on the subject you are photographing and how much of the frame it occupies.

During the last few months, I've been experimenting with different lenses. I am very happy with the results from most of them although I have found, depending on the subject and magnification required, that some are better suited to the task than others. Nikon manufactured several macro lenses that were designed specifically for bellows only, most are capable of 1:1 and can be attached via the appropriate adapters. These are no longer made but can be bought through eBay and other second-hand camera outlets. Magnifications over 5X are possible depending on the focal length of the lens used.

Schneider APO-Digital f/4.5 90mm Flat Field Lens.

Novoflex offer this lens to go with the BAL-F and BALPRO systems (see illustration of bellows). It is a superb lens with stepless adjustment from infinity right up to 1X. Being a manual lens, you do not have automation and must set the desired aperture and appropriate shutter speed before making the exposure. However, using Live View I have not found this to be an inconvenience in any way. The working distance is also very reasonable and it's apochromatic and digitally corrected. It is supplied with the appropriate Novoflex adapter ring to connect with either system. The lens is highly corrected flatness of field with minimum distortion.



Left: Unidentified fungus Right: The setup. The subject is less than a centimetre in size. Nikon D850, BALPRO 1, Novoflex 60mm auto bellows lens, Castel XQ focusing rail supported on the MagicBall and PRO75 tripod 2X.

Novoflex Auto Bellows 60mm Macro

No longer sold by Novoflex but can be purchased second-hand on eBay. I have been testing and using this lens recently. It's an ideal manual lens for higher magnification macro and extremely sharp delivering excellent colour and contrast. It is possible to achieve magnifications when reversed for improved optical performance around 3X. It is an outstanding all-manual lens and can be used on either bellows unit.

Nikon EL Nikkor 50mm f/2.8

One of the ideal lenses for the Novoflex BALPRO 1 and BAL-F bellows systems is the Nikon EL 50mm f/2.8 enlarger lens. When you need to obtain magnifications above 1X enlarger lenses are an excellent choice. The EL 50mm f/2.8 is a six-element, four-group configuration, with an eight-blade aperture diaphragm. The working distance is approximately around 100mm which is quite reasonable and will leave enough room for lighting. Magnifications of around 3:1 are possible with this lens with excellent results.

Other Lenses

The lenses I have outlined below are Nikon however, other lenses will work equally as well from other camera manufacturers with the appropriate adapter rings and retro reverse adapter where applicable.

Nikon Z 24-70mm f/4 S

I found the Z 24-70mm f/4 S reversed on the Retro Reverse Adapter to be an ideal lens producing some outstanding results. It's also a good introduction to macro as many photographers will already own a lens in this focal range from other camera brands. It's best to keep the lens extended to its longest focal length to improve the lens to subject distance. All automatic functions are maintained when the appropriate retro reverse adapter is used.



The fully automated Z 7II with the Z 24-70mm f/4 lens reversed using the Retro Reverse Adapter on the BALPRO 1. When reversed this lens produces extremely sharp results 2.5X. Above: *Lisianthus* species.

Nikon Z MC 105mm f/2.8 S

I have also been testing the new Nikon Z 105mm f/2.8 on the BALPRO 1. With this combination, you can easily achieve magnifications more than 2X with the lens set at 1:1. If you are intending to purchase the latest Nikon Z 105mm macro then investing in one of the Novoflex bellows systems means you have the capability to enter the world of true macro photography without the need to purchase any other additional lenses.



Musk Mallow - *Malva moschata*
A 2X magnification close-up of the tiny stamens of the flower. Photographed using the Nikon Z MC 105mm VR S Micro Nikkor on the BALPRO 1 bellows and Castel XQ II focusing rail.

Short telephotos can also be used and when placed on bellows will focus closer than their minimum focusing distance. Longer focal length lenses increase working distance but produce less overall maximum magnification.



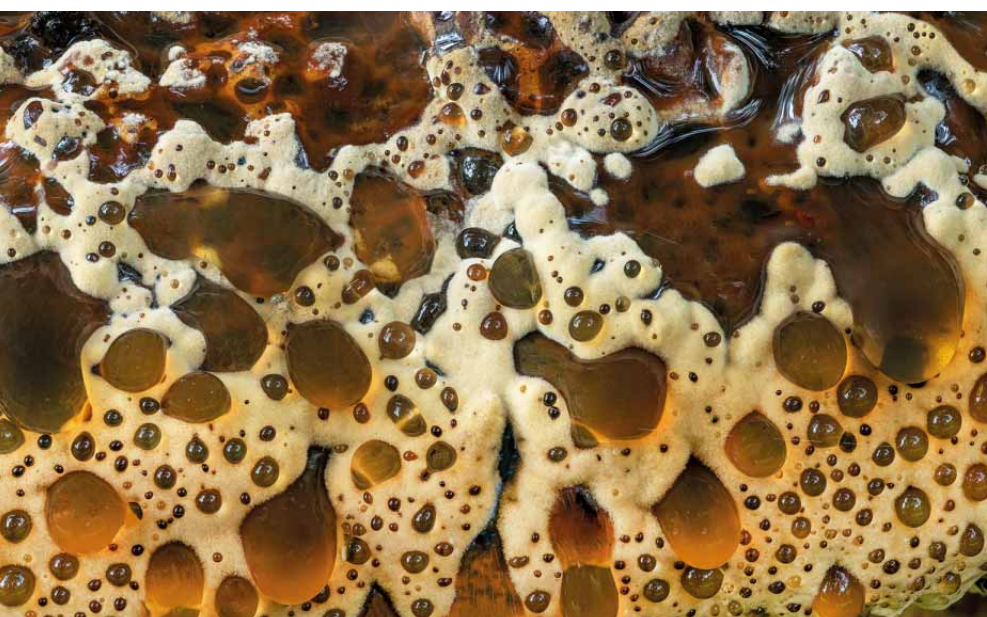
Wide-angle lenses when reversed produce the largest magnifications, but the lens to subject distance is greatly reduced.

Ultra-macros such as the Laowa 25mm f/2.8 2.5 -5X and the Canon MP-E 65mm f/2.8 1-5X macros can be used on either of the bellows systems. These lenses can produce high reproduction ratios well beyond 5X and require a focusing rail for best results. Being manual lenses, you must set both the aperture and shutter speed manually and use Live View when setting up.

Photographing in the Field

It's fair to say that using bellows for the first time in the field can be a little awkward especially if you're not someone who shoots close-ups regularly. It takes a little time to become familiar with setting and positioning the unit in place. However, within a short time you will find it no different than working with a macro lens. I recommend working with a focusing rail such as the Castel XQ II which allows you to fine-tune your starting position without trying to manoeuvre the unit on a tripod into position. Initially, it's best to concentrate on subjects that are easy to find and not too complex. I recommend working at lower magnifications initially to become familiar with using the equipment. It is also important to select your days carefully, those with little wind and overcast light are the ideal conditions for photography. Since most of the subjects you are intending to photograph will require focus stacking it will be easier to achieve continuity in your exposures in these conditions. Changing light and intermittent wind makes it much more challenging to get acceptable results. If you must work under these conditions look for shaded areas where the light is more uniform.

Below: Oak Bracket Fungus *Inonotus dryadeus*
A close-up of the tiny weeping pores.
Nikon Z 7II Novoflex 60mm auto bellows lens,
BALPRO 1, 1:5X.



Subject Selection

Photographing mobile subjects such as insects is much more challenging whether using bellows or even a conventional macro lens. Having knowledge of their behaviour and habits is essential in my opinion but be prepared for failures. All insects are cold-blooded and therefore the ambient temperature is an important factor to consider. Not all insects are amenable to bellows photography especially when employing higher magnifications. However, having said that it is possible to get some excellent results with some species especially if shooting early in the morning when temperatures are low, or in the evening when many settle for the night. You don't have to limit your photography to insects there are many subjects to explore where bellows photography can open up a world beyond your normal vision. The intimate structures of plants, lichens, fungi, bryophytes and the seashore create endless possibilities.

A Final Word

I've been using the Novoflex bellows systems for a while now. The digital revolution has, in many ways, made the process of using bellows more straightforward than in the past. I carry them frequently into the field in my bag and where opportunities present themselves, I find more often now I reach for the bellows rather than an ultra-macro. Being able to explore subjects and their intricate structures is, in many ways, refreshing from the routine imagery I often shoot.

For those who don't own a dedicated macro lens, using bellows is a great way of exploring the smaller world utilising the lenses you already own. Specialised software programs for focus stacking such as Helicon Focus and Zerene Stacker make the whole process straightforward and the results from even an average lens are excellent!

Acknowledgements

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Also, Rob Macneice Senior Consultant for Imaging Nikon UK and NPS for his help and assistance with information and products.

For further information on the Novoflex bellows systems visit www.novoflex.de For information on Nikon products mentioned in this review, www.nikon.co.uk and NPS nps.nikon.co.uk

The Nature Group Annual Exhibition 2022

Gold Medal Print:
Ocelot in habitat by Peter Smith



Gold Medal Digital Image
Leopard capture by Peter Hudson





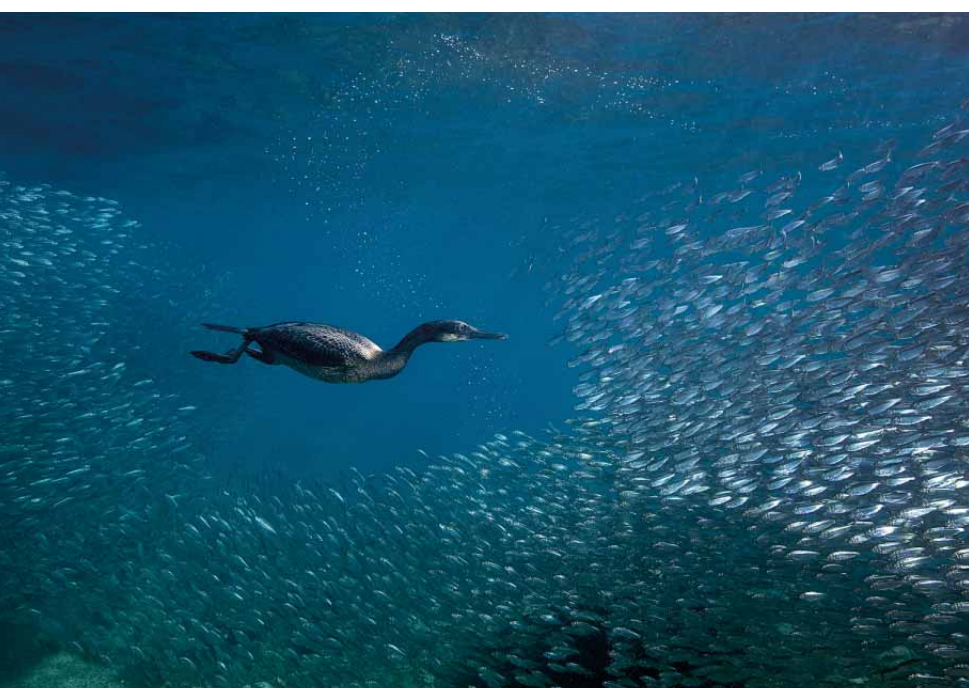
Bronze Medal Winning Images

◀ Bronze Medal Print
Barn Swallow feeding chick
by Kirsten Asmussen ARPS

◀ Bronze Medal PDI
Angel's Wings
by Mick Durham FRPS



◀ Bronze Medal PDI
Cormorant hunting in
Sardine shoal
by David Keep ARPS



Inside Front Cover:
Bronze Medal Print
Kilauea Lava Flow at Dawn
by Kirsten Asmussen ARPS

Nature Group Annual Exhibition 2022

Selectors' Choices - Prints



Juvenile European Rabbit
by Kirsten Asmussen ARPS

Creeping Ladies Tresses
by Lesley Simpson ARPS



Treecreeper
by Stewart Haynes ARPS





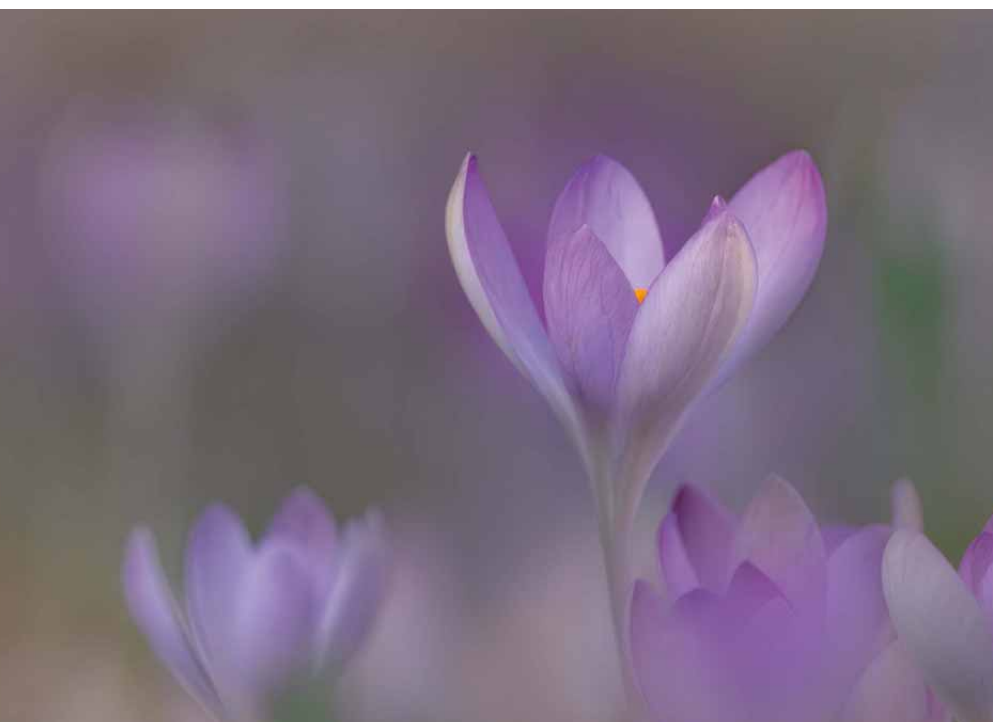
Annual Exhibition 2022

Selectors' Choices: Prints

Above: Grey Heron in the snow
by Ann Miles FRPS

Right: Brown Hare
by Kevin John Pigney LRPS

Below: Woodland Crocus
by Kirsten Asmussen ARPS



Nature Group Annual Exhibition 2022

Award Winning Prints

Peter Smith	Ocelot in habitat	Gold Medal
Kirsten Asmussen ARPS	Barn Swallow feeding chick	Bronze Medal
	Kilauea Lava Flow at Dawn	Bronze Medal
Kirsten Asmussen ARPS	Detail of the Rivulets from an Icelandic Glacier Delta	Selector's Choice
	Juvenile European Rabbit	Selector's Choice
Stewart Haynes ARPS	Treecreeper	Selector's Choice
Ann Miles FRPS	Grey Heron in the snow	Selector's Choice
Mike Rowe FRPS	Clustered Bonnet	Selector's Choice
Lesley Simpson ARPS	Creeping Ladies Tresses	Selector's Choice
Mick Durham FRPS	Four-spotted Chaser newly emerged	Highly Commended
Roger Hance FRPS	Backlit <i>Mycena crocata</i>	Highly Commended
	Bee Orchid	Highly Commended
Martin John Hancock ARPS	Swallow emerging from barn	Highly Commended
Stewart Haynes ARPS	White-tailed Eagle	Highly Commended
Ann Miles FRPS	Roosting Marbled Whites	Highly Commended
Ian Mitchell ARPS	Juvenile Pine Marten on branch	Highly Commended
Ken Rasmussen ARPS	Ringed Plover	Highly Commended
Mike Rowe FRPS	<i>Helina impuncta</i>	Highly Commended
	<i>Mycena</i> species	Highly Commended
Lesley Simpson ARPS	Cattle Egret fluffing its feathers	Highly Commended
	Mating Black-veined Whites on Fragrant Orchid	Highly Commended

Accepted Prints

Author	Title	Award
Kirsten Asmussen ARPS	Barn Swallow feeding chick	Bronze Medal
	Detail of the Rivulets from an Icelandic Glacier Delta	Selector's Choice
	Falgradalsfjall Caldera	
	Juvenile European Rabbit	Selector's Choice
	Kilauea Lava Flow at Dawn	Bronze Medal
	Red Stag bellowing	
Wendy Ball	Fly Agaric	
Malcolm Blackburn ARPS	Brown Pelican fishing	
	Brown Pelican taking off	
Nick Bowman ARPS	Brown Hare making a splash	
Bob Breach	Andean Flamingo taking flight	
Maggie Bullock ARPS	Kestrel diving	
	Ringed Plover feeding	
	Short Eared Owl taking flight	
Graeme Clarke ARPS	Angel's Bonnet	
	Blushing Wood Mushroom	
	Candle Snuff Fungus	

Print Acceptances

Author	Title	Award
Trevor Davenport ARPS	Gecko with moth Male Emperor Moth Narcissus Bulb-Fly Small Heath on fern	
Gary Dean LRPS	Wild Pine Marten Kits	Wild Pine Marten Kits
Mick Durham FRPS	Four-spotted Chaser newly emerged Honey Fungi and Slug Marsh Marigold Mountain Hare in Winter	Highly Commended
Chris Ellison ARPS	Cedar Root Poppy Field Squirrel eating	
James Foad LRPS	Common Blue Butterfly resting	
Roger Hance FRPS	Backlit <i>Mycenta crocata</i> Bee Orchid Female and Male Banded Demoiselles Immature Female Scarce Chaser Man Orchid	Highly Commended Highly Commended
Martin John Hancock ARPS	Alert Fox Swallow emerging from barn	Highly Commended
John Harvey	Red Deer Stag bellowing in the mist Short-eared Owl	
Kevin Harwood LRPS	Black-bellied Plover	
Stewart Haynes ARPS	Black-crowned Night-Heron Treecreeper White-tailed Eagle	
Ann Ruth Helen Healey FRPS	<i>Allium sicutum</i> Common Spotted Orchid Common Zinnia Issid Planthopper Nymphs Resplendent Quetzal	Selector's Choice Highly Commended
Christine Holt LRPS	Bonnet Mushrooms in moss Fungus with Fly Hummingbird Moth Resting Fly	
Koshy Johnson FRPS	Leopard suffocating Topi	
Yealand Kalfayan ARPS	Sanderling at dusk Mountain Houseleek Spanish Festoon on Aristolochia	
Richard Kay FRPS	Male Polar Bears playfighting	
Sarah Kelman ARPS	Red-throated Diver Singing Snow Bunting	
Bryan Knox ARPS	Jay about to have a drink Oystercatchers mating	
Darron Matthews FRPS	Petticoat Brittlestem Shield Bugs Paired on Corncockle Yellow Stagshorn Fungus	

Author	Title	Award
Ann Miles FRPS	Butter Cap <i>Rhodocollybia butyracea</i> Common Deceiver <i>Laccaria laccata</i> Green Drake Mayfly Grey Heron in the snow Roosting Marbled Whites	Selector's Choice Highly Commended
Ian Mitchell ARPS	Grebe feeding time Juvenile Pine Marten on branch	Highly Commended
James Moir ARPS	Red Deer Rut Water Rail	
Douglas Neve ARPS	Wood White	
Andre Neves ARPS	Chalkhill Blue pair on Wild Carrot Chalkhill Blues mating Common Mayfly Female Emperor Dragonfly ovipositing Pasque Flowers at sunset	
Ian Nicol ARPS	Frogs with spawn	
Steven Parrish	Dipper with catch	
David Pelling LRPS	Stork-billed Kingfisher	
Ken Rasmussen ARPS	Early Purple Orchid Ringed Plover Shaggy Inkcap Turnstone turning a stone	Highly Commended
Mike Rowe FRPS	Clustered Bonnet Crested Caracara display <i>Helina impuncta</i> Male Helina <i>Mycena</i> SP Reindeer Lichen Rufous Milkcap in Lichen Garden Yellow Dung Fly with Hoverfly Prey	Selector's Choice Highly Commended Highly Commended
John Scholey	Brown Hares	
Richard Sheldrake LRPS	European Brown Bear, Finland Roosting Marbled White Butterfly before Sunrise Roosting Marbled White Butterfly with Robber Fly <i>Amanita citrina</i> - False Death Cap Cattle Egret fluffing its feathers Creeping Ladies Tresses Mating Black-veined Whites on Fragrant Orchid <i>Russula</i> on Moss Covered Stump <i>Russula</i> Trio	Highly Commended Selector's Choice Highly Commended
Peter Smith	Large Red Damselfly Ocelot in habitat	Gold Medal
Sonja Thompson FRPS	Capercaillie displaying Orange Peel Fungus in Beech Litter Receding Tide	

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Award Winning Digital Images

Peter Hudson	Leopard capture	Gold Medal
Mick Durham FRPS	Angel's Wings Fungi	Bronze Medal
David Keep ARPS	Cormorant hunting in Sardine shoal	Bronze Medal
Kirsten Asmussen ARPS	Woodland Crocus	Selector's Choice
Kevin Elsby FRPS	Common Centaury	Selector's Choice
Simon Jenkins ARPS	Cuckoo in heavy rain	Selector's Choice
David Keep ARPS	Diving Gannets, Shetland	Selector's Choice
Kevin John Pigney LRPS	Brown Hare	Selector's Choice
Mike Rowe FRPS	Coral Fungus	Selector's Choice
Kirsten Asmussen ARPS	Courting Red-necked Phalaropes	Highly Commended
Trevor Davenport ARPS	Dryad's Saddle	Highly Commended
Kevin Day ARPS	Red Squirrel leaping	Highly Commended
Jean Dixon	Frosted Willow	Highly Commended
Tim Downton ARPS	Gannet with nesting material	Highly Commended
	Sulphur Tuft	Highly Commended
Ajit Huilgol ARPS	Mother Elephant and male calf final farewell	Highly Commended
David Keep ARPS	Caribbean Reef Sharks, Northern Bahamas	Highly Commended
Richard Nicoll ARPS	Tufted Duck in flight	Highly Commended
Kevin John Pigney LRPS	Brown Hare in snowstorm	Highly Commended
Mike Rowe FRPS	Belted Kingfisher Confrontation	Highly Commended
Peter Wyles LRPS	Keel-billed Toucan	Highly Commended
Gavin Bickerton-Jones LRPS	Barn Owl hunts in snow	Commended
Malcolm Blackburn ARPS	Pair of Blue-tailed Damselflies	Commended
Mick Durham FRPS	Sulphur Tuft	Commended
Godfray Guilbert	Coprinus species	Commended
Mike Rowe FRPS	Clustered Bonnet	Commended

Digital Acceptances

Kirsten Asmussen ARPS	Courting Red-necked Phalaropes	Highly Commended
	Fibrecap Mushroom	
	Fly Agaric Fruitbody	
	Great Northern Diver & chick	
	Woodland Crocus	Selector's Choice
Wendy Ball	Porcelain Fungus	
David Barrett LRPS	Common Heath Moth	
Gavin Bickerton-Jones LRPS	Barn Owl hunting	
	Barn Owl hunts in snow	Commended
	Impala & Red-billed Oxpeckers	

Author	Title	Award
Mat Bingham LRPS	Knot	
James Black ARPS	Lang's Short-tailed Blue	
	Marsh Thistle	
	Red-underwing Skippers mating	
Malcolm Blackburn ARPS	Pair of Blue-tailed Damselflies	Commended
	Yellow-billed Stork	
Nick Bowman ARPS	Brown Hare in the stubble	
Colin Brett	Black-tailed Godwit catching a worm	
Maggie Bullock ARPS	Kestrel diving	
	Knot walking	
John Bulpitt FRPS	Red Ants tending Blackfly	
Pamela Carter ARPS	Garden Tiger Caterpillar with old skin	
Janice Clark ARPS	Common Earth Ball	
	Four-spotted Chaser on grass	
	Hen of the Woods	
Graeme Clarke ARPS	Dead Moll's Fingers	
Matthew James Clarke	Male and Female Wasp Spider	
	Scurfy Twist Mushrooms	
	Shaggy Scalycap Mushrooms	
	Velvet Shank Mushrooms	
Robin Claydon ARPS	Caracara with prey	
Trevor Clifford ARPS	Brown Hares	
	Sanderling feeding	
Sandie Cox ARPS	White Tailed Eagle in flight with fish	
Sue Critchlow ARPS	Peregrine with prey	
	Starlings squabbling	
	Waiting for the Worm	
John Richard Curgenvin LRPS	Indian Grey Langur Monkeys	
Trevor Davenport ARPS	Dryad's Saddle	Highly Commended
	<i>Evernia prunastri</i>	
	Lime Hawkmoth	
	Tachinid Flies paired	
Kevin Day ARPS	Red Squirrel leaping	Highly Commended
Jean Dixon	Blackthorn Flowers	
	Frosted Willow	Highly Commended
	Hazel Catkins	
Louise Donovan	Heron	
Tim Downton ARPS	Gannet with nesting material	Highly Commended
	<i>Mycena purpureofusca</i>	
	<i>Mycena purpureofusca</i> Cluster	
	Red Kite	
	River Warbler attacking an insect	
	Sulphur Tuft	Highly Commended
Mick Durham FRPS	Angel's Wings Fungi	Bronze Medal
	Foxglove	
	Large Red Damselfly emerging	
	Sulphur Tuft	Commended
Charlotte Eades-Willis ARPS	Grey Seal Pup	
Phillip Eastwood	Juvenile Red Deer	

Author	Title	Award
Chuck Eccleston ARPS	Scorpion Fly	Selector's Choice
Kevin Elsby FRPS	Tiger Hoverflies mating Common Centaury Red-backed Shrike	
Wendy Margaret Burton Eve ARPS	Barracudas in the Red Sea Leafy Filefish	
Michael Feeney ARPS	Black Necked Grebes Squacco Heron	
Jonathan Gardner	Lilac-Breasted Roller	Commended
Godfray Guilbert	Boletus sp <i>Coprinus</i> species	
Thomas Hanahoe FRPS	Early Seed Head of Wild Carrot	
Roger Hance FRPS	Golden Jackal digging in sandy soil Marsh Fritillaries <i>Mycena polygramma</i>	
John Harvey	Nuthatch	
Stewart Haynes ARPS	Osprey Treecreeper	
Ann Ruth Helen Healey FRPS	Collared Acaris Dawn Redwood Leafhopper, Costa Rica	
Margaret Hocking ARPS	Tiger-legged Frog, Costa Rica Meerkat on watch Parasol Mushroom close up	
Christine Holt LRPS	Mating Soldier Beetles Parasol fungus	Gold Medal
Michelle Howell LRPS	Starling Murmuration	
Peter Hudson	Leopard Capture	
Ajit Huilgol ARPS	Cheetah tug of war Mother Elephant and male Calf final farewell Tiger Cub jumping over water Tigress clamps down on Sambar's throat	
John Hunt ARPS	Albatross and chick	Highly Commended
Simon Jenkins ARPS	Blue Morph Arctic Fox Cuckoo in heavy rain Sand Tree pattern	
Jan Jerome ARPS	Gannet dive Three Gannets One Fish	
Koshy Johnson FRPS	Pied Kingfisher flying with fish Water Dikkop	
Yealand Kalfayan ARPS	Small Blue Roosting on Horned Pansy Spotted Deadnettle Yellow Turk's Cap Lily in habitat	Selector's Choice
Richard Kay FRPS	Blue Morph Arctic Fox crossing a river Blue Morph Arctic Fox on the lookout Red Deer mating	
David Keep ARPS	Caribbean Reef Sharks, Northern Bahamas Cormorant hunting in Sardine shoal Diving Gannets, Shetland	

Author	Title	Award
David Keep ARPS	Sea Lions, La Paz, Mexico	
Adrian Langdon ARPS	Barn Owl sensing prey	
	Cattle Egret with Toad	
	Common Dolphin	
	Stinkhorn Fungus	
	Stonechat	
Roger Lewis ARPS	<i>Tortula muralis</i>	
Rosamund Macfarlane ARPS	Fieldfare Feeding	
	Fox in Autumn	
Jack Malins ARPS	Butter Cap	
	Herring Gull with Crab	
	Red-throated Diver with chick	
	Spider Plant	
Darron Matthews FRPS	Pair Buff-Tip Moths	
	Sallow Moth on Lichen covered branch	
Ian McLean ARPS	Sainfoin	
Mallory Mercer	Small Skipper	
Ann Miles FRPS	Trooping Funnel <i>Infundibulicybe geotropa</i>	
Gordon Mills ARPS	Grey Seal pup	
Jon Mullin LRPS	Dartford Warbler	
	Gorse	
	Great Crested Grebe - fishing	
	Peregrines - food pass	
Lajos Nagy	Hoopoe chick taking food	
	Hoopoe delivering food to chick	
Peter Gordon Nash	Kestrel	
Douglas Neve ARPS	Clouded Yellow	
	Glanville Fritillary	
	Marbled White with Red Mite affliction	
Andre Neves ARPS	Female Chalkhill Blue on Devil-Bit's Scabious	
	Four-spotted Chaser in flight	
Richard Nicoll ARPS	Tufted Duck in flight	Highly Commended
David Michael O'Neill LRPS	Grebe with Perch	
Dawn Osborn FRPS	Dog Stinkhorn	
	Redwing singing in rain	
	Robin Displaying	
Claire Pettingale	Great Reedmace amid Common Reeds	
Kevin John Pigney LRPS	Brown Hare	Selector's Choice
	Brown Hare in snowstorm	Highly Commended
Keith Polwin ARPS	Cuckoo taking off	
	Female and Male Chalkhill Blue Butterflies	
	Iberian Fox with rabbit	
	<i>Meigenia</i> Sp Tachinid Fly	
Ken Rasmussen ARPS	Newly Emerged Marbled White	
Jane Rees ARPS	Porcelain Fungi	
	Small Heath Butterfly	
Richard Revels FRPS	Brimstone Butterfly flying from flower.	
	Porcelain Fungus on Beech Tree	
Jeremy Richards	Grey Seal on a Sandy Beach	

Author	Title	Award
Brian Ridgley LRPS	Red Squirrel on Heather	
Jean Robson ARPS	Brittle Stem on Oak	
	<i>Didymium</i> Slime Mould on Grass Cutting	
	Parachute (<i>Marasmiellus</i>) Fungus	
	Red-legged Shield Bug Early Instar and Lichen Cup	
Mike Rowe FRPS	Belted Kingfisher Confrontation	Highly Commended Commended Selector's Choice
	Clustered Bonnet	
	Coral Fungus	
	Dartford Warbler	
	Scorpion Fly	
David Scrivener LRPS	Fungus Cascade	
Paul Sievers ARPS	Sulphur Tuft Fungi	
Lesley Simpson ARPS	<i>Amanita excelsa</i>	
	<i>Boletus</i> sp	
	Dew Covered <i>Argiope bruennichi</i>	
	Night Heron with Nesting Material 2	
	<i>Ophrys aveyronensis</i>	
	<i>Psathyrella</i>	
Colin David Smith LRPS	Roseroot on sea-cliff face	
Grahame Soden ARPS	Northern Lights in Swedish Lapland	
Gordon Uprichard	Hyenas Feeding on Wildebeest	
	Shrike Chasing Tawny Eagle	
Martin Vaughan FRPS	Chickory Flower	
	Water Rail on mudbank	
	Yellow Staghorn Fungi	
Clive Wade LRPS	White Cherry Blossom	
Alan Walker	Fighting Stellers Eagles	
	Kingfishers squabbling over a fish	
Karin Wilson ARPS	A Tangle of Knots	
	Bee-Eater with Dragonfly	
	Dalmatian Pelican Landing	
	Dry Riverbed Patterns, Sossusvlei	
	Red Fox Alert	
	Sandstone Rock Strata	
Ngar Shun Victor Wong FRPS	Grass Cicada	
Peter Wyles LRPS	Common Gull Juvenile	
	Keel-billed Toucan	Highly Commended
	Little Bee Eaters	



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**Selectors' Choices
Projected Images**



**Top: Diving Gannets, Shetland
by David Keep ARPS**

**Centre: Common Centaury
by Kevin Elsby FRPS**

**Right: Cuckoo in heavy rain
by Simon Jenkins ARPS**





1



2



Highly Commended Prints

1 Roosting Marbled Whites
by Ann Miles FRPS

2 Ringed Plover
by Ken Rasmussen ARPS



3

3 Swallow emerging from barn
by Martin J Hancock ARPS

4 Juvenile Pine Marten on branch
by Ian Mitchell ARPS



4

5 Cattle Egret fluffing its feathers
by Lesley Simpson ARPS



5



Highly Commended Prints

- 1 Four-spotted Chaser newly emerged
by Mick Durham FRPS
- 2 *Helina impuncta* by Mike Rowe FRPS
- 3 Mating Black-veined Whites on Fragrant Orchid
by Lesley Simpson ARPS
- 4 Bee Orchid by Roger Hance FRPS
- 5 White-tailed Eagle by Stewart Haynes ARPS





1



2

Highly Commended Digital Images

1 Belted Kingfisher Confrontation
by Mike Rowe FRPS

2 Keel-billed Toucan
by Peter Wyles LRPS



3

3 Tufted Duck in flight
by Richard Nicoll ARPS

4 Gannet with nesting material
by Tim Downton ARPS

5 Courting Red-necked Phalaropes
by Kirsten Asmussen ARPS



4



5

Highly Commended Digital Images

1 Caribbean Reef Sharks
by David Keep ARPS

2 Red Squirrel leaping
by Kevin Day ARPS



3 Brown Hare in snowstorm
by Kevin J Pigney LRPS



4 Mother Elephant and male Calf final farewell
by Ajit Huilgol ARPS





Commended Digital Images

1 Barn Owl hunts in snow
by Gavin Bickerton-Jones LRPS

2 Sulpher Tufts
by Mick DurhamFPRS

3 Clustered Bonnet
by Mike Rowe FRPS

4 Coprinus species
by Godfray Guilbert

5 Pair of Blue-tailed Damselflies



Observations of Pine Martens

by Robert Galloway LRPS

A selection of images of Pine Martens is presented and discussed. These images were taken over a period of six years in the Scottish Highlands in the same garden as those of the badger in *The Iris* (Spring 2022, pp.40 &41).

We first suspected that Pine Martens were visiting the garden in January 2016 when the peanuts we put out to feed the Red Squirrels were consumed much more rapidly than usual. During the following months, night time visits by Pine Martens were confirmed by use of an infrared trail camera.

The images are arranged in chronological order and are identified by the date when taken which may be useful as different families or different generations of animals could be involved over the six years. The Mammal society (mammal.org.uk) quotes Pine Martens as having a maximum lifespan of 8 years and elsewhere about 4 years is said to be a typical lifespan.

Although Pine Martens are commonly regarded as nocturnal, my first visual observation of a Pine Marten was unexpectedly in early daylight on a branch of a tree in our garden during May 2016. Happily, a camera was at hand and the opportunity also provided my first colour image of one of our new visitors, see image 1. The substantial claws, which make tree climbing easy, are clear and this is quite a dark brown animal with ear colouring which is either pale or pale edged. The typical white bib on the chest is hardly seen from this angle.

Careful investigation showed that the night time visits by the Pine Marten were not deterred by outside lights being on, nor by flash used considerably, as for image 2 and all but one of the subsequent images. Indeed, even when lights were on in our Garden Room on many occasions an inquisitive Pine Marten would come up to a patio door and look in with nose up to the glass while I was similarly close to the glass inside. Image 2 shows a typical Pine Marten, a brown animal, with claws again clear, but with paler ears than in the first image.





The Pine Marten in image 3 is on a felled tree and shows well the characteristic teeth and light bib typical of all Pine Martens. The bib usually has some dark spots or patches, the pattern of which can be used to identify an individual animal.

Image 4 is an attractive head and shoulders portrait, showing typical whiskers and, since the teeth cannot be seen, possibly looking cute and cuddly as many modestly sized furry animals can.



A full body shot of a typically brown Pine Marten with the substantial bushy tail clearly shown. In image 5 it is sitting in snow on an old tree stump.

The Pine Marten in image 6, its teeth visible, is shown emerging from under a log with snow visible in the foreground. Snow did not deter the Pine Martens from visiting.

By 2018 the Pine Martens visited so regularly that it became a matter of comment if there was a night when they did not come. Comparing the face of the Pine Marten in image 5 with that in image 6 shows that the face can be uniformly pale (5) or much darker (6).



In 2019 we were experiencing occasions when two Pine Martens visited together. We witnessed no aggressive behaviour between them. Also, our Pine Martens are typically brown in colour rather than noticeably dark. What was unusual however was to have a Pine Marten standing upright on rear legs as here in image 7.

In image 8 we have a very intent looking Pine Marten in profile standing on a projecting log, probably the same animal as standing on rear legs in image 7.

Unusually, image 9 was taken in daylight at about 8pm in July 2019 and shows a dark animal, the first so darkly coloured animal seen since 2016. It has a much less bushy tail than is typical and photographed in a paved part of the garden with summer floral background.

Two fine looking young Pine Martens, known as kits, playing happily together are shown in image 10.

In image 11 two young Pine Martens are peacefully side by side and showing no visible signs of being in any hurry to leave the snow.



An adult Pine Marten contentedly on snow is in image 12 and again shows the typical bushy tail.

Image 13 shows three Pine Martens, an adult and two well developed youngsters, so probably a family, crossing an area of grass. By June 2020 such groups were seen in the garden from time to time. Typically, the young are born in March/April and stay with the mother for about 6 weeks (mammal.org.uk).

A young dark Pine Marten with an identifying spot clearly visible on the light bib is shown in image 14. Autumnal foliage provides the background.

Seven months later in image 15, an equally dark but probably a different young Pine Marten shows clearly that Pine Marten have 7 claws per foot and so have 7 toes per paw.

Image Captions

2016

May: Pine Marten on a tree in our garden. (1)

2017

November: A tree climber on the ground. (2)

2018

January: Pine Marten on a felled tree. (3)

January: A head and shoulders portrait. (4)

March: Pine Marten on a tree stump. (5)

March: A Pine Marten emerging from under a log. (6)

2019

February: Two Pine Martens together. (7)

February: Whole body in profile. (8)

July: In garden context. (9)

September: Two youngsters playing. (10)

2020

January: Two youngsters, on snow. (11)

February: An adult lying on snow. (12)

June: A family of three Pine Martens. (13)

October: A young dark Pine Marten. (14)

2021

May: Another young dark Pine Marten. (15)





During the six years in which we studied our Pine Martens, we observed periods of quite dark brown animals and periods of brown animals, both categories having many subtle variations. However, distinguishing between dark brown and brown can be ambiguous.

A group of young has been seen at least in each of three adjacent years, but whether they are of the same family or of three different families I cannot say.





RPS Nature Group – Minutes of the 46th AGM

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

The AGM Agenda, Minutes of the 45th AGM 2021, Officers' Reports and Programme Coordinator's Report were made available in advance of the AGM and remain available on the RPS website under:
<https://rps.org/groups/nature/agm-reports/>

Welcome and Apologies for Absence:

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

Apologies for Absence had been received from:

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

Minutes of the 45th AGM 2021 (printed in Issue 140 of The Iris, Summer 2022 and available on the RPS Nature Group Website).

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

Matters Arising

None.

Chair's Report – David O'Neill LRPS

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

Events – Field Trips and Zoom: Ann Miles continues to organise an impressive number of Field Trips with new events planned in several parts of the country. She would like to extend this to as many counties as possible and in order to achieve this, we are hoping to encourage many more members to offer to host events in their local areas. All suggestions and support will be welcome.

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

Nature Group Advisory Days

The RPS is now encouraging the Nature Group to run Advisory Days, which will allow us to build on the success of our last one in 2020. All the places for Advice on the first of these on 26th March were filled, but there will be another later in the year, when we hope to be able to include prints.

The Iris

The new A4 version of the Iris has received a lot of very positive feedback from Members, regarding both the printed and electronic versions and I would like to congratulate Dawn Osborn for her excellent work. The larger size makes it more flexible for organising the content and layout of articles. It also allows more space for members' images to be shown at a more suitable size to showcase the photographer's work. The feedback also suggests a need to support both printed and electronic versions and we already have a system in place for anyone who prefers to receive electronic copies instead of a printed magazine. We can also monitor and report on the take-up of an electronic version. Feedback from members is always welcome and we also hope that you will be inspired to submit articles to Dawn for future editions.

Members' Photography Competition

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

Young Persons Exhibition/Competition

With the support of our new RPS Development Director Tracey Marshall Grant, we have recently held a meeting with Education Manager, Liz Williams, and Young Persons Engagement Officer, Elise Wootten, to discuss a Young

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

The Nature Group Code of Practice

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

Environmental and Social Responsibility

We have been approached by the Chair of the RPS Environmental and Social Responsibility Committee (Martin Hancock ARPS) and have agreed to work with him to devise a policy for the Nature Group. The Travel and Landscape Groups have draft policies documented, but there appears to be no commonly agreed standard for this at the moment, although it is a relatively new initiative that will undoubtedly change in the coming months. Our current approach is to be mindful of the environment and make common sense decisions to reduce our impact, such as encouraging more local events to reduce travel and increased use of Zoom for both Committee Meetings and online talks for Members.

Treasurer's Report – Peter Ward

This is included at the end of these Minutes.

Secretary's Report – Duncan Locke ARPS Committee:

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

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

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

Changes to The Iris:

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

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

Nature Group Membership:

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

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

Code of Practice:

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

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

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

Programme Coordinator's Report – Ann Miles FRPS:

The Nature Group organised many events through 2021 and into 2022 with a series of Zoom lectures and technique talks and a wide variety of Field Trips. All events are listed on the Nature Group home page when ready for booking and News items and Galleries are created after the events. The talks were excellent and many thanks to those who have helped provide this service to Members – if you missed any of these, recording of almost all of these can be found from the Nature Group home page under Event Recordings. Mick Durham (Chair of the Natural History Photography Distinction Panel) gave us a very interesting and comprehensive explanation of the Natural History Distinctions.

We ran one online Advisory Day last month and are hoping to run a 'live' Advisory Day at Smethwick in the Autumn so that those long-neglected prints can be viewed and commented on.

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

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

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

Any Other Business:

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

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

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

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

The AGM closed at 13.42hrs.

Treasurer's Report for AGM 2022

Peter Ward

Report for the Year Ended 31st December 2021

Cash Book Summary:

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

Income and Expenditure Summary:

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

Notes:

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

Summary:

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

Peter Ward
1st April 2022



Nature Group Annual Exhibition 2020

Selectors Choices

1) Clustered Bonnet (print)
by Mike Rowe FRPS

2) Coral Fungus (pdi)
by Mike Rowe FRPS





Highly Commended Print and PDI Awards

- 1 Backlit *Mycena crocata* (print)
by Roger Hance FRPS
- 2 *Mycena* species (print)
by Mike Rowe FRPS
- 3 Frosted Willow (pdi)
by Jean Dixon
- 4 Sulphur Tufts (pdi)
by Tim Downton
- 5 Dryad's Saddle (pdi)
by Trevor Davenport FRPS

