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THE **RPS**  
ROYAL  
PHOTOGRAPHIC  
SOCIETY

# THE IRIS

MAGAZINE OF THE NATURE GROUP OF THE RPS

Issue No. 129 / Winter 2017





More pictures from the article:

**Land of the Falling Lakes**

**by Robert Thompson FRPS FIPF**

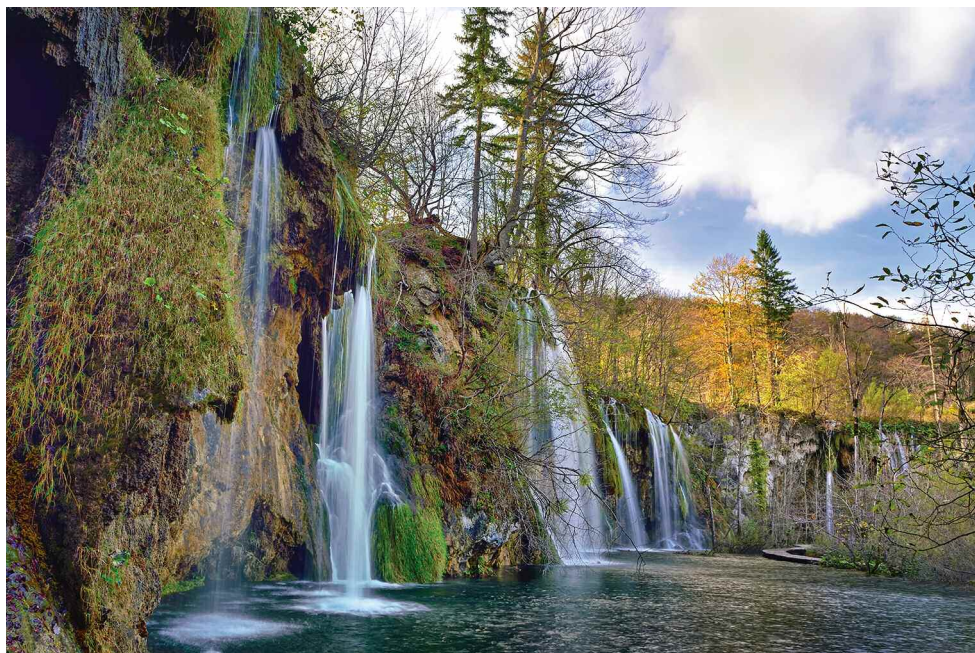
See page 4

Top left: *Cephalanthera longifolia*

Top right: Southern White Admiral *Limenitis reducta*

Above: Scarce Swallowtail *Iphiclides podalirius*

Bottom: Galovacki Waterfalls



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Copy should be sent as .txt or .doc files by email or on CD. Please do not send hand written copy.

Digitally captured photographic images are preferred but scanned transparencies are also acceptable.

Images (whether vertical or horizontal) should be supplied on CD as flattened 8bit sRGB Tiff files, 6" x 4" at 300 pixels per inch (1800 x 1200 pixels, file size approx 6.17MB). Please do not send larger images. If your image is selected for use on the cover of The Iris you will be asked to supply a larger file.

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## Distribution:

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by Adrian Davies ARPS

The front cover shows it fluorescing in UV radiation and the back cover shows it in visible light. This relatively recently discovered phenomenon where the rim (or peristome) of the pitcher fluoresces is thought to attract insect prey at night.





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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

Sadly I must begin this column with the news that our new Editor has been taken very ill and therefore is unable to complete this issue or continue in the role. I am sure you will all want to join with me in wishing Kevin a speedy recovery to full health and fitness.

I apologise for this issue being a little shorter than normal but unfortunately due to constraints on time and deadlines it is not possible to source sufficient items for a full issue but we hope you will still enjoy it.

Included in this edition you will find some interesting and informative articles. First, from professional nature and wildlife photographer Robert Thompson FRPS, FIPF., a piece about the Plitvice Lakes in Croatia accompanied by a very attractive assortment of images; then we have the second of two articles on 'Ultraviolet Photography' by Adrian Davies ARPS. Gordon Follows ARPS gives us an account of his visit to The Danube Delta with some lovely images, and an interesting article from Luan Kay about Sable Island, Nova Scotia, completes the content of this issue. You will also find details for entering the 2018 Nature Group Members Annual Exhibition.

Looking forward to the next issue, David Osborn FRPS has very kindly agreed to review the new book on Macro photography by Robert Thompson FRPS FIPF released in late September. The book has been endorsed by Michael Pritchard FRPS, Chief Executive of the Society.

## The Iris - articles required

Please support The Iris. Articles (copy and images) and other items of interest are desperately needed for the Spring issue. Please forward by 8th December 2017 to avoid the Christmas post. If you need more time please let me know before that date. Please email to iris\_editor@btinternet.com

## Nature Group eNewsletter

Hopefully you all received the first issue of eNews, the new Nature Group Newsletter which is being emailed to all members who have their email address registered with the RPS Membership Department. Deadline for Items of interest to be emailed is 12th January. Email to: naturegroup\_eneews\_editor@btinternet.com

It just remains for me to wish you all a very happy Christmas and New Year.



# From the chair

---

Welcome to the latest edition of the Iris. As you will note from the Editorial, Kevin Booth has not been in the best of health recently. As result of this, there is been a slight delay in the production of this edition of The Iris.

I am sure you'll join with me in wishing Kevin the very best of health and a full and speedy recovery. I would like to thank Dawn Osborn FRPS for continuing with the production of The Iris in the circumstances.

I hope that you had a productive few months in your photographic pursuits, but speaking of the weather in East Anglia, where I live, it has been a relatively poor summer. Indeed it has been one of the coolest summers in Norfolk for many years.

Since the last edition of The Iris was published, there have been several issues which merit comment. At the last Nature Group committee meeting many of these issues were discussed. Firstly, we had hoped to introduce nature videos into the Nature Group Exhibition for next year. However, after due consideration, we are deferring this until we are confident that all the concerns raised by members of the committee have been addressed. For example, we need to decide which rules should be used for submitting video entries to an exhibition (eg. image size, frame rate, sound, music, length of video etc.). Similarly, we need to decide what processing methods would be allowed. These rules need to be established before any successful judging process can take place. Please bear with us. The committee remains positive about the idea of having videos in our exhibition in the not-too-distant future, but at this stage we need to iron out some of the concerns that have been expressed.

We hope to run a workshop at a later date for group members to come and equate themselves with all aspects of video recording techniques, as well as covering technical processes involved in producing the final product. We will announce the date of this event in due course.

Another issue which has been at the forefront of our thoughts over the last two or three months has been that of defining what constitutes nature photography. There was a major change in regulations a few years ago. I know many of you expressed your concern at the time, and subsequently, about some of these changes. To this end, two members of the Nature Group were asked to conduct a review of these changes and how to address the aspects which

are troubling the Nature Group. They have been analysing these changes and putting forward proposals to amend the regulations. Having seen their draft proposals, I feel confident that members will be delighted with the changes suggested.

I am pleased to report that Barbara Lawton FRPS and Duncan Locke, both members of the Nature Group committee, have organised a full day of nature photography techniques to be held at the Smethwick Photography Society venue at Smethwick on Saturday, 25 November. This promises to be a very exciting day where various techniques will be demonstrated by individual speakers. Techniques will cover underwater photography, macro photography, focus stacking, and, pertinent to the above, an introduction to video shorts.

I am sure there will be much to interest many of you, and at a bargain price of £10 for RPS members, places are sure to be filled very quickly. (Maximum capacity in the venue is 80 people). If you have not secured a ticket I urge you to contact Barbara Lawton, email: [rpsngprog@talktalk.net](mailto:rpsngprog@talktalk.net) for further information.

Another date for your diary is the Chairman's Day of the Nature Group, to be held at Smethwick, on Saturday, 15 September 2018. As usual, on such a day, we hope to have a good selection of speakers on various different topics to entertain us. Full details will be given as the date gets closer.

I was delighted to receive the first edition of the Nature Group's new eNewsletter produced by Dawn Osborn FRPS. I thought it was excellent. This will be a publication which will compliment The Iris, and, in addition to showing the work of members of the Nature Group, it will also contain items for sale as well as requests for 'wants' by members. Just like The Iris though, the eNewsletter will be dependent on contributions of material from the membership as a whole for it to be a success. In common with most members, I enjoy reading about the photography of other members as well as learning about the places they have visited and their photographic techniques. Please consider submitting articles and other items of interest to The Iris or the eNewsletter.

Finally I would like to wish you productive autumn and winter seasons, and the good weather to get out and enjoy your photography.

Kevin

# Land of the Falling Lakes

by Robert Thompson FRPS., FIPF.

## Plitvice National Park, Croatia

### Introduction

Croatia has long been renowned for its outstanding natural beauty and warm Mediterranean climate. The rich azure waters of its famed Adriatic coastline are peppered with picturesque islands, pine-fringed beaches and rocky coves that stretch over 1700km in length. The allure and serenity of steeply wooded hillsides and valleys make it an idyllic location for the natural history photographer. From an environmental perspective it is one of the finest examples of pristine natural habitat in Europe and no longer the hidden jewel it once was. Plitvice is perhaps the best known of Croatia's eight national parks and is the country's largest, some 300 square km in size. It was designated in 1949 and received UNESCO'S world heritage status in 1979. The park is located in the mountainous karst region of central Croatia near the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina. It's a truly captivating place with a collection of sixteen turquoise-coloured lakes, which are connected to each other by an elaborate series of streams and waterfalls. The formation of the lakes is the result of the amalgamation of various river systems; all are interconnected, producing a continuous flow of water that runs from the highest lake cascading down through the others, creating an impressive series of waterfalls, ranging from turquoise through to green. The variation in colour is mainly based on the depth of the pools, mineral content and the intensity of sunlight. The lakes are divided into upper and lower systems. Protection from pollution of the whole ecosystem in the park is taken seriously by the authorities and rightly so. When you gaze into their crystal clear waters, you can appreciate why a place such as this needs protecting. Swimming is forbidden in any of the lakes, and the all of the boats are electric. No vehicular traffic is permitted within the central section of the park.

### Flora & fauna

Plitvice is naturally a haven for wildlife. Of the 50 species of mammal that have been recorded within the park, the most notable of these are the European Brown Bear, Wolf and Lynx. They occur in the quieter parts of the park which are less frequented by the public. Nevertheless, it is not a place to be wandering aimlessly about after dark; I can certainly testify to this.

The flora list for Plitvice is impressive with approximately 1,270 species (55 of which are orchids) currently recorded with some notable endemics. The Lepidoptera population is around 320 species which includes the 76 butterflies that have been seen, although not all are resident in the park. I suspect that the moth fauna is greatly under recorded. Amphibians and reptiles are not that well represented with around 12 species confirmed for both groups; the cold winters and the heavy snowfalls are perhaps the main reason for the low numbers.

Fish abound in the lakes and sheltered pools; the clarity of the water is amazing especially when sunlight strikes the surface. Brown Trout, European Chub are among the most frequently seen species along the lake margins, but there are many others, as well.

My first encounter with Croatia and Plitvice was back in the 1990s when I was shooting stock images on medium format for agencies and travel guides. I never had the time to explore the whole park then but vowed to return and give it the time it deserved. For anyone that has a passion for photographing water, this is the 'holy grail' of waterfall systems in Europe. I have run some workshops in the park, during late spring and again in October. The end of May and mid-October are ideal times to visit Plitvice; the latter being the peak for autumn colour which can be amazing in some years. The number of visitors during this period is considerably less than the large crowds that descend on the park during the summer months. The climate of Plitvice is mainly continental and changeable. During one visit, it went from 25 ° to -6 ° in two days. A five day trip is ideal; this allows time to explore both the upper and lower lake systems for suitable locations for photography. The woodlands are predominantly beech and fir and have their own interesting flora and fauna. I tend to focus mainly on the plants, in particular, the orchids and diversity of insects, however, having said that the numerous waterfalls that proliferate throughout the park are amazing and difficult to ignore. Many of the common orchids are easily found in the adjoining meadows although more elusive species require a little more diligent searching. The eye-catching Lady's Slipper is the most notable orchid within the

park. Butterflies are common throughout, but the biggest concentrations are to be found in the meadows which can keep you occupied for all of your trip. Many other insects occur in the park particularly Longhorn Beetles which can often be found resting on logs and flower heads.

Apart from its beauty and charm, it is easy to be overwhelmed when you experience the park and its crystal clear waters for the first time. However, be under no illusion, it can be challenging photographically especially when the light is strong and directional. Many of the larger cascades are north facing and shooting into the light requires Graduated Neutral Density filtration, or blending to cope with the exposure differential. On days when conditions were very bright exploring the woodlands for orchids and insects is perhaps the best approach during the middle part of the day. They are to be located off the main tourist routes. Early evening tends to be the most productive time with more stable lighting conditions, and fewer people around. It's also a good time to focus on the many waterfalls in the park.

If you are staying in any of the three hotels situated within the park, then an early start is advisable if you want peace to absorb the tranquil serenity of the place before the mob of sightseer's descend. As a resident you have access before it's opened to the general public. The mayhem usually starts around 11am when most of the coaches start arriving, this continues until 2 pm after that most people quickly filter away. By 4 pm it's relatively quiet again. One option is to start the opposite way round and work against the flow, which will buy you some extra time. The lower waterfall system is the most frequently visited by tourists; they usually don't have the time to cover upper and lower systems together. Dealing with the constant procession of visitors can at times try the patience of even the most disciplined photographer; this is especially true when photographing some of the waterfalls from the boardwalks. The vibration from the herds of approaching feet can make even the heaviest tripod bounce in step.

Having a plan in advance is always a good strategy; you waste less time, and a definite focus rather than wondering around hoping to stumble upon subjects. Many photographers prefer to operate tripod free these days. I would strongly advise against this if you are visiting Plitvice.



*Lady's Slipper Cypripedium calceolus*



*Neotinea tridentata*





*Veliki Slap & Sastavci Waterfalls*



*European Chub Leuciscus cephalus*



*Croatian Hawk-moth Haemorrhagia croatica*



*Gypsy Moth Lymantria dispar*

In all of my photography publications, I have always devoted a chapter to the merits of working from a tripod. I shoot every image I can using one, only resorting to a monopod when the terrain prevents me from doing so. The varied topography of the landscape and woodland habitats means a variety of lenses will be needed. On the wide angle front, a focal range from 17mm to 35mm will cover most situations; this includes working from the boardwalks when you are often very close to some of the larger waterfalls; having a wider focal length here is a real advantage as a 24mm is too tight on some of the larger cascades. Another issue is exposure variation; you will often find yourself shooting into the light whether the sun is shining or not! If you use Graduated Neutral Density filters (GND) then don't leave home without them. I shot virtually every cascade with at least one, and frequently two in some cases as well as a polariser to deal with reflections on the water and foliage. The other popular approach these days is to record a series of exposures and digitally blend them together. I do use this method in some situations, but not in every case. A long focal length macro is an ideal choice for flower portraits, especially the orchids, making it easier to control the background clutter; it also doubles up as an excellent telephoto when you need to refine the composition on some of the distant cascades. If you don't own a longer focal length macro, then a 200mm with extension tubes is perfectly adequate. A 105 macro and a flash system are also useful, especially when photographing insects and working in the woodlands.

### Planning a trip

The park is open all year round, and each season has its own particular beauty, but the spring and autumn colour is indeed quite memorable. There are two entrances to the park, entitled simply, Entrance 1 and Entrance 2 – the latter closes during winter. Access to certain areas throughout the winter months can be restricted due to heavy snowfalls. The lakes and waterfalls generally freeze at some point during December and January producing wonderful ice formations. Spring and autumn are, in my opinion, the best times to visit the park. It's a good idea to contact the parks information centre to check on water levels in the lakes before you go, especially in the autumn as warm, dry conditions in late summer can have a direct bearing on the flow of water and subsequently the grandeur of the cascades.



### Getting around the park

There is a network of clearly marked paths and much longer trails, which involve several hours of walking for those that are more adventurous. Be mindful however, if you are on the other side of the lakes you will need a boat back. Check the times carefully you really don't want to be caught in the dark on trails you are not familiar with. The upper lakes (the larger group) are situated among dense forests comprised mainly of beech and fir and connected by numerous waterfall systems. There are also a number of paths that connect between the lakes allowing you to get up close to most of the waterfalls. Access to others is via boardwalks, most of which are not 'vibration free'. Boats also ferry you between the larger lakes to access other paths and trails throughout the park. There is also a shuttle bus which operates in the park; you can walk part of the way and then get the bus back to one of the entrance points. The upper lakes are further away from the central hub of the park and therefore, generally less crowded. The lower lakes are smaller, shallower and more popular with coach tours that frequent the park on a daily basis. However, they do contain some of the larger waterfalls including Veliki Slap at 256 ft., which is the highest in the national park. The lower waterfall system tends to be more popular with day-trippers that don't have the time to explore the whole area, but it's well worth exploring locations in-between the trees especially on the high paths where there are some excellent views.

### How to get there

Plitvice can be easily reached from a number of places. From Zagreb, the journey time by car is around 2½-hours down the main north- south arterial route to Split. From Dubrovnik, the 457km journey is considerably longer by car, around 6 hours.

More of Robert's images can be seen on the inside of the front cover.



*Neotinea tridentata*



Longhorn Beetle *Agapanthea villosiviridescens*

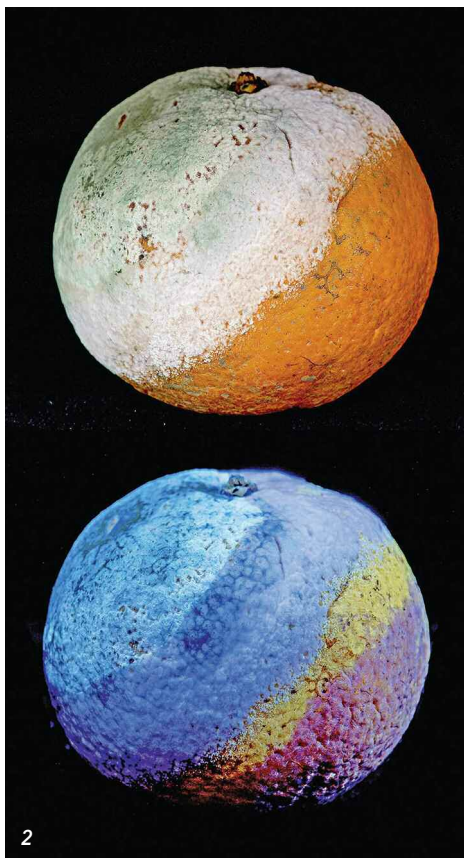
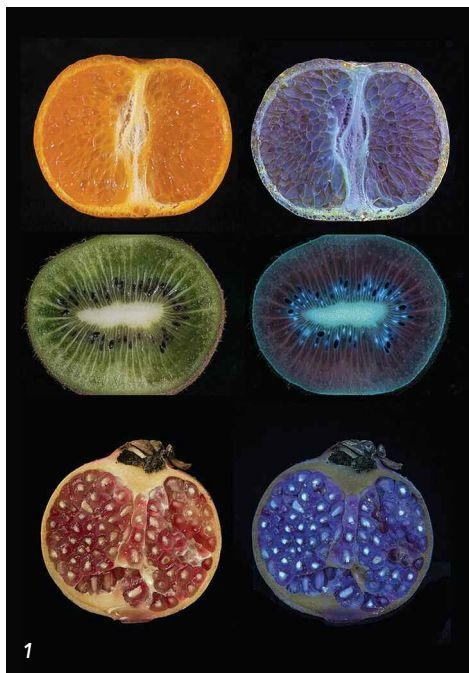
# Ultraviolet Fluorescence Photography

by Adrian Davies ARPS

In the previous article on Ultraviolet (UV) reflectance photography we looked at how to photograph the invisible UV radiation reflected from a subject, using a modified camera, special lens and filter, helping to reveal hidden patterns on plants and insects for example. UV fluorescence photography is much easier, and can yield some startling results. The basic idea is to record the visible light emitted from a subject when it is illuminated by UV light (technically this is called "excitation"). Virtually any camera and lens can be used.

You will need a completely dark room, and a UV source such as an UV LED torch (preferably emitting UV radiation at 365 nanometres (nm), with no visible light leakage). Subjects such as minerals, official documents (e.g. passport, drivers licence) and some plants and animals will glow, or fluoresce, when lit with UV light. Walking around the garden or woodland at night with a UV torch can be very enlightening!

Probably the easiest source of UV radiation to find are the new generation of LED torches. The model which, until recently, was considered one of the best is the MTE 303, costing around £100. These can be hard to find and may need to be imported from abroad. Recently, a new UV torch has been introduced, called the Convoy S2 (costing around £20) which is also very good. Both are powerful sources of UV at 365nm. It is possible to use electronic flash, filtered with a UV transmitting filter (Advanced Camera Services supply a couple of models) but they are very expensive.







#### NOTE:

*Never look directly at a UV light source, and never shine one into somebody's eyes. UV safety glasses are available. Avoid prolonged exposure to the skin.*

You will probably need a long exposure (I frequently use an exposure time of 30 seconds with an aperture of f/11 at 200 ISO) so a tripod is essential. I find that using Aperture Priority metering works well for determining exposure, sometimes with -0.3 or -0.7 compensation.

I tend to keep the ISO at around 200 ISO, to minimise the risk of noise in the image, and to enable 'light painting' with a long exposure. The LED torches have a very definite hot spot, so to achieve an even illumination of the subject a good technique is that of painting the subject with light, where the light source is moved constantly during the exposure, trying to achieve as even an illumination as possible of the subject.





Tip: if you want to check that your UV source for visible light emission, shine the UV source at a piece of metal such as a coin or ballbearing. Metal does not fluoresce, so should be black in an image.

Choice of background is important. Many papers and fabrics will themselves fluoresce, and may influence the colour of the subject you are photographing. I tend to use good quality black velvet for many of my subjects, which remains black for the image. The one problem with it is that any dust particles on the surface may fluoresce, and require spotting out afterwards.

### Images:

1. Various fruit fluorescing in UV light: top: Orange, centre: Kiwi fruit, bottom: Pomegranate.
2. Mould growing on a Satsuma.
3. A compost heap at night. Note the fluorescing egg shell, lettuce and rotting pineapple.
4. Lichen *Cladonia squamosa*, photographed in woodland at night in Snowdonia.
5. One way of finding scorpions at night is by shining a UV torch into the undergrowth. This individual was found in the tropical rainforest of Borneo, and stayed very still during a 20 second exposure.

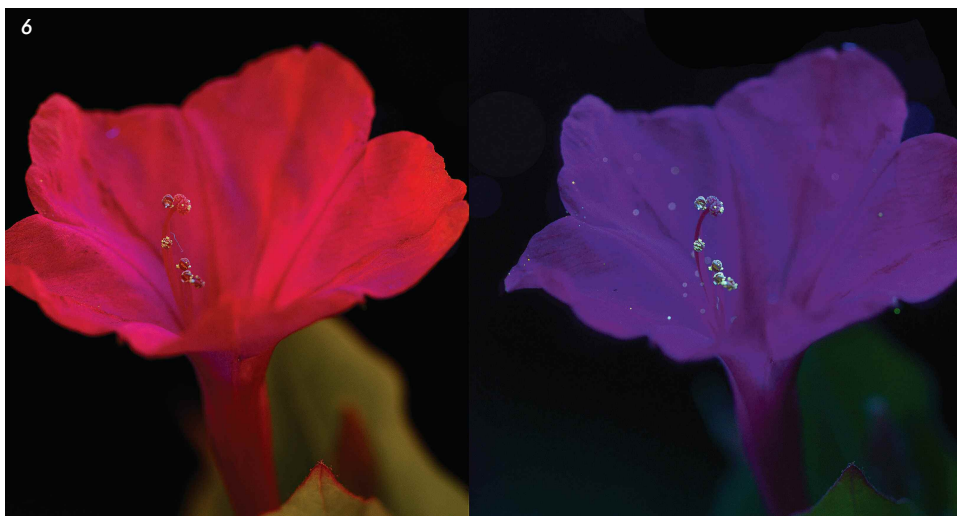


6. The pollen of the Four O'Clock Plant (*Mirabilis jalapa*) fluorescing at night in UV light.

Cover: A hybrid Pitcher Plant: *Nepenthespathulata* x (*copelandii* x *truncata*). The front cover shows it fluorescing in UV radiation and the back cover shows it in visible light. This relatively recently discovered phenomenon where the rim (or peristome) of the pitcher fluoresces is thought to attract insect prey at night.

More examples of UV fluorescence can be found on my website at: [www.imagingtheinvisible.com](http://www.imagingtheinvisible.com).

My new book: Digital Ultraviolet and Infrared Photography will be published by Routledge in October 2017



# The Danube Delta



by Gordon Follows ARPS

To spend time viewing and photographing wildlife from a boat within the Danube Delta has long been on my bucket list, and in 2017 it finally reached the top of the list. The boat which we used had been designed specifically for photography, taking a maximum of four photographers facing sideways with the guide and a boatman at the bow. A bespoke covering with a single open panel for the photographers provided sufficient camouflage to enable the boat to be manoeuvred close to wildlife. Inside, there was ample room to erect a tripod for say a 500mm f4 lens and to have another body and smaller lens available for hand holding. The boat itself was small enough to access narrow channels within the reed beds as well as open areas with floating vegetation; however these latter areas could be challenging when water levels were low as the vegetation would regularly foul the propeller.

The guide, Zoltan Baczo, was top notch, spoke excellent English, knew his birds and where to find them and appreciated the needs of photographers when positioning the boat etc. The pattern of daily life was to leave the hotel at 04:45 after coffee and biscuits in order to be at our desired location at sunrise, returning for breakfast around 10:00. Then after some downtime, out again at 15:30 until sunset



*Paradise Delta House Hotel*



*Channel through reed beds*



*Photographic boat*

around 21:00. Although there was often frequent traffic along the main thoroughfares in the delta, away from these we usually had the small channels and lakes to ourselves only encountering the odd fisherman.

Photographic opportunities will obviously differ depending on the timing of the visit and the season, and the variety will be limited to those species which favour reed beds and lakes.



*Dalmatian Pelican in flight*

Travelling in early July 2017, my particular highlights included good numbers of both Purple and Squacco Herons, both White (common) and Dalmatian Pelicans, huge numbers of breeding Whiskered Terns nesting on floating vegetation on a number of lakes (with small numbers of migrant Black and White-winged Black also present), Little Bittern, Glossy Ibis and both breeding Black-necked and Red-necked Grebes. Passerines were limited but both Penduline and Bearded Tits were encountered as well as a number of Warblers, Great Reed probably being the most numerous. With resident Caspian Gulls for the gull connoisseur and breeding wildfowl including Pochard and Ferruginous Duck, there was lots to maintain interest and provide photographic opportunities.



*Black-necked Grebe at nest*



The operation was organised by Saker Tours [www.sakertour.com](http://www.sakertour.com) and travel involved flying to Bucharest where we were met by the guide and taken by minibus to Tulcea (4 hours) at the head of the delta and then by boat (1+ hours) to the Paradise Delta House hotel within the delta.

The Paradise Delta House is a comfortable, relatively modern hotel, only accessible by boat, and which serves mainly local cuisine (fresh water fish - but thankfully not at breakfast!). It was well used by Romanian holiday makers, particularly at week-ends, very much in the way of the Norfolk Broads, but this did not impinge on our activities.

All in all a successful trip which I would thoroughly recommend if this is your sort of photography. If anyone would like to discuss then please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Gordon Follows : [gordonfollows@btinternet.com](mailto:gordonfollows@btinternet.com)



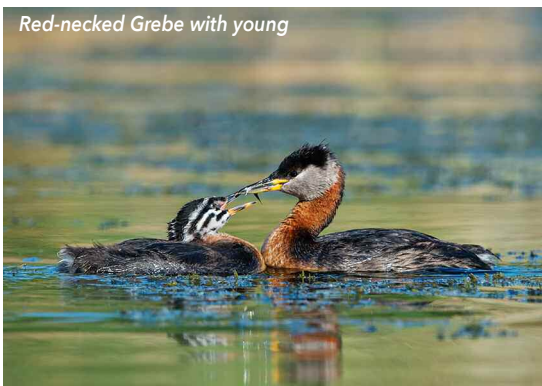
*Little Egret*



*Squacco Heron running with food*



*Purple Heron running with prey*



*Red-necked Grebe with young*

# THE RED SQUIRREL

A FUTURE IN THE FOREST

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# Book Report

## The Red Squirrel

### a Future in the Forest

Images by Neil McIntyre and words by Polly Pullar

ISBN: 978-0-9568423-1-2

166 pages

The publication of *'The Red Squirrel: A future in the forest'* was brought about by a successful crowd-funding campaign in November 2016. SCOTLAND: The Big Picture, the book's publisher has created a high quality book filled with vibrant colour images of this iconic little animal.

The images are the work of Neil McIntyre - a name many of us will be familiar with. He has been making friends with and photographing the Red Squirrels near his home in the Cairngorms National Park for twenty years. Referring to them as his 'neighbours', like the people next door, they have come to know him well. They are familiar with his presence in their environment and shown him their trust, which has enabled him to capture such lovely intimate shots.

Neil's images give us a real insight into the world of the Red Squirrel and are complimented by the words written by author Polly Pullar. Polly's home is a small farm in the Highlands of Scotland. She shares Neil's love of Red Squirrels and has planted 5,000 native trees to help enlarge their environment. Now she is able to watch their visits to her garden from her kitchen window and describes washing-up as 'a pleasure'. I might have to agree with her. Polly's story covers the history of how this wonderful little creature has endured not only the loss of much of its habitat, but also persecution that almost resulted in its extinction. Aspects of their lives from habitat to diet, courtship to raising young, survival and predators, are told in a way that only someone who knows and cares for them can. The book also covers the biodiversity, past and present, of what remains of Scotland's once magnificent Caledonian Forest and the need, not only protect it, but to expand it.

Every page is both interesting and entertaining - most will put a smile on your face, perhaps even a tear in your eye. Indeed, in the Acknowledgements, Neil himself thanks his 'little red friends' and says "You've made me laugh, cry and everything in between. Our journey together continues."



The book succeeds on many levels; delighting our eyes with an abundance of images, while the text stimulates our interest and draws attention to the need to protect Red squirrels and their habitat, not just for them but for all the other creatures they share it with. They will face an uncertain future without our help.

The book is beautifully presented and printed throughout. The layout is excellent and the images are both charming and heart warming, the colour reproduction is superb. In my opinion it would make a first class Christmas Gift for anyone with an interest in our native wildlife and/or nature photography.

Dawn Osborn FRPS

Director of SCOTLAND: The Big Picture, the book's publisher, photographer Peter Cairns said "Neil's beautiful images shine a unique light on one of Scotland's best-loved mammals, but squirrels need forests just as much as forests need squirrels. I hope this book will ignite fresh conversations about that crucial link."



# Sable Island - Nova Scotia

by Luan Kay

Sable Island is a National Park Reserve and is world famous for its wild horses and shipwrecks. It is known amongst maritime people as the 'Graveyard of the Atlantic', with over 300 shipwrecks having occurred here since the 1500's. The island is a crescent shaped sandbar that stretches around 45km in length and around 1.5km at the widest point, but it's shape is constantly changing due to the frequent storms and shifting sands.

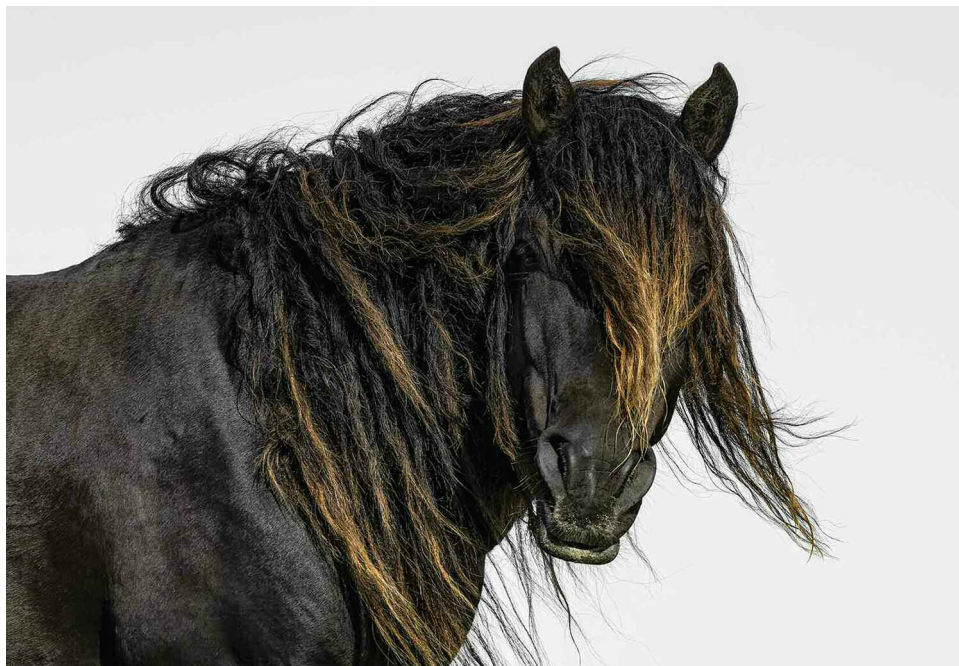
The Island is normally only accessible by private charter of a boat or plane. There are no landing strips or docks so any expedition comes with its own risks, and the weather is very unpredictable in this area. Fortunately for me, Adventure Canada planned a sea expedition to the Island, and I was lucky enough to secure a place.

My photography specialism is with horses and wildlife, so I was lured by the romanticism of photographing wild horses on a desert island. The horses that live on Sable Island are technically feral not wild, as they have domesticated ancestors. Some of the horses may have been shipwrecked here but most were likely shipped to the island at several points in

history, perhaps when the Acadians were expelled from Nova Scotia in the late 1700's, and later at the time when life stations were built on the islands to help shipwrecked sailors, also during a brief period of farming history.

There are over 400 horses currently on the island. They survive by eating marram grass and sweet pea, and drinking from the freshwater pools fed by precipitation. There is a variety of plant life on the island including wild strawberry and cranberry, and the Blue Flag Iris is a beautiful contrast in colour to the green grassy plants in the summer.

I found the horses beautiful with their sea-salt tangled long manes and tails, and they were curious of photographers. The horses move around the island foraging, and travel to the freshwater pools throughout the day, resting on the warm sandy beaches. They live in small family herds of up to five horses, which includes a stallion, mares and foals. A few bachelor groups were also to be found, and I saw a few lone stallions looking for an opportunity to acquire some mares!





*Sable Island herd*

In the 1960's the Government considered moving the horses off the island back to the mainland, where they would undoubtedly be sold off, but public outcry, in particular from school children who loved the wild horses of the island, secured their future, and they were protected under the Sable Island Regulations of the Canada Shipping Act. Today many of America's wild horses are not so lucky to have the same protections, as they are rounded up from the American plains and sold off, sometimes for slaughter.

The island and its limited resources control how many horses can survive on the island, but there has been an increase this year. This is thought to be attributed to the other wildlife, like seals and sea birds, that help to fertilise the island and grasses on which the horses survive. Sable Island is an oasis in the Atlantic, but rising sea levels could threaten the future of the island and its inhabitants.

Sable Island is also home to a small number of Harbour Seals and has the world's largest Grey Seal colony - the population can reach over 400,000 but this varies by season. Historically Grey Seal numbers have been much lower in the area, when



*Sable Island horse amongst Blue Flag Iris*



*Sable Island horse family*





*A Tern in flight*



*A Gull chick*

sealers hunted them for their skins and oil. A rise in the seal population at Sable has also coincided with a recent rise in their natural predator, the Great White Shark. There are around 18 different varieties of shark in the Nova Scotia area.

There are hundreds of species of birds recorded on Sable Island, including the rare Roseate Tern and Ipswich Sparrow. The Terns and Black-backed Gulls were very active during my visit, as they aggressively defended their nests during the breeding season. A young gull briefly wandered through the sand dunes onto the beach to have his picture taken, before he was relocated with his family.

To photograph the horses I used a Nikon D750 and a D810, paired with either the Nikon 70-200mm, or Nikkor 200-500mm lens, depending on how far away the horses were. I prefer telephoto lens as they have more scope to be adaptable to a variety of photography subjects when travelling. I found the Nikon D500(DX) with the Nikkor 200-500mm lens combination, paired with a monopod, really great for photographing birds.

Tripods are not very useful on the island, due to the terrain and having to walk long distances across deep sands or long grasses.

If you hope to visit the island, a dry bag and waterproof covers for cameras and lenses are essential - the weather is very unpredictable in this area and there is frequent sea spray.



*Ipswich Sparrow*



*Basking Seal*



# Request for Field Meeting Leaders

Hello Everyone

On behalf of the RPS Nature Group, I would like to take this opportunity to thank those members who organised or attended a field meeting during 2017.

Feedback received from those who attended the Residential Field Meeting was excellent and the event was well supported. However day events seem to have received less and less support year on year.

RPS Nature Group Field Meetings have always been an integral part of the Nature Group's activities, offering members opportunities to visit sites of natural history interest which may not be known to them while also meeting and sharing ideas with other like minded photographers.

There are Nature Group members all around the country and it would be wonderful if at least one field meeting could be arranged in each of the RPS regions during the course of next year. So I am appealing to all members to consider hosting a field meeting.

If you know of a site with interesting subjects to photograph, please consider becoming a leader – you are not expected to instruct others in photographic techniques or to be an expert at identifying all the wildlife subjects.

Meetings do not have to be arranged at weekends. Many members of the Nature Group are retired and therefore mid-week meetings are often well attended.

To ensure inclusion in the Spring issue of The Iris please complete the form opposite or send details to me before the end of January 2018. Please contact me if you require any further information.

Barbara Lawton, FRPS, DPAGB  
78 Leybourne Crescent  
Pendeford,  
Wolverhampton, WV9 5QG

Tel: 01902 787811

Email: [barbara.lawton@talktalk.net](mailto:barbara.lawton@talktalk.net)

I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards

Barbara Lawton

## RPS Nature Group Field Meetings 2017

*Please return this form before 31st January, 2018*

**Day and Date:**

**Time:**

**Location:**

**Grid Ref/Post Code:**

**Meeting Place:**

**Subjects of Interest:**

**Additional Information:**

**Items to bring:**

**Cost: (eg Car Parking Fees)**

**Leader:**

**Address:**

**Tel:**

**Email:**

# From Kevin Booth

As I am writing this, I can't help but think about how life has changed for me in the past twelve months. It was around this time last year, I saw the opportunity of becoming the next Editor of the Iris, and amazingly I was offered the job. Unfortunately during this year ill health has struck. This has been a real pain (excuse the pun) especially as all I really wanted to do was just get out and really enjoy nature and photography of all the wonderful flora and fauna.

Unfortunately due to how this year has gone, I've been a tad restricted, however I have managed to get over to my favourite seal sanctuaries in Lincolnshire. Yes, I know, not the Serengeti, but just as important for the health, survival and conservation of many animals - not just seals.

I recently visited the old parrot centre in Lincolnshire, which very recently has turned into the Lincolnshire Wildlife Centre. I must say they are doing an amazing job. The enclosures are individual and well suited to each animal in residence. Amazingly they have eleven Bengal Tigers, a Puma and a Black Panther, with a great supporting cast of Lemurs, Marmosets, Tapir, Otters, Capybara, plus the now usual meerkats and yes, Parrots. Not bad for a relatively young park. Certainly well worth a visit, and in truth I would have missed this hidden gem, had I not been unable to get around. Whilst I know, nothing outstanding, in fact with the way

nature parks are these days, quite ordinary, but in fairness, the walk through the parakeets and parrot enclosure was really outstanding. Many of the birds were friendly and very keen to be near the humans visiting their habitat. Not perhaps a good idea for people who have a real phobia about birds, or birds landing on your heads and shoulders, or perhaps you really dislike Hitchcocks the birds....

Did you catch Robson Green on 'Coastal Lives' on the 10th October 2017? Well you perhaps missed a treat. It was from a little favourite of mine, the Mablethorpe Seal Sanctuary and Wildlife Centre. Robson was chatting to the current owners Dennis and Chloe Drew, who took over the Centre nearly ten years ago. Since then they have spent huge amounts of money and time, turning this tucked away sanctuary into an amazing wildlife centre. Work is ongoing to enhance the habitats for the animals, and spread out within the grounds, to give a superb visit for all its visitors. Robson Green even released a seal, named Robson Green junior, which was previously unnamed.

*Kevin Booth*

*Ed.*

*The piece above was written by Kevin before he was taken ill. I thought it should be included in this issue.*

## Congratulations

The following members have achieved the standard required by the Society and have been awarded their Associateship.

Douglas Neve	Eastbourne
Evangeline Lam	Hong Kong
Mary Kirkby	Warwick
Malcolm Blackburn	High Peak
Sue Green	London

Caron Steele	Pershore
Helena Spinks	Cirencester
Lynda Mudle-Small	Bodmin
Andy Teasdale	Caernarfon
Ngar Shun Victor Wong	Kowloon



## 2018 Exhibition of Prints and Digital Images

### Opening Presentation

Saturday, 21st April 2018, at 2.45pm

### Smethwick Photographic Society's Clubrooms

The Old School House, Churchbridge, Oldbury, West Midlands, B69 2AS

#### 2018 Exhibition Selectors:

Gianpiero Ferrari FRPS

Mike Lane FRPS

Rosemary Wilman Hon FRPS

#### 2018 Exhibition Calendar:

Closing date for receipt of entries	31st January 2018
Selection Day	28th February 2018
Report cards/Results notification	mid March 2018
Exhibition Opening	21st April 2018
Returned unaccepted entries	late April 2018

The preferred method of entry is via the online entry system. All Nature Group members with email will receive an invitation with a link to the entry system. Members unable or not wishing to use the online entry system can post their entry, along with a completed entry form and a cheque for payment, to the address on the entry form.

Gold Medals will be awarded to the best print and the best digital image of the exhibition.

A Bronze Medal, Selectors, Highly Commended and Commended Certificates will be awarded in each category.

The 'Tony Wharton' award will be presented to the most successful entrant in the exhibition.

**Please read the Conditions of Entry carefully - failure to do so could result in your entry being rejected.**

The accepted images will be displayed/projected at the Exhibition Opening.

The acceptance list, plus a selection of the award winning images, is published in the Summer issue of The Iris.

The award winning images will also appear on the RPS website.

A DVD containing all the accepted images will be issue to each entrant.

#### Print Entries

We will be continuing with the 'travelling' initiative piloted in 2017, As well as all accepted prints being displayed at the Exhibition Opening at Oldbury, they will also be displayed at additional locations. Probable locations are Edinburgh and East Anglia plus other locations will be considered in the coming months. The 2018 accepted prints will therefore be retained until the 2019 AGM. Unaccepted prints will be returned at or immediately following the 2018 AGM along with the accepted prints from the 2017 exhibition. In order for the prints to be displayed at the additional locations the mount size must be 40cm x 50cm.

Further details of the entry conditions can be viewed in the online entry system, the Nature Group section of the RPS website and within this entry form.



# RPS Nature Group Members Exhibition 2018

## ENTRY FORM (Manual Entry Only) 1 of 2

ENTRANT DETAILS (Please complete legibly in BLOCK CAPITALS)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Honours \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Post Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel No: \_\_\_\_\_

I accept the Conditions of Entry and confirm that I am a member of the RPS Nature Group.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

The Entry Fee this year is set at £8 for the complete entry.

This change in fee structure is a pilot with two objectives. Firstly to provide an additional benefit to Nature Group members, and secondly, to encourage more members to enter more sections of the exhibition. The committee hope to be able to continue this in future years, but will need to review the position post the exhibition.

Please support this initiative by entering all sections.

Prints will be returned by:	ENTRY FEE	£ 8.00
Royal Mail 2nd Class or MyHermes		
A signature will be required on delivery	Return Postage or My Hermes Courier	£ 7.00      £
	Total Amount Due	£ _____

Please send your entry to:-  
RPS Nature Group Exhibition,  
c/o Ralph Snook ARPS  
8 Knole Close  
Almondsbury  
Bristol BS32 4EJ

Please make cheque payable to:  
RPS Nature Group

E-mail: [rpsngexsec@btinternet.com](mailto:rpsngexsec@btinternet.com)

## RPS Nature Group Members Exhibition 2018

### ENTRY FORM (Manual Entry Only) 2 of 2

IMAGE ENTRY DETAILS (Please complete legibly in BLOCK CAPITALS)

#### Prints - Category A

All creatures - birds, mammals, reptiles, marine life, insects, etc.

Cat Id	Image Title
PA1	
PA2	
PA3	
PA4	

#### Prints - Category B

All plant life (including flora, fungi, lichens) and all other subjects, including geological and microscopy, plus patterns (design and form found within nature).

Cat Id	Image Title
PB1	
PB2	
PB3	
PB4	

#### Digital Images - Category A

All creatures - birds, mammals, reptiles, marine life, insects, etc.

Cat Id	Image Title (File name)
DA1	
DA2	
DA3	
DA4	

#### Digital Images - Category B

All plant life (including flora, fungi, lichens) and all other subjects, including geological and microscopy, plus patterns (design and form found within nature).

Cat Id	Image Title (File name)
DB1	
DB2	
DB3	
DB4	

# RPS Nature Group Members Exhibition 2018

## CONDITIONS OF ENTRY

Entry is restricted to members of the Nature Group of the Royal Photographic Society.

### General Conditions

- All entries must be titled with the correct English name. The scientific name should only be used where there is no English name. **Trivial and/or cute titles are not acceptable and will result in disqualification.**
- All images must convey the truth of what the author saw at the time of taking. **Any manipulation must be confined to exposure adjustments and the removal of minor blemishes or distractions.** The final image must have been produced from a single negative, transparency or digital recording and must not be a combination of images. The only exception to this is focus stacking.
- Work accepted in previous Nature Group Exhibitions will not be eligible regardless of which section it was entered into, i.e. prints acceptances cannot be entered as slides or digital images, nor digital images as prints or slides. **This also applies to near duplicates of previous acceptances.**
- Entering this exhibition assumes that entrants have agreed to their entries being used to promote the Nature Group by inclusion in, for example, the Exhibition DVD, the Nature Group magazine 'The Iris', the Nature Group eNewsletter, the Nature Group section of the RPS website and The RPS Journal. Copyright of all images remains with the author.
- Acceptance of entries will be notified by a report card which will be emailed or posted to all entrants.
- Whilst every care will be taken of all entries submitted, the Nature Group cannot accept any responsibility for loss or damage however caused.
- Submission of work implies acceptance of the above conditions.
- **Failure to comply with the Conditions of Entry will result in your entry being rejected.**

### Print Conditions

- Mount size for prints should not exceed 50cm x 40cm. Please keep the thickness of the mount to a maximum of 2.8mm. **Mounts too thick will not be hung at the exhibition.**
- Please also note that any print mounts that are not of the above sizes, or have on the back, velcro pads, peeling tape, or any sticky substance, will be disqualified, as they could damage other prints.
- Overseas entries can be sent unmounted. Overseas entries should be clearly marked on the outside: *'Photographs for Exhibition only - to be returned to sender. No commercial value'*
- The back of each print entered must bear the title and name & address of the author.  
If using the manual entry system, the number of each entry, corresponding with the entry form should also be included.  
The author's name must not appear on the front.
- If not entering via the on-line entry system then a CD/DVD containing the digital files of your prints must be included with the entry. See the notes below relating to digital files on the CD/DVD.
- All unaccepted prints will be returned as soon as possible after the opening of the Exhibition, but only if the correct return postage has been paid in advance. The prints will be returned in their original packing - please ensure that this is adequate, but please take into account that parcels have to be opened by the exhibition secretary. Accepted prints will be retained for display during 2018. These prints will be returned after the 2019 Exhibition opens in April 2019.

### Production of DIGITAL files

- **Maximum size is 1400 pixels horizontally by 1050 pixels vertically.** Vertical images must be 1050 pixels on their longest side. Files to be in jpeg format, in the sRGB colour space and 300dpi.  
Please do not add a background fill as the projection software will do this automatically.
- **Manual entries:** CD/DVD, with your name/s and distinctions written clearly on it, containing a folder for each entrant, with up to 16 images in each folder.  
Folder naming protocol: Name and RPS Distinction (e.g. **Joe Bloggs ARPS**)  
File naming protocol: Category and number corresponding to the details on the entry form, space and Title. (e.g. **PA1 Common Seal DB1 Oxeeye Daisies**). Please use both upper and lower case, as in these examples. The titles as entered will be used on the exhibition DVD.
- **Burn as a Data CD/DVD and close it.** Do not use options to write 'Session' or 'Multi Session'.
- All CD/DVDs will be destroyed after the close of the Exhibition.





More pictures from

**The Danube Delta**  
by Gordon Follows ARPS

See page 11

Top: Little Bittern

Left: Whiskered Terns nesting

Bottom: Red-necked Grebe stretching

