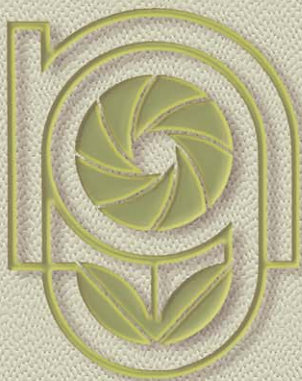


*Magazine of the Nature Group  
of The Royal Photographic Society*

THE



IRIS



*No. 78 - Winter 2000*





Photo by Dennis Johnson ARPS - "Stag Beetle" male  
one of The Iris "Five Slide" 3rd Prize set

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# PUBLICATION INFORMATION

The IRIS is published by The Nature Group of the Royal Photographic Society three times a year. Copy and publication dates are:-

	<u>Spring Issue.</u>	<u>Summer Issue</u>	<u>Winter Issue.</u>
<b>Copy deadline:-</b>	<b>23rd January</b>	<b>23rd May</b>	<b>23rd September</b>
U.K. members receive by:-	18th March	15th July	15th November

**Contributions** on all aspects of Nature Photography and Natural History are welcomed, including reviews on relevant books & equipment. Material should be typed, double spaced, on one side of the paper only. Copy can be accepted on floppy disc (RTF or Microsoft ‘Word’) accompanied by printed copy. Please send submissions to The Editor. *No payment is made for material used and whilst every care is taken neither the Editor, nor the Nature Group, nor Printers accept liability for any damage that may occur to photographic material submitted*  
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**Magazine Distribution:-** The IRIS is posted using labels produced by the RPS Membership Dept in Bath. Any Nature Group member who does not receive their copy should contact the Membership Department so that their name appears on a label in the future. However the Editor will be pleased to post single copies to those who have failed to receive them.

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**Front Cover Photo** by Tony Wharton FRPS  
 "Young Leaves of Sycamore" one of The Iris "Five Slide" 1st Prize set.

**Back Cover Photo** by Frank Millington ARPS  
 "Green Woodpecker (male) at Nest" one of The Iris "Five Slide" 2nd Prize set

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**Printed by Stanley L. Hunt (Printers) Limited**

Layout and distribution by John & Margaret Myring

## EDITORIAL

Bear with me whilst I indulge in my last grumble as the millennium draws to a close. Don't despair it's just for the first three paragraphs.

Firstly may I remind members that our magazine is called 'The Iris' not 'Iris'. My neighbour's name is 'Iris' and items so addressed risk

being passed to her rather than appearing in print.

Next there is the continuing lack of volunteers (with a few notable exceptions). Which brings us to the perennial request for Field Meeting Leaders. Why should the Programme Coordinator be forced to telephone around cajoling, pleading, maybe even trying a spot of blackmail in an attempt to ensure a reasonable number of events? *Please, please, respond on the enclosed leaflet.*

*Right, grumble over, it's safe to read on.* What's that? Oh, yes, I am one of those who believes the new millennium starts in 2001 and I promise not to grumble once during it's first decade.

The start of the new millennium sees our Silver Jubilee. The Nature Group was inaugurated 25 years ago on the 29th January 1976 and to celebrate it our Chairman, Martin Withers FRPS, is arranging a rather special weekend but I'll leave him to tell you about it. As Editor I've already started work on preparing the Spring issue of The Iris as a Jubilee Edition which will appear in March 2001.

**Overseas Matters:-** An overseas member has written to our Chairman with a number of interesting suggestions relating to overseas members. One of these covered the publication of articles and photographs from overseas members which also included the idea of a special international section in The Iris once a year.

I welcome suitable material from all sources including that from overseas members. Given that there are 600 UK and 54 overseas members it is not surprising that there is a larger proportion of contributions from the UK. Having said that Peter Ginn (Zimbabwe) was published in the last issue and over the last few years work from Constantinos Petrinos (Greece), Manfred Klindwort (Germany) and Dr. Cyril Manzansky (America).

Accepted that it may not have been obvious that the author was an overseas member as I have never thought it relevant to indicate the country of the author in the title.

I'm very conscious that for overseas members The Iris is probably the only tangible benefit they receive from our Group and would wish to be as helpful and accommodate them as far as possible. However I'm uncertain as to what an international section should contain, how it would work, and what additional benefit it would give to our overseas members?

Bear in mind that the current 54 members are spread across 25 countries. See the bottom of page 6 for full breakdown.

My preference is to maintain full flexibility by publishing the best available variety of suitable material in each issue. If there were a special 'International Section' in one issue a year does that mean anything from overseas should be kept just for that issue and excluded from the other two?

*What do overseas members think? Would you like a special section for yourselves in at least one issue a year? How would this benefit you and what should it contain? Please write or e-mail direct to The Editor* ❀



## ***FROM THE CHAIR***

***Martin Withers FRPS***

In the last issue of the Iris I mentioned that the Nature Group Committee had decided to hold a weekend Convention for Nature Group members and guests, to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the Group's existence. The venue for this event

will be Brooksby Agricultural College, near Melton Mowbray in Leicestershire. Over the summer months the programme for the weekend has been finalized and a booking form is enclosed with this issue. It would be extremely helpful if members could book their places as soon as possible. If we have received insufficient support for the Convention by the early New Year, the event will be cancelled. You are reminded that a limited number of places are available (70) and they will be allocated on a first come first served basis.

The event will commence on Friday August 10th 2001 with dinner at 7.30, followed by two slide presentations. The first will be by Harold Grenfell FRPS and will be entitled 'A Short History of Black & White Bird Photography'. Following Harold we have Gordon Langsbury FRPS, one of the country's leading bird photographers, who will take us on a journey to Norway by presenting his talk entitled "High on the Hardangervidda". This talk revolves around the birds of Hardangervidda, Europe's largest National Park.

Saturday morning will commence with a Nature Distinctions Advisory session (please indicate on your booking form if you wish to have work assessed). Also in the morning we will be shown the beauty of plants with lectures from Robert Hawkesworth ARPS and Dawn Osborn ARPS. Following lunch Chris Mattison FRPS will show slides under the heading 'Patterns of Nature', a varied collection of images covering a variety of subjects from around the world. Following afternoon tea, Kath Bull ARPS will present a talk entitled "Mainly Insects" and to complete the afternoon's entertainment Peter Basterfield ARPS will introduce us to "The World of Birds".

Following dinner on Saturday evening, Colin Smith FRPS will delight us with one of his stunning audio visual presentations. Tony Wharton FRPS, who will show a varied mix of subjects and techniques in his presentation entitled "Faces of Nature", will conclude the lecture programme.

I think you will agree that with speakers of this quality we are in for a very special weekend. The total cost, commencing with dinner on Friday evening and terminating after lunch on Sunday, inclusive of all other meals, teas, coffees and accommodation, will be £110 per delegate. Members should note that the college offers student style accommodation on a single room basis (married couples being allocated adjacent rooms) ❀

### **Analysis of Overseas Members as at 31st August 2000.**

Australia - 3. Austria - 1. Bangladesh - 1. Canada - 2. Cyprus - 1. Finland - 8.  
France - 1. Germany - 1. Gibraltar - 2. Greece - 1. Hong Kong, China - 1. India - 4.  
Kenya - 2. Lao PDR - 1. Malaysia - 1. Netherlands - 2. New Zealand - 2  
Portugal - 1. Saudi Arabia - 1. Singapore - 1. South Africa - 2. Taiwan - 1.  
USA - 11. Zambia - 1. Zimbabwe - 2.

**TOTAL - 54.**

## ***ASSOCIATESHIP & FELLOWSHIP - APPLICATION RESULTS***

The Nature Associateship and Fellowship Panel met at The Octagon on Tuesday September 12th 2000. Martin Withers FRPS chaired the Panel with Panel Members John Bebbington FRPS, Tony Wharton FRPS, Colin Smith FRPS and Chris Mattison FRPS. *Fellowship submissions are now recommended by the Nature Panel and forwarded to the newly established Review Panel for ratification before being granted by Council.* The results of the day's assessments are given below:-

**Fellowship Prints:-** 3 applications - 1 recommended.

Richard Merritt (Marine subjects)

**Fellowship Slides:-** 3 applications - 1 recommended.

Robert Hawkesworth (plants)

**Associateship Prints:-** 4 applications- 2 successful.

Tony Thompson (African wildlife)

Ruth Peplow (varied subjects)

**Associateship Slides:-** 12 applications - 2 successful.

John Hill (Florida birds)

John Sixsmith (varied subjects)

## ***THE IRIS "FIVE SLIDE" COMPETITION - 2000***

**FIRST PLACE:-** TONY WHARTON FRPS

**SECOND PLACE:-** FRANK MILLINGTON ARPS EFIAP

**THIRD PLACE:-** DENNIS JOHNSON ARPS

"Our thanks must go to everyone who took up the challenge of entering the 'Five Slide' Competition. We were most impressed by the high quality of the work submitted. Almost without exception, every entrant had at least one outstanding image and many had several. We were both pleased and surprised to discover just how many individual pictures had received the maximum mark.

All of the ten sections were well supported. Birds, Mammals, Wildflowers, Insects and Spiders being the most popular.

Our congratulations go to all of you and especially to the winners. We very much enjoyed our task of judging the Competition and thank you again for your entries."

Best wishes to all, Cath & Peter Mullen and David Haigh.

*Editor:-*

*My thanks both to the selectors for willingly undertaking all the administrative work for this year's competition and also to all those who entered. A selection of pictures from the sets of the three winners appear on pages 1, 2, 17 - 20, 35 & 36.*

*This event, whilst being informal, is certainly a challenge. So I'm giving all members plenty of advance notice that it will be run again in 2001. Start taking the pictures now!*

## ***WHY NOT RIDE THE RAINBOW ?***

### ***PART TWO***

***BY PETER EVANS FRPS***

## **THE CAPE RESERVES**

The Kalahari Gemsbok National Park, now renamed the Kgalagadi National Park, is another huge one with a million hectares in South Africa and a further two million in

Botswana and is managed as a joint effort between the two Governments. There is no border fence and the animals roam freely over the whole area, but the only realistic access for humans is from the South African side. Fly to Upington, where you may need to spend the night, and drive from there. It used to be a long, dusty drive, but the road has been tarred for most of the way and that part can be driven briskly. When you hit the dirt, take it easy, even though the locals do not. The "rainy" season of March-May is the best time and a 4 WD will be handy if it is wet; otherwise a standard saloon is fine and either can easily be hired in Upington. The Molopo Lodge is reached before the park and would make a good stop if it is getting late, but the Kalahari is at its best in the early morning, so you really need a base in the park. There are only three camps and no hotels: Twee Rivieren, near the entrance, offers luxury huts and good food, Nossob and Mata Mata (if open) have older, but adequate accommodation, and you will need to cook for yourself. The park has roads along the Auob and Nossob valleys and two others which connect them. The riverbeds are almost always dry, even after rain, and the impression is of driving along a sandy track in a wide valley. In the absence of rain it will be dusty and hot. In 1999 there were exceptional rains, producing waist-high grass, carpets of flowers and a dense population of kites, goshawks, kestrels and Lanner Falcons. The Auob flowed for the first time since 1974 and the Nossob since 1963.

The main prey animals are Springbok, Blue Wildebeest, Gemsbok (*Oryx*) and a few Red Hartebeest. Lions are quite conspicuous and may roar at night along the camp fence. There are plenty of Cheetah and Leopard; you may find leopard tracks in the camps, but the animals will not trouble you. Black-backed Jackals are common, but the Spotted and Brown Hyenas are nocturnal and you have to be lucky to see them, even at crack of dawn. There are two common mongooses, Slender and Yellow, Meerkat, Cape Ground Squirrel, Cape Fox and Bat-eared Fox. Many small birds come to drink at the waterholes as do two species of sandgrouse. Huge communal nests of Social Weavers cannot be missed: they are sometimes shared with Pygmy Falcons and the yellow Cape Cobra. The camps have Giant (Milky) Eagle-, White-faced, African Scops and Pearl-spotted Owls. I once had a roost of Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters by my hut at Twee Rivieren and photographed the ground squirrels just beyond the last hut there.

The Kgalagadi is better for photography than the Central Kalahari in Botswana and much more accessible. As an alternative to staying a night in Upington, you could consider driving to Augrabies NP. This is mainly a scenic park featuring the waterfall on the Orange River. When the river is in spate, this is truly awesome. Few visitors drive to see the game, but you should find Steenbok and Klipspringer. Rock Hyrax, of a different species to the East African ones, sun themselves on the rocks between the camp and the river and so do Cape Flat Lizards, some of which are nicely coloured. Several other lizards and geckos live around the camp.

Cape Province has several small National Parks, which protect species which were on the verge of extinction. A convenient itinerary is to fly to Port Elizabeth and drive to Addo NP, which has Elephant, Red Hartebeest and Black Rhino, and proceed to Mountain Zebra NP, for animals of the same name and Grey Rhebok, then to Bontebok NP, for the well-marked race of Blesbok and to Karoo NP for Gemsbok, Eland, Black Wildebeest and Springbok.





Photo by Peter Evans FRPS - "Lammergeier".



Photo by Peter Evans FRPS - "Lammergeier

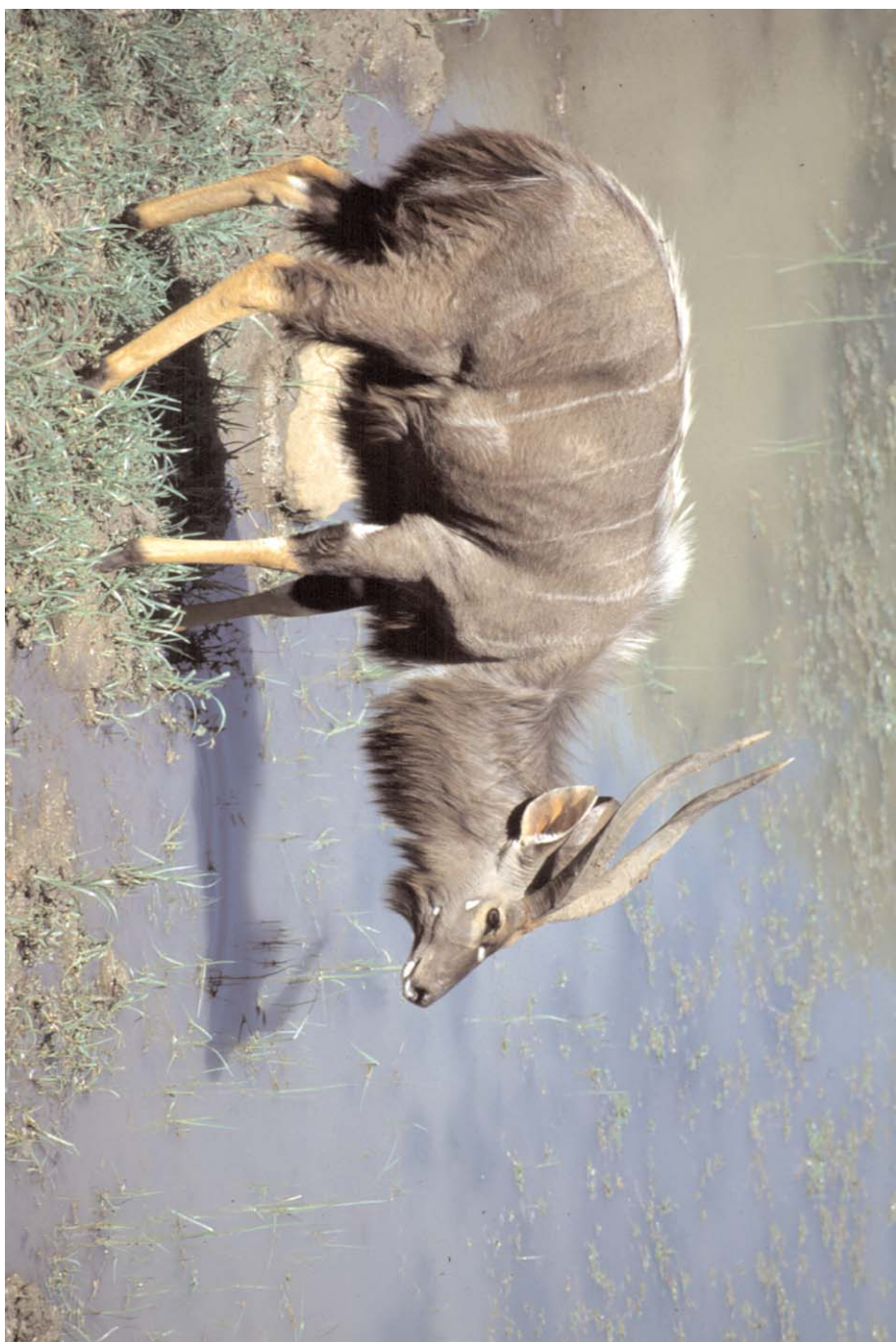


Photo by Peter Evans FRPS - "Nyala".

Birds are plentiful. All these parks have good accommodation and food; they can be booked through National Park headquarters and seem to be little used outside weekends and school holidays. You could drive on to Capetown and Simonstown, and photograph the very amenable Jackass Penguins at Boulders. Avoid weekends here, because people come to swim with the penguins, which eventually leave to seek less disturbed quarters. Because of increased visitor numbers, access has had to be restricted a bit. There is a guest house just across the road, but I have not tried it.

It is an easy drive north to the West Coast National Park, best known for its flowers, though it also has a variety of land mammals and is the best place for the scarce Angulate Tortoise. It is good for whales from late July to the end of October. Southern Right Whales breed round the coast from there at least as far as De Hoop National Park, a long way to the east. Whales are a major tourist attraction in the Hermanus area. Lamberts Bay has a large colony of Cape Gannets, three species of cormorant and a few penguins a five minute walk from the Marine Protea hotel. The colonies are on Bird Island, but there is no need for wet feet as a causeway will take you there. The main flower areas lie to the east and north – Clanwilliam is a recognized centre.

### **KWAZULU-NATAL**

Although they are not currently controlled by the National Parks Board, the KwaZulu parks are in no way inferior to the others and, because they are better equipped with hides, may be better photographically. They are well signposted from the nearest main road.

Giants Castle, in the Drakensberg, offers Lammergeier and Cape Vulture in winter and a superb hide built into the cliff edge from which to photograph them, designed so that you can see out, but the birds cannot see in. It is only available during winter weekends, when park staff put out food for the vultures, though other birds are not slow to benefit. You will be driven up in early morning and can walk back when you have finished. Red-winged Starling, Cape Rock Thrush and Familiar Chat will probably be the first to come and then Lammergeiers patrol the cliff to see what is on offer. Lanner Falcon and Jackal Buzzard will come to feed, but the vultures are quite shy and you may only get flight shots. A 600 mm lens is about right. Use a beanbag, not a tripod. It will be cold and you need to bring your own food. The camp is booked with park headquarters, but the hide needs separate booking with the camp warden.

The reserves in the north east of the province are very different. Like the Kruger, they are best from June to September; after that they are likely to be hot, wet and malarial, though full of birds. The combined reserve of Umfolozi-Hluhluwe lies a couple of hundred miles north of Durban airport along the N2, which bypasses the city. Some sections require a toll, but it is minimal. These reserves saved the White Rhino and hold a big population. From here, stock has been translocated to other reserves all over South Africa and to East Africa, but about a third of the world population remains here. You cannot fail to see them. There is a hide in Hluhluwe on a mud wallow, though the animals cannot be relied on to arrive. There are plenty of other mammals, including Elephant; Black Rhino, too, but they tend to stay in thick bush. Hilltop camp in Hluhluwe is excellent and has a restaurant.

Sixty miles further north is Mkuze. There are huts in the park, and cooks to see to your food. Alternatively, there is the Ghost Mountain Hotel in Mkuze village, half an hour's drive away. There are birds and mammals all over the park, but for photography you will not better the four hides, especially the three furthest away from the main entrance. When conditions are dry, you can watch a procession of Impala, Blue Wildebeest, Zebra, Kudu, Warthog, Chacma Baboon, Vervet Monkey and White Rhino coming to drink within easy camera range. The speciality of the park is the Nyala, which is here in abundance.

Waterbirds, like Great Egret, Woolly-necked Stork, Hadedda Ibis and Hamerkop come to feed at the water's edge. Cape Terrapins form heaps in the warmth of the sun. Be aware that after heavy rain the roads in the park and even the access road from Mkuze village can be difficult. Further north still, on the border with Mozambique, lies Ndumu, which has even more birds than Mkuze, but less of its photographic potential. Instead, try Itala, which has first class huts and meals. The open areas near the camp have plenty of mammals and birds. So have the steep, wooded areas along the game roads, but the bush comes down to the road making photography difficult. Watch out for small puddles by the roadside, used as wallows by Warthogs. In wet weather, Hluhluwe and Itala are better than Mkuze. There is a proposal to join some of these reserves, the St. Lucia Bay World Heritage Site and a substantial part of southern Mozambique to make another huge reserve, but it needs money and is probably a few years away.

Reservations to:-

KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation Services, P0 Box 662, Pietermaritzburg 3200.

Telephone (from the UK):- 0027331 47 1981

Fax:- 0027 47 1980.

### **Update to Part One published in Issue No. 77 - Summer 2000:-**

The flooding which devastated Mozambique in February started in South Africa. River levels rose twenty feet and more causing massive damage to vegetation along the river lines. The Kruger camps emerged virtually unscathed and park staff have cleared nearly all the roads - they are now in excellent condition. There is still water in many river beds (unheard of for this time of year) and animals are healthy and in greater numbers than I have ever known. The park is busy and advanced booking is strongly advised.

The hide at Nwetsi was useless because the water level was too high, but future users should note that it is not straightforward to find. From near Nwetsi take the road signposted to Skukuza and turn left to Sweni, a couple of kilometres further on. The hide is adjacent to the car park on the right. There are now three other hides marked on the latest maps ❀

## *TO COMMEMORATE OUR 25th ANNIVERSARY A NATURE GROUP WEEKEND CONVENTION*

*from the evening of Friday 10th August*

*to lunch, Sunday 12th August 2001*

*Venue:- Brooksby Agricultural College, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire.*

*SEE 'FROM THE CHAIR' on page 6*

*LOOSE BOOKING FORM ENCLOSED WITH THIS ISSUE*

**THE LIMITED NUMBER OF PLACES WILL BE ALLOCATED  
ON A 'FIRST COME FIRST SERVED' BASIS!**



## REPORTS of MEETINGS

### Aston Clinton Ragpits - Wednesday 31st May - Leader & Report Nick Jarvis ARPS

We were again blessed with excellent weather for this meeting. However, the weather had been poor for several weeks previously, which meant the orchids were flowering much later than last year. The expected carpet of Fragrant Orchids was not to be seen at the Ragpits. Fortunately though, the earlier flowering orchids at nearby sites were still in good condition. After a quick count up of members (eleven), I decided to split the party in two, on account of one of the sites being rather fragile in nature. Half the party was left at Dancersend reserve while I led the others to a marsh at Weston Turville. After returning to Aston Hill for lunch, we swapped around.

At Weston Turville, the Early Marsh Orchids (*Dactylorhiza incarnata*) were in very good condition, though great care was needed to avoid trampling them and surrounding vegetation. Other finds included Blue-tailed Damselflies (*Ischnura elegans*), Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*), numerous snails, spiders, and a very large caterpillar that I have not yet identified. What at first looked like a mass of bright orange caterpillars on stems and leaves of meadowsweet turned out to be a fungus, later identified as *Triphragmium ulmariae*.

At Dancersend, good examples were found of White Helleborine (*Cephalanthera damasonium*), Greater Butterfly Orchid (*Platanthera chlorantha*), and Fly Orchid (*Ophrys insectifera*). Doubtless there were other finds here, but I was obliged to spend the day acting as guide at the marsh.

Altogether it was generally agreed to be a very satisfactory outing. Owing to personal plans, it may not be possible to repeat this meeting next year, but I hope to do so at some point in the future ☘

### Horner Woods, Exmoor - 3rd June - Leader & Report David Manners ARPS

On a rather overcast morning, two group members (including the leader) met together with two additional representatives of Rent-a-Throng in the car park at Horner on Exmoor.

A decision was made to follow a route which was to take the party up the steep wooded side of the valley through the lush woodland which characterises this part of the Exmoor National Park, to the open moor some 600 feet above the nearby Bristol Channel. We all enjoyed the many mosses and lichens that blanket the ancient oaks, beeches and birch trees. Beside the path, the nest hole of a Green Woodpecker (*Picus viridis*) was noted, it's presence being given away as an adult bird flew off into the woodland. Light drizzle showed signs of giving up as the group passed the recently excavated remains of a small medieval village on the fringe of the woodland as it broke onto the open moor. A pair of bullfinches (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*) were admired and far in the distance two red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) were spotted through binoculars. Cameras had not been in evidence as the light was far from conducive to photography, even as a basic record of events.

The walk continued over the upper reaches of Ley Hill in the hope of finding more red deer at closer range than those already seen. The weather by now showed signs of improvement, the sun beginning to break through the mistiness and drizzle, but not far away, a thick pall of cloud hung on the slopes of Dunkery Beacon, the highest point on Exmoor. A buzzard

(*Butea buteo*) was observed above as were a pair of ravens (*Corvus corax*) noisily “cronking” their way across the woodland.

A number of favourite resting areas used by the deer were checked out without success. A fine adult adder (*Vipera berus*) was seen basking in the weak sunshine but slid away into the gorse before its photograph could be recorded. A shame, as it was a very dark, almost black melanistic form.

A lunch break was an opportunity for some lively discussion on the merits or otherwise of digital imaging. What else! Refreshed, we made tracks for a nearby breeding site for Heath Fritillary Butterflies (*Melicta athalia*). The wet cold start to the year has probably affected this year’s breeding cycle and despite a much warmer start to the afternoon none of these rare insects were to be seen. The frustration and disappointment was, however, compensated by the sighting at very close quarters of a Dartford Warbler (*Sylvia undata*). This species is becoming more frequently recorded on Exmoor with some probable successful breeding records. Unfortunately, the sighting on the gorse tops to confirm identification proved so brief that even the fastest shutter-finger reaction and exposure would never have recorded the moment of seeing this rare bird from only 3 metres distance!

The walk passed through a recently discovered prehistoric hill fort within which we observed (and photographed — albeit digitally!) wood ants (*Formica rufa*) milking black aphids on the stems of foxgloves in the company of a number of seven-spot ladybirds (*Coccinella 7-punctata*). Strengthening sun created some beautiful mood in the ancient oak woods and many species of lichen were admired on the tree trunks. Walking back down into the valley of Horner woods a brief stop was made to watch and photograph a pair of Pied Flycatchers (*Muscicapa hypoleuca*) in a nest hole in the bough of an oak. Shortly afterwards two roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) ran up the steep slope crossing the footpath a short distance ahead.

Back down by the rapidly flowing Horner Water, a brief detour to inspect the site of an ancient iron working furnace with it’s dam, building remains and slag residues proved to be a light relief from the abundant greenery of the ferns, mosses and woodland plants.

Over a cup of tea at Horner Tea Gardens a decision to take a quick circular tour by car over the moor to try and see deer in better circumstances was sadly cancelled when the cloud over Dunkery decided to make it’s move and to deposit it’s rain on the moorland above! A very damp end to an interesting day brought proceedings to a close. Shutters had barely clicked but at least a number of brief sightings had made the meeting worthwhile for all who attended.

Better luck next time?

**Addendum:** On the morning of June 4, I received a phone call from the one attending group member, to tell me that he had returned to the Ley Hill location that morning, where in glorious warm sunshine he had spent an enjoyable couple of hours in the company of a herd of about twenty red deer hinds and consumed a number of rolls of film.. (His camera, and not the deer! I hope!) ❀

### **Oxwich, South Gower - Sunday 4th June - Leader & Report Margaret Hodge FRPS**

After many less than perfect days we were fortunate once again to have a superb day at Oxwich. As ever from far and wide there were eighteen enthusiastic photographers all hopping for interesting pictures. From Lichfield, Hereford, Hay-on-Wye, Plymouth, Newport, Llanelli and Wiltshire; some never having explored a seashore before.

Because the low tide was in the afternoon we started in the dunes first. After such a damp

Spring the growth was very lush and green. The webs of many Tunnel Web Spiders glistened with large water droplets. Southern Marsh orchids (*Dactylorhiza majalis*) and Twayblade (*Listera ovata*) were abundant. Marsh Helleborines (*Epipactis palustris*) were just beginning to show, promising abundance later. A very large area of Bloody Cranesbill (*Geranium sanguineum*) and assorted members of the *Leguminosae* and Common Rock Rose made a beautiful splash of colour, whilst the smell of Thyme filled the air. Larks sang loudly overhead all day and many people both heard and saw the Cetti's Warbler. Along the board walk the yellow iris were in perfect condition.

Back to the car park for an early and brief lunch and then back down onto the sands. There was an extremely low tide, this probably accounted for the many hundred Common Starfish (*Asterias rubens*) clustered in the cracks, crevices and pools. The vast range of colours of them was much commented on. Two Dahlia Anemones (*Urticina felina*), two Snakelocks (*Anemonia viridis*), and many Beadlet (*Actinia equina*) were seen. A very striking group of Orange Sponge (*Hymeniacidon sanguinea*) was exposed; many *Tunicates*, Common Shore Crabs carrying eggs, Broad-clawed and Long-clawed Porcelain Crabs. A Diver appeared above the waves holding a large Spiny Spider Crab (*Hyas arenarias*), this too was photographed.

In a small pool were some large prawns, a female Pipefish Worm, a very elastic green Leaf Worm (*Eulalia viridis*) ; spawn of Sea Slug, Blenny, Sand Goby and Shore Rockling. A very large Hermit Crab (*Eupagurus bernhardus*) in the shell of *Buccinum undatum* and a large Velvet Swimming Crab (*Liocarcinus puber*) moulting were recorded.

As well as the fauna the low tide displayed some really attractive pattern pictures amongst the seaweed. In particular a large area of the red weed *Dumontia incrustata* was lying in long curves on the sand, the deep red *Dilsea carnosa* together with the Irish Moss (*Carragheen*) with its beautiful iridescent blue tips were lovely to see. There were some long lengths of Kelp (*Laminaria saccharina*) sprinkled with sand in the curves looking very much like dormant snakes.

A lovely photographic day with friends.

ADVANCE NOTICE - SUNDAY 3RD JUNE 2001 - SAME VENUE & TIME ❀

### **Monkwood Nature Reserve, Worcestershire, - 9th. July - -Leader & Report Tony Wharton, FRPS**

Through the good offices of Paddy Harrison, the reserve manager, and of Claire Turner, the previous incumbent, seventeen Nature group members met in Monkwood car park shortly before 10.00 am on Sunday, 9th. July. The wood is a Worcestershire trust reserve and enjoys an excellent reputation for providing a wide variety of subjects for nature photography, especially plants and insects.

As in previous years, we moved off from the car park to the lovely house and garden of professional ecologist Dr Chris Betts, adjacent to the reserve. His 'Robinson' light-trap had been in operation overnight to provide us with some early morning subjects.

Although weather conditions overnight had not been ideal, with a lot of blustery showers, it had been reasonably mild, and there was quite a collection of moths to photograph. These included several Poplar Hawkmoths (*Laothoe populi*) and Elephant Hawkmoths (*Deilephila elpenor*), Peppered Moths (*Biston betularia*), Buff-tips (*Phalera bucephala*), Garden Tigers (*Arctia caja*), Drinker Moths (*Philudoria potatoria*) and Buff Arches (*Habrosyne pyritoides*), to name but a few. Between the showers, they kept us occupied for more than two hours, after Mrs Betts had generously provided us all with refreshments.

After lunch back at the cars, most of us went into Monkwood itself, which was very wet underfoot and subject to further heavy showers. Not surprisingly, it was not easy to photograph those subjects which were in evidence but, between the showers, we saw quite a few White Admirals (*Limenitis camilla*), one or two Commas (*Polygonia c-album*) and Purple Hairstreaks (*Quercusia quercus*), as well as a number of Ringlets (*Aphantopus hyperantus*), Meadow Browns (*Maniola jurtina*) and Large Skippers (*Ochlodes venatus*). At the pools there were a few Large Red (*Pyrrhosoma nymphula*) and Common Blue (*Enallagma cyathigerum*) Damselflies, but hardly any Dragonflies. I saw only a single Southern Aeshna (*Aeshna cyanea*) and none of the Darters at all, which was most disappointing.

Although we had an unproductive afternoon, everyone seemed to have enjoyed the morning in Chris Betts' garden, and I hope that members went home in a reasonable frame of mind, especially those who had travelled some distance, from places such as Sussex, Hereford, Cannock and Wolverhampton ☘

### **Scottish Islands Residential Field Week - 10th to 18th June 2000** **by Kath Bull ARPS EFIAP DPAGB.**

This new venture for the Nature Group proved popular with members, and in the days just prior to departure was oversubscribed with a waiting list. Nineteen participants travelled to North Berwick - most were driven in very comfortable new minibuses which started from Bridport in Dorset; others made their own way north by car or public transport. The detailed organization involved arranging convenient motorway pickup points, and locating sufficient convenient bed and breakfast accommodation in North Berwick. The latter worked very well

Having never photographed or indeed, ever seen the large colonies of UK seabirds that I was told *should not be missed*, I was looking forward to visiting the offshore islands, and observing the activity and life of these birds in their breeding season. I was not disappointed! As we drove along the A1, I caught my first glimpse of Bass Rock, that imposing monolith of basalt and guano, rising 350 ft out of the sea, and which is now monitored by television so that bird behaviour can be watched by visitors to the new Seabird Centre.

During our seven day stay in Scotland, we visited Bass Rock for the 40,000 breeding pairs of gannets; rocky and somewhat inaccessible Craigleith for the colonies of herring gulls, razor bills, shags, cormorants and charming puffins; and the Farne Islands (twice) for the protective arctic terns, and more of the other seabirds. Here we learned the value of wearing a hard hat! Those diving terns can draw a person's blood! On shore we visited Dunbar Harbour for the delightful kittiwakes, St Abbs Head for the large mainland seabird colony, and the rolling Trossock hills for late afternoon landscape photography.

We had lots of sunshine, only a few spots of rain, and on one day only did gale force winds prevent boats from getting to the islands.

I extend my thanks to Colin Varndell especially, who organized the trip with such fine attention to detail and our safety; to Iain Cameron, Nicholas Reuss, and Brian Trott, who shared the minibus driving, also to the rest of the group for being such good company ☘

ENTRIES ARE INVITED FOR THE **4TH WIRRAL SLIDE EXHIBITION**  
**CATEGORIES:-** GENERAL & NATURE

**CLOSING DATE** 31ST MARCH 2001

**ENTRY FORMS:-** PLEASE SEND SAE TO - MRS. M. SIXSMITH ARPS BPE\*

62, CIRCULAR DRIVE, GREASBY, WIRRAL, CH49 3NB.





Photo by Tony Wharton FRPS - "Green-veined Whites on Heath Spotted Orchid"  
one of The Iris "Five Slide" 1st Prize set

Photo by Tony Wharton FRPS - “Fossil Ammonites” one of The Iris “Five Slide” 1st Prize set





Photo by Tony Wharton FRPS - "Black-headed Heron" one of The Iris "Five Slide" 1st Prize set





Photo by Frank Millington ARPS - "Mole"  
one of The Iris "Five Slide" 2nd Prize set



Photo by Frank Millington ARPS - "Grass Snake swimming"  
one of The Iris "Five Slide" 2nd Prize set



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## **MANAGING A**

### **WOODLAND NATURE RESERVE**

*BY ANDY CALLOW*

I share the management of a nature reserve in an upland area of Carboniferous Limestone. Weather permitting, I spend one day a week on conservation tasks. The 17 hectare reserve consists of a steep-sided valley running

north / south, containing ancient semi-natural ash / hazel woodland. A smaller 2 hectare area of floristically rich calcareous grassland, the "orchid slope", with patches of scrub and a copse, is included within the reserve. Altitude ranges from 195m at the south end to 245m along the upper edges of the valley. Unusually for the area a surface stream enters the wood and shortly disappears down a swallet; the cave system linked to this is actively explored and, together with a second cave system lower down, is a designated geological SSSI. The stream also provides a moist environment, and there is a good fern & bryophyte flora. The whole reserve above ground is also an SSSI.

A long-distance footpath passes through the orchid slope but disturbance from the public is minimal. A permissive path runs through Long Wood which is well-used as is the nature-trail path. Disturbance is mainly from children building dams across the stream during the school holidays.

In deciding how to manage the wood, the history of the site was considered. Records go back to 1179 relating to its use by Carthusian monks as sheep pasture. A parish map of 1761 shows the valley as woodland, whereas the first Ordnance survey edition shows the orchid slope as grassland and "brake". Photos taken in the wood in the 1920's show open coppiced woodland with rich ground flora. By the 1950's the woodland had been felled for firewood and replanted with a commercial crop of beech, plus a few larch & Corsican pines. This venture largely failed and when management was taken over by the local Wildlife Trust in 1969 a programme of gradual beech removal and reinstatement of ash & hazel was initiated and is still continuing. Removal of the smaller beech can be done by the reserve managers using a bow saw, but the larger beeches require a chain saw. This work must be done in Nov / Dec to avoid damage to bulbs of bluebells and ramsons for which this wood is well known. Coppicing of hazel has been done plot by plot to encourage the original ground flora and associated invertebrates. This has been only partially successful since the dense beech canopy has shaded out much of the original flora. Too much coppicing would lead to less favourable conditions for the bryophyte and associated flora. Latterly deer damage has restricted the regrowth of ash and hazel seedlings: "Wigwams" of brushwood placed as protection around coppiced stools of hazel have met with some success.

On the smaller orchid slope management has involved maintaining the main grass sward by grazing in autumn, well after the four species of orchid and the other woodland flora have finished. The various patches of scrub have been examined to see whether the ground flora was woodland or grassland type. In the former case the scrub has been left but the lower branches removed to allow more light in; the effect has been encouraging. In the latter case the scrub (usually bracken or bramble) has been removed to encourage grass. In a lower corner of the orchid slope is a bed of nettles; this is a haven for invertebrates and a colony of dark bush crickets (*Pholidoptera griseoaptera*) of which 27 were counted in 1998.

My main task is to clear bracken & bramble on the orchid slope. Towards the end of May I start to pull up bracken by the roots; this is tedious but effective. Recent invasions of bracken can be cleared in a year or two; longer established stands take longer to eradicate. By August / September the bracken has died and I start to slash or lop brambles which

have grown since the previous year and before they establish roots at the end of their runners. Slashing only keeps the brambles in check and does not destroy them. Some patches of bramble are left to accommodate invertebrates and one area of bracken has been left to give some protection to a badgers sett.

There are various general routine maintenance tasks such as repairs to steps on parts of the woodland nature trail and repairs to the dry stone walls where they have been damaged by falling trees, cattle etc. Repair of dry stone walls involves removing all stones down to the base of the damaged wall & rebuilding it from scratch. This is skilled and time consuming work (but interesting for the occasional fossil or invertebrate). In the upper part of the wood we maintain a glade; this is cut every autumn, and every few years we remove a tree or two to maintain a scalloped edge which encourages the butterfly population. One of the non routine jobs last year was to construct a wooden bridge over the stream to replace an old and inadequate railway sleeper.

In addition to the bluebells and ransoms there is a good spread of Dog's Mercury in the wood and in early spring a good display of Golden Saxifrage (*Saxifraga oppositifolia*) in the lower, damper parts. Moschatel (*Adoxa moschatellina*) occurs on the northern edges of the wood; Herb Paris and Meadow Saffron, an indicator of ancient woodland, can be found in places. Toothwort (*Lathraea squamaria*), often mistaken for ghost orchid, also occurs. On the orchid slope, Twayblade, Early Purple Orchid, Common Spotted and Heath Spotted Orchids are recorded as well as Cowslips, Adders Tongue Fern and Moonwort.

Over the years specialists in most biological disciplines have visited the reserve and we now have an excellent collection of records. Last year the local Wildlife Trust was able, with the aid of lottery money, to purchase the reserve together with another nearby, thus securing the land and its inhabitants for the future.

Apart from the rewards of seeing the annual blooming of bluebells, golden saxifrage, ransoms and the orchids, there is also the satisfaction of seeing the gradual expansion of ground flora where it is being encouraged by management practices. Rarer pleasures come

from the unexpected sightings of a lizard or adder basking on the orchid slope, the brilliant scarlet of Cardinal Beetles in spring in the wood, the occasion when a roebuck grazed within a few yards of me while I was having lunch, and the moment when I became aware of a pair of deer fawn's eyes peering at me through some brambles (it stayed there for several weeks).

Having gained much pleasure and interest in photographing wildlife over many years I feel pleased to be able to use some of my energies in preserving a little corner of the countryside and in encouraging the wildlife associated with it and I would encourage other nature photographers to do likewise. The opportunities for becoming better acquainted with outdoor conservation and to work with people who have expertise in other disciplines than one's own can be of great benefit ☘



## *RESIDENTIAL FIELD EVENTS IN 2001*

### **Dorset Field Weekend Friday 8th June to Monday 11th June 2001 at the Burton Cliff Hotel, Burton Bradstock, Dorset**

For this fourth Dorset field event we are again fortunate to have the services of Colin Varndell and a venue that is ideally suited for a photographic weekend. Colin lives locally, and is a highly experienced photographer, naturalist and writer. This corner of Dorset is rich in nature reserves and outstanding landscapes. The programme will include evening slide lectures and two whole days in the field at the best photographic sites in the area - the same successful formula that we have used in our previous weekends. It should provide some splendid photography under expert guidance and in congenial company.

**Cost :- £130 to £150 according to accommodation.** The cost includes full board for the 3 night stay, and two whole day field trips and evening lectures.

***Deposit Required £25 per person.***

***Please make deposit cheque payable to 'The Burton Cliff Hotel'.***

*For further information for either of these events please  
contact:-Kath Bull ARPS - Tel 01892 663751*

*For reservations please send your deposit with an S.A.E.*

### **A Week in the Scottish Islands -- visit Craigleith, the Farnes, Bass Rock, etc. for fabulous Bird Photography.**

**7 nights - depart Saturday 16 June return Saturday 23 June 2001**

This trip will follow roughly the same format as the successful 2000 trip, and is a non-profit making venture with Colin Varndell. Members will stay in Bed & Breakfast accommodation in North Berwick. Transport will be by minibuses from Dorset with pre-arranged pickups on the way. Some help with driving will be needed. The programme will include daily boat trips to the islands to photograph the magnificent colonies of seabirds, gannets, herring gulls, cormorants, shags, guillemots and the charming puffins, with alternative shore based locations in adverse weather. Evening meals will be taken in a local hotel.

**Cost:- £450 maximum - Single supplement £40.** The cost includes B & B and evening meals for 7 nights, all boat and landing fees, and all minibus travel.

***Deposit Required £50 per person.***

***Please make deposit cheque payable to 'Colin Varndell'.***

*Deposits on either event are non-refundable unless the member's  
place can be filled.*

*They will be returned in full if the event is cancelled by the organiser.*

## MEMBERS' LETTERS

*The views expressed by correspondents are not necessarily those of the Editor  
nor of The Nature Group Committee*

*[The following is an extract from a letter which Dennis kindly sent following his short initial letter enclosing a print from a digital photograph.*

*This correspondence brought to my attention the fact that whilst we have previously debated Digital Imaging in relation to Nature Photography in general terms we have not had any views expressed as to the suitability of digital cameras in nature photography. So I asked Dennis to set the ball rolling. Hopefully other members will give us the benefit of their views / experience.*

*From my own very limited knowledge of such cameras I offer the following:- Firstly that until Digital SLR's with interchangeable lenses are more affordable the current fixed lens cameras are of limited use. Secondly, that the majority of serious nature photographers need transparencies, either to use in exhibitions or for possible publication. Whilst it is comparatively easy to scan slides to produce digital prints, producing acceptable transparencies from digital files is far more difficult. Both the current cost and uncertain quality probably make this a non-starter.*

*What do you think? Letters please.]*

Dear John

3 July 2000

As you realise from being dead against four years ago, I am now fully besotted by digital. Firstly for the convenience of my light room work against my old wet room and the ability to print exactly the same image again as many times as you wish whenever you wish, the absence of nasty dust or chemical processing spots to be removed etc. etc.,

The Nikon 950, like most digital consumer cameras has a chip, image size, which is smaller than a 35mm frame, in the case of the 950 1/1.8. This coupled with the very short focal lengths, usually zooming between 8mm - 24mm (giving a 35mm equivalent to 35mm - 135mm) means that the depth of focus is much greater at any given aperture than on conventional cameras.

I suppose that guessing the depth of field is no more difficult than using a hard to see stopped down preview on a film camera. The Nikon gives complete control over aperture or shutter priority, manual focussing etc. in addition to various automatic options. The latest Nikon 990 has a number of extra features which include one which highlights the edges of the items in focus on the LCD screen.

I have taken many nature pictures for my own interest over the years when I found the subject matter of beauty. I do not consider myself a naturalist and my latest foray is due to a combination of a guided walk highlighting miniature hard to find wild flowers on Stanpit March, which is on the Dorset coast near Christchurch, and the acquisition of the 950 which focuses down to 0.8".

This resulted in my spending a couple of days on my tummy on the, not always dry, parts



of the marsh recording the outstanding beauty of only a limited number of the 300/400 species there and concentrating on the ones which were only an inch or less in diameter.

I think that digital has a lot to offer all fields of photography. The present consumer cameras I do not think are suitable for nature 'long distance' work like animals etc. where the telephoto/conventional still rules. The Coolpix 990 with its 3.3 megapixels and macro ability is marvellous for the small flowers and plants.

The Nikon D1 which takes standard Nikon lenses is the first sub - £5000 digital camera which offers wildlife opportunities but even this (body only) currently costs minimum £3,500. The Fuji S1 (body only) promised soon at £2100 is going to be cheaper and no doubt time will produce cheaper ones still which will have the same ability to take standard lenses.

The advantages of these standard lens digital cameras for nature, if they ever become affordable, are very many. Because of the size of the CCDs currently used, the focal length of the lenses are increased by a factor of 1.5 so that a 70mm - 300mm f 2.8 Sigma lens for example becomes 105mm - 450mm and their 170mm - 500mm becomes 250mm - 750mm while the size and weight does not alter!

In addition because you can inspect the image straight away you can still take 50 to get a good one but you can throw the other 49 away on the spot and not waste film and processing later to see what you have (or have not) got.

I won't bore you with other factors which make it good in my mind - the last bastion of conventional defence was that the prints have only a short colour life but now Epson have brought out a 100 year print life ink/paper combination which beats any existing conventional colour print process I believe.

Best wishes, Dennis Toff ARPS (Radlett, Herts) ❀

## ***NATURE GROUP ANNUAL EXHIBITION - 2001***

***SELECTORS:-***

***ROBERT HAWKESWORTH ARPS***

***COLIN SMITH FRPS***

***MARTIN WITHERS FRPS***

**CLOSING DATE FOR ENTRIES IS 24TH FEBRUARY 2001**

**SEE ENCLOSED ENTRY FORM FOR FULL DETAILS**

***THE EXHIBITION WILL BE ON DISPLAY FROM 28TH APRIL TO 5TH MAY 2001***

***AT SMETHWICK PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY.***

***FURTHER DETAILS IN SPRING ISSUE OF THE IRIS.***

## ***BLOODY BAY MARINE PARK - - CAYMAN ISLANDS.***

*BY DR. ANNE OWEN FRPS*

There's nothing quite like the prospect of leaving behind the drab UK winter and heading off to the warmth and sunshine of the Caribbean in February. My plan this year was to spend a week on a live-aboard dive boat based in Grand Cayman, in the hope

that the winds and weather would be kind enough to allow us to travel the 80 miles to Little Cayman and the somewhat gruesomely-named Bloody Bay Marine Park.

Little Cayman is the smallest of the Cayman Islands, only 9 miles long and 1 mile wide at most, with a maximum elevation of 40 feet above sea level. Offshore, the water depth plunges to over 6,000 feet, in many places in sheer vertical walls. These spectacular drop-offs, densely coated in corals and sponges and with crystal clear visibility make this area immensely popular with divers. The Marine Park protects the reefs by limiting the numbers of boats bringing divers each day and by providing a series of permanent moorings along the reef to avoid the damage that would be caused by boats dropping anchor. Additionally, divers are not permitted to wear gloves to protect their hands. This is very effective in making people extremely careful not to touch anything!

We started our week's diving in Grand Cayman with two dives on a small wreck. The wreck itself was none too photogenic, but it did host a large Tiger Grouper being cleaned by a collection of cleaner wrasse, and juvenile Spanish Hogfish. When being cleaned, many fish become almost trance-like and can be quite closely approached by a photographer using very slow movements. Any sudden movement, though, and the fish will throw off its attendants and scoot away very quickly.

We made an overnight passage to Little Cayman and started four great days of diving on Bloody Bay Wall. My real passion is for macro-photography, but that really cannot do justice to the wonderful scenery here, so I promised myself that I would make a real effort to get to grips with wide-angle. For wide-angle photography underwater the limitations of lighting usually means featuring a foreground subject about 1-3 feet in front of the lens, that can be lit by flash and accepting that any elements of the picture in the background will be shades of monochrome blue.

The sponges that drape the walls of Bloody Bay are spectacular in size and in the diversity of forms and shapes, but adding artificial light from a torch or a flashgun reveals even more spectacular colours. Muddy yellows can turn out to be many brilliant shades from lemon to orange, the rather dull bluish Azure Vase Sponge becomes a vibrant, delicate lilac and most unexpectedly of all, many inky, black blobs glow with deep, rich and beautiful reds. This means that there is even more excitement than usual in getting back the processed films each day (they do E6 processing on the boat). While you will know what you had in the way of composition when you took the picture, you can never be really sure about the colours until you see the finished slides.

Sponges and corals are not the only subjects to lend themselves to wide-angle. Another common sight along the top of the sheer wall is shoals of grunts and snappers, essentially resting during the day before becoming active feeders at night. These fish make lovely subjects- silver, with yellow and blue detail, drifting in elegant groups of 20-50 fishes, often against spectacular backgrounds of soft corals and clear blue water. Even in sunlight, you need to use a hint of fill-in flash to avoid a blue-cast and so a very careful approach is needed to get close enough without spooking the fish, but the results are worth it.

My final subjects for wide-angle were back in Grand Cayman at a very famous site called Stingray City. Here, a large population of stingrays has become accustomed to daily hand-outs of frozen squid from divers to supplement their normal diet of crustaceans sucked up



Photo by Anne Owen FRPS - “Peppermint Goby” (*Coryphopterus lipernes*)



Photo by Anne Owen FRPS - “Diamond Blenny” (*Malacoctenus boehlkei*)





Photo by Anne Owen FRPS  
“Sergeant Major guarding egg patch.”



Photo by Anne Owen FRPS  
“Social Feather Duster” (*Bispira brunnea*)



out of the sandy sea bed. Not only are these creatures unafraid, they are distinctly pushy and swarm all over, looking for a handout. The sensation is much like having a large, heavy doormat thrown over your head! Fortunately, they don't have teeth, so they can't bite, but they do have very powerful crushing plates to grind up their food and can give a painful 'hicky' to the unwary.

Is this really natural behaviour? The stingrays first gathered here many years ago when fishermen used this area to clean their catch before heading into market. Later divers and snorkellers came to see close-up creatures that are normally rather wary. Certainly, the stingrays are not captive and come simply because it is to their advantage to do so, much like birds following the plough. Anyway, it's a unique experience and one that certainly offered a rare opportunity for photographs of stingrays. I enjoyed myself hugely.

Much as I enjoyed the wide-angle photography on this trip, there was also a huge range of macro subjects out there too and I didn't pass this up. New 'finds' for me, though admittedly not really rare, included the Diamond Blenny, which is often found in association with the Giant Anemone, the beautiful Peppermint Goby and the tiny Orange-sided Goby, which I could hardly see at all without the magnification of the 105 mm macro lens. I can never resist photographing the almost transparent Pedersen Cleaning Shrimp and I tried but failed to get a decent shot of a Snapping Shrimp, which lives in the burrow of the Corkscrew Anemone. If you can entice this shrimp out, it makes a loud cracking sound with its claws to warn you off. Unfortunately, it darts out and back in to its burrow at great speed and I never managed to press the shutter at just the right moment.

One real highlight of the trip for me was seeing the male Yellowheaded Jawfish brooding a ball of eggs in its mouth. Periodically, the fish spits out the ball, then sucks it back in again. Slow motion video footage has revealed that as it does so, the fish turns the ball of eggs round, presumably to ensure that they all get adequate care in the days before they hatch. Another fish actively guarding its eggs was the Sergeant Major. These fish in the Damsel family lay their eggs in a single layer on a carefully chosen patch of hard substrate and then tend them and chase off would-be predators, of which there are many. The egg patch is dark purple and a very close look will reveal that each egg is individually anchored, at a precise distance from its nearest neighbours.

Another highlight was a close encounter with a group of Caribbean squid, close to the surface at around dusk. Two of the group seemed engrossed in an elaborate dance and oblivious to my somewhat noisy presence, blowing bubbles nearby. Squid are particularly fascinating, both for the way that they manoeuvre using a combination of the delicate skirt around their body and their remarkable jet propulsion and also for their ability to change colour. I spent a very exciting 30 minutes or so watching and photographing these lovely animals.

Overall this turned out to be one of most rewarding and productive underwater photography trips. It was only a pity that I wasn't able to make it two weeks instead of one – next year, maybe!✿

## ***REVISED COPY DEADLINES - FOR FUTURE ISSUES***

### ***PLEASE REMEMBER***

***SPRING ISSUE:- ALL COPY BY 23RD JANUARY***

***SUMMER ISSUE:- ALL COPY BY 23RD MAY***

***WINTER ISSUE:- ALL COPY BY 23RD SEPTEMBER***

*A NEW FACILITY FOR ...  
NATURE GROUP MEMBERS WHO GIVE LECTURES  
(AND NATURE GROUP MEMBERS WHO LIKE TO ATTEND THEM).*

**NATURE GROUP LECTURERS** - *PROMOTE YOUR TALKS IN 'THE IRIS'.*  
**NATURE GROUP MEMBERS** - *READ WHERE THEY ARE TAKING PLACE.*

During 2001, as an experiment, each of the three issues of The Iris will have a maximum of one whole page made available to list details of talks and presentations given around the country by our members.

**FACTS**

Many of our members have a full portfolio of excellent talks which they regularly update and present to a variety of photographic clubs and other venues across the country.

Many of our members are unaware that such talks may be taking place at a location close to them.

Many of the venues hosting these lecturers would welcome an increased audience.

**HOW IT WILL WORK**

- 1/. The facility is restricted to lecturers who are members of the Nature Group.
- 2/. These Lecturers are invited to avail themselves of the facility by sending *brief* details of their forthcoming talks (with venues) to our Programme Co-ordinator Roy Place FRPS (his address is at the front of this magazine).
- 3/. In order to accommodate as many members as possible details will be limited to, and printed in, the following format:-

**RPS Region:-**(that the event taking place in)**Date & Time:-** (of event)

**Lecturer's Name:-**

**Title of Lecture:-**

**Full Address of Venue:-**

**Tel No:-** (of contact at host organisation)      **Cost:-** (if any)

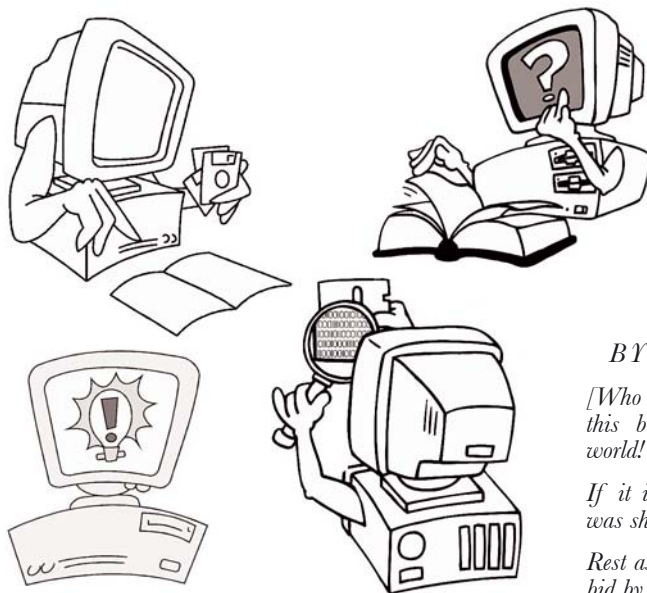
4/. *As you will see from the above it will not take many lectures to fill a page!* Should too many event details be received the Editor will print a selection in which he will attempt to provide as wide a geographical range as possible and at the same time feature as many lecturers as possible.

**LECTURERS - PLEASE NOTE**

We hope you will utilise this **free facility**. Please think ahead and remember the copy deadlines and when members will receive The Iris (both at the front of the magazine). Allow time for your information to be passed from Roy Place to the Editor. *Please don't swamp us with details of your whole years programme in one batch (those later in the year will be lost). Send only details which are relevant to the next issue of The Iris.*

**WILL IT WORK ?**

We hope so, but it is up to you. If no one sends details the scheme will be dropped.



# “ARTICLES & COLOUR REPRO IN THE IRIS”

BY YOUR EDITOR

*[Who hopes he will be forgiven for this brief foray into the digital world!]*

*If it is any consolation the article was shortened by a page.*

*Rest assured this is not a take over bid by the Digital Group.]*

Firstly, please remember that guidelines for publication appear at the front of the magazine under ‘Publication Information’ together with revised copy deadlines.

**Articles:-** As a guide one text page of our layout holds approximately 650 words. In order to publish a reasonable number of items it is helpful to have pieces to be between one and two pages. Longer articles are accepted but may be split over two issues to avoid monopolizing space.

*I implore you **not** to send slides or pictures with the initial text.* Occasionally I may hold articles for a considerable time before printing them. As colour space is restricted by cost not all articles can be illustrated. The benefit of this is that there is also a requirement for articles without photographs. Where slides are to be used I liaise with the contributor a few weeks before the article is due to be printed.

*For those who haven’t contributed before don’t be shy. I suggest that you send a basic draft of your article to see if it is suitable.*

**Colour reproduction:-** One of the reasons for writing this piece is that more of you are using computer equipment to scan your photographs and, quite understandably, wish to send me the resultant digital files instead of the original transparency. This though is not practicable and I hope the following will explain *why I need original transparencies*.

Many publishers use a separate professional colour house / service bureau to prepare the computer graphic files which are passed to the printers. The service bureau contacts the printer in advance to confirm technical information regarding the presses / inks to be used before preparing the files. ‘The Iris’ is not in this league.

Let’s look at some of the factors involved. The following is a distillation of personal experience, magazine articles, books and discussions with various commercial printers, including our own.

**Home computers / ink jet printers etc., :-** Many of us have seen some truly excellent prints produced by these methods. So why can't commercial printers use your file produced on your computer and provide the same results?

Well there are many reasons. One of which is that each part of your equipment has its own colour profile which should have been calibrated so that what you see on your monitor is what comes out of your printer. Put that file in any other computer and it is virtually guaranteed that the result will not be the same. To obtain anything like the original time has to be taken to adjust the file for the new equipment being used. Even then, unless the same inks and paper are being used, there will be differences.

### **Commercial printing requirements - comparisons / comments:-**

**Scanning & Files:-** Our commercial printers set their presses at 150 lpi (lines per inch) and when picture scans are submitted require them to be at 300 dpi (dots per inch). Also the scan should be made at the target size (i.e. size that the picture will be reproduced at in the magazine). Not many of us will normally scan at 300 dpi nor set picture size as low as 12 x 18 cms or 8 x 12 cms. Yes, files and picture sizes can be adjusted but dependent upon how this is done loss of quality (and possibly distortion) can occur. Our printers require files saved as uncompressed CMYK Mac Tiff's. For files generated on equipment other than their own they also need actual prints to show how the colour should appear.

Please see Mike Busselle's article "Digital Files" in his "FAQ's" article in the RPS Journal - July/August 2000 issue. Also Adrian Davies's article "Preparing digital files for repro" appeared in the RPS Journal - September 2000.

*[This paragraph was written by our printers on their Scanning and Output equipment:-* The facility for high resolution in-house scanning is an important part of our pre-press operation. The use of Agfa flatbed or ICG 355i drum scanners provides the facility for scanning flexible or rigid media from transparencies to colour and line art up to a maximum original size of A3. For clients wishing to do their own page make-up considerable time and cost savings can be made if any illustrations are pre-scanned at high resolution. These high resolution scans are then held on our Sun Sparc OPI server, and the client is supplied with a set of low resolution layout files for inclusion in their page make-up. However the layout files are cropped, re-sized or positioned, the server will automatically substitute the high resolution files with the necessary amendments at output stage without further intervention. After make up and proofing, final film output is processed using an Agfa Avatar 30 B2 image setter with register punching and online processor.]

**Printing:-** Home computers and monitors deal with pictures in RGB which has a wider colour range than CMYK. Whilst our ink jet printers use CMYK inks these are specifically manufactured to produce fairly vibrant colours as are most papers used. Also we (usually) only print one picture on one sheet at a time.

The four plate commercial printing process also uses CMYK inks but these are different, less vibrant, and produce a 'flatter' picture by comparison. For our magazine one colour plate is used for four colour pages; this means that on one plate you could have any combination of between four whole page to eight half page pictures. The commercial printer has to 'balance' (compromise is probably a better word) ink colour flows to obtain the 'best' average across this range of pictures. Probably these will be from different film stocks, include both high and low contrast slides, have different colour ranges and casts. Also the small number of copies we require means an extremely short, fast print run with little time to monitor and adjust colour reproduction during printing.

**Conclusion:-** You can see from the last paragraph why individual pictures may sometimes



not appear at their optimum in the magazine and can fall short of a top quality single print produced at home. If I accepted a mix of computer files from contributors the problems would only be compounded with results unacceptable to everyone. Printer's costs could become unaffordable due to the extra time required to attempt adjustments.

Since becoming editor I have checked with some of the other RPS groups as to how they deal with colour reproduction in their magazines. Of those that use colour it seems that there are varying approaches and methods. Whilst all wish to achieve the best possible results I think that given our subject matter we arguably have the greatest requirement for the most accurate colour reproduction affordable and, possibly, we may be the most critical.



Another factor is that we all see colour differently. Some issues ago I thought there was an overall cyan cast, one member thought it was yellow and another that it was red!

I hope that the above was not too boring and gives a reasonably clear resume of the factors under consideration and why *I need original slides* ❀

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## *NEWS FROM NATURE GROUP POSTAL PORTFOLIOS*

**CIRCLE A:- SECRETARY** - Peter Downing ARPS 12, Penny Cross Green, Norton Canes, Staffordshire, WS11 3SX.

After sterling service our Portfolio Secretary, Bill Furse ARPS has fled to Wales! [*Sorry Bill, I didn't mean all those things I wrote on your comment sheet, honest*]. Seriously the Circle has much to thank Bill for and all his work is very much appreciated by all the Circle members.

Peter Downing very kindly volunteered to be our new Circle Secretary. Pete is now looking for an influx of new members into the circle. Anyone interested should send an s.a.e for further information.

**CIRCLE B:- SECRETARY** - Terry Ridgley LRPS 30, Sedgemoor Gardens, Flackwell Heath, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, HP10 9AR.

Terry reports that Circle B is running smoothly (apart from the odd hiccup from Parcel Force). The recent exchange of slides with Circle A was thought to be worth the effort, enabling both groups to view a selection of the others work. Currently the circle is up to strength but Terry is always happy to hear from prospective new members ❀

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Photo by Dennis Johnson ARPS - "Squat Lobster"  
one of The Iris "Five Slide" 3rd Prize set



