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THE **RPS**
ROYAL
PHOTOGRAPHIC
SOCIETY

The IRIS





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Cover Image

Eurasian Otter
Lutra lutra
by
Brian J Boyes LRPS



Editorial

You will have read in recent issues, that we have been looking for help from current members of The RPS Nature Group, to edit this, your in-house magazine. Dawn Osborn FRPS has been Editor of The Iris now for many years (57 issues since Winter 2003). Two years ago, Dawn gave us notice that she wanted to retire from this role and Issue No 151 was to be her last. She has kept her promise to support The Nature Group in the handover, and I can report that we are making good progress. Dawn has given her time generously to the RPS Nature Group and we owe her a huge debt of gratitude. I am sure there will be opportunities to show our thanks in future issues of The Iris.

Producing, from scratch, each issue of The Iris is a huge task for one individual. However the Editor's job can be conveniently split into two tasks, preparation of content and the digitalisation of this content into a format we can send to the printers. Finding one person, like Dawn, who can volunteer what amounts to 40/60 hours for each issue and has the relevant skills, has not been easy. We have therefore decided to split her role; we now have two individuals who will take on this work. This issue of The Iris, No. 152, is the result of the new two-man Editorial Team. Yes, you've got there before me; it requires two men to replace one woman. Enough said.

So, please welcome on board, Brian Boyes LRPS, who responded to our call for help as our Production Editor. He has the necessary technical skill set and time to prepare the digital copy of The Iris. Brian is a retired police officer - Detective Inspector no less. He retired to Mull to follow his passion for otters. As a way of introducing himself, Brian has kindly written an article for us on his passion.

The role of Content Editor falls to me, and I'm delighted to volunteer my time and energies. I have been on the Nature Group Committee now for several years. So hopefully we are now set for the task ahead, but right now is time to report back on several successful events and distinctions since we last went to print in the Spring of 2025

Our main feature is a piece on our annual exhibition. Ralph Snook ARPS delves into a little of its history and provenance. It's an important event in our calendar and so we have given over sufficient space to many of your wonderful winning images.

We can also report on two successful ARPS distinction successes for Keith Wardle and Richard Broomfield. It is pleasing that both Distinctions were awarded for local photography. In Keith's case it was literally on his doorstep, whilst Richard kept to his local patch.

Our annual residential weekend this year was held at Preston Montford in Shropshire 6th-9th June 2025 and Peter Ward has kindly offered us his fond appreciation. A little bit more dryly perhaps but just as important, this issue is also an opportunity to publish our AGM minutes and Treasurer's Report, held at Smethwick PS on 12th April 2025.

Finally, we want to hear from you, our readers. So 'Your Comments', polite of course, and ideas, are most welcome. We hope to make this section a regular feature of our magazine. So do get in touch, simply email us at natureeditor@rps.org



Bruce Kendrick ARPS
Content Editor



Brian J Boyes LRPS
Production Editor

From the Chair

Introduction

The Iris has entered a new era; it is now under new management, and I very much hope that you like it! I must offer a very big THANK YOU to Bruce Kendrick ARPS and Brian Boyes LRPS for agreeing to take on their respective roles of Content Editor and Production Editor. Do read their Editorial for more information. However, they can't work without material! Please get busy and send any articles of interest to nature photographers to natureeditor@rps.org.

I hope that you are enjoying your nature photography and producing great images. Remember to enter our Monthly Competition; the entries are an inspiration to all Members, so please keep them coming in.

Websites:

We now have close to 400 Members registered on the Nature Group website and it remains an excellent place for us to advertise Events, provide Group News, run the Monthly Competition, host Galleries of Members' images and to show the accepted images from our Annual Exhibition.

RPS Developments:

RPS House has now been sold and the RPS has moved into offices close by. The RPS has lost its Auditorium and Exhibition Space, but this is seen as a great opportunity to get out and about a lot more. Dan Jones has departed, and the new CEO is Victoria Humphries, who joined the RPS in mid-May.

Following on from last year's changes to LRPS, the RPS has produced documents detailing proposed changes to both the requirements for ARPS and FRPS and the method by which these Distinctions are assessed. Discussions are ongoing, but the RPS plans to implement the proposed changes from the start of 2026.

Group Membership:

I am very pleased to report that the Group membership is slowly increasing and edging ever closer to a 1000. As of the 27th August 2025, the Group had 994 Members.

Spring Meeting:

Our Spring Meeting, AGM and opening of the 2025 Annual Exhibition was held at Smethwick Photographic Society on Saturday 12th April 2025. Elsewhere in this issue of The Iris you will find the Minutes of the Group's AGM.

It was a great day starting with an excellent talk by Will Cheung FRPS on 'The Changing Face of Digital Nature Photography'. Will had done a considerable amount of research, for his talk, into the latest camera

Technology and we hope to persuade him to repeat his talk in the autumn on Zoom so it can be enjoyed by a wider audience.

The Group AGM was followed by the prize giving for the Annual Exhibition and a viewing of the accepted digital images. The accepted prints were on display throughout the day. Congratulations to all Group Members who had their work accepted and congratulations to the award winners. All are listed elsewhere in this issue of The Iris. Thanks again to Ralph Snook for all his hard work in organising the Annual Exhibition.

Field Meetings, Workshops and Residential Weekends:

This summer, Ann Miles has run an excellent programme of UK Field Meetings, but as in past years we have struggled to cover as much of the country as we would like. We really would like to hear from Members prepared to organise a Field Meeting in their local area. As I wrote in the last issue of The Iris, I am very keen to build up a programme of workshops to help Members develop their nature photography skills. Please let me have any ideas for topics and venues.

The Group's Residential Weekend at Preston Montford Field Studies Centre near Shrewsbury over the weekend of Friday 6th to Monday 9th June was very successful. Fifteen Members booked, although unfortunately two had to drop out due to illness. Despite the less than encouraging weather forecast, five Shropshire Nature Reserves were visited, and moth traps were set up in the Centre grounds on Friday and Sunday nights.

Juniper Hall Field Studies Centre near Box Hill in Surrey has been booked for the weekend of Friday 29th May to Monday 1st June 2026 for next year's Residential Weekend. Further details will follow later in the year.

Fiftieth Anniversary Year:

The Nature Group's inaugural meeting was held on the 29th of January 1976 and so 2026 will be our fiftieth anniversary. A good excuse for a party and a very large cake! We are working on it, but we would love to hear your ideas on how to celebrate this very special year.

Distinctions:

Congratulations to Richard Broomfield ARPS and Mark Wardle ARPS, whose successful panels appear elsewhere in this issue. More will follow in the next issue of The Iris.

Enjoy your Nature Photography,



Duncan Locke, Nature Group Chair

ARPS On Your Doorstep

By Mark Wardle ARPS

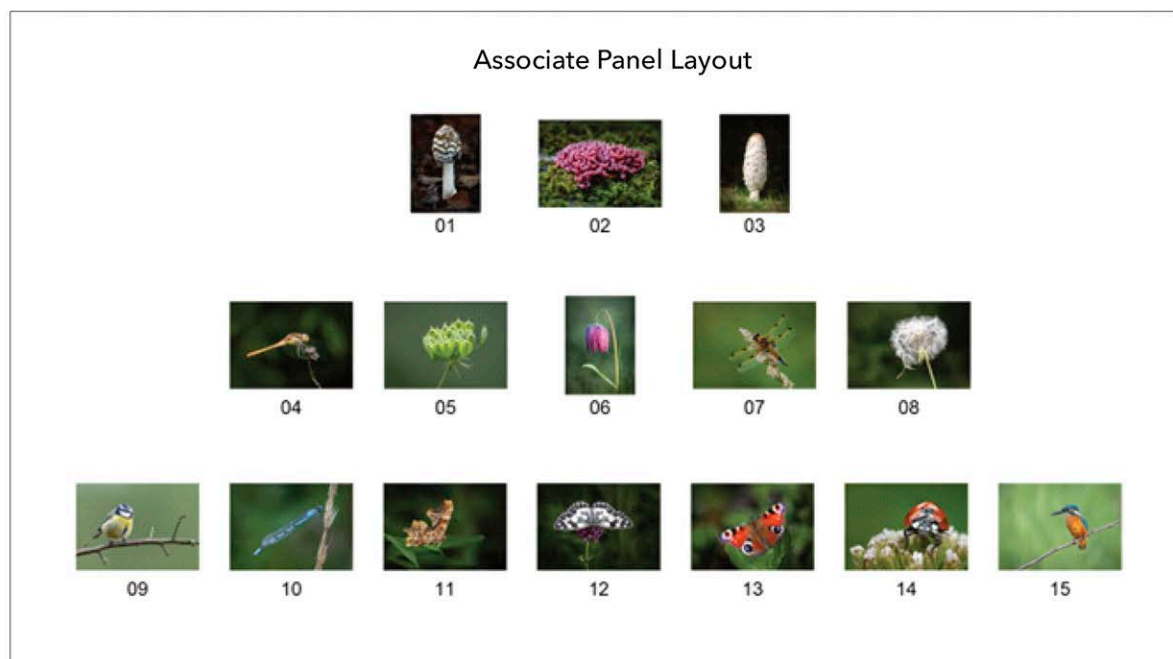
Like many of us I am a member of a camera club, in my case Cheltenham, a large and active club with members interested in many genres of photography. Over the years I have tried many of these genres and achieved my LRPS in 2021 with a variety of images including landscape, travel and nature. When I started to analyse which areas of photography excited me the most, I always returned to nature. So, with the encouragement and advice from my fellow club-members I decided to try for my ARPS in the Nature category.

This brought several challenges, not least to understand what the assessors are looking for, and how to put together a panel of 15 images which met the criteria. To my mind there is not a lot of written-down guidance, however looking at successful panels offers a good pointer. Sharing pictures with other club members is helpful too, as often what I might consider good, may have defects which others spot.

I am extremely fortunate to live in the countryside, right next to a river, adjacent to farmland and a wood. My wife loves gardening; our flowers, shrubs, trees and ponds attract a wide variety of wildlife during the year in each habitat.

It is very tempting to travel around photographing rarer species, but when one looks close to home, through the changing seasons, one starts to realise that often, some of the more common species, we take for granted, are not only beautiful, but also easily accessible. If the subject is close by and the photograph fails to make the grade for whatever reason, it is easier to retake than looking for a new subject.

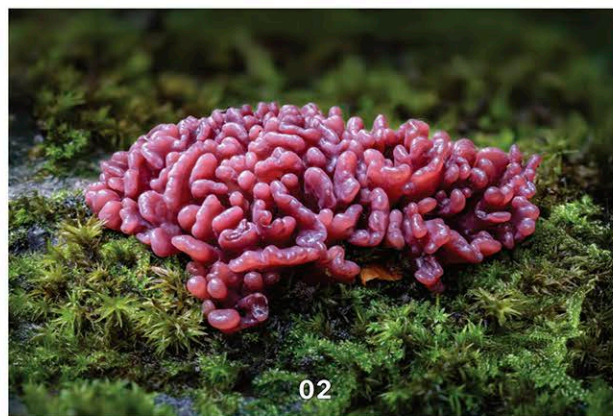
Over a period of two years, I slowly built a portfolio of images which I hoped might make the grade. While doing this I experimented with and implemented focus stacking techniques, often with a tripod but occasionally hand-held depending on the subject,. The big advantage of focus stacking is that it allows multiple images with a shallow depth of field to be merged together to produce a sharp image of the subject, while still rendering the background out of focus. The disadvantage, for me can be the high failure rates. Fortunately, many cameras now have a high shutter rate, and some have focus stacking built in.



This technique is particularly useful for the fungi, seed-heads and a few of the insects in my panel, where the background was difficult to handle. With static subjects such as fungi, experimentation with reflectors or diffusers and perhaps a panel light can pay dividends.

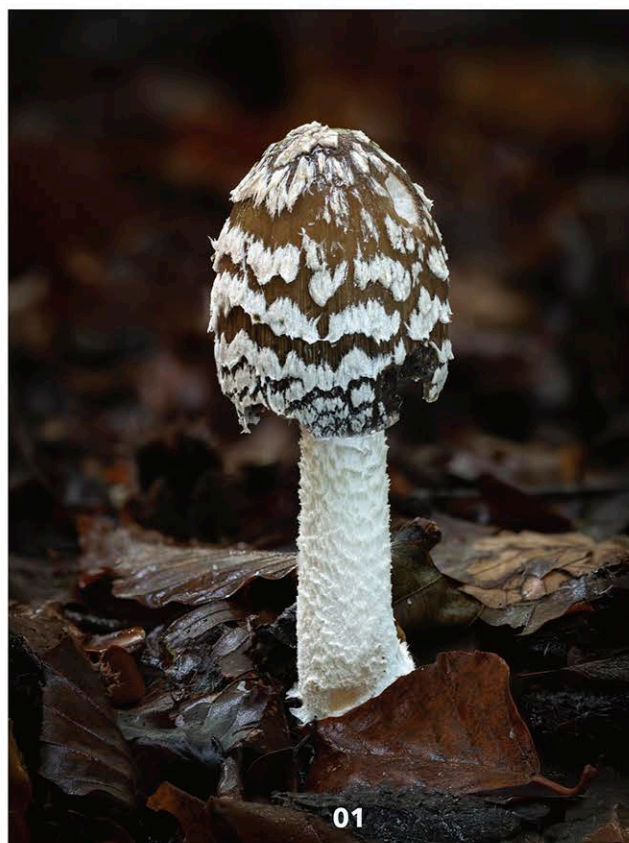
Having had valuable input from an ARPS friend at the camera club, I applied for an advisory day. It is possible to apply for a 1:1 mentor who can be valuable, but I felt the advisory day would help me collect a cross-section of comments, directly, from a few judges. This indeed proved to be the case with each judge picking up on different aspects of the 15 digital images submitted as well as a few words on a number of spare, fall-back images. I thought all their comments were fixable.

The layout of the panel is also important. I had spent a lot of time laying out fifteen, small, laser-print pictures to get a feeling about the panel: light and dark, subject matter, how the images work together. The assessors also had useful comments about the layout



However, when we come to the statement of intent, my words were just not good enough. The statement needs to be succinct and clear about the aims and objectives of the panel, and several re-writes followed before I felt it was good enough. I applied for a print assessment which was only just a few weeks away, and of course quite different from the lower resolution digital images I showed on the advisory day.

The panel layout for prints is important as the body of work is seen as one, with the assessors then looking at each individual image.





What I had completely underestimated was just how hard it was to get accurate commercial prints which match what I was seeing on my monitor. Prints invariably come back darker than Expected - screens are backlit and prints are not - and the choice of papers can be bewildering. Having sent pictures to a few labs and selected what I thought was a suitable paper I then sent off the rest of the pictures to be printed.



They all came back not as I was expecting! I was running out of time and phoned a few of the labs, all of which offered different advice which was not helpful. In the event I selected one who sent me a decent sample. All the pictures came back correct, even if the paper finish was not ideal. In the meantime, I purchased pre-cut mounts and backing boards from a local specialist supplier, aiming for a mount colour that complemented the pictures. The result was a set of images with which I was happy.

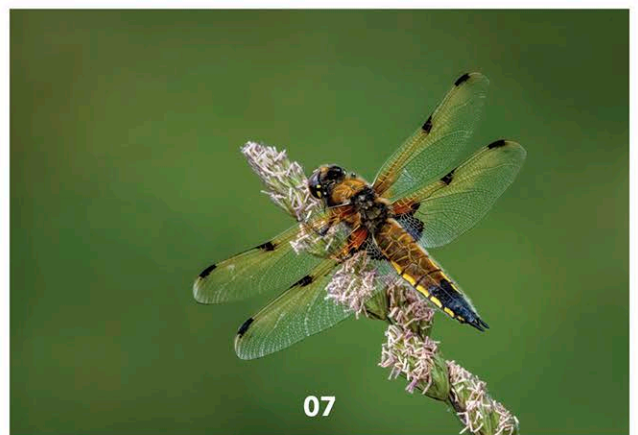
I attended the assessment day in person and was absolutely delighted to learn that I had been successful, albeit it with a comment from the



judges about the paper being disappointing choice! With hindsight I should have printed at home.

Was it a stressful experience? - somewhat. Was it valuable experience? - most definitely. The process is challenging. It makes you concentrate on exactly what you are doing. It makes you critical of your work and I hope it will act as a spur to future improvement. I would recommend anyone to try for a distinction.

Mark Ward ARPS





Statement of Intent

Our garden is adjacent to a river and some woodland, and has been developed to make attractive to a variety of wildlife and wild flowers, with ponds and trees providing habitat for many birds, insects and wild flowers.

My portfolio aims to show some of the variety of flora and fauna which can often be enjoyed close to home without the need to travel any great distance to do so.

My objective was to include largely common species, and some that can be found around woodlands and water close by using a variety of photographic techniques to reveal their beauty which is sometimes overlooked,

Many of these species can easily be attracted to gardens, and it is my hope that this panel might inspire others to garden for nature and derive as much pleasure as it does to me.





Species List

- 01 - Magpie Inkcap (*Coprinopsis picacea*)
- 02 - Purple Jellydisc fungus (*Ascocoryne sarcoides*)
- 03 - Shaggy Inkcap (*Coprinus comatus*)
- 04 - Common Darter Dragonfly (*Sympetrum striolatum*)
- 05 - Cow Parsley seedhead (*Anthriscus sylvestris*)
- 06 - Snake's-head fritillary (*Fritillaria meleagris*)
- 07 - Four-spotted Chaser (*Libellula quadrimaculata*)
- 08 - Goat's-beard seedhead (*Tragopogon pratensis*)
- 09 - Eurasian Blue Tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*)
- 10 - Common Blue Damselfly (*Enallagma cyathigerum*)
- 11 - Comma Butterfly (*Polygonia c-album*)
- 12 - Marbled White Butterfly (*Melanargia galathea*)
- 13 - Peacock Butterfly (*Aglais io*)
- 14 - 7-spot ladybird (*Coccinella septempunctata*)
- 15 - Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*)

The Annual Exhibition of the Nature Group - Introduction

By Ralph Snook ARPS

The RPS Nature Group was founded in 1976 by Heather Angel FRPS with the aim of uniting photographers with a passion for the Natural World. The first Members Exhibition was held in 1978. That exhibition consisted of 3 sections: Transparencies, Colour and Mono Prints. Each section was 'Open' ie all aspects of nature could be entered in each section. Accepted prints were displayed at the RPS House Gallery in London. Over time the Exhibition emerged to be one of the key events in the Nature Group Calendar. It has been run annually ever since, providing an opportunity for members to share and display their finest nature photography.

Over the years there have been changes; digital files have replaced transparencies, and the separation of colour and mono prints has gone. There has also been a significant change to separate images of 'all living creatures' from 'plants, geological and patterns'. This split was an attempt to emphasise the broader aspects of nature beyond the popular mammals and bird images which tend to dominate the entries and so correspondingly receive a larger share of the awards. The current format of the exhibition now has four sections. 'All living creatures' and 'Plants, Geological, Patterns' in both digital and print format. Entry is open to all, and only, Nature Group members.

The Exhibition of accepted work opens in April each year at the Group AGM. All accepted prints are mounted and displayed, and all accepted digital images are projected. Awards to successful entrants are presented on the day. Prints remain on display at the AGM venue for as long as space is available. Over the years prints have also been displayed at a few venues around the country. The availability and costs of doing this has limited our options and currently they are only displayed at the Edinburgh Photographic Society. All accepted images - digital copies of prints - can be viewed on the Group's website

2025 Exhibition

The awarded images and acceptance lists shown on the following pages reflect this year's exhibition. Entry was via an online system and print entries, unmounted on A3 paper, were sent to the Exhibition Secretary during January and February. All images in each section were assessed and finally selected by three experienced Nature Group members. Display space dictated that print acceptances were limited to a maximum of 120, across both sections. Digital acceptances were around 30% of this year's total entry. The selectors were John Chamberlin FRPS, Richard Kay FRPS and Greg Lovett ARPS; all excellent nature photographers, experienced assessors of nature images, who have had work accepted/awarded in previous exhibitions. Several specific awards were then chosen by the selectors.

- RPS Gold Medal to each of the best Digital and Print images chosen across both corresponding sections,
- RPS Bronze Medal for the best in each section
- Highly Commended Certificates at the selector's discretion
- 'Selectors choice' from each selector
- 'The Tony Wharton Trophy' was awarded to the entrant gaining the most acceptances in the exhibition. This year the award went to Ken Rasmussen ARPS.

The prints remained on display at the AGM venue (Smethwick Photographic Society) for 5 weeks and were displayed at Edinburgh Photographic Society during September. All accepted digital images were also shown on a continuous loop at Edinburgh.

The Exhibition attracts entries from around 120 members - about 12% of the total Nature Group membership. We would love to see that number increase. We are confident that many of you, who do not enter, have excellent images which could and should be shared. We welcome entries from you and would particularly encourage prints from both new and regular entrants. Any acceptance in the exhibition is something to be proud of, and while all acceptances, both digital and print, can be viewed in an online gallery, it is perhaps only when you see 120 prints displayed together that you can appreciate the quality and range of work created by our Nature Group members. We look forward to seeing your work in the 2026 Exhibition.

Nature Group Annual Exhibition 2025

Digital Section

Gold Medal Image



Bronze Medal Image (Class A)



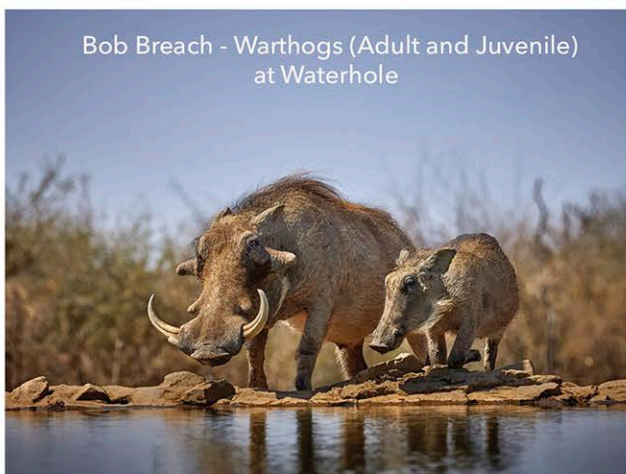
Digital Section Continued

Bronze Medal Image (Class B)



Ken Rasmussen ARPS - Water Avens

Highly Commended Digital

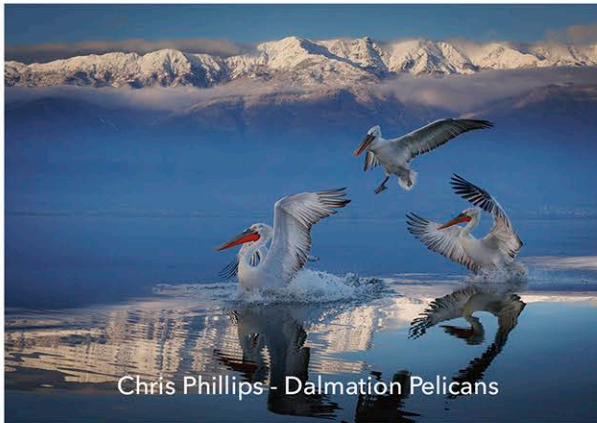


Bob Breach - Warthogs (Adult and Juvenile)
at Waterhole

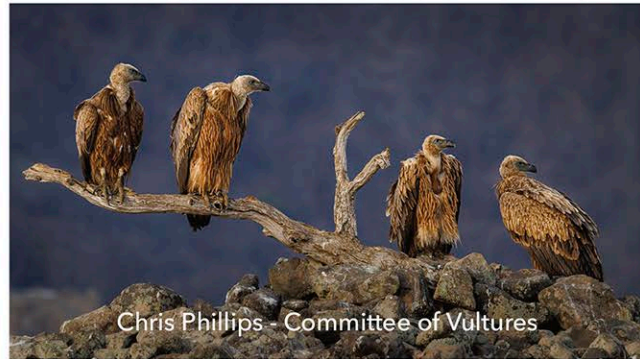


Ann Healey FRPS
Green Immigrant Leaf Weevils

Highly Commended Digital Continued



Chris Phillips - Dalmatian Pelicans



Chris Phillips - Committee of Vultures



Duncan Locke ARPS - Lion Zebra Kill with Hyenas

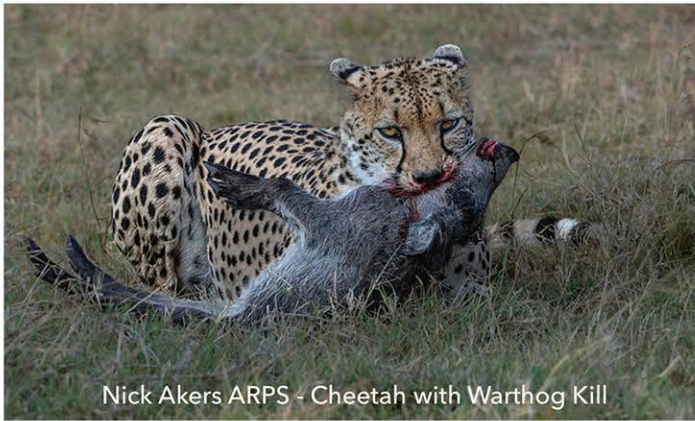


Ken Rasmussen ARPS
Royal Tern Courtship

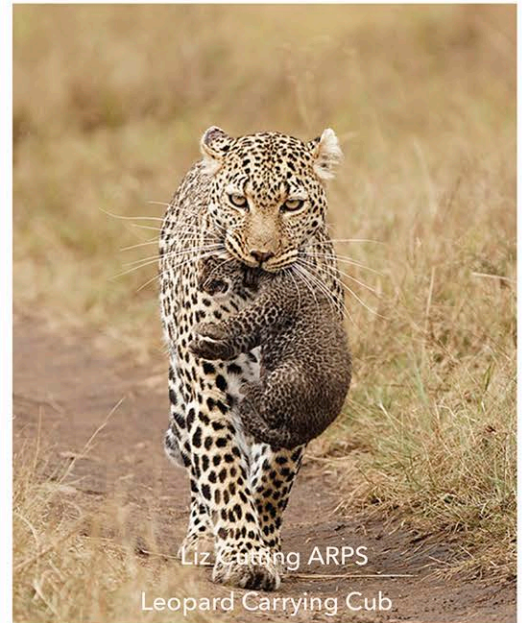


Dawn Osborn FRPS
Hoopoe with Mole Cricket

Highly Commended Digital Continued



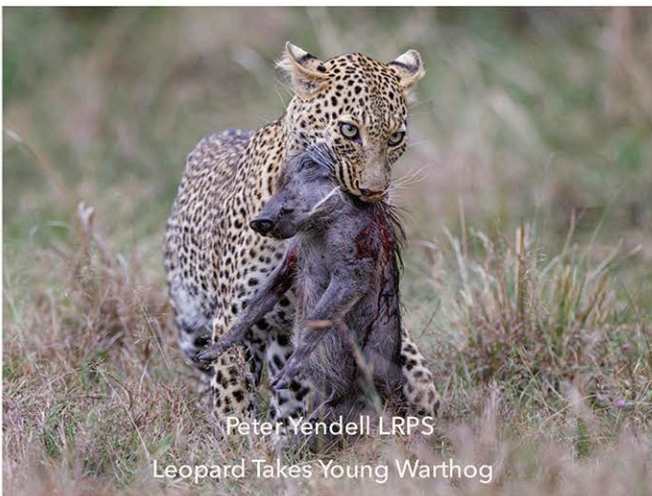
Nick Akers ARPS - Cheetah with Warthog Kill



Liz Kitting ARPS
Leopard Carrying Cub



Peter Farmer ARPS - Large-billed Tern



Peter Yendell LRPS
Leopard Takes Young Warthog



Robin Claydon ARPS
Orangutan Mother and Infant



Sue Critchlow ARPS - Lion Cubs Waiting for Mother

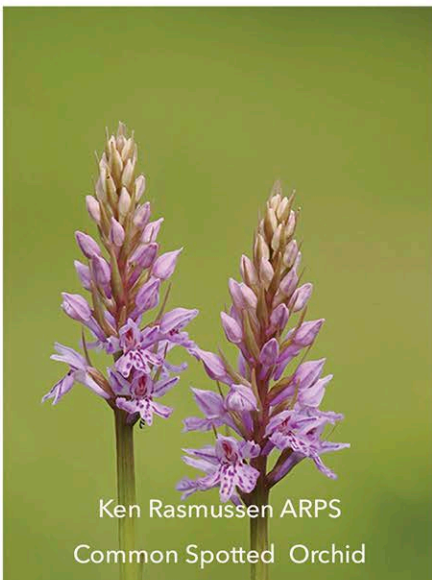
Highly Commended Digital Continued



Christine Holt ARPS
Pasque Flower



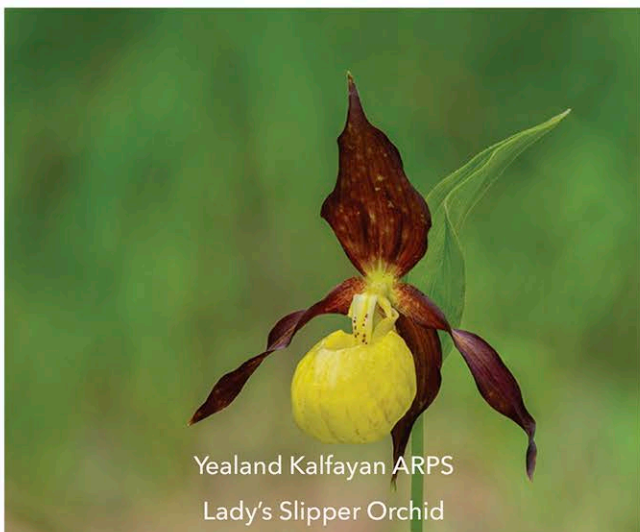
Sue Critchlow ARPS - Marching Little Owl



Ken Rasmussen ARPS
Common Spotted Orchid



Gianpiero Ferrari FRPS
Mycena fungus



Yealand Kalfayan ARPS
Lady's Slipper Orchid

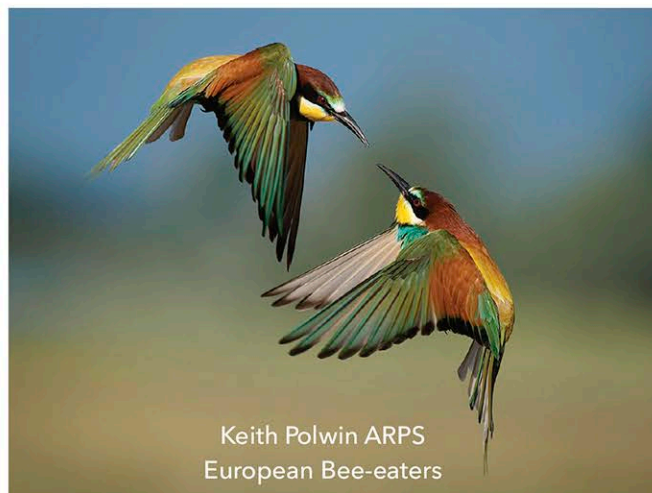


Ken Rasmussen ARPS
Eyebright

Selectors Awards Digital



Gianpiero Ferrari FRPS
Angle Shade Moths



Keith Polwin ARPS
European Bee-eaters



Colin McLatchie LRPS+ Green Turtle



Gianpiero Ferrari FRPS
Cobweb House Leek



Andre Neves ARPS
White Helleborine



Andre Neves ARPS
Bladder Campion

Acceptances - Digital Class A

Author	Title	Award
Nick Akers ARPS Wendy Ball	Cheetah with Warthog Kill Mountain Hare After the Storm Red Deer Stags and White - Tailed Eagle Atlantic Salmon	Highly Commended
Paddy Beck ARPS Gavin Bickerton-Jones ARPS	Cheetah Escaping Crocodile Cheetah Fight Juvenile Kestrel Wing Exercising	
James Black ARPS Peter Bott LRPS	Dingy Skippers Mating Small Skipper Common Blue Damselflies	Highly Commended
Mary Braddock LRPS	Red Deer Hind and Calf Large Red Damselfly with Exuvia	
Bob Breach Colin Brett Maggie Bullock ARPS	Warthogs (Adult and Juvenile) Kestrel Hovering Black Grouse Lek Hawk Owl Landing Pied Kingfisher with Fish Short-eared Owl Portrait Violet-tailed Sylph Feeding Little Owl Drying Its Wings Beetles in Buttercup Mountain Hare in Heather Red Squirrel Peeping Round a Tree Crested Tit Mothers Love	Highly Commended
Jesse Rene Cason	Orangutan Mother and Infant	
Philip Channell Janice Clark ARPS	Polar Bear Brothers Grey Heron with Fish Kestrel with Its Prey Lion Cubs Waiting for Mother Marching Little Owl Black-crowned Night Heron Blue Heron and Great Egret Stand Off Steller's Sea Eagles	Highly Commended
Robin Claydon ARPS	Leopard Carrying Cub Mayfly Emerging from Exuvia Eurasian Brown Bear Reflection Brown Pelican Skirmish Waxwing Hovering Bee Eater with Dragonfly Grebe Courtship Display Great Reed Warbler Hawksbill Turtle with 2 Ramoras Napoleon Wrasse in Red Sea Pygmy Seahorse Komodo Snappers at Shark Reef Red Sea Glaucous Gull Tree Pangolin	
Czech Conroy LRPS	Large-Billed Tern Cuckoo	Highly Commended
Sue Critchlow ARPS	Angle Shade Moths Pair Eurasian Otter on the Rocks Brown Bear in Autumn Colour Bison on the Move Eastern Skunk Anemonefish Squid at Night, Philippines Gentoo Penguin on an Iceflow Tawny Owl Landing Zebras at the Water Hole Etosha NP	
Liz Cutting ARPS		Highly Commended
Nicholas de Cent Gary Dean LRPS Alexandra Doughty Tim Downton ARPS		Highly Commended
Chris Ellison ARPS Wendy M Burton Eve ARPS		Highly Commended
Peter Farmer ARPS		Highly Commended
Michael Feeney ARPS Gianpiero Ferrari FRPS Lachlan T McGil French ARPS		Highly Commended
Rosemary Gillies ARPS		Highly Commended
Chris Gledhill LRPS Phil Green LRPS Richard Hall LRPS		Highly Commended

Acceptances - Digital Class A Continued

Author	Title	Award
Carol Hamcke-Onstwedder Martin Hancock ARPS	Leopard Shake Badger Foraging Call of the Wild	Highly Commended
Alan Harris Alan Hartley ARPS Ann Healey FRPS	Kestrels Squabbling Small Elephant Hawkmoth Common Blues at Ranmore Common	
Jeff Henley LRPS Nigella Hillgarth Margaret Hocking ARPS	Green Immigrant Leaf Weevils Treecreeper Leaping Leopard, Masai Mara Bottlenose Dolphin and Calf Lion Cub in the Sun	
Christine Holt ARPS	Burnet Moths Mating Field Grasshopper Weaver Bird	
Peter Hudson ARPS	Secretary Bird and Locust Jacksons Widowbird Fighting Males	
David Hughes ARPS	Black-veined Whites Mating Heath Fritillary on Grass Seed Head	
Michelle Jackson ARPS	Little Owls Puffin	
Simon Jenkins ARPS	Beewolf Wasp with Honeybee Prey Grey Seal in a Sandstorm	
Koshy Johnson FRPS Yealand Kalfayan ARPS	Blue-tailed Bee Eater Small Skipper Spotted Hyena White Stork Feeding Chick	
Shelley Knight LRPS	Arctic Fox Chase Crested Tit in Snow Sea Mist and Gannets over Troup Head	
Adrian Langdon ARPS	Humpback Whale-Cornwall Spotted Owlets	Highly Commended
Duncan Locke ARPS	Cayman with Catfish Lion Zebra Kill with Hyena	
Jack Malins ARPS	Banded Demoiselle (F) Fallow Deer Rut Steenbox Botswana	
Ita Martin LRPS Darron Matthews FRPS	Wasp Spider with Prey Elephant Hawk Moth	
Colin McLatchie LRPS	Green Turtle Juvenile Turtle	
Richard Merritt FRPS	Whaleshark Feeding in Plankton with Numerous Remoras School of Blue Lined Snapper Longnose Hawkfish Perched on Black Coral Bush	Selectors Choice
Gordon Mills ARPS	Kestrels Lesser Goldenback Woodpecker Thailand Olive-Backed Sunbird Thailand	
Chris Moncrieff LRPS	Meadow Grasshopper Redshank Courtship White Tailed Eagle Flying Through Snow	
Stephen Moon	African Buffalo (Syncerus caffer) Capybara, Giant Cowbird, and Fly Celebes Crested Macaque	
Carolyn Moore LRPS	Humpback Whales Bubble Net Feeding Black Vulture in Flight Baltimore Oriole	
Douglas Neve ARPS	Buff-tailed Bumble Bee Common Blues Orange Tip Wood White	
Andre Neves ARPS	Common Blue Pair Crested Tit	

Acceptances - Digital Class A Continued

Author	Title	Award
David Michael O'Neill ARPS	Migrant Hawker in Flight	Highly Commended
Dawn Osborn FRPS	Migrant Hawker	
	Little Owl About to Land	
Emma Parker	Hoopoe Pair About to Mate	
Chris Pepler ARPS	Hoopoe with Mole Cricket	
	Steller's Sea Eagle on the Ice Pack	Highly Commended
Chris Phillips LRPS	Pygmy Seahorse on Seafan	
	Big Fin Reef Squid at Night	
	Yellow Pygmy Goby and the Neighbour	
	Dalmatian Pelicans	
	Pelicans of Lake Kerkini	Highly Commended
Keith Polwin ARPS	Committee of Vultures	
	Emerald Damselfly	
	European Bee-eater Flight	
	European Bee-eaters	
	Southern Skimmer Dragonfly	Selectors Choice
Somdutt Prasad	Little Blue Kingfisher Emerges	
	Moorhens Catch	
	Pied Kingfisher Courting	
Barry Quatermass LRPS	Wren on Bullrush	
Geetha Ramesh	A Confusion of Wildebeest	Highly Commended
Ken Rasmussen ARPS	African Jacana Running	
	Newly Emerged Six Spot Burnett Moth	
	Royal Tern Courtship	
	Willet Feeding	
Chris Reekie LRPS	Giraffes	Bronze medal
	Leveret	
	Hippos	
Jane Rees ARPS	Grey Wolf	
Jeremy Richards ARPS	Southern Carmine Bee-eater in Flight	
	Yellow Baboons Grooming	Bronze medal
Brian Ridgley LRPS	Short-eared Owl in Winter Sun	
Mike Rowe FRPS	<i>Helina Abdominalis</i>	
	White-fronted Bee-eater with Butterfly	
	<i>Phaonia sp</i>	
	Striated Heron with Frog	Highly Commended
John Scholey LRPS	Long-legged Fly	
Phil Shaw FRPS	Bat Falcon with Female Blue Dacnis	
	Great Bustard Male Display	
	Great White Egret and Grey Heron Interaction	
	Puma Female Approaching	Highly Commended
Lesley Simpson ARPS	Female Bearded Tit in Habitat	
Peter Smith	Black-necked Grebe Trio	
	Crested Tit	
Steve Taylor ARPS	Dolichopus Long-legged Fly on Grass Glume	
	Heath Snail in Summer Drought	Highly Commended
Mary Venables LRPS	Young Male Lion Hunting	
Kevin Wailes LRPS	Peacock	
Karin Wilson ARPS	White-backed Vultures Preening	
	White-tailed Eagle with Catch	
	Southern White Rhino's Affection	Highly Commended
	Grey Heron Scratching	
Peter Yendell LRPS	Leopard Takes Young Warthog	
	Oystercatcher amongst Knots	

Acceptances - Digital Class B

Author	Title	Award
James Black ARPS	Sandstone Detail	
Jason Boswell	Common Spotted Orchid	
Peter Bott LRPS	Early Spider Orchid	
Bob Breach	Common Spotted Orchid	
	Eyelash Fungus	
	Red-belted Polypore	
Janice Clark ARPS	Mycena 1	
	Amethyst Deceiver	
Gary Dean LRPS	Broad-leaved Marsh Orchid	
Chuck Eccleston ARPS	Tongue Orchid	
	Pink Butterfly Orchid	
Gianpiero Ferrari FRPS	Mycena Fungus	Highly Commended
	Cobweb Houseleek in Habitat	Selectors Choice
	Helleborine and Fly	
Ann Healey FRPS	Coral Fungi 'ramaria Pallida'	
	Fritillaria Persica	
	Zinnia	
Christine Holt ARPS	Bonnet Fungus	
	Mica Cap Mushroom	
	Pasque Flower	Highly Commended
David Hughes ARPS	Candlesnuff Fungus	
Yealand Kalfayan ARPS	Alpine Snowbell	
	Lady's Slipper Orchid	Highly Commended
Robert Lavers ARPS	Once There Was a Forest	
Jack Malins ARPS	Amethyst Deceiver	
Chris Moncrieff LRPS	Lady Orchid	
	Pyrimide Orchid	
Jon Mullin ARPS	Blue Globe-thistle	
	Common Hazel	
Andre Neves ARPS	Bladder Champion	Selectors Choice
	Common Spotted Orchid	
	White Helleborine	Selectors Choice
Chris Phillips	Magpie Inkcap	
Keith Polwin ARPS	Bee Orchid	
	Common Eyelash Fungus	
Ken Rasmussen ARPS	Green-winged Orchid	
	Eyebright	Highly Commended
	Common Spotted Orchid	Highly Commended
	Green Winged Orchid	
	Water Avens	Bronze medal
Jane Rees ARPS	Burnt Orchids	
	Lesser Butterfly Orchid	
Mike Rowe FRPS	Earthfan	
	Sheathed Woodtuft	
Paul Sievers ARPS	Jelly Ear Fungi	
John Simpson ARPS	<i>Ophrys israelitica</i> with fly	
	<i>Ophrys mammosa</i> with fly	
	<i>Ophrys apifera</i> Var Bicolor	
	Late Spider Orchid	
Lesley Simpson ARPS	<i>Ophrys argolica</i>	
	<i>Ophrys flavomarginata</i>	
	Green-winged Orchid	
	Spiny Puff Balls	
Steve Taylor ARPS	Herb Paris After Rain	
	Lichen Assemblage South Island New Zealand	
	Porcelain Fungus New Forest	
Sonja Thompson FRPS	Toothed Jelly Fungus	
Kevin Wailes LRPS	Echinops	
	Tulip	
Karin Wilson ARPS	Mycena on Rotting Log	
	Amethyst Deceiver in Forest Undergrowth + El Tatio Geyser Bubbling	

Nature Group Annual Exhibition 2025

Print Section

Gold Medal Image (Class A)



Bronze Medal Image (Class A)



Bronze Medal Image (Class B)



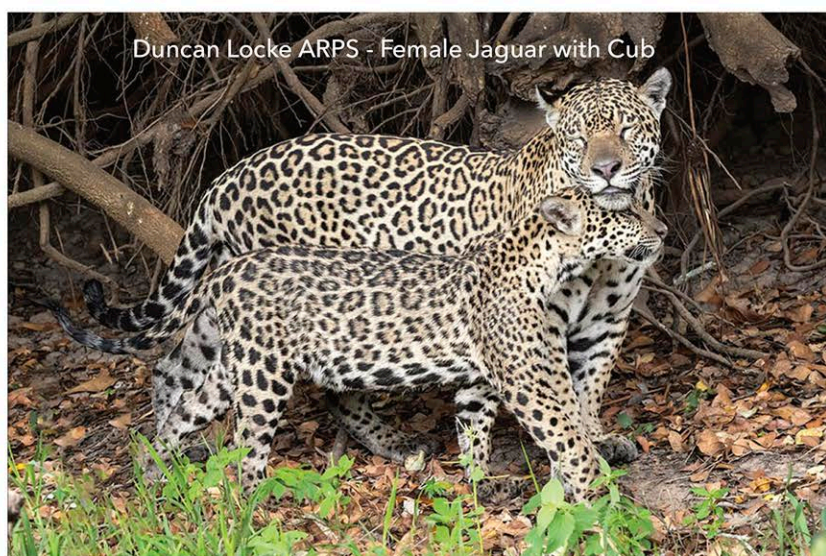
Highly Commended Prints



Highly Commended Prints Continued



Chris Gledhill LRPS - African Lions at the Water Hole



Duncan Locke ARPS - Female Jaguar with Cub

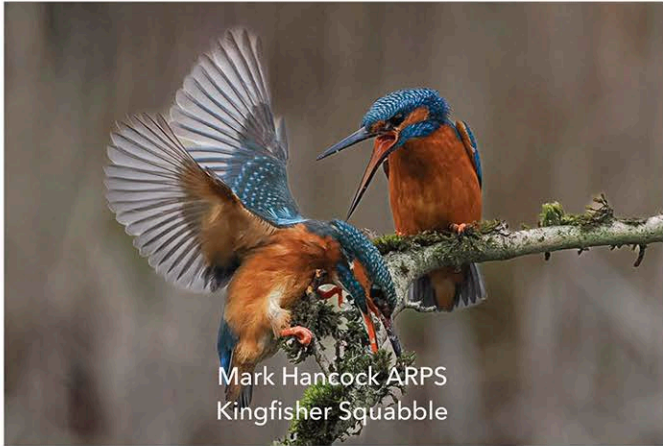


Ian Mitchell ARPS
Wet Pine Marten

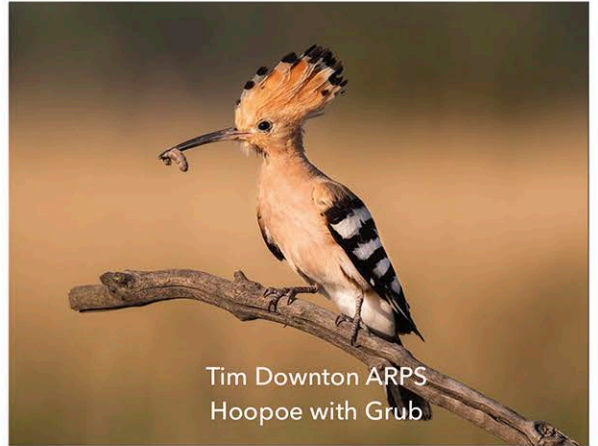


Gianpiero Ferrari FRPS
Maggie Ink Cap

Highly Commended Prints Continued



Mark Hancock ARPS
Kingfisher Squabble



Tim Downton ARPS
Hoopoe with Grub



Robin Claydon ARPS
Mountain Hare Preening

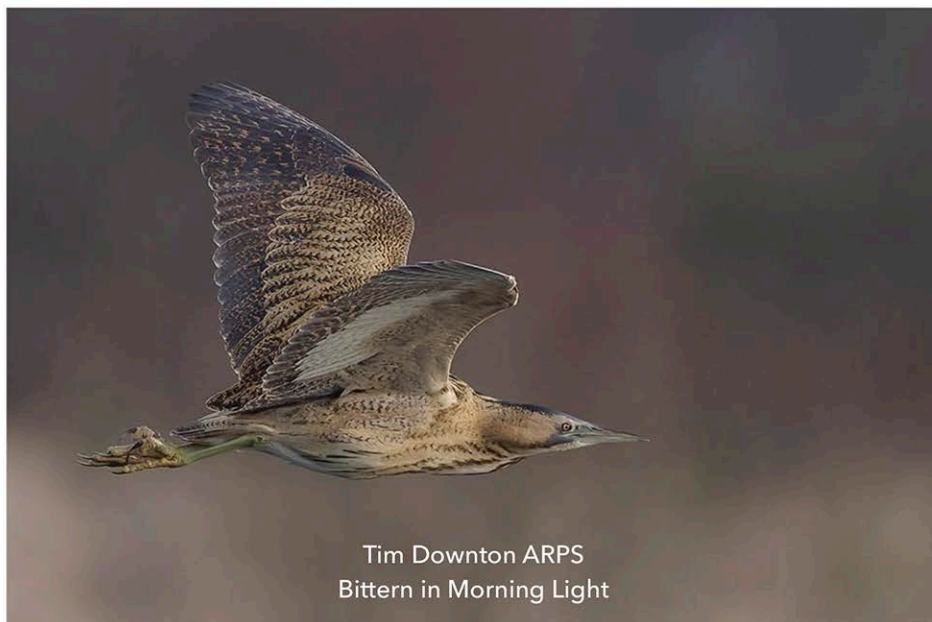


Lesley Simpson ARPS
Slime Mould- *Lycogala Epidendron* Fuiting Bodies

Highly Commended Prints Continued

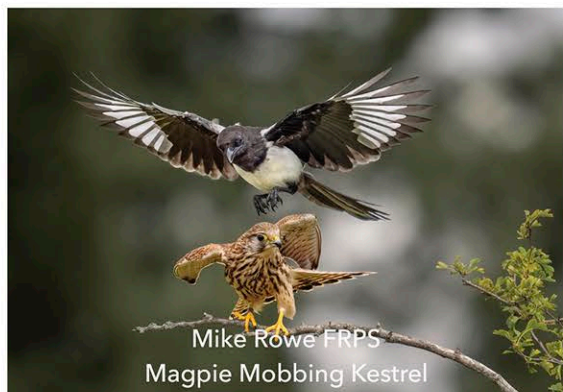


Ken Rasmussen ARPS
Green-winged Orchid Group



Tim Downton ARPS
Bittern in Morning Light

Selectors Awards Print



Mike Rowe FRPS
Magpie Mobbing Kestrel



Brian Ridgley LRPS
Short Eared Owl Hunting in Winter



Sue Critchlow ARPS
Ambush by Jackals



Lesley Simpson ARPS
Early Marsh Orchid



Mike Rowe FRPS
Saffrondrop Bonnet



Ken Rasmussen ARPS
Man Orchid

Acceptances - Print Class A

Author	Title	Award
Neil Avery LRPS Wendy Ball	Emperor Moth Mountain Hare Leaping Atlantic Salmon	
Bob Breach Robin Claydon ARPS Sue Critchlow ARPS	Avocet Filter Feeding Mountain Hare Preening Bee-eaters Mating Ambush by Jackals Kestrel with Insect	Highly Commended Selectors Choice
Liz Cutting ARPS	White-tailed Eagle on Ice Black Leopard White-legged Damselfly in Dew	
Tim Downton ARPS	Hoopoe with Grub Bittern in Morning Light Fritillary Trio	Highly Commended Highly Commended
Chris Ellison ARPS Gianpiero Ferrari FRPS Lachlan T McGil French ARPS Rosemary Gillies ARPS	Black Redstart with Catch Eurasian Otter Cubs Playing Pair of Whip Coral Shrimps Whip Coral Goby on Coral	
Chris Gledhill LRPS	African Darter with Catfish African Lions at the Water Hole Pair of Black Backed Jackals	Bronze medal Highly Commended
Peter Gregory	The Spider, Bee and the Fly Male Lion Morning Stroll Northern Gannets Mating	
John Haigh ARPS Richard Hall LRPS	Anhinga Costa Rica Fulmar Pair Nesting Among Thrift Reed Warbler Feeding Cuckoo Chick	
Martin Hancock ARPS	Kingfisher Squabble Misty Morning Reflection Badger with Cub Tiger Scent Marking	Highly Commended
Alan Harris	Barn Swallows Steller's Eagle Confrontation Emperor Dragonfly Ovipositing Feeding Time for a Caracara Mating Chalkhill Blues	
Stewart Haynes ARPS Ann Healey FRPS Christine Holt ARPS	Red Fox Listening for Rodents Asiatic Elephants Returning from Waterhole Adonis Blue Feeding on Toad Carcass Spotted Fritillary Pairing on Plantain Bengal Tigress	
David Hughes ARPS Koshy Johnson FRPS Yealand Kalfayan ARPS	Common Tern Action Humpback Whale Breaching Female Jaguar with Cub	Highly Commended Highly Commended
Adrian Langdon ARPS	Male Canary Shouldered Dusky Thorn Moths on Yarrow Buff-tip Moths on Lichen Branch Male Canary Shouldered Thorn Moths on Musk Mallow Wasp Spider	
Duncan Locke ARPS Darron Matthews FRPS	Red-crowned Cranes Bugling Short-eared Owl Buzzard Plucking Pheasant Wet Pine Marten	
Dave McKay ARPS Ian Mitchell ARPS	Grey Herons Preparing Nest <i>Cheilosia Longula</i> Clouded Yellows Glanville Fritillary	Highly Commended
James Moir ARPS Douglas Neve ARPS		

Acceptances - Print Class A Continued

Author	Title	Award
Andre Neves ARPS	Marbled White Pair on Yellow Wort	Highly Commended
Peter Ottley LRPS	Shield Bugs	
Somdukt Prasad	Willet Crabbing	
Barry Quatermass LRPS	Bear Hug	Gold medal Selectors Choice
Ken Rasmussen ARPS	Bloody Bear Fight	
Jeremy Richards ARPS	Male Redstart	
	Sanderling Running	
	Gentoo Penguins Interacting	
Brian Ridgley LRPS	White-fronted Bee-eater with Catch	Gold medal Selectors Choice
	Short-eared Owl Hunting in Winter	
	Old Male Mountain Hare Preening	
Kit Robinson LRPS	Forester Moths	Selectors Choice
Mike Rowe FRPS	Magpie Mobbing Kestrel	
	Female Yellow Dung Fly	
Phil Shaw FRPS	Running Turnstone with Mollusc	Selectors Choice
	Black Leopard	
	Puma Cubs Climbing Tree	
Lesley Simpson ARPS	Tiger Portrait	Selectors Choice
Peter Smith	Elephant Hawk Moth Roosting	
Sonja Thompson FRPS	Long-tailed Silky Flycatcher	
	Little Owl on Old Sheep Hurdle	Selectors Choice
	Short-eared Owl on Fence Post	
	Female Goshawk Drinking in Woodland Pool	
Bill Venables	Antelope at the Waterhole	Selectors Choice
	Cheetah	

Acceptances - Print Class B

Name	Title	Award
Wendy Ball	Sundew and Fruiting Body (<i>Drosera Rotundifolia</i>)	Highly Commended
Bob Breach	Thermophilic Bacterial Mats - Grand Prismatic Spring	
Gianpiero Ferrari FRPS	Globe Orchid in Habitat	
Ann Healey FRPS	Magpie Ink Cap	Highly Commended
Duncan Locke ARPS	Glistening Ink Cap Trio	
	Rose-Gold Pussy Willow	
	Lichens Fluorescing in UV Light	Bronze medal Highly Commended Selectors Choice
	Military Orchid	
	Monkey Orchid	
Andre Neves ARPS	Man Orchid at Dawn	Bronze medal Highly Commended Selectors Choice
	Meadow Clary	
Ken Rasmussen ARPS	Fly Orchids	
	Green-winged Orchid Group	Selectors Choice
Mike Rowe FRPS	Man Orchid	
	Bonnet Fungi	
	Dog Vomit Slime Mould	Selectors Choice
	Saffrondrop Bonnet	
Lesley Simpson ARPS	Common Spotted Orchid	
	Slime Mould (<i>Lycogala Epidendron</i>)	Highly Commended Selectors Choice
	Early Marsh Orchid Var Coccinea	
	Boletus Calopus Group	
Nigel Symington ARPS	Golden Scalycap on Ash Tree	Highly Commended Selectors Choice
	Turkey Tail Fungus	

Nature Group Weekend at Preston Montford

By Peter Ward



When I booked the Nature Group Residential Weekend trip dates to Preston Montford into my diary, it seemed such a long time in the future. However, it soon came around. If it was anything like the previous residential weekend I had attended, then it would be full on. It did not disappoint!

Preston Montford had previously been used as a base to hold a Residential Weekend for the Nature Group some 10 years ago. It still offers all the facilities that the Group needs at a sensible price point.

In the end there were 13 of us in the group; it was encouraging that I had met at least 6 from previous outings.

Friday 6th June:

Day 1 Llanymynech Rocks Nature Reserve

We met up at 10.00am, as this was the first day, and once the formalities were complete, we set off to explore the reserve.

The weather could have been better as it was overcast and rain was threatened. However, it held off, so we had a full day in the field.

Llanymynech Rocks Nature Reserve is part of the Shropshire Wildlife Trust and situated on the border between England and Wales. It's a limestone outcrop quarry with steep cliff faces. Mining was carried out on the small scale up until WW1. Ruins of the industry can be seen all over the site.

It finally became a Nature Reserve in 1972 and is renowned for Bee and Pyramidal Orchids as well as bright yellow Rock Rose.

Most of the participants concentrated on photographing the many and varied array of flowers, using their macro lenses with their cameras mounted on tripods.

Personally, I prefer birds and insects and found a variety to photograph from caterpillars, dragonflies, bees and wasps. Birds wise, I managed to photograph crows harrassing a Kestrel. We met back at the carpark for lunch and to review the morning photography.



Pyramid Orchid by Steve Lindsell



Greater Butterfly Orchid by Duncan Locke

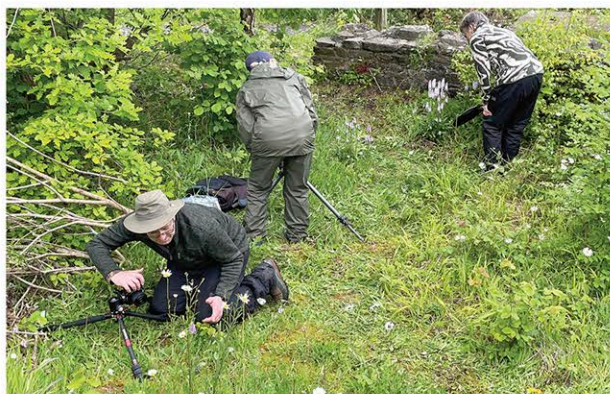
Later that evening we held a session in the classroom, chaired by Duncan, where we critiqued a selection of our images. The group gave constructive feedback on the selection of shots presented by the participants.

Finally, the Moth Traps were set by Jeremy and Duncan for those who wanted an early start photographing moths before breakfast.

Saturday 7th June:

Day 2 Snailbeach (morning) and The Bog Mine (afternoon)

A common theme over the weekend was the state of the weather - and trying to predict what it was going to do.



With this in mind, we decided to postpone the visit to Whixall Moss until the Sunday as there appeared to be more favourable conditions.

So, we set off for Snailbeach Lead Mine, a short drive from Preston Montford.

With extensive, unspoilt views looking out over the beautiful Rea Brook valley, this site is a very important part of Shropshire's industrial heritage and is protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Snailbeach is the most complete collection of mine building remains in England.

This large site also includes pools, a small reservoir and areas of woodland for visitors to explore on a warren of paths and trails.

Our group split into two once we arrived, one concentrating on the Orchids and the other in search of insects and birds.

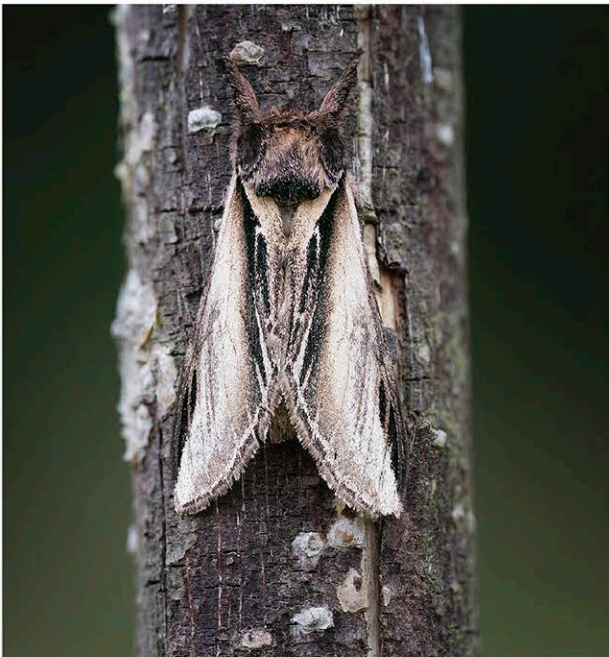


Above: Jeremy Malley-Smith, Julia Andrew and Margaret Beardsmore set up and assist each other in photographing the Orchids.

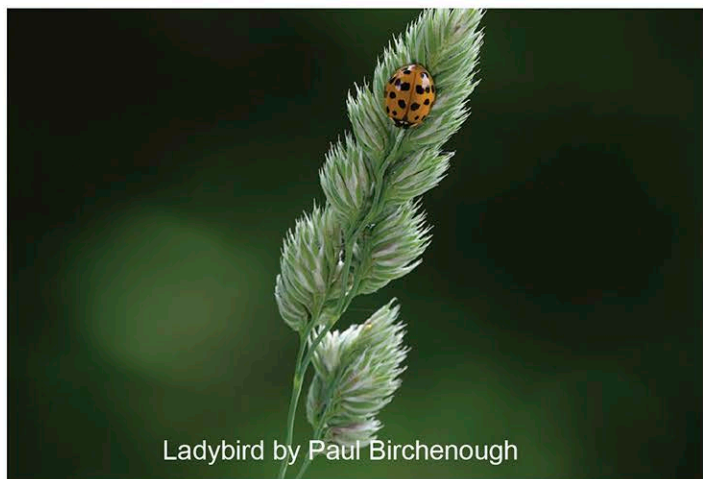
Saturday 7th and Monday 9th June:

Early Morning Moth Photography

Jeremy and Duncan kindly set the moth traps on Friday and Sunday so there were plenty of subjects for us to photograph. This gave us an opportunity to practice the focus bracketing functions on our camera or use the focus rail techniques that Geoff had shown us the previous night.



Above: reviewing the contents of the traps, Swallow Prominent Moth by Peter Ward and White Ermine Moth by Duncan Locke



Ladybird by Paul Birchenough



Fly by Gay Gilmour.

Sunday 8th June:

Day 3 Whixall Moss National Nature Reserve

The March Mosses, of which Whixall Moss is stand-out feature straddle the border between Shropshire and Wales. They were created more than 10,000 years ago as the ice age glaciers covering much of Britain receded. These Mosses are one of our rarest habitats as well as enormous carbon store, holding more carbon acre for acre, than a forest. It's a haven for plants and wildlife that thrive in the acidic peat; many of these species are seen in very few other places. Most of the land within the NNR is owned and managed by Natural England. This is the second time I have visited the site, so I knew I was going to be in for a good day.

The reserve has 18 species of bog moss, as well as many other characteristic bog plants, such as the insect-eating Round-leaved Sundew, and more uncommon plants such as Bog Asphodel, Bog Rosemary, Lesser Bladderwort, and White-beaked Sedge. Invertebrates are now thriving after the restoration of the bog, including Raft Spider, the Window-winged Sedge Caddis Fly, and 29 species of Dragonfly and Damselfly, on macro photography, including the White-faced

Darter Dragonfly. On this Sunday the weather remained dry and warm, so conditions were ideal.

I set up with a 100/400mm lens so I could stand a good distance away from the insects without disturbing them.

A small group of us set off for an area of bog where the Raft Spiders had been seen. However, it wasn't until we started to talk to a local photographer, that we discovered how difficult they are to spot never mind photograph. We did, eventually find one but we just could not get a clean shot.

In the evening Duncan hosted a presentation on macro photography. He took us through his processes for both focus bracketing and focus stacking, the equipment he used and his flash set up. Geoff and Jeremy also demonstrated their set up on their gear and showed us their resulting photographs.



Azure Damselfly by Peter Ward



Dung Fly by Steve Lindsell.

Monday 9th June:

Day 4 Prees Heath

Prees Heath Reserve is owned by Butterfly Conservation, a British Charity devoted to saving butterflies, moths and their habitat throughout the UK. Here they have a 60- hectare site and one of the few in the Midlands to find the tiny Silver-studded Blue Butterfly. The reserve supports a vast array other species of butterfly, moths and other invertebrates.

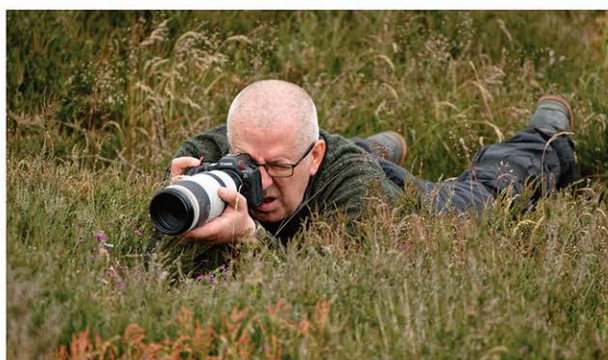
The Common has fascinating history. It was a military training camp in WW1 and 2. It was then ploughed up for agricultural use.

The Heath is now being restored by Butterfly Conservation.

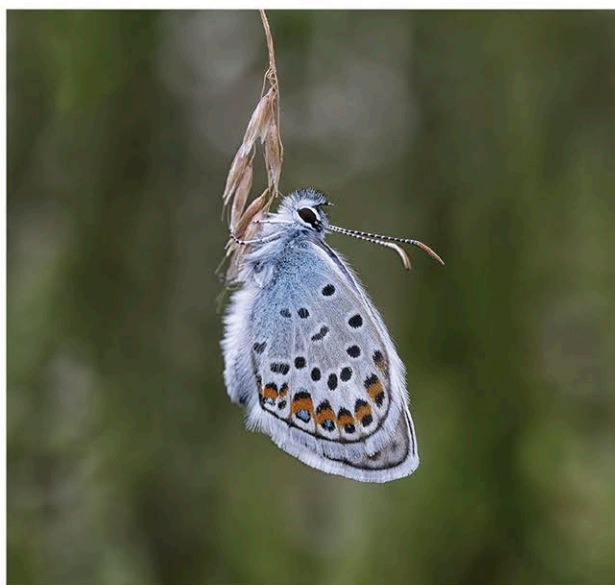
This visit was a stop off on our return journey so only suited some.

I can honestly say that I saw the most butterflies in one small area for far too many years. It meant that we could be very fussy and concentrate on getting clean shots.

I hope this article has given you a flavour of a typical Nature Group Residential Weekend. It is a great opportunity to visit some new nature reserves and venues, meet like-minded photographers, learn some new techniques and of course have a good time in nature.



Above: Julia and Jeremy photographing the Silver-studded Blues



Above: Silver-studded Blues by Peter Ward and Margret Beardsmore

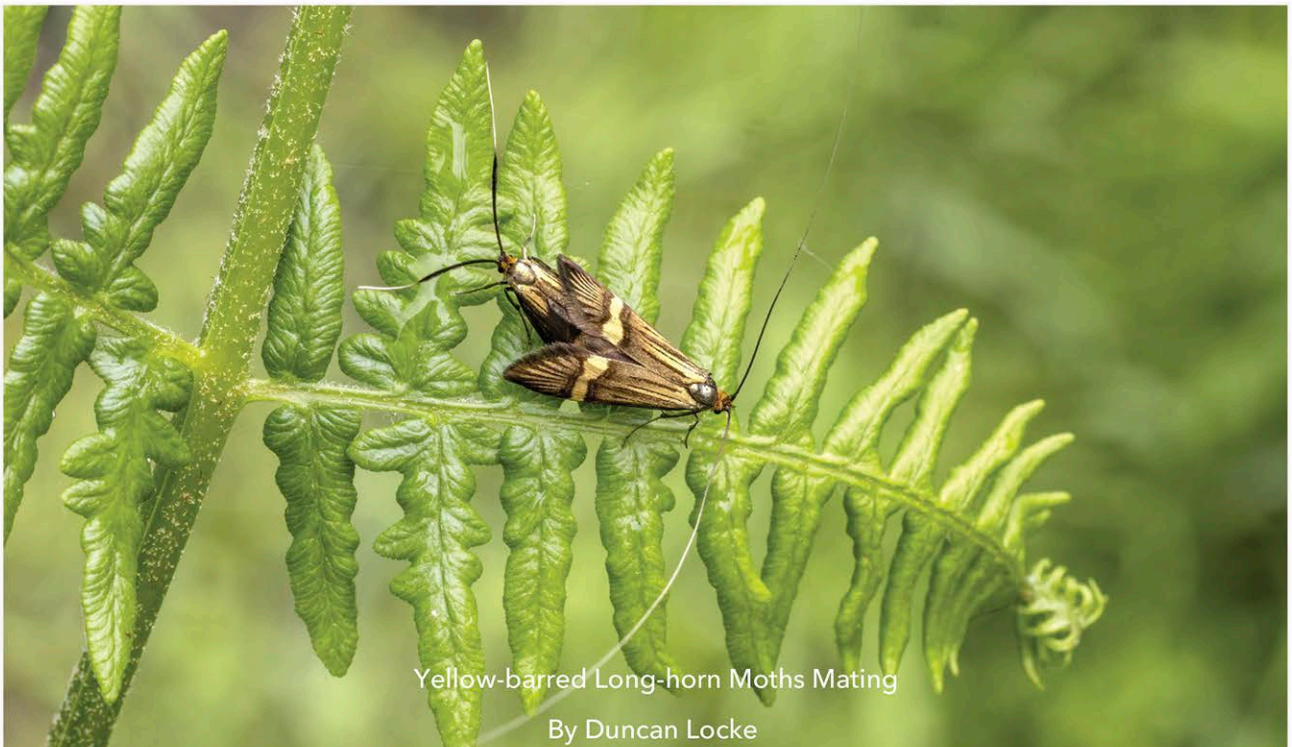
Editors note. Hot off the press - Your Nature Group Committee have agreed that the next residential course is now booked. We will be returning Juniper Hall in Mickleham, Surrey. We were last there in 2018. We have booked 16 rooms for the weekend of Friday 29th May until Monday 1st June 2026. A note for your diary perhaps.....



Wild Strawberries by
Margaret Beardsmore



Common Spotted Orchid by
Paul Benham



Yellow-barred Long-horn Moths Mating
By Duncan Locke

Fungi on my Worcestershire patch

By Richard Broomfield ARPS

The dreadful global Covid pandemic and lockdowns, restricted as we were to home and immediate locality, focussed my mind on my local photography opportunities which then triggered my ARPS journey!

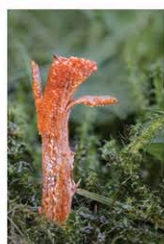
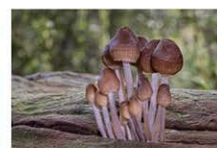
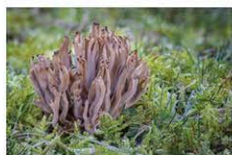
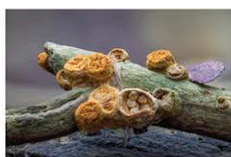
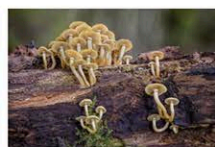
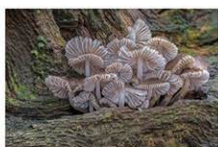
Throughout my early childhood years, I lived close to Southampton Water. Family and later career moves, meant I moved further from the coast, eventually retiring in Worcestershire. Like many who were borne by the sea, the draw of the coast and marine life has remained a constant. Having completed my LRPS in 2019, (my panel is still on the LRPS example panels section), I naturally thought about developing an 'A' panel based on sea and coastal architecture. I am principally a landscape and nature photographer, so my mind went into overdrive with ideas as to how I might pull this together. However, by the time I'd marshalled my thoughts, the pandemic arrived and all that followed. Coastal architecture became an impossible dream for me, certainly in the short term.

As the tight grip on our 'stay-at-home' instruction eased and we were told to exercise, my wife and I walked the quiet Worcestershire lanes and woods within a mile of our home. Apart from occasionally seeing neighbours passing at a distance, we were alone to explore. My local wood is renowned as a butterfly reserve, but if you search

hard enough, at the right time of year, it's also full of fungi. I speculated whether I could produce a Natural History panel right here on my doorstep. This subject was all new to me and started a massive learning curve, supported by reference books. Although pleased with the first few cluster shots, my research revealed this wouldn't be as straightforward as I had envisaged. Locating specimens in pristine condition before any insect or animal damage or decay occurred, meant shifting our leisurely Covid exercise to early morning jaunts. I was soon armed with stacks of additional paraphernalia for blowing, dusting, tweezing and generally cleaning specimens, whilst at the same time cautiously looking out for tangled and unsuitable backdrops. I quickly realised that single shots would not give me the front to rear sharpness I was after.

I started out using a Canon 5D Mark iv and Canon EF 100mm f2.8 USM macro lens plus 12mm extension tube; the lens being some 20 years old. Focus stacking was, at the time, new to me, but something that I quickly mastered and came to rely on. Having potentially 'exhausted' the visible supply and variety of pristine specimens, the biggest learning point hit me! Fungi are seasonal and there would probably be insufficient variety to fulfil my challenge from one wood; how naïve this now seems!

Associate Panel Layout



My mentally drafted Statement of Intent reflecting 'one mile from home', was extended to perhaps 15-20 minutes distance, but continuing the self-imposed rule that every shot fell within the county boundary of Worcestershire. My submitted panel fulfilled this brief. Indeed, half of the final images met the one-mile challenge, with two thirds being not more than 10 minutes from home.

My greatest frustration was finding that by mid-January, there weren't any suitable specimens in top condition. So, my first fungi season was effectively over... I reflected on my initial plans and impatiently looked forward to the following autumn!



01

At this point I part-exchanged my Canon 5D Mk iv body for a Canon R5 body, but continued with my trusty, ageing, 100mm macro and 12mm extension tube, coupled with EF:RF lens adapter. The R5 focus stacking capability was so much more effective. Working with Helicon Focus software (then Zerene Stacker) I was now well set up. I do have a Canon RF 100mm Lf2.8 macro lens but continued with the old lens as I found the electronic focussing/manual options of the new lens difficult to master, along with the R5's extensive menu settings. I was simply comfortable with the results achieved, so why change a winning combo? The next two fungi seasons gave me the opportunity to shoot, reshoot, assess and shoot again, numerous single specimens and clusters, keeping to my location brief.



02

In January 2024, I participated in an online Natural History group ARPS Advisory Day, chaired by Andrew McCarthy FRPS. I received encouraging feedback from the advisors on my Statement of Intent and digital images submitted, with suggestions made on a couple of images where the processed stacks had not quite worked and one image of Fluted Bird's Nests had a distracting background. Buoyed by this advice, I re-jigged the images and took the plunge, submitting my panel for ARPS assessment in September 2024. All seemed to be going well during the assessment, but alas - and quite rightly so - the panel spotted errors in the background mosses on the finished print of the Fluted Bird's Nest. It was not to be... I was, however, very pleased to be immediately offered a resubmission of my panel for the next assessment day.



03

After much head scratching, I decided to completely ditch the Fluted Bird's Nest and swap to a cluster of Common Bonnets that would comfortably fit into the now empty number 10 space. But this left a slightly unbalanced panel, so two of the existing images were repositioned. All images were scrutinised for the umpteenth time with the assistance of good friend Neil Avery LRPS as my critical buddy. Satisfied, I completed all of the paperwork for a March 2025 resubmission. Final prints were 13" x 8 2/3" (3:2 ratio) lustre, backed on board and finished in 20" x 16" off-white mounts.



Statement of Intent

My intention in this panel is to show a selection of the diverse range of fungi found in woodlands and churchyards close to my home in rural Worcestershire. I wanted to achieve this with a limited carbon footprint. Consequently, most of the images were captured less than one mile from home.

I aim to show a range of larger individual and clusters of fruiting bodies side-by-side, with magnified images of the smallest species. All images were captured in natural-light or using LED-illumination in dark woodland.

My key challenge was to locate freshly emerged specimens in pristine condition, certainly before insect or animal damage occurred. This usually meant dawn shoots to capture the often-minute fungal spores developing on leaf litter, grassland and branches as they rapidly turned into stunning fruiting bodies.

My interest in this aspect of natural history started during the pandemic lockdown. It has developed into an all-consuming passion!





Species List

- 01 Russet Toughshank (freshly emerged) - (*Collybia dryophila*)
- 02 Clustered Bonnets (*Mycena inclinata*)
- 03 Russet Toughshank and Pin Mould - (*Collybia dryophila*, *Spinellus* sp.)
- 04 Sulphur Tuft (mature) (*Hypholoma fasciculare*)
- 05 Clustered Bonnets (freshly emerged) - (*Mycena inclinata*)
- 06 Common Bird's Nest (*Crucibulum laeve*)
- 07 Grey Coral Fungi (*Clavulina cinerea*)
- 08 Common Puffball (freshly emerged) - (*Lycoperdon perlatum*)
- 09 Collared Mosscap (*Rickenella swartzii*)
- 10 Common Bonnets (*Mycena galericulata*)
- 11 Scarlet Caterpillar Club (*Cordyceps militaris*)
- 12 Sulphur Tufts (freshly emerged) - (*Hypholoma fasciculare*)
- 13 Crimson Waxcap (*Hygrocybe punicea*)
- 14 Wrinkled Peach (*Rhodotus Palmatus*)
- 15 Felted Twiglet (*Tubaria furfuracea*)

Richard Broomfield



From Riverbank to Recovery

Photography, Peace and a Patch Called Barnwell

By Matthew Farrugia

Some people find photography. For me, it was photography that found me - at just the right time. Like many of us, I didn't start out knowing I would end up chasing tiny insects through a dewy meadow or crouching silently for hours in a hide watching Robins squabble over seed. I was simply the kind of child who preferred the rustle of leaves over the buzz of the television. Outdoors was home. Bugs were friends. And though I didn't have a camera, I always had the instinct to look closely and pay attention.

That instinct never really left me. But it wasn't until 2010 - more than a decade into adult life - when I finally picked up a camera. My first? A Fuji HS10 bridge camera. No interchangeable lenses, no fancy settings - just a solid, beginner-friendly tool that unlocked a door I didn't realise had always been there, waiting for a push.



Hummingbird Hawk-Moth
Macroglossum stellatarum

The Canon Years

Soon enough, I graduated to DSLR territory with the Canon 1100D and the humble yet capable EF-S 55-250mm lens. From that moment on, photography became my main hobby, and as an almost therapeutic obsession. I moved steadily through the Canon system: 550D, 7D Mk II, 5D Mk IV, EOS-1D X Mark II, R7, and finally the R5. Each upgrade wasn't just about megapixels or frames per second - it was about pushing my own boundaries. But despite the power of these bodies I found myself increasingly frustrated by limitations around flash focus bracketing, especially for macro work.

And so, in 2024, after nearly 15 years in the Canon ecosystem, I made the leap to the OM System OM-1 Mark II. The freedom and precision it offers, especially for focus stacking and handheld macro, has been game-changing.

More Than Just Wildlife

While wildlife and macro are my primary focus, my photography journey has taken me beyond hides and hedgerows. Over the years, whilst not my focus, I have enjoyed exploring other genres too, such as landscapes, architectural structures, cathedrals come to mind. Long exposure photography, particularly of events like our annual fair, can be fun. Even now, when visiting a new city, I will often find myself drawn to its buildings before anything else, looking for symmetry, texture, and the way light dances across stone. Each genre has taught me something different, and those lessons always feed back into how I see the natural world.



Rosemary Beetle *Chrysolina americana*

Barnwell: My Patch, My Peace

Of course, a camera is only half the story. The real magic lies in the subject, and for me, that subject has always been wildlife.

About ten years ago, I discovered Barnwell Country Park in Northamptonshire, just half an hour from home. Tucked along the River Nene, this unassuming park has become my photographic haven. Its flat gravel trails loop around three lakes, making it ideal for exploring, no matter your ability or whatever the weather has in store.

But the real treasure is the Lowland Hide. Over the years, I have volunteered at the park, enhancing this hide and the Kingfisher Hide to improve wildlife diversity, whilst also helping around the park.

On one occasion I positioned some sturdy perches in just the right spots, often no more than 2.5 metres from the viewing window. The result? An astonishing density and variety of wildlife, much of it photogenic and comfortable in the presence of a silent visitor.



Cetti's Warbler
Cettia cetti

From Blue Tits and Great Spotted Woodpeckers to Water Rails and even the occasional Mandarin Duck, the birdlife here is extraordinary. I have counted nearly 20 regular bird species from this hide alone. Mammals, too: Bank Voles, Shrews, even a cautious Brown Rat now and again. The insect life is no less impressive, with Ichneumon Wasps, Solitary Bees, and the electric jewel tones of the Ruby-tailed Wasp. One of my personal highlights was capturing a Hummingbird Hawk Moth mid-hover - an unreal moment frozen in a burst of high-speed frames.

Outside the hide, the entire park continues to surprise. This year, we had breeding Chiffchaffs, Cetti's Warblers, and a full supporting cast of Reed and Sedge Warblers. Overhead, Red Kites are a regular feature, a testament to successful reintroduction efforts in the region. What makes Barnwell truly special is that there's always something worth photographing. Rain or shine, summer or snow, it offers peace, possibility, and presence.



Ichneumon Wasp (female)
Stenichneumon culpator adsentator

From Hobby to Healing

Initially, photography was just an excuse to get outside and enjoy nature. I'd share my shots on social media, pleased when friends would ...like" them or ask for a print. But something deeper was also unfolding. Photography became the way I processed life.

Like many people - especially men - I have had my battles with mental health. The pressure of modern life, the expectations, the noise... it can get loud. Too loud. Photography gave me an off switch. Or perhaps more accurately, it gave me a pause button. Sitting in a hide while the rain taps on the roof or tracking a butterfly through sun-drenched grass - it's a kind of meditation I was not aware I needed. This isn't something I talk about lightly. But I believe it is important.

Photography saved me in ways that antidepressants or therapy never quite could. It gave me purpose on difficult days and presence on good ones. It's no exaggeration to say that my camera has been both a creative outlet and a lifeline.



Bank Vole
Mydas glareolus

The Confidence to Submit

Despite my love for the craft, I have always hesitated to enter competitions. A mix of imposter syndrome and a tendency to be my own harshest critic held me back. However, I have recently entered two national wildlife photography competitions. Not because I expect to win, but because, finally, I realised I had nothing to lose. The worst that can happen is a no. The best? Who knows?



Common Kingfisher
Alcedo atthis

Looking Forward

These days, photography feels less like a hobby and more like a calling. I now lead walks through Barnwell for others who also want to connect with nature the way I have. I have also found joy in sharing what I have learned and over the years. I have helped newcomers to the craft - some just getting their first telephoto lens, others experimenting with macro. Watching their confidence grow is immensely rewarding. Special thanks go to my good friend Frank McGill - one of my very few friends who always puts others first. His company, wisdom and humour have made many days more enjoyable.

My photographic journey continues. I aim to share not just pretty pictures, but also a bit of the wonder and calm they represent to me. I'll likely be the one lying face-down in the mud, trying to catch a beetle at eye-level or chasing the call of the elusive Garden Warbler. It's not glamorous, but it's real. It's peace. And it's home.

Mathew Farrugia



European Robin (Juvenile)
Erithacus rubecula melophilus



Common Wasp
Vespa vulgaris



Bank Vole
Myodes glareolus

Isle of Mull Otters

by

Brian J Boyes LRPS



I first came to the Isle of Mull as a tourist in 2013, a year after retiring. I have visited Scottish Islands before, mainly Skye and Arran but had never been to Mull. I was keen to continue with the photographic skills I learnt whilst serving as a Crime Scene Investigator (CSI) in the Police but now I wanted to concentrate on an enjoyable subject rather than crime scenes and corpses.

Many years of Carp fishing spending countless days in a bivi by numerous lakes makes you aware of your environment. Sitting, watching a kingfisher sat on your rod bashing a fish to death causing a "beep beep" on the bite alarm was enough inspiration for me to try and capture this on film, and so my love of wildlife photography began.

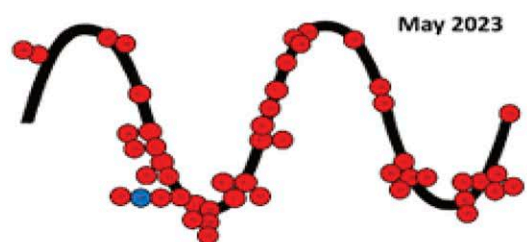
I make no apologies for admitting I am a "Canon Man", although I was issued with a Nikon Fe2 when I served as a CSI, but unfortunately, I could not get to grips with it. So that was replaced at the first opportunity. I have remained Canon ever since.

So why Mull? Put simply the island is stunning with it's diverse landscape, geology and of course wildlife. Where else in the UK could you drive twenty minutes down the road and see Hen Harriers, both Golden and White-tailed Eagles, Short-eared Owls, Common Buzzards, Red Deer and my favourite animal, the Eurasian Otter.

Why Otters? They may look cute and cuddly but, they are killing machines, eating anything they can get their teeth into. Their diet consists of fish, crabs, sea birds, rabbits, voles and chickens. They need to eat between 14-16% of their body weight each day to survive.

Please remember these otters are not sea otters. Whilst they live in salt water, they are the same Eurasian Otter "*Lutra lutra*" that are present in most freshwater rivers down south in England.

Otters are not easy to find let alone photograph. Males are territorial but have a larger range than females. I am going to make a comment here with which many people disagree. I believe the height of the tide is a contributory factor to otter activity. Since moving to the island permanently in 2019, I have kept records of all my sightings. From these records I produce monthly charts.



The red dots show single sightings and the blue dots are families. As you can see from the chart there is a larger cluster of sightings from halfway out on the ebb tide to halfway in on the flood tide. These clusters repeat each month with remarkable similarity. I am not saying you will not see otters at high tide, that would be an unwise comment to make. From my observations those otters seen at high tide are mainly females with young to feed. If you talk to local guides on the island they will concur with me.

Unlike beavers, otters are not monogamous. Males have a large territorial range and are constantly looking for females with which to mate. Otters are sexually mature once they leave their mother which is usually after approximately 14 months. The father has no involvement in raising the cubs.

Large numbers of tourists come to the island each year to watch and photograph otters. Some are very much aware of otter behaviour and field craft. Unfortunately, many are not. It's not unusual to see people unsuitably dressed running down the beach with an iPad trying to photograph an otter. This behaviour tends to give sensible photographers unwarranted bad press.



So how do we photograph otters? Otters are creatures of habit and they tend to leave tell-tale signs on the shore indicating their presence. They also use the environment to their best advantage. Our job, as respectful photographers, is to use these signs and understand the surroundings in which otters live to increase your chances of seeing these elusive animals.



The fur on an otter is incredibly dense consisting of two coats, one to keep warm the other to keep dry. There are between 30-50,000 hair follicles per square centimeter of skin on an otter. Much of the otter's day is spent grooming and keeping the fur in tip-top condition.

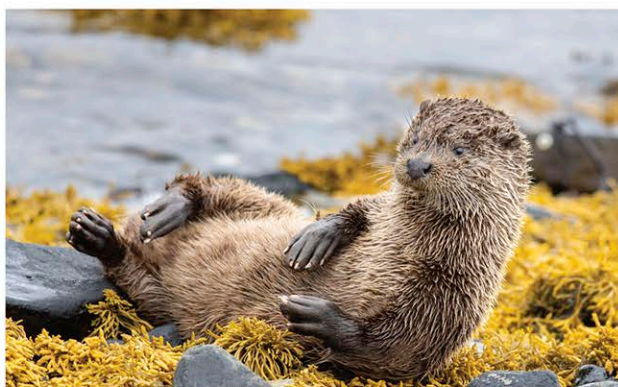
Otters like to rest and sleep; this can be a quick "cat" nap or a sleep for over an hour. They will use day holt which is usually a hideaway in the rocks or they can simply curl up on the beach or in the bracken.



Otters have an acute sense of smell and hearing although their eye sight is the least effective sense. The photographer must be aware to stay off the sky line and stand still whilst the otter is on the surface of the water, only moving when it is submerged. They usually dive for between 20-30 seconds. You will often see otters defecating (sprainting) and smelling spraint left by other otters. These spraints can be deposited in the same place generation after generation. This continuous sprainting in the same location causes green algae to form and this is one of the main indicators that we, as photographers should be looking out for.

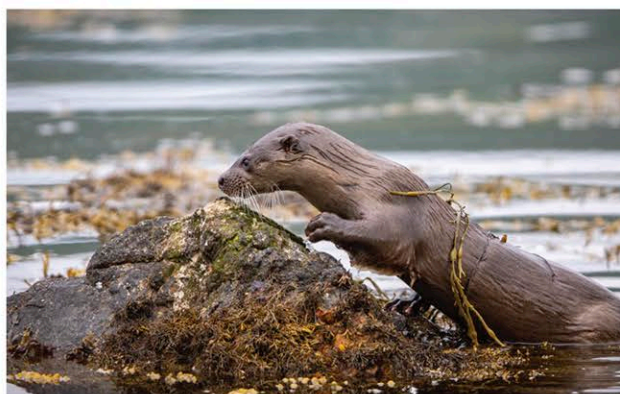


There are other indicators that will help us find otters. Fresh water burns that flow into saltwater lochs are very important for otters. Otters need freshwater to drink, to bathe and remove salt deposits from their fur to keep warm and dry. In addition otters use these burns as "highways" to natal holts (where they give birth). These birthing chambers can be hundreds of yards away from the shoreline. The mother needs to protect her cubs from other otters, particularly other males who will kill the cubs if they are not his - similar to the behaviour of the lions in Africa as he too will want his genes to be dominant.



Another indicator of the presence of otters is bird activity. By birds I mean scavengers such as Hooded Crows (*Corvus cornix*) and Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*). These birds are always looking for an easy meal and if you see them "dancing" on the shoreline you can be sure there is an otter with a kill or the remnant of a kill.

Photographing otters is not at all easy. We need to use our field craft skills to be in the right position at the right time - easier said than done.



My method is to find an otter in the water and establish which way it is swimming and feeding. I will place myself 30-40yds ahead of the otter and using rocks and a scrim net as cover I sit and wait for the otter to come to me. I never chase an otter or any wildlife just to take a photograph. It is not ethical or best practise. Sometimes the otter swims past and other times it comes out right in front of me. It's the luck of the draw.

I keep records of otter sightings and these are passed onto the UK Wild Otter Trust on a monthly basis. One of the facts they want to know is the sex of the otter. This can be difficult to determine to the untrained eye. Males tend to be larger than females with a much broader head with females being slimmer in the face. This is not always easy to distinguish out in the field unless they are side by side. There is one way to identify the sexes which is 100% accurate and that is when they spraint and urinate. Otters tend to spraint and urinate at the same time and this applies to both sexes. If the spraint and urine appear close together then it is a female. If they appear far apart then it is male.





Otters breed at any time of the year, they have a nine-week gestation period and when the cubs are born they will spend another nine weeks in the holt before the mother will bring them out for the first time and introduce them to the water. It is at this point that the mother will teach them to swim and hunt. Female otters have four nipples and produce milk that is approximately 25% fat. The brood is usually one or two but very rarely three youngsters. Mortality rate in young otters is high.



Otters in the wild are not long-lived creatures, with a life expectancy of up to six years. In captivity they can live for over sixteen years, sometimes even older. The main killer of otters on the island is vehicles. I mentioned earlier that otters use freshwater burns to access holts. Often these burns run through culverts (pipes) under the roads to allow drainage. Otters use them regularly to access their holts but occasionally they go over the top and consequently, are hit by vehicles. Mull Otter Group (MOG) have identified a number of hot spots on the island where

otter deaths occur and they have installed small posts with angled reflectors which cause vehicle headlight beams to deflect the light into the verges at night and so frighten the otters from crossing the road. This simple device has worked well over the years and reduced otter deaths considerably. Fishing nets and lobster pots also contribute to otter fatalities. I have seen many otters with either missing or heavily decayed teeth. I believe this is caused by their excessive consumption of various crabs and lobsters that live in the Scottish Lochs. Crab shells and claws, are extremely tough to break into to eat the flesh. This, I believe wears down the enamel on the otter's teeth and subsequently the teeth decay and drop out.

Captive otters do not face the daily dangers of their wild counterpart. They are fed on fish, chicken and dead day old chicks which are easy to consume and no crabs.

As well as identifying otters by their sex there are a couple of other methods I use. Marks and scars on their nose, tail or teeth are useful identifiers. There is an otter on Loch Spelve called "Fang" as his bottom left hand incisor is missing. This is a great identifier for the otter spotter.



Otters want the best return from their hunting for the least amount of energy expended. I live on the side of Loch Assapol in Buinessan which is a freshwater loch and full of brown trout with occasional sea trout. For all the years I have lived here I have never seen an otter in the loch. The local farmer who has lived here all his life has only ever seen one. Why is that?

I have a friend who runs a day ticket and members fishing loch near to Ayr. This fishery consists of a large loch stocked with Rainbows, Browns and Tiger Trout. He also has a loch stocked with course fish and some double figured carp. (a carp whose weight is in double figures - 10lbs or more). He is having a major problem with otters. He regularly found carcasses of double figured carp on the edges of the loch which was both upsetting and very costly. He has now installed an otter net around the course lake and he has no more otter problems.

I believe that the reason I do not see otters on the freshwater lochs on Mull is the fact that trout, being game fish, are simply too quick and require the otter to expend too much energy chasing after them. In the salt water their prey is much slower, easier to catch and therefore the otter gets a better return for its efforts.



I hope this has given you a small insight into my experience with Mull otters. I came to the island because of the wildlife and photography, especially the otters. That might seem drastic but these animals are amazing creatures and they get under your skin. Every time I see one it gives me pleasure whether I photograph it or not. Just to watch a mother come in with a live fish and drop it in a rock pool for the youngster to chase around. This is mum teaching her baby to hunt, giving it the skills to survive in what is a very harsh environment.

Brian J Boyes LRPS



Minutes of Annual General Meeting

The 49th Annual General Meeting of the RPS Nature Group was held on Saturday 12 April 2025 at Smethwick Photographic Society, The Old Schoolhouse, Oldbury, B69 2AS starting at 13:15hrs. It was chaired by Duncan Locke ARPS and attended by 36 Members. The AGM Agenda, Minutes of the 48th AGM 2024 and the officer's reports were made available in advance of the AGM and remain available on the RPS website under: <https://rps.org/groups/nature/agm-reports/>

1. **Welcome to Members**

Duncan Locke ARPS (DL), Chair of the RPS Nature Group welcomed Group Members to the Meeting. He thanked his fellow Committee Members for all the planning that had gone into making this event possible.

2. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for Absence had been received from the following Group Members: Maggie Bullock, Christine Holt, David O'Neil, Ann Miles, James Foad, Dawn Osborn, Jeanette Hill and Lorina (last name not provided).

3. **Approval of Minutes**

It was proposed by Bruce Kendrick and seconded by Margaret Beardsmore that the AGM Minutes be approved. They were adopted by the Members.

4. **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

5. **Annual Report of the Nature Group given by Duncan Locke ARPS**

DL reported to the Members as follows:

5.1. **Committee:**

I must start my report by thanking the Group Committee for their hard work over the last year to maintain and improve the services provided to our members. Historically, the Committee has been elected to serve for two years, and the present Committee finishes its term of office at this 2025 AGM. However, following the adoption of new Terms of Reference for the Group in March 2024, the Committee elected at the 2025 AGM will serve for three years. Our Group Secretary, Greg Lovett, will report on any Committee changes and the results of this year's election in his Secretary's Report.

5.2. **Nature Group Membership:**

I am very pleased to report that the membership of the Group as of 1st March 2025 was 981 as compared to 948 members on 1st March 2024, giving a 3.5% increase in membership during the year. The Nature Group remains the third largest of the RPS Special Interest Groups (SIGs).

As of 1st March 2025, the Group had 916 Members in the UK, Eire, the Isle of Man and Channel Islands plus 65 overseas members. The biggest single overseas Group is in the USA, with 14 members. The Group continues to have a high turnover of members to keep our Membership Secretary, Christine Holt, very busy.

5.3. **RPS Developments:**

As I reported at the 2024 AGM, the RPS is implementing a Transformation Plan to assure its long-term financial viability. I sit on the Members Committee (MemCom) along with the Chairs of the other SIGs and Regional Organisers. The RPS has now imposed a charge on each SIG for the Financial, Membership and Website/IT services that it provides to that Group. For the Nature Group, this is just over £3 out of your £18 Annual Subscription. MemCom Members are working hard to put in place Service Level Agreements to ensure that the RPS delivers the services that we are being asked to pay for.

Your Finance Officer, Peter Ward, and Committee have carefully considered whether we can make cost savings, but has reluctantly come to the conclusion that to balance our budget we have to propose an increase in the Nature Group's annual subscription from £18 to £20 from the 1st January 2026; this will partially offset the charge imposed by the RPS.

More generally, I understand that discussions are taking place with a potential buyer for RPS House and Dan Jones, the CEO is leaving shortly, and a replacement is being recruited. I expect the services the RPS provides to the Group to continue with these changes, but improvements may be delayed.

5.4. Group Website:

You must now all be aware that the Group now has its own website separate from the RPS. We have about 335 Members registered on the site. I must thank Ian Wilson for all of his hard work in providing and maintaining this website.

The website provides us with an excellent place to advertise Group events, report on past events and share Group news with our members. In addition, it has enabled us to provide new services for our members and improve on existing ones. In particular:

Lightbox:	Greg Lovett has developed this as a place where members, particularly those working towards ARPS, can get constructive criticism on their images
Galleries:	provide an easy-to-use place for members to share images from successful distinction panels, field meetings, etc
Exhibition:	provides a place for members to view the accepted images in our Annual Exhibition

5.5. Monthly Competition:

We launched the Monthly Competition in October 2023 on the basis that the competition year would run from April to March; to fit in with our AGM in April. There would be a winner each month and, based on the accumulated scores, there would also be an overall winner for the year with a prize presented at the AGM. I am very pleased to report that the overall winner for 2024 - 2025 is our Group Secretary, Greg Lovett ARPS.

The Competition continues to prove very popular. In the competition year 2024 - 2025, 112 Members entered at least one image. On average 41 Members have entered each month and 36 have scored the images.

5.6. Group Activities:

I must thank Ann Miles for continuing to coordinate a very large programme of field meetings, Zoom talks and distinction advisory days. Last year's events are listed in her Programme Coordinators Report. In 2024 the Group organised well over one event a week, all thanks to Ann's and other's hard work. Last May and July we ran two very successful macro workshops at Toft and Welney respectively. I would like to give particular thanks to Nick Bowman, who organised the Welney Workshop. Ann Miles also ran a fungi photography workshop at Brandon Country Park in October. I am very keen to build up a programme of workshops to help Members develop their nature photography skills. Please let me have any ideas for topics and venues.

I really must thank James Foad for organising an excellent residential weekend on the Yorkshire Coast in June last year, including an intensive day photographing diving Gannets off Flamborough Head. James has decided to step down from organising residential weekends and so I would very much like to thank him for all of his hard work over the last eleven years. Preston Montford Field Studies Centre near Shrewsbury is already booked for the 2025 Residential Weekend. Could you take on James' role and organise Residential Weekends for the Group? Please contact me if you are interested. Help is available to get you started.

Last, but not least, I would also like to thank Ralph Snook for continuing to organise the Group's Annual Exhibition.

5.7. Challenges Facing the Group:

Last December I sent an e-mail to Group Members outlining the challenges facing the Group in 2025 and asking Members to reply with their thoughts and if possible, offers of help.

The Iris sets us two challenges in 2025: firstly, Dawn Osborn intends to step down as Editor at the 2025 AGM in April and secondly the ever-increasing cost of producing, and more particularly, posting a paper journal.

One person that I must really thank for her years of service to the Group, is Dawn, who took over as Editor for Issue 87 of The Iris, Winter 2003, and we have now reached Issue 151. There have been short breaks when other Editors have taken over, but I estimate that Dawn must have now edited over 50 issues. As a result of my e-mail last December, I am hopeful that we will be able to find a replacement for Dawn.

Of the 17 Members who gave me their thoughts on the future format / frequency, of The Iris, the majority preferred to stick with the status quo: three paper issues each year and were prepared to pay more to cover the increasing costs. We plan to try and maintain three paper copies a year but we are also conscious of the very high cost of sending paper magazines overseas.

Finally, I don't think that I will offend anyone as it is a statement of fact that the Nature Group Committee are not getting any younger! We would be delighted to hear from any members who would like to get involved in running the Group. The main qualification required: Enthusiasm!

5.8. Going Forward:

As I said at last year's AGM, I believe that the aim of the Group is to inspire and educate its members into taking better images of the natural world and so we must organise events for members to get together and develop their nature photography. We now have an excellent and ever-growing programme of field meetings and workshops, and it would be very helpful if you could let Ann Miles or any other committee member know what events you would like the Group to organise.

6. Group Finance Officer's Report

Peter Ward presented his report as Group Treasurer, a copy of which is included at the end of these minutes.

7. Group Secretary's Report

GL reported to the Members as follows:

7.1. Meetings

The Committee meet bi-monthly, all meetings being undertaken by Zoom. We have therefore had 6 meetings since the last AGM. Committee meetings generally last a couple of hours on a Friday evening. I must thank the members of the Committee for their diligence in making the effort to prepare and attend Committee meetings and to turn up on time. While there are inevitably occasional absences, the members of the Committee had all done their level best to attend.

7.2. Committee

As I mentioned at last year's AGM, that the Trustees of the RPS introduced some new Terms of Reference, the document that sets out how the Nature Group (and all the other Special Interest Groups) are governed. These changes have come fully in force over the last 12 months.

As a result, as we come to this year's AGM we have been operating with an elected committee of 7 individuals:

Group Chair	Duncan Locke
Group Finance Officer	Peter Ward
Group Secretary	Greg Lovett
Group Engagement Officer	Ann Miles
Group Communications Officer	Ian Wilson
Ordinary Committee Members	Dawn Osborn
Ordinary Committee Members	Ralph Snook

This is a smaller committee than we have been used to operating with historically, but we are allowed to delegate responsibilities to individual volunteers or to teams of volunteers to assist in the execution of committee duties or in delivery of Group activities. We have been lucky enough to have enjoyed the support and assistance of:

Christine Holt - Membership Secretary

Bruce Kendrick - Publicity and events

James Foad - Residential Weekend Advisor

David O'Neil - Immediate Past Chair

You may recall that Dawn Osborn announced that she will be stepping down as Editor of the Iris and the Spring 2025 Edition will be her last as Editor. While Dawn will be a very hard act to follow, we have received some offers of help in this respect, and we hope to be able to announce the appointment of a new editorial team for the Iris in due course.

On the subject of changes, after many years helping to organise the annual Residential Weekend, James Foad has now stepped back from that role. Those of us that have had the pleasure of experiencing one of the Group's residential weekends in the past will be all too aware of the amount of hard work and effort that have gone into making them as successful as they have been.

7.3. Facebook

The Nature Groups' Facebook Page is moderated by Ann Miles and myself. We currently have 389 members, of whom 311 are considered to be active. This year 115 people have applied to join the page, 63 of whom met the membership requirement and were allowed to join. We declined membership of the page to 52 applicants, in each case because they failed to provide confirmation of their membership of the RPS and the Nature Group.

Of those who declared a gender, the membership is 66% male and 32% female.

The membership is largely UK based, 353 members are based in the UK, 7 in Ireland, 4 in the USA, 3 in each of India, New Zealand and Hong Kong. We also have 2 members in Switzerland and a member in each of Belgium, Israel and Gibraltar.

Perhaps unsurprisingly the most popular times to access the page is either over breakfast or later in the afternoon/early evening (UK time).

I am pleased to confirm that over the course of the year Ann and I have found the Nature Group Facebook page easy to moderate. Thanks to those who participate in the group we find that comments are generally helpful and supportive even where there are negative points to be made and, most of all, are relevant to our nature photography

7.4. Image Critique Forum

As some of you will be aware, this time last year we set up the "...Towards Associate" image critique forum aimed at those members of the Group who are working towards the Associate qualification and who would like to receive feedback on individual images. This initiative was intended to be separate from the existing Advice Days and One to Ones (which look at panels of images) but is intended to be complimentary to them.

Our aim with the "...Towards Associate" group has been to provide a forum for those taking part to provide feedback which will, over time, help them recognise what constitutes images that meet the criteria needed for inclusion in a panel of images at Associate level. The facility allows those taking part to upload images for positive critique by other members of that closed group. The group includes some individuals who have already achieved either Associate or Fellowship distinctions, who are able to offer advice and guidance.

Inevitably with a forum of this nature most people choose to participate for a limited time, and once they become more confident of what is required for the Associate qualification they will want to step back from membership as they concentrate on their panel submission. As a result, there is generally only a short waiting list, and I encourage those members who are interested in taking part to email me for further details.

8. Group Engagement and Events Officer's Report

Duncan Locke reminded the members attending that Ann Miles has only recently been discharged from hospital after a significant operation and was unable to attend. He praised the sheer number and quality of the events that she has organised over the last 12 months and referred members to her detailed report which can be found at <https://rps.org/groups/nature/agm-reports/>

9. Membership Subscription

DL presented the following resolution:

...In accordance with the recommendation of the Group Committee the Members resolve that the annual membership subscription for the Nature Group be increased from £18 to £20 with effect from 1st January 2026."

Proposed Margaret Beardsmore second Bruce Kendrick, the resolution was passed with the unanimous approval of all Members in attendance.

10. Committee for 2025 -2028

The following were elected unopposed:

Group Chair	Duncan Locke
Group Finance Officer	Peter Ward
Group Secretary	Greg Lovett
Group Engagement and Events Officer	Ann Miles
Group Communications Officer	Ian Wilson
Ordinary Committee Members	Dawn Osborn
Ordinary Committee Members	Ralph Snook

11 Q&A Session for Group Members with the Group Committee

DL the gave the attending members the usual opportunity to raise questions of the Committee.

11.1 The Iris

In response to various questions there was a discussion over the cost of sending The IRIS to overseas members (which exceeds an individual's membership subscription). The general feeling was that given the relatively small number of overseas members the cost was probably inconsequential in the context of the Group's budget.

11.2. The Membership Subscription

It was suggested that the Group should just automatically uplift the membership subscription by reference to inflation rates or similar. GL explained that the current terms of reference did not make provision for this and that we would continue to need to seek members approval to any potential increases either at an AGM or EGM.

11.3. Membership Numbers

In response to questions about Membership "turnover", DL explained that while the Group's membership remained very healthy and indeed, continued to increase, there was no real information available from the RPS as to the numbers who did not renew their subscription and their reasons for not doing so. The Committee had previously organised a survey of members which did not throw any greater light on the subject. Some degree of turnover was to be expected in the membership of a special interest group and the RPS. The age profile of RPS membership was likely to also play some part. Certainly, for the time being the group membership looked healthy, and the Committee would be keen to try to ensure that this remains the situation in future.

11.4. Generating Revenue from the Exhibition

The exhibition was very well received by members and several asked whether it would be possible to share this more widely and indeed to generate revenue for the Group in the process. DL promised to take this back to the Committee to see if there was more that could be done in this respect.

12. Date and Venue of the 50th AGM 2026

The 50th Annual General Meeting of the RPS Nature Group will be held on Saturday 11th April 2026 at Smethwick Photographic Society, The Old Schoolhouse, Oldbury, B69 2AS.

13. Thanks, and Close of the AGM

The AGM closed at 14:19hrs

Greg Lovett ARPS

RPS Nature Group Secretary

The Nature Group will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2026.

I want to make sure we use our next edition of *The Iris* to honour and mark the occasion with suitable material from our members. So please can you trawl through your back catalogue of both photographs and memories and relay them back to me.

I want this issue to record the development of the RPS Nature Group since its inception, and I want that **history to come directly from you.**

Please send me your recollections of events and photo shoots organized by the Nature Group. You may think that what you want to send is trivial, personal and unimportant but please take off that filter from your own 'lens'. I would love to receive your stories, both trivial and seminal.

Please get in touch via natureeditor@rps.org As for deadlines I would appreciate your material by the end of the year at the very latest. So please get cracking now!!

Very many thanks
Bruce (Content Editor)

Treasurer's Report for AGM 2025

Peter Ward

Report for the Year Ended 31st December 2024

Cash Book Summary:

Opening Account Balance 1st Jan 2024:	£ 24 962.33
Income for 12 Months to 31 st Dec 24	£ 20 153.20
Expenditure for 12 Months to 31 st Dec 24	(£19 472.88)
Closing Balance: 31 st Dec 2024	£ 25 642.65

Main areas of income and expenditure

Summary:

	Income	Expenditure:
Members Subscriptions:	£16 210	
Life members:	£560	
Printing & Distribution of The Iris:		£13 900
Exhibition:	£1 548	£975
Distinction Days:	£535	
Events in Year:	£1 407	£1 530
Talks:		£275
Milage		£300
Zoom Fees:		£325
Accommodation	£230	£500
Refund/Corrections	(£117)	£200
RPS Admin fees 6 months		£1500

Summary

1. We had a small surplus of £680.32 for the financial year.
2. Our biggest income is from membership subs and life members subs.
3. We supplement this with the events we host during the year such as the Annual Exhibition and Distinction Advisory days.
4. The weak-end residential should be cost neutral and costs covered by the participants.
5. Our biggest item of expenditure is printing and distribution of the IRIS which cost £13900 during 2024
6. We have just started paying the RPS Admin fee and for 6 months we contributed £1500. Next year this is due to increase to £3000

2025 budget

I have submitted to the RPS Finance team the following budget for 2025. As can be seen the impact of the RPS Admin fee is having a negative impact on our forecast and as such takes us into the red. There is very little we can do to increase our income to overcome this negative impact. After lengthy discussions with RPS management by the different SIG/RAG committees a cost of £3.20 per member was agreed. This will be paid monthly as a fee to the RPS.

	Expenditure		
Postage for Iris	£450		
Printing for Iris 3 editions	£15000		
Speaker fees	£300		
IT and website	£400		
Week end residential	£5,000		Budget to make 10% surplus
Mileage	£250		
Room/Hall hire	£250		
Events	£300		
AGM	£1,500		
RPS Admin fees (£3.20x975)	£3,120		
Expenditure total	£27,070		
		Income	
Life members subs		£500	
Publication sales		£100	
Vat refund		£50	
Tickets		£500	
Members subs		£16200	
Distinction Advisory day		£200	
Week end residential		£5500	
Total		£23050	
Profit +/-		£-4020	



Female Mallard and Ducklings *Anas platyrhynchos*
By Bruce Kendrick ARPS

Obituary

Bryan Knox ARPS

1933-2025

Bryan passed away peacefully in his sleep in the early hours of August 7th, at the age of 92, after a long battle with COPD. I was by his side as he had wished.

He had been one of the longest serving members of the RPS Nature Group, joining shortly after its formation by Heather Angel FRPS. He was a knowledgeable naturalist and a talented photographer. His passion for wildlife began as a young child when he was tutored by his father, a close friend of Sir Peter Scott. At that time, he was collecting specimens as well as shooting animals in Kenya where he went to study farming. It was the accepted norm. Like Sir Peter Scott, he then had a complete reversal of his attitude to the treatment and respect of Nature.

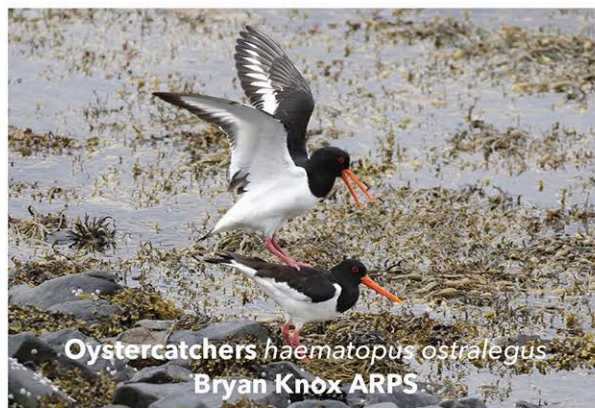
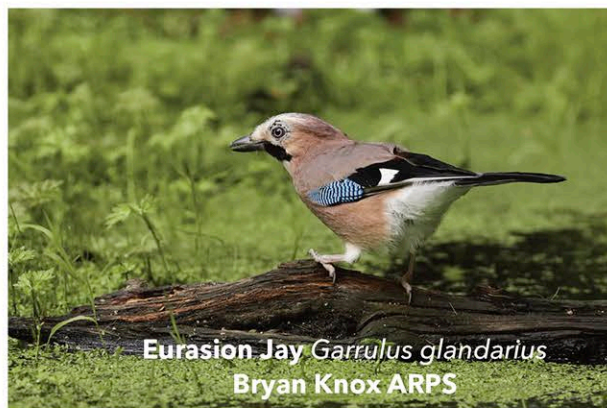
He could never forgive himself for what wildlife he had destroyed previously. As a farmer for 70 years of his life he could not even kill the squirrels that were stealing the bird food that he put out every day!

Bryan was a sensitive and caring person. Indeed, it was he that got me into wildlife photography. Sadly, he never went on to gain his Fellowship, although he did achieve his Associateship.

He was my friend for over 47 years. I give thanks for his advice and encouragement.

Sadly missed.

Sonja Thompson FRPS



THE **RPS**
ROYAL
PHOTOGRAPHIC
SOCIETY



**NATURE
GROUP**

Publication Information

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 Published early September

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

- Copy should be sent as .txt or .doc files by email. Please do not send typed or hand written copy.
- Digitally captured photographic images to support your article (whether vertical or horizontal) supplied as 8bit tif or jpg files, 216mm (2555pixels) on the longest edge, at 300pixels per inch, quality 12, file size approx 5mb. Please send via We Transfer.
- If your images is selected for us on the cover of The Iris you will be asked to supply a larger file,
- No payment will be made for material used.

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

Distribution

The iris is forwarded to members using addresses provided by the RPS Membership Dept in Bristol, Any member not receiving their copy should contact that department to confirm that their correct address is recorded. The Secretary will be pleased to post single copies to members who have failed to receive them.

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