



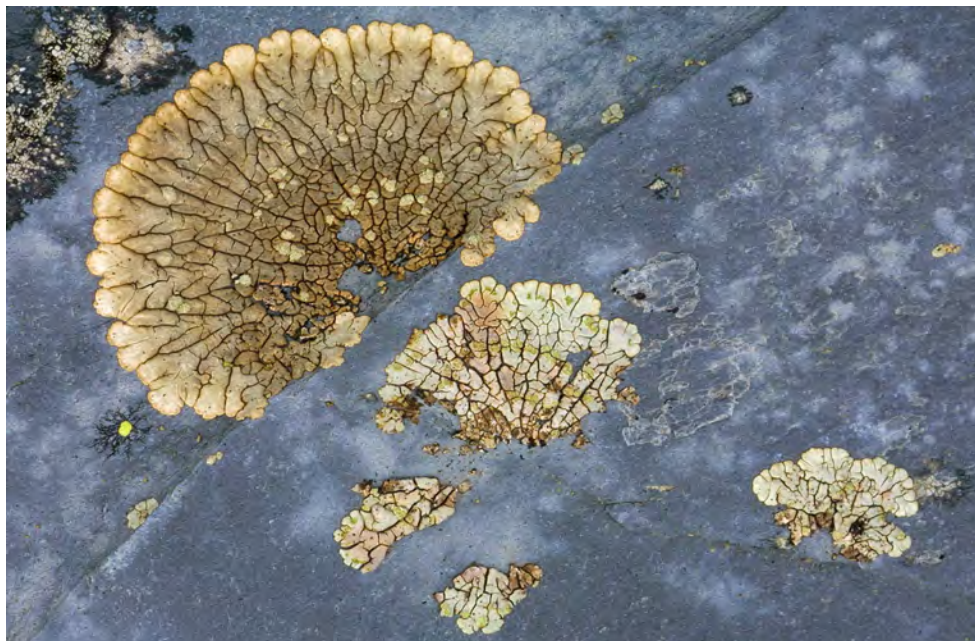
THE IRIS

MAGAZINE OF THE NATURE GROUP OF THE RPS

Issue No. 95 Summer 2006



Gold Medal - Best Print 2006
Martin Withers FRPS
Ring-Tailed Lemurs



Award winning prints

Best print Class C *Placupsia gelida* Lichen
Margery Maskell ARPS

Best Print Class D *Melting Iceberg, detail*
Ian MacWhirter ARPS



Publication information

'The Iris' is published by the Nature Group of the RPS three times a year. Copy and publication dates are as follows:

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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.

Copy may be sent by email or on disc as .txt or .doc files, or printed using double line spacing on one side of the paper only.

Digitally captured photographic images are preferred supplied as Tiff files on CD. They should be at least 2555 pixels on the longest side. Scanned transparencies are also acceptable providing they are scanned to the same specification. Original slides/transparencies are also acceptable, however, the Editor cannot specify how long they may be away from the author.

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

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

Distribution:

'The Iris' is forwarded to members using address labels produced by the RPS Membership Dept in Bath. Any member not receiving their copy should contact that department so that their name appears on a label in the future. However the Secretary will be pleased to post single copies to those members who have failed to receive them.

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Editor's apology:

I should have included the following acknowledgement in the article by John Nathan in the last issue of The Iris. My apologies for the omission. The acknowledgment is printed below.

'I experienced great difficulty identifying some of the plants I had photographed. Eventually they were identified by Dr Peter Brandham of Kew.'

Committee

Officers

Chairman: David Osborn FRPS

19 Mount Street, Cromer, Norfolk, NR27 9DB
Tel: 01263 511221 E-mail: poppyland3@aol.com

Vice Chairman: Geoff Trinder ARPS

The Croft, Carrhouse Road, Belton, Doncaster, DN9 1PG
Tel: 01427 872051

Immediate Past Chairman: Robert Hawkesworth FRPS

5 Ravensdale Drive, Wollaton, Nottingham, NG8 2SL
Tel: 01159 281050

Secretary: Margaret Johnson LRPS

53 Mapperley Orchard, Arnold, Nottingham, NG5 8AH
Tel: 01159 265893 E-mail: m.a.beevers@btopenworld.com

Treasurer: Trevor Hyman LRPS

3 Northcourt Lane, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 1QA
Tel: 01235 524909 E-mail: trevor.hyman@lineone.net

Committee Members

Webmaster:

Nick Jarvis ARPS

31 Meadow Way, Irthlingborough, Northants, NN9 5RS
Tel: 01933 651477 E-mail: Nickjarvis@aol.com

NG Rep to Advisory Panel:

John Bebbington FRPS

Quantock View, Newtown, Langport, Somerset, TA10 9SE
Tel: 01458 253027 E-mail: john.bebbington@ukonline.co.uk

Programme Co-ordinator:

Colin Smith FRPS

3 St Hilda's Close, Chorley, Lancs, PR7 3NU
Tel: 01257 271981 E-mail: colin-smith@foto-wizard.fsnet.co.uk

John Jones ARPS

31 Bridgefields, Kegworth, Derby, DE74 2FW
Tel: 01509 672125

Patricia Kreyer ARPS

Langdale House, 10 Mulberry Way, Ely, Cambs CB7 4TH
Tel: 01353 615623 Email freedom7@ntlworld.com

Ex-officio members

Editor of The Iris:

Ms. Dawn Osborn FRPS

5 Crompton Close, Little Haywood, Stafford, ST18 0YS
Tel: 01889 881928 E-mail: iris.editor@ntlworld.com

Exhibition Secretary: Peter Jones ARPS

3 Curlew Close, Mountsorrel, Loughborough, Leics, LE12 7ED
Tel: 01509 412286 E-mail: pwjonesarps@btconnect.com

The Chairman of the A&F Nature Distinctions Panel, the President, Director General, Hon. Treasurer and Finance Officer of the Royal Photographic Society are also ex-officio members.

Nature Group Exhibitions

Copies of Nature Group Exhibitions dating back to 2000, are available to book for camera clubs/photographic societies. If you would like to book one of these or the current or next years' Travelling Exhibition, please contact: Peter Jones ARPS, details above.

Field Meeting Reports

Please send these directly to the Editor (address above) by post or email.

Editorial

As I write this, I can hear the sound of rain falling heavily on my conservatory roof. Following the extreme heat and humidity of the last few days, I have to say that the sound is very welcome and extremely pleasant to the senses. During the last few days I ventured to a local spot to photograph Southern Marsh and Common Spotted Orchid. Although in pristine condition at 9am in the morning, by 11am, many of the prime specimens appeared to be in a state of distress, leaving me to wonder if they could recover!

By the time you receive this issue of The Iris, Summer Solstice will have already passed. I hate the knowledge that the days will now begin to get shorter, especially as the weather has only just begun to offer us some opportunities to get out with our cameras. I know that many of you will be travelling to far distant places this year, but even more of you will be exploring the wild places and subjects that the British Isles has to offer. As wonderful as it is to read about places and species in other parts of the world, it is equally interesting to read about our own native wild subjects, especially as they more readily accessible if we take the trouble to look. I would like to remind those of you who are vacationing within these home shores, that your fellow readers are equally keen to hear your accounts of encounters with British wild species. The Iris is always on the lookout for items of interest to fill its pages.

As I said previously, Solstice has passed and since the Spring issue, so have the Spring Meeting, AGM and our Annual Exhibition. Those of you who missed the showing at Smethwick, missed a real treat, so just to tempt you into both entering and attending the Exhibition next year, I have included a good selection of the award winning images as well as a full listing of the accepted images.

I do hope that you find this issue interesting - if there is anything that you feel we should be including or if you have any thoughts you would like to share, please contact me.

Have a happy summer



From the chair

As the Iris copy date rushes rapidly towards me, I really can't believe where time disappears to! Today is supposed to be the first day of summer, but once again it seems that no one has let the Atlantic weather systems in on the secret, so with a bitterly cold wind blowing rain against the window, heralding the fact that summer is now officially upon us, I guess today is going to be a very good day to sit down and write 'from the Chair'.

Spring has now come and gone and is probably a fading memory. I think it's fair to say that it wasn't a classic, with long periods of unsettled weather giving cold, grey rainy days and very little sunshine. What weird weather we do get sometimes - no wonder the British are all so pre-occupied by it!

I don't think anyone, anywhere, had a particularly good showing of spring flowers and many plants have been fairly late in flowering. I know that the blossoms I had planned to photograph were blown off the trees by strong winds almost as soon as they'd opened. I have also been told by a friend of mine that the pair of Chaffinch which nested in his garden had all their chicks drowned in the nest. I would imagine that many of the smaller songbirds have all suffered similarly with the cold and the rain and many first broods have already been lost.

I do sincerely hope that there has been a major improvement in the weather before this lands on your doorstep. We really do need things to warm up a touch in order to be able to get some quality time out and about in the countryside. It would be very nice to get out with the camera as well.

On the other hand I've been very fortunate this spring and have spent a lot of time photographing the birds in Florida. Unfortunately the urban development there continues at an alarming rate but thankfully the opportunity for quality bird photography remains nothing short of superb and during the springtime I think the place is truly wonderful. You should try and join me if you can. Florida still offers some really great wildlife photo opportunities.

The 2006 AGM has come and gone since the last 'Iris' and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved, both on the committee for their help and the general membership for their support and attendance. The day was both enjoyable and successful, starting off with a superb slide presentation from Tony Bond FRPS and finishing with the opening and projection of another excellent group annual exhibition. Thanks again to everyone who attended the event for their support and to everyone at Smethwick PS for hosting the event.

I may have mentioned it before on the odd occasion, but please remember that this is your group and that it can only be as successful as the membership support allows it to be, so please make a diary date for next year and join us once again at Smethwick for the 2007 AGM.

I am also repeating my plea for a suitably qualified member to take over the role of Treasurer from Trevor Hyman who would like to retire at the next AGM. If you can help please contact either Trevor, the Secretary or myself.

On the subject of Nature Group activities, I'd like to remind you all that this year is the year of that bi-annual flourish, known as Chairman's Day. In the past we have seen some hugely successful and popular days organised by our Chair persons and this year I'll be aiming to maintain the standards previously set. The full details of the day appear later in this edition of *The Iris*, but in brief this is an all day event to be held at Smethwick on Saturday 21st October 2006. I've got some excellent lecturers lined up who will not only show you their work but also discuss techniques, and hopefully there will be something of interest for everyone. We'll also be showing a number of recent successes in the A' & F' categories as well as organising a field meeting for Sunday 22nd. You're all invited and I look forward to meeting you all on the 21st, so please come along and join us.



Report of the 30th AGM, April 2006

The 30th Annual General Meeting of the Royal Photographic Society Nature Group was held at The Old Schoolhouse, Oldbury, on Saturday 22nd April 2006 at 2pm. It was chaired by David Osborn FRPS and attended by 44 members.

Apologies

These were received from Kath Bull, Simon Cook, Bert Crawshaw, Liz Goodchild, Radu Handoka, John Keighley, Tricia Kryer, Ludi Lochner, Martin Withers and Eric Wright.

Minutes of the 2005 AGM

The minutes of the 2005 AGM printed in Issue 92 of *The Iris* were approved and signed by David Osborn as a correct record of what then took place.

Matters Arising

There were none.

Chairman's Report

The last year has once again seen the Nature group improve and move from strength to strength.

The membership has increased over the period and Margaret will give full details in her report. Financially the group is in a very sound and strong position and our flagship magazine *The Iris* is as good as it gets.

The committee has had a number of successful meetings over the period and moved forward with a number of long term items as well as re-arranging a number of committee duties. I've always been conscious of sharing the organisational burdens through the committee as widely as possible and to aid in this matter I'd like to thank John Bebbington FRPS for volunteering to take over the role as the Nature Group's representative on the advisory panel. John's vast knowledge and experience will, I'm sure, be of benefit both to the group and the RPS in the future. I'd also like to thank Colin Smith FRPS for not only willingly offering to join the committee but also for taking on the thankless task of field meetings' co-ordinator.

There have been many items discussed at committee, far too many to report back briefly, but there are a few that membership should be made aware of:

- Changing the date for the AGM has been discussed and later in the meeting we will be proposing bringing the date of the 2007 AGM forward to late March.
- The ongoing question of how to encourage members has also been discussed at length. Many organisations face the exact same problems and unfortunately in the end we failed to come up with a positive answer to the question. We felt in general we were too small a group to effect any positive change and that any innovations in this area need to come from the main body of the Society.
- We have also discussed the matter of making the annual exhibition available as a CD-ROM and have agreed in principle to implementation subject to further discussion at the next committee meeting. We have for the first time inaugurated digital imaging into the 2006 exhibition.
- The other main topic discussed was the bequest from Michael Shirley. It had been felt that it would be more appropriate to do something positive with the donation other than allow it to be swallowed up into the group's general account. After discussion we decided that the group would use the money to update and produce a revised copy of the Nature Photographer's Code of Practice, which although in its infancy is proceeding and we will be in a position to report on more fully at next year's AGM.

On an almost final note and from issues which came to the fore at the end of 2005, I would like to make it perfectly clear to the group membership that the Nature Group has nothing at all to do with, no control over and no input into the workings of the Nature Distinctions Panel or the distinctions process. They are completely separate and independent of one another.

Finally as the Chairman, I would thank all of my fellow committee members for their time hard work and effort that they freely give to make this group work as one of the most efficient in the RPS.

I must however give special thanks to Margaret for her excellent work in the never ending task of group secretary and to Trevor for efficiently monitoring our expenditure and ensuring the group's financial stability.

Thanks also to Peter and Susie for once again organising an excellent annual exhibition and for then seeing that it is viewed as far and wide as possible, not only spreading the reputation of the group but also earning some additional revenue.

Thanks too, to Andrew Parsons for his work administering and implementing the first ever digital image section of the exhibition.

To Nick for his innovative work in setting up and administering the web-site.

And last but by no means least, to Dawn for presenting us with an ever growing and quality magazine in 'The Iris' which is certainly the envy of the rest of the specialist groups within the Society.

We are very lucky indeed to have such a talented and dedicated group steering the future of the Nature Group. All in all it was a very positive and successful year.

Secretary's Report

There has been yet another change in the layout of the monthly members' list and I now receive 104 pages as opposed to 53!!

The membership has increased over the year to 636 members (according to Bath). Last year at this time we had 616. We do lose members each month for various reasons but they usually have issues with the RPS and not with our group.

We have had some good feedback about the travelling exhibition from Godfray Guilbert of Spectrum in Guernsey:

"I have just returned from our Spectrum club evening. It was particularly enjoyable as we had the 2005 Nature Group travelling Exhibition of slides and prints (slides of the prints). The evening was packed with stunning images and the club members were very appreciative of the exhibition. One aspect particularly remarked on was the commentary - one of the best we have heard on an exhibition slide show and very clearly recorded. Thanks from Spectrum (Guernsey) to all concerned in the production of this set and, of course, the Nature Group photographers who gave us these wonderful pictures."

In the last week I have had enquiries about the CD-ROM: An Interactive Guide to obtaining your Nature Associateship and these I have passed on to Trevor. All in all it has been a busy but successful year.

Chairman's Day 2006

This will take place Saturday, 21st October at Smethwick and should be a stimulating day with excellent speakers and good company. There will also be field events arranged for Sunday, 22nd October. Full details will appear in The Iris.

Any Other Business

John Bebbington said that Bill Burns-Begg was not well and wished us to send good wishes to him. He has passed over the Circle 2 slides to John who will return them to their owners.

Robert Hawkesworth said that the NPP had lost members since the digital explosion and perhaps those members from the slide circle would be interested in joining the NPP. It was suggested that perhaps Nature Group members could have a digital circle via memory stick or the website.

Richard Revels wanted to know if there was any chance of having a digital projector for the Nature Group's own use; perhaps applying for a lottery grant. Dawn Osborn said that we would be unlikely to obtain a grant as our funds were healthy. David Osborn stated that the committee were conscious of wasting the Group's money and that the amount of use we would get from it did not justify the expense.

There was ongoing discussion about losing members and after much discussion it was unanimously agreed that the committee should explore the possibility of selling The Iris to non-members of the Nature Group with the stipulation that they were not given permission to enter Nature Group exhibitions.

Michael Huggan asked if it was possible for members with successful Associateship or Fellowship panels to make them available at events for people to see. He said that even at workshops around the country there were no examples. David said that he would mention it to Bath and that he would see if he could have some on display at Chairman's Day in October. Erna Kritzinger asked if it would be possible for the authors to speak about their panels as it would be very educational.

Sonja Knox asked if the rules about the mounting of prints could be clarified before the next exhibition and the committee agreed to look at this at the next committee meeting.

Date & Venue for the 31st AGM 2007

This would be Saturday 31st March 2007 at The Old Schoolhouse, Oldbury at 2.00pm. The meeting was declared closed at 2.50 pm.

Treasurer's Report for period 1st. January – 31st. December 2005

General Comments

This is the first report when the accounts cover both a full calendar and also financial year. I have decided to model this report as previously i.e. to use a broad-brush approach and to highlight points of special interest. As usual the accounts are a record of Income and Expenditure for the year and not a detailed Balance Sheet for each item.

Subscriptions

I am glad to say that the Membership data I get each month has improved somewhat, though still not perfect - Bath seem to be listening to comments re the database, at last. The Subscription Income shown in the Balance Sheet is that credited monthly to our CashBook Account during the current Financial year - (which is, of course, the Nature Group Subscriptions paid to the RPS at Bath for December 2004 to November 2005). On Bath's instruction, the Life Members' sub-reimbursements for 2005 are included in the 2005 accounts, even though they are not to be paid to Nature Group until 13 Jan. 2006.

Lectures & Workshops

Two events have taken place this year - the Residential week-end held at the Kingcombe Centre in Dorset (organised by Kath Bull with the assistance of Nick Jarvis) and the Brooksby Convention (organised by Martin Withers with the assistance of Robert Hawkesworth). Both events were enjoyed by participants - even though these were fewer in number than had been hoped. The Kingcombe event made a very slight profit after allowing for £100 paid last F/Y (remember this when looking at this year's Balance Sheet). The £2 involved will go someway towards helping with the central Admin. costs. Brooksby, on the other hand, made a loss of £117 - unfortunately as a result of the small number attending.

The Iris

Three editions of The IRIS were published this year - the last one (#93) being larger than usual. The cost of production and posting does seem to be creeping up (the latter will rise again shortly).

Annual Exhibition

With the change of Financial Year to coincide with the Calendar Year, both Income and Expenditure for our showcase Exhibition come together. There was an exceptional expenditure for a stock of medals, which will be engraved as required (and which will reduce running costs over the next few years). The Travelling Exhibition brought in a record £410 over the year. Overall there was a loss of some £186.

Sundry Income

This includes VAT refunds and income resulting from the sale of the 'A' Guidance Interactive CDs (£310) - these are still selling well (now 158 total). The CDs have recently been updated to include some recent successful 'A' panels, which the authors were happy to acknowledge the help received from the CDs !!

Interest

This is a most welcome addition to our running costs and comes from the good CashBook balance.

Legacy

Michael Shirley ARPS left the Nature Group £500 in his Will. This is included as a separate item, so that it doesn't disappear into the general funds.

General Administration

Includes all running costs of the Nature Group - general postage, telephone, stationery and travel to committee meetings, the cost of our web-site (£423 p.a.) plus VAT expenditure. This year there were exceptional expenditures for updating Quark Express (£385) for The Iris Editor, the purchase of a new die (£429) for Annual Exhibition medals and a stock of medals for future years (£183).

Overall Financial Situation

The Balance Sheet shows an overall excess of Expenditure over Income of £1,434.43 (excluding the legacy) which, considering the purchases etc., I don't feel to be excessive. However, care should be taken in the future not to allow uncontrolled spending. The CashBook shows a healthy credit balance of £15,455.17 at the end of the year (c.f. £17,319.52 at the same time last year).

Trevor Hyman LRPS
Hon. Treasurer 21st. April 2006

THE NATURE GROUP OF THE ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

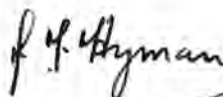
Receipts and Payments Account for 1st January 2005 to 31st December 2005

Nature Group 'Cash Book' at RPS Bath

<u>Year 2004</u> (1/4 to 31/12)		<u>Year 2005</u>
<u>Income</u>		
3,027.81	Subscriptions	6,109.46
-	Life Subs 2005	907.79
589.00	Lectures & Workshops	4,536.00
317.00	Annual Exhibition	1,014.16
541.99	Interest received (to Cash Book)	765.51
520.90	Sundry Income	670.45
-	Legacy	500.00
4,996.70	sub totals	14,503.37
<u>Expenditure</u>		
3,856.26	The Iris incl. postage	6,156.82
427.50	Lectures & Workshops	4,551.24
613.50	Annual Exhibition	1,200.51
1,550.55	General Administration	3,529.23
6,447.81	sub totals	15,437.80
-1,451.11	Receipts minus Payments	-934.43


Balance Sheet at 31st December 2005

Nature Group Cash Book	£
Balance brought forward from 2004	17,319.52
Income minus Expenditure	-934.43
Debit from 2004	-49.91
Uncleared cheque 2005	27.78
Uncleared Credit 2005	-907.79
Total	15,455.17
<u>Total Carried Forward To Financial Year 2006</u>	15,455.17

 J T Hyman (Hon Treasurer)

Independent Examiner's Report to Members

The financial statements for the year ended 31st December 2005 set out above have been prepared from the books and records of the Nature Group of the Royal Photographic Society and are in accordance therewith.


C S Wilkinson
Chartered Accountants

6th March 2006

Expedition to East Africa

by Chuck Eccleston LRP5

At the beginning of February this year my wife and I embarked on a one month 'African Expedition' to Kenya and Tanzania with Exodus Adventure Holidays. We spent 25 days in an open sided truck with 18 other like minded people, plus a leader, co-driver cook and assistant cook. Travelling in a group and camping every night helped to keep the costs down. Each morning/evening we had to erect/dismantle our tents and soon became very proficient at it. We covered approximately 2600 kilometres and visited five national parks.

Our main interest was to see and photograph the many spectacular mammals and birds, for these we used a Canon 20D and 100-400mm IS lens with 1.4 and 2x converters with an 18-55mm lens for our visits to various African tribal villages; we also carried a Powershot 5 for candid shots. We backed up our images every night onto a 40GB Flashtrax. I tried to use a tripod at all times although sometimes in the truck I had to collapse the legs and use it like a monopod. On our first day we visited the Daphne Sheldrick Elephant Orphanage just outside Nairobi, recently featured in the BBC programme 'Elephant Diaries'. Needless to say the baby elephants were full of the 'aahhhh' factor!!, playing in giant tyres and being splashed with water. The following morning we set off to the foothills of Mount Kenya. During our first game walk we saw Colobus monkeys in the distance and many bird species including two types of Kingfisher, Weavers and a Tawny Eagle but all too distant to photograph.

Our first proper reserve was Samburu, located to the east of the Rift Valley in the north eastern corner of Kenya. Samburu is a well documented reserve, and has been featured in numerous T.V. programmes. Our visit was during the dry season and therefore most photo opportunities occurred at waterholes and along the river banks. Unfortunately, due to a very serious drought, the rivers were virtually dry. We spent two nights 'wild camping' in the centre of Samburu, surrounded by Buffalo, Baboon, Zebra and Lion, all of which we heard during the night!!

We photographed all of these during the day plus Giraffes, Grants Gazelle, Impala, Elephants and many birds including three types of Bee-eater and three species of Eagle.

Our next journey took us west to Lake Baringo, home to some 300 different species of bird. A canoe trip gave us the opportunity to see and photograph Herons and Egrets, Pelicans and Fish Eagles which obligingly dive for fish thrown by the boat's helmsman. The grounds of the camp-site contained a large number of bird species, but photography was difficult due to strong sunlight and dark dappled shadows from the trees.

Soon we were off to Lake Nakuru, a 'soda lake' which is home to vast flocks of Flamingos and Pelicans. An evening game drive gave wonderful views of Burchells Zebra, White Rhino, Giraffe, Black-backed Jackals at a kill, Wart Hogs, Buffalos and Lions. During the night at our wild camp, we were visited by a Buffalo only 10 metres from our tent!

Next morning we were up before the dawn for another game drive. As the sun rose we spotted our first Leopard. He suddenly turned and ran toward us! But no-one managed to get a good picture of him - we were all shaking with excitement!!

After a superb morning drive through the park we headed to the border between Kenya and Tanzania, crossing at tea time and heading for our next camp on the shores of Lake Victoria. It was very windy so photo opportunities were limited however I managed to get some shots of Yellow-billed Kites, Hadeadh Ibis and a Little Egret.

The following morning we headed southwest to the western end of the Serengeti National Park, the Ndaraka Gate, travelling along the famous western corridor and surrounded by huge herds of Zebra and Wildebeest with their calves. The afternoon was spent on a game drive where we saw and photographed at close quarters Lion, Zebra, Topi, Gazelles, Elephant, Buffalo, Impala, Eagles, Vultures etc. By the time we reached the





camp, in the heart of the reserve, we were all on a high from seeing so many different species of animals and birds. Another early start the next morning found us heading southwards to the Nabi Hill Gate and the Olduvai gorge, en route we again passed vast herds of wildebeest and zebra heading north on their annual migration.

We arrived at our camp site above the Ngorogoro Crater in the evening and were all looking forward to a full days visit to the crater the next morning. We used jeeps for the steep descent into the magnificent crater with green plains full of game and birds. Within one hour we had seen Africa's Big Five - lion, cheetah, buffalo, elephant and rhino - we also had superb sightings of a female cheetah with her cub, a leopard sleeping in a tree and male and female tawny eagles fighting over a stork that they had killed. At our lunch stop we were the prey of black kites or at least our sandwiches were!!

On leaving the Ngorogoro we made the long journey through the foothills of Kilimanjaro to Dar-es-salaam and then by ferry to Zanzibar for a few days rest and relaxation before flying home.

Despite the very dusty conditions my kit and sensor stayed remarkably clean. Every evening everything was given a thorough cleaning using a Giotto blower on the sensor and soft cloths to clean the exterior, I also tried not to change lenses or converters unless absolutely necessary and only then when conditions were clean and wind free. During the day I kept the camera on my lap at all times inside an 'Exped' waterproof expedition bag which seals by rolling the top over and fastening with a clip. This prevented dust getting into the camera when it was not in use, but remained easily accessible when needed.

We had taken 1800 large fine JPEG images which were down loaded to our PC upon our return home and checked in Photoshop CS2 for sharpness, exposure etc and then either adjusted or deleted as required, leaving us with approximately 650 images to retain. The holiday was a great success and despite having to share the best positions for photographs with other members of the group when in the truck, we do not feel we missed out on any good opportunities as we all took turn and turn about.





Associateship Panel

by John Scotten ARPS

I joined my local camera club in 1984, being rather a late starter in photography at 52 years of age, and joined the RPS in 1985. During the next few years I occupied myself with club photography and in 1988 I obtained my LRPS with a panel of monochrome prints. A change of job at age 61 got me into the professional side of photography and weddings, portraits, etc. became my work and not my hobby. I took a photo restoration course using PhotoShop and began restoring old photos which I continued to do beyond retirement age. I finally started to run things down and retire properly when I was 71. Until this time I had found that I hadn't wanted to take many pictures for myself, as it was too much like work, although I did take slides on my twice-yearly visits to the Lake District.

After gaining the Licentiate distinction I found it difficult to think of a subject that interested me sufficiently that I could have a stab at the Associate distinction. I think you also need to think of the type of person you are, for myself I know I have a lot of patience and I do enjoy macro work.

I bought my first 'real' digital camera, a Nikon D100, in the autumn of 2003 and after learning how to use it, stopped using film in favour of digital imaging. I also joined the Digital Imaging Group, which has helped me to develop my skills and I'm now secretary of the Central Southern Group DIG.

It was 2 years ago during my Spring holiday in the Lakes that, on one of our walks around the southern end of Derwentwater, we came upon a host of damselflies that were just emerging. I spent quite a lot of time photographing them. Two of the shots I took were looked upon favourably and did quite well in competitions and I felt that in Natural History I had at last found a subject in which I could work towards making up a panel for the Associate distinction; although the damselflies were not in my final selection.

Since May of 2004 I have been going out to visit many of my local nature reserves and taking photos of the small world that butterflies and fungi inhabit.



Opposite: Marbled White

Above: Gatekeeper

Below: Glistening Ink Caps





Mycena species

Equipment

I used the Nikon D100 body that I have already mentioned and a Nikon 105mm macro lens which I already owned. I added another macro lens and a secondhand Nikon 200mm, which was useful for the butterfly shot's. Other items of kit included a right angle view finder, some high quality Nikon close up filters, and a remote release. All the images were taken using a Gitzo carbon fibre tripod; I always use a tripod, part of my professional training.

The Work

I decided I would make my submission with a panel of 15 prints. After having taken a great many images, I made a selection and then began sorting them into what I thought would make a well-balanced panel. I made about 30 working prints and showed what I thought was the best arrangement to a group of experts at an RPS Advisory Day. Next, one particularly wet day on my autumn week in the Lakes, I showed them to my fellow guests, some of whom were Fellows or Associates. We spent time changing things around and replacing some with other prints until we all agreed that I should submit the final panel that you see here. I then reprinted the final selection at 12.5" x 8.5" and mounted them into window mounts 20" x 16". My choice of colour for the mounts was Antique White.

I delivered the panel, including my written statement of intent to the RPS headquarters in Bath in late February for the Spring assessment on the 7th





March. I attended the adjudication and found it very interesting to listen to the comments made by the members of the adjudicating panel. The panel consisted of six Fellows plus the Chairman to give a casting vote if needed.

Fortunately nobody disliked my work and the only thing I was criticised for was for over-sharpening two of the prints. I had passed, and it was a very nice 74th birthday present!

Afterthoughts

First costs. I estimate it cost me about £250 spread over a period of two years. This includes the fee of £50, the cost of ink jet paper and inks, and eight sheets of mount-board plus the costs involved in making two trips to Bath, one to deliver the panel before the assessment, (£18.50 mid day with a senior citizen rail card) and the other of the day of the assessment (£49 for the early morning service). Of course it is all worth it when you know you have passed and you receive your certificate in the post.

When you have retired I think it is a good idea to make a project for yourself and not sit indoors in front of the television too much.

So flushed with my success my next project will be to work towards a Fellowship Distinction. This will be very much harder and the submission needs to show visible signs of being above the normal level. At the moment I am proposing to photograph fungi only but things may change, as I like all nature subjects.



Gymnopilus species



**Award Winning Images,
Print Section**

Bronze Medal, Class B:
Richard Revels FRPS
Brown Hares boxing



**Barbara Hawkesworth's
Award in Class C**
John Jones ARPS
**Xanthoria &
Caloplaca Lichens**



Nature Group Annual Members Exhibition 2006

Print Section

Gold Medal - Best Print in the Exhibition

Martin Withers FRPS

Ring-Tailed Lemurs

Bronze Medal Winners - Best Print in each Class

Class A

Dawn Osborn FRPS

**Rockhopper Penguin
drinking**

Class B

Richard Revels FRPS

Brown Hares boxing

Class C

Margery Maskell ARPS

***Placupsia gelida* Lichen**

Class D

Ian MacWhirter ARPS

Melting Iceberg -detail

Selectors Awards

John Bebbington:

Elizabeth Goodchild ARPS

Buffalo in Snowstorm

Michael Huggan ARPS

Immature Green Backed Heron

Linda Shuaib LRPS

Calligonum polygonoides

Linda Shuaib LRPS

Wind-rippled Arabian sand

Barbara Hawkesworth:

John Jones ARPS

Shoal of Compass Jellyfish

John Jones ARPS

Xanthoria & Caloplaca Lichens

John Jones ARPS

Cleonicerus Ammonite

Brian Knox FRPS

**Willet removing legs from
crab**

Colin Smith:

Kevin Maskell FRPS

Basalt Columns at

Aldeyjarfoss

Richard Revels FRPS

Hummingbird Hawkmoth

about to feed

Richard Revels FRPS

Cauliflower Fungus in habitat

Martin Withers FRPS

Osprey with nest material

Highly Commended Prints

Elizabeth Goodchild ARPS - **Sea Otters**

Michael Huggan ARPS - **Elephants in Ruaha**

Dawn Osborn FRPS - **King Penguins on a South Atlantic Beach**

Kay Reeve FRPS - **Seashore pebble and rocks, Bagdsey**

Richard Revels FRPS - **Gentoo Penguins**

Commended Prints

John Bulpitt FRPS - **Brown Pelicans Dive-fishing**

Kenneth Day ARPS - **Cheetah with kill**

Martin Withers FRPS - **Wildebeest Migration**

Print Acceptances

Author

John Bulpitt FRPS

Kenneth Day ARPS

Title

Red-billed Tropic Bird

Bridled Guillemot

Brown Pelicans Dive-fishing

Banded Demoiselle

Marbled White on Field Scabious

Little Bee eater

Secretary Bird

Cheetah with kill

Male Cheetahs

Award

Commended

Commended

Elizabeth Goodchild ARPS	Sandhill Cranes Sea Otters Artic Foxcub Polar Bear Buffalo in Snowstorm	Highly Commended John Bebbington Award
Roger Hance FRPS	Elk Feeding Song Thrush on post Adult Greater-spotted Woodpecker feeding young High Brown Fritillary Grass snake in pond flicking tongue Banded Damoiselle Damselfly	
Roy Hodgkiss ARPS	Dipper Peacock Butterfly Sperm Whale Diving Pasque Flower <i>Mycena leptcephala</i> Pancake Rocks New Zealand	
Michael Huggan ARPS	Spotted Hyena Elephants in Ruaha Roan Antelope Immature Green Backed Heron	Highly Commended John Bebbington Award
Brian Iddon	Herring Gull Bridled Guillemot Elephant Hawkmoth	
Colin Jeeves ARPS	Shoal of Compass Jellyfish	Barbara Hawkesworth Award
John Jones ARPS	Xanthoria & Caloplaca Lichens Geological fault in Devonian old Red Sandstone Cleonicerus Ammonite	Barbara Hawkesworth Award Barbara Hawkesworth Award
Peter Jones ARPS	Greater Spotted Woodpecker searching for food King Penguins Blue Ice Antarctica Green Heron feeding Tricolour Heron feeding Osprey with fish Burrowing Owl at nest Willet removing legs from crab	 Barbara Hawkesworth Award
Ian MacWhirter ARPS	Anhinga male about to feed young Black-browed Albatrosses mutual preening Arctic Tern <i>Araweus quadratus</i> with prey Roe Deer with Fawn Melting Iceberg -detail	 Bronze Medal
Margery Maskell ARPS	Gentoo Penguins Forest Bug Lady Fern Placupsia gelida Lichen	 Bronze Medal
Kevin Maskell FRPS	King Cormorant coming into land Two -Banded Plover Gentoo Penguin on wind swept beach Red-Crested Pochard Southern Elephant Seal Bull Basalt Columns at Aldeyjarfoss	 Colin Smith Award

Dave Mckay ARPS	Wolf Spider with egg sac	
Ian Mclean LRPS	Six Spot Burnet Moth	
R Middleton LRPS	Brimstone on Goneptery Fleabane	
	Holly Blue on Knapweed	
David Osborn FRPS	Limestone Pavement with Hawthorn	
	Gentoo Penguin	
	Reddish Egret	
	Great Egret	
	King Cormorant with nesting material	
	Juvenile Grey Seals playing	
Dawn Osborn FRPS	King Penguins on a South Atlantic Beach	Highly Commended
	Falkland Skua with stolen egg	
	Snowy Sheathbill in flight	
	Rockhopper Penguin drinking	Bronze Medal
	Common Spotted Orchid	
	Southern Marsh Orchid	
Andrew Parsons ARPS	Gatekeepers Paired	
Archie Raymond	Panther Chameleon	
	Chameleon no 3	
	Leaf-tailed Gecko	
Kay Reeve FRPS	Grasshopper	
	Red Squirrel	
	Marbled White	
	Green-veined Whites paired	
	Seashore pebble and rocks, Bagdsey	Highly Commended
Richard Revels FRPS	Gentoo Penguins	Highly Commended
	Arctic Tern Hovering	
	King Cormorant flying with seaweed	
	Brown Hares boxing	Bronze Medal
	Hummingbird Hawkmoth about to feed	Colin Smith Award
	Cauliflower Fungus in habitat	Colin Smith Award
Linda Shuaib LRPS	Crab Spider with Hoverfly	
	Calligonum polygonoides	John Bebbington Award
	Cistanche tubulosa	
	Wind-rippled Arabian sand	John Bebbington Award
Kay Thompson ARPS	Burchell's Zebra	
	<i>Mollugo flavescens</i> on fresh lava flow	
Martin Withers FRPS	Laughing Dove	
	Osprey with nest material	Colin Smith Award
	Ring-Tailed Lemurs	Gold Medal
	Wildebeest Migration	Commended

Nature Group Annual Members Exhibition 2006

Slide Section

Gold Medal - Best Slide in the Exhibition

Flammulina velutipes - Tony Bond FRPS

Bronze Medal Winners - Best Slide in each Class

Class A

Dawn Osborn FRPS

**Black-crowned
Night Heron (Imm)**

Class B

Kay Thompson ARPS

**Elephant Hawkmoth
Caterpillar**

Class C

Margaret Sixsmith ARPS

Amethyst Deceiver

Class D

John Jones ARPS

**Cast detail of
Phyllacanthus imperialis
*Echinoid***

Selectors' Awards

John Bebbington:

Simon Cook ARPS

Boreal Jacob's Ladder

John Cucksey

Claypan Sand Dunes & dead

Camelthorn, Dead Vlei

William Middleton ARPS

Male Cuckoo displaying with moss

Richard Revels FRPS

Blue Underwing Moth

Barbara Hawkesworth:

Kath Bull ARPS

Mine in Hogweed Leaf x 2.5

Gill Cardy

Lesser Kestrel

Kay Reeve FRPS

Pholiota squarrosa

John Sixsmith ARPS

Brown Argus mating

Colin Smith:

Tony Bond FRPS

Pearl-bordered Fritillary

John Jones ARPS

Devonian Sandstone,

Skokholm Island

Dawn Osborn FRPS

Dolphin Gull with stolen egg

Dawn Osborn FRPS

Early Purple Orchids

Highly Commended Slides

Richard Revels FRPS - **Greater Spotted Woodpecker**

Richard Revels FRPS - **Lime Hawk Moth**

Richard Revels FRPS - **Kentish Glory Moth**

Commended Slides

Roger Hance FRPS - **Dark Green Fritillary**

Monique Vanstone - **Broad- Bodied Chaser**

Terry Wall ARPS - **Orchard Oriole**

Slide Acceptances

Author

Karen Berry ARPS

Tony Bond FRPS

Les Borg ARPS

Gordon Bramham ARPS

Title

Elephant Hawkmoth Caterpillar

Neobulgaria pura

Striated Caracara with Gentoo chick

Pearl-bordered Fritillary

Mottled Beauty

Beautiful Golden Y

Flammulina velutipes

Fieldfare on snow

Weasel on broken concrete blocks

Striped Kingfisher

Mountain Gorilla and young

Spotted Hyena and Thompsons

Grizzly Bear cubs

Mother's pride

Award

Colin Smith Award

Gold Medal

Kath Bull ARPS	Great Green Bush-Cricket Mine in Hogweed Leaf x 2.5	Barbara Hawkesworth Award
Andy Callow ARPS	<i>Phaelous schweinitzii</i> Plaited Door Snails False Scorpion x 5.1 Gills of Fungus <i>Panellus Stipticus</i> x 1.2 Erosion in Navajo Sandstone	
Gill Cardy	Black Grouse at Lek Steppe Eagle Lesser Kestrel	Barbara Hawkesworth Award
Simon Cook ARPS	Black-tailed Godwit Pectoral Sandpiper & Giant Tortoise, Galapagos Mountain Avens Boreal Jacob's Ladder	John Bebbington Award
John Cucksey	Reticulated Giraffe Black-faced Impala, Etosha Claypan Sand Dunes & dead Camelthorn, Dead Vlei	John Bebbington Award
Joe Curtis LRPS	Long-tailed Tits Wheeling Terns Winter Waxwings no 2 Winter Waxwings no 7 Jay on log	
Roger Hance FRPS	Dark Green Fritillary	Commended
John Hankin LRPS	Lady Orchid Brimstone Veiled Fibre Caps	
Margaret Hodge FRPS	Ooliths Hydroids Pisoliths	
Nick Jarvis ARPS	Blue-tailed Damselfly with Prey Yellow Dungfly Meadow Grasshopper Flamingo Eye	
John Jones ARPS	Compass Jellyfish <i>Chrysaora hysoscella</i> Navelwort <i>Umbilicus rupestris</i> and Lichens Cockle Shell <i>Laevicardium elatum</i> Devonian Sandstone, Skokholm Island Cast detail <i>Phyllacanthus imperialis</i>	Colin Smith Award Bronze Medal
Peter Jones ARPS	Walrus Spitsbergen Praying Mantis Polar Bear, Spitsbergen <i>Euphorbia avasmontana</i> Fossilised Leaves Red-backed Hawk Large Painted Locust	
Jean MacWhirter LRPS	Great Crested Grebe offering feather to chick Steinbok Large Flowered Leopard's Bane Llaretta and Taapaca Volcano	
Tony McDade FRPS	Grosbeak Weaver Sanderling Bataleur eagles	
Reg Mellis ARPS	Male Cuckoo displaying with moss	John Bebbington Award
William Middleton ARPS	Common Puff-Ball <i>Lycoperdon perlatum</i>	

Nature Group Annual Members Exhibition 2006

Digital Section

Gold Medal - Best Digital Image in the Exhibition

Richard Revels FRPS

Brown Hare in snow

John Bebbington:

John Bulpitt FRPS

**Migrant Hawker
patrolling reed bed**

Selectors Awards

Barbara Hawkesworth:

Kevin Maskell FRPS

**Gentoo Penguins
on wind swept beach**

Colin Smith:

Adrian Langdon ARPS

Barn Owl hunting

Highly Commended Digital Image

Dawn Osborn FRPS - **Gentoo Penguin coming ashore**

Commended Digital Image

Margaret Sixsmith ARPS - **Three Reindeer**

Digital Acceptances

Author

Peter Basterfield ARPS

John Berry ARPS

Les Borg ARPS

Gordon Braham ARPS

John Bulpitt FRPS

Norman Carmichael ARPS

Stephen Deakin LRPS

Chuck Eccleston LRPS

John Fairclough ARPS

Peter Jones ARPS

Title

Harvest Mice

Barn Owl

Black-tailed Skimmer

Female Kestrel

Painted Lady

Red Admiral

Downy Woodpecker

Leopard

Rufus-crowned Roller

Lioness

Lappet-faced Vulture

Chalkhill Blues on Knapweed

Blue-tailed Damselflies

Brown Pelican preparing to dive

Migrant Hawker patrolling reed bed **John Bebbington Award**

Six Spot Burnets

Black-tailed Godwit

Bracket fungus

Common Langur

Fulmars

Brimstone Butterfly

Viper's Bugloss

Wasp Spider

Cream Spotted Ladybird

Northern Goshawk

Razorbill

Gemsbok in Habitat

Black-backed Jackal

Dead Camel Thorn Trees

Leopard

Award

Adrian Langdon ARPS	Marsh sandpiper Black Egret Fishing Barn Owl hunting Crested Serpent Eagle Egyptian Vulture <i>Hygrocybe splendidissima</i> Wall Rue	Colin Smith Award
Margery Maskell ARPS		
Kevin Maskell FRPS	Gentoo Penguins on wind swept beach	Barbara Hawkesworth Award
Dave McKay ARPS	Emerging Poppy <i>Oedemera nobilis</i> Female Brimstone	
David Osborn FRPS	Striated Caracara in flight Gentoo Penguin running ashore Reddish Egret in evening light Piping Plover Grey Seal Pup	
Dawn Osborn FRPS	Birds-eye Primrose Magellanic Penguin Calling King Cormorant with nesting material	
	Gentoo Penguin coming ashore	Highly Commended
Andrew Parsons ARPS	Striated Caracara with kill Scots Pine Flower & seed head Greater Bindweed Common Damselfly with nymph case Sanderling at Donna Nook Cowslips In Cressbrook Dale	
Richard Revels FRPS	Mute Swan Landing Large Copper Butterfly male Median wasp looking out of nest Grey Heron	
	Brown Hare in Snow	Gold Medal
John Sixsmith ARPS	Humming Bird Hawkmoth feeding Ptarmigan Puffin Brushtail Possum Resting Stag Three Pelicans	
Margaret Sixsmith ARPS	Three Reindeer Honey Fungus <i>Trollius europaeus</i> <i>Xanthoria parietina</i>	Commended
Ian Tait ARPS	Great Horned Owl Snowy Egret Displaying	
Ian Vaughan LRPS	Red Rock Canyon Green Heron	

Award Winning Slides Opposite Page,	bottom left Bronze Medal Winner - Class B Kay Thompson ARPS Elephant Hawkmoth Caterpillar	bottom right John Bebbington's Award - Class C: Simon Cook ARPS Boreal Jacob's Ladder
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Above **Gold Medal - Best Slide**
Flammulina velutipes - Tony Bond FRPS

Award Winning Images
Slide Section





Award Winning Images Print Section

Below: **Colin Smith's Award Class D, Kevin Maskell FRPS - Basalt Columns at Aldeyjarfoss**



Award Winning Slides

Opposite:
Bronze Medal Class A
Immature Black-crowned
Night Heron
Dawn Osborn FRPS



Opposite:
Bronze Medal Class C
Margaret Sixsmith ARPS
Amethyst Deceiver



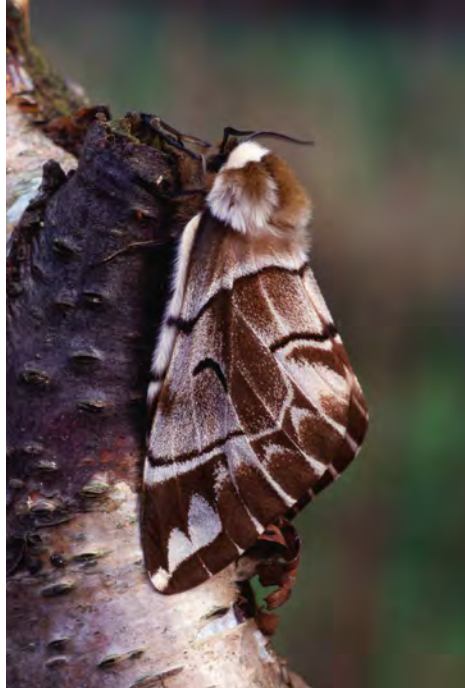
Below:
Barbara Hawkesworth's
Award, Class D:
Kath Bull ARPS
Mine in Hogweed Leaf
x 2.5



Award Winning Images Print Section (opposite page)

top left:
John Bebbington's Award
Buffalo in snowstorm
Liz Goodchild ARPS

top right:
Bronze Medal Class A
Dawn Osborn FRPS
Rockhopper drinking



Award Winning Images - Category B

Highly Commended Slide

(Top right)

Richard Revels FRPS -

Kentish Glory Moth

From top left to bottom left:

Barbara Hawkesworth Print Award -

John Jones ARPS

Shoal of Compass Jellyfish

Commended Slide

Monique Vanstone -

Broad- Bodied Chaser

Colin Smith's Slide Award:

Tony Bond FRPS

Pearl-bordered Fritillary

Commended Slide:

Roger Hance FRPS -

Dark Green Fritillary



Colin Smith Award Class C - (above left)
Dawn Osborn FRPS - **Early Purple Orchids.**

Barbara Hawkesworth Award Class B (above right)
Kay Reeve FRPS - ***Pholiota squarrosa***



Award Winning Slides

(Below) **Bronze Medal Class D -** John Jones ARPS
Cast detail of *Phylacanthus imperialis* Echinoid



Skomer – a jewel on the Pembrokeshire coast



by Phil Collier

We were up early for the journey west to Pembrokeshire to catch the first boat from Martins Haven. The sun was rising and it looked like the optimism generated by the weather forecasters was justified.

Skomer lies just to the southwest of the Marloes peninsula cut off from mainland Pembrokeshire by Jack Sound, a narrow stretch of water renowned for its strong tidal currents. This small island covers only 730 acres but it is a breeding haven for many different seabirds – and to photograph these was the reason for our visit.

I love islands – we both do! The “we” is myself and my younger brother, Tim, who is a professional, freelance photographer. We were brought up on the coast of Lancashire and invariably spent holidays on the west coasts of Scotland and Wales, gaining an invaluable grounding in the natural world from a young age. We have both – together and separately – spent many holidays on islands off the UK coast, watching and photographing the wildlife.

As this was April, the target species were puffins, guillemots, razorbills, kittiwakes and, offshore, the spectacular and somewhat prehistoric-looking gannets. A trip later in the season would bring storm petrels and the enigmatic nocturnal wailings of Manx shearwaters – Skomer is the most important breeding site in the world for this species, with somewhere in the region of 165,000 pairs nesting in the island’s rabbit burrows.

For now though we joined the other members of the public on board the Dale Princess for the short, 15 minute hop across Jack Sound. Most of our companions were clearly tourists kitted out in bright, light spring clothes, some with binoculars and others content to simply stroll around taking in the sights and sounds of Skomer through their own eyes. We, however, received a good number of sideways glances due to the amount of gear we were taking over – all for a day trip. My gear consisted of two Nikon D100 bodies, 500mm f4, 70-300mm, 105mm macro and 18-35mm Nikkor lenses, together with my good sturdy tripod. All this in my

customised backpack weighed in at 42lbs – three stone!! - but I always prefer to go ‘over subscribed’ and prepared for anything.

Having duly reported to the warden, everyone dispersed. Tim and I took our time, chatting at more length with the warden and then taking in the surroundings and studying the OS map to decide which way to work the island to the best effect of both the light and the wildlife. We set off towards the farm in the centre of the island – a landmark from times past. Skomer is said to have supported an Iron Age community of 200 people although later on, in the seventh century, a modern field system was put in place in the centre of the island and this supported a single farm until 1950 when the island was sold.

Just beyond the farmhouse we spooked a short-eared owl, which flew up across the field and landed on a post some forty metres ahead of us. We stood transfixed and stared through our bins as it glared back as if to say ‘how dare you disturb me from my mid-morning siesta’. Slow and stealthy stalking brought me within twenty metres of the owl and looking through my 500mm lens into those bright yellow eyes I was able to run off eight frames before the bird took off to fly across the fields and out of sight behind the farm buildings once more.

A steady walk took us on to the north of the island overlooking the Garland Stone – an offshore stack around which grey seals breed in the autumn. Skomer boasts the second largest colony of breeding greys in Wales with only Ramsey Island, a few miles further north hosting more. Even in April there were plenty of seals on show. On the Garland Stone itself were nesting guillemots and razorbills together with a small number of kittiwakes. Some of the larger gulls were also present here at the north end of the island – herring and both great and lesser black-backed – as were puffins, scurrying to and fro still nest building at this time.

Offshore there were feeding gannets from the island of Grasholm, seven miles to the west of Skomer, and at one point a peregrine flew past so quickly that we almost missed it. Ravens were fairly common and we also saw a chough that had probably flown across from its breeding territory on the Marloes peninsula.





Being spring there were a number of migrant passerines present, although these were not as plentiful as I believe on some days. Meadow pipits were all over – they breed on the island – and there were good numbers of wheatears looking resplendent in their fresh breeding plumage. Linnets and goldfinches flitted about in the sunshine with a small number of house sparrows and starlings around the farm.

Our final destination was The Wick, a deep almost fjord-like inlet on the southwest of the island. This is the favourite haunt of the majority of the day-trippers as here they can literally walk amongst the nesting puffins. No long lenses needed here and it is a rare chance with birds to try some artistic and alternative shots such as capturing the puffins as they spread their wings to create the parachute effect on coming to land.

Sadly, the last boat leaves the island at 3pm so, having used every last minute – and more! – of our available time, a rather brisk trot took us back to North Haven to board the Dale Princess once again. Looking west as we sailed across Jack Sound, there were some superb views of Skomer's cliffs and stacks silhouetted against the sun.



The early start was well worth it and both Skomer and its close neighbour, Skokholm are well worth a visit. You can book to stay on either island but the accommodation is basic and in short supply. I intend doing this on my next visit – I want to spend at least one night listening to and photographing the wailing Manxies.

Both islands are managed by The Wildlife Trust of South & West Wales and visiting arrangements can be made through them by calling 01656 724 100. Alternatively, you could attend one of my brother Tim's wildlife photographic weeks – see advert on page 39.

Digital Workflow

by Mike Lane FRPS

I was a late comer to digital photography. Many friends had gone through several generations of digital camera bodies before I got started. So I thought I would seek their advice about a digital workflow. I wanted to know how were they handling the large number of digital pictures they were taking? What filing system were they employing and how did they edit, caption, convert and back up their images?

The response was very disappointing. No one impressed me with their organisation of files, editing was often neglected, file renaming not considered and no one was backing up their data securely. Friends I visited were in a mess. Hard drives were bulging with pictures in no particular order and piles of un-catalogued CD's stretched up towards the ceiling. Their digital workflow was non-existent.

With a computer background and an organised nature a good digital workflow was essential to me. I had seen how not to do it, now I had to find a better way.

My first rule is never to have a single copy of any picture. On a trip I first download to my Sony laptop and secondly to a small storage device. I use the Epson 4000 (40 Gb hard drive), which has a very high quality screen, but there are much cheaper screenless units available, such as the Digimate range. Having a screen is not essential if the device is only used to backup, rather than view and edit.

I am amazed how many people are going on trips with just one storage device when they would not consider going with just one camera. A hard drive is the least reliable part of any computer system, so a second totally independent unit is essential. Relying upon one device to store valuable pictures is too risky.

A friend recently returned from a trip to discover he could not read any files on one of his storage devices. Wisely he had backed up everything to a second. It was a nervous time until his pictures were safely copied onto his desktop. An earlier laptop of mine had twice failed on me abroad when it refused to boot. Without my Epson 4000 I would not have been able to download my flash cards.

Today I have a more reliable laptop, but they are not the perfect answer for everyone. As well as being a heavy addition to ones luggage laptops are very antisocial. If you are used to travelling with a group and enjoy an evening gathering in the bar after a days photography, laptops can kill the conversation. Everybody sits around with heads buried into their screens rather than talking to each other. I travel alone most of the time and enjoy editing my pictures of an evening, but when with a group I leave my laptop in the bedroom when heading for the bar or restaurant. Two small storage units might be a better answer than a laptop for many.

When working from home I still make two copies of my pictures. First I download to a folder on my hard disk called 'Incoming Pictures', which is further subdivided to hold pictures from each shoot. The folder 'Incoming Pictures' is then automatically backed up to another hard drive using a simple and cheap program called 'Handy Backups'.

Handy Backups can be started manually or will automatically run to a set schedule, perhaps once a day. I run it as an incremental backup, which means it only copies new or altered files. If a file has been previously backed up it will not be redone. Only when the two copies are secured do I begin a first edit.

Camera manufacturers supply their own software for viewing and editing Raw files, but there are many independent programs that are worth looking at. Using a search engine on the internet type in 'Raw image conversion software' and it will list many choices. One thing all these programs have in common is a free trial period, which usually runs for between 14 to 30 days so you can trial them without cost.

Here are some of the better known ones which are well worth trying.

- Bibblelabs www.bibblelabs.com
- Breezebrower Pro v1.3 www.breezesys.com
- ACDsee www.acdsee.com
- Rawshooter and Rawshooter Premium www.pixmantec.com
- Capture one LE and Pro versions www.phaseone.com
- Profotosoftware www.profotosoftware.com

My clear favourite is Breezebrower Pro v1.3, but it is only suitable for Canon cameras and PC computers. Most of the others work with a variety of camera makes and run on PC or Mac machines.

Breezebrowsers strength is its speed and intuitiveness. Thumbnails are formed in seconds and moving from one full sized picture to the next almost instant, even with large 100Mb Tiff files, let alone smaller Raws. The interface with the user is simple and the icons obvious and meaningful. I have never had to read the manual.

It has a wonderful feature for comparing nearly identical pictures. Four images can be quickly displayed on the screen at the same time and they all zoom in and scroll simultaneously. Inevitably one is slightly sharper or better than the others. I used to compare one slide against another on a lightbox with a loupe, now I can do the same with digital images. Other program designers are starting to copy this feature, but Breezebrower does it quicker and smoother.

Breezebrower is one of the few Raw conversion programs that views Tiff and Jpeg files as well as Raws, which is a very important part of the digital workflow. I use Breezebrower to copy or move my finished files to their ultimate destinations. I think the other program designers have made a big error in not allowing this. For Canon users I would highly recommend Breezebrower. For other camera makes Rawshooter Pro and Bibblelabs were my second favourites.

My first edit is very fast, just getting rid of the absolute rubbish. I turn off all the confirmation messages asking if I really want to delete this file. Otherwise this requires an extra key press per picture. If I delete a picture by mistake the file is backed up as well as being in the Recycle bin where it can be quickly recovered. Turning off confirmation messages is an option usually found in the preference settings of most programs.

After the first edit I rename the Raw files with my own naming convention. I can see no point in retaining the file name the camera creates, although others photographers commonly do so. Breezebrower and most of the other programs make renaming pictures in batch mode easy. If I highlight all my green woodpeckers Breezebrower will rename them all as 'Green woodpecker 6nnnn'. The 6 represents the current year and the next 4 digits are automatically put in by Breezebrower, sequentially starting at 0001. It

remembers the number it used last time and continues from there. It is very simple and quick. Highlight 100 pictures and it will rename them all in a second. Any Tiffs or Jpeg files generated from these Raw images retain the same name.

The advantage of renaming at this early stage is all the species within a folder will now be together alphabetically, making for easier comparison. Despite having been renamed I will be deleting more of them yet.

While renaming I also keyword my Raw files, also in batch mode within Breezebrower. This means putting information such as the scientific name, gender, location, description, my name and telephone number into the file IPTC data. It is just as quick to do 100 pictures at a time as one and the information also remains in the file when converted to a Tiff or Jpeg. So although I may still delete some of them I am not wasting time and it prevents me forgetting to do it later.

I will then do a second edit, comparing images against each other and trying not to keep similar pictures. This is difficult stage and takes a lot of effort to delete pictures that really have nothing wrong with them. It requires a lot of will power, but there is simply no point in filling my hard disks with similar images.

Once completed I can start to think about converting the Raw images to Tiff files. Every picture I keep is converted as it will be sent out to a picture library somewhere within a few weeks, but most people only need to convert their very best. By necessity of speed I also do the Raw conversion in batch mode.

I have heard many claims that one Raw converter program produces better pictures than others and each has its fans and detractors. As with most things in photography testing for my own satisfaction was the only answer.

I did tests between Photoshop CS, Breezebrower, Bibblelabs and Capture One, converting the same picture in each program and comparing the results carefully. I satisfied myself that there was nothing in it. Get the settings right and all are perfectly capable of producing first class results. I now do all my Raw converting in Breezebrower and if I have the exposure right can do a whole folder at once. Any that are slightly over or under exposed I do separately and make the appropriate adjustments in the settings.

The Tiff files have to be de-dusted in Photoshop and I usually do a final tweak in

either Levels or Highlight/Shadow control. This is one of the most time consuming processes of all and I really appreciate the Spot Healing Brush in Photoshop CS2. It speeds the job up a lot by dispensing the need to ALT click on a nearby area.

The real answer however lies in keeping the sensor clean. Canon and Nikon advocate sending the camera to them for cleaning, but that is not practical when it needs doing every couple of weeks. Other camera manufacturers recommend the use of cleaning fluid and swabs. I was a bit nervous of doing this at first, especially as their use negates the Canon guarantee. However after watching someone else perform the procedure I am now a regular swabber. So far no harm has been done and it makes a huge difference to the amount of de-dusting I have to do later. The downside is the swabs cost about £3 each and can only be used once. Warehouse Express is the main supplier of both swabs and cleaning fluid.

Once clean I file my pictures away. I currently have 4 internal 300Gb hard drives and 6 external USB drives of various capacities upto 500Gb. My pictures all go onto one master picture disk where I only keep my finished images. How pictures are filed depends very much on needs. If they do not need to be found quickly it need not be very complicated. In fact the same system that was used to file slides can be replicated on the computer. Pictures from a trip to Tanzania could be filed in a folder called 'Tanzania', which could be subdivided into birds and mammals.

Personally I have always filed my slides alphabetically by species, so I have done the same with my digital images. The master picture disk is divided into folders for each species. Actually there are two folders for each species, one for the Raw file and the other for the Tiff.

Backing up my digital images is the final stage and one I put a lot of effort into. In the computer industry security of data is taken very seriously with daily backups stored in fireproof safes at different geographical locations. Home computer users however have traditionally been very lax about backing up. Serious digital photographers need to get away from the home computer attitude and give it the attention it deserves.

Using Handy Backups I keep two copies of my master disk on external 500Gb Lacie drives. Again Handy Backups is set to only backup new or altered files and is scheduled to run automatically every day. It runs in the background without me even knowing it is happening.

Like most computer hardware disk drives are getting cheaper by the day. I paid £199 each for my 500Gb Lacie drives and in the next year disk drives will get even cheaper and greatly increase in capacity. We will soon be seeing internal disk drives measured in Terrabytes (1000Gb).

Of the two Lacie drives one is kept at home and the other at a friends house. I swap them weekly so that they are both fairly up to date. Keeping a copy elsewhere is vital. In the next year are or so we are all going to know someone who has lost all of their digital images in one go. This will be from a computer virus, disk crash or theft. A computer system is a prime target to a burglar and when he calls he takes all your images too. This never happened with slides, but it will with digital. It is going to happen to someone soon and I am trying to make sure it is not me. I only know one other photographer who is taking this precaution, but suspect many more will do so once it has happened to someone they know.

One other piece of software that completes my digital workflow is ACDsee version 8. It is a digital photo manager and the interface is very simple for such a complicated program. I tried out the free trial download and was immediately hooked. It provides a convenient method of viewing and selecting pictures and recording those chosen to be sent out. I use it to maintain a comprehensive record of images that I have sent to publishers, picture libraries, competitions or exhibitions. I can view the images by folders, calendar or organisation. The calendar option is particularly useful allowing the viewing of all pictures taken in one year or month or day or even hour. You could even restrict it to viewing all pictures of one species taken in one year. The options are extensive.

ACDsee will also keep a track of which files are stored on DVD's too, although personally I have no faith in the archival abilities of discs and only use them to send pictures through the post. In years to come if you think you will be able to read old DVD's on your next DVD drive you are a lot more optimistic than me.

One of the many pleasing advantages of digital photography is that my workflow is now so efficient I am constantly right up to date with my picture editing, whereas I was usually running about a year behind with my slides. I was lucky in being more computer literate than most - for many it is a game of constantly catching up. The time to get organised with your digital pictures is right now!

Obituary

Idris Bowen, FRPS, died in February after suffering a stroke about a year previously. He was a long-time member of the Nature Group, specialising originally in damselflies and butterflies but later extending his expertise to smaller invertebrates including aquatic subjects, many of which he kept in small aquariums in his garage. He developed and built electronic flash systems for macro work long before modern dedicated flashguns made this sort of work simpler.

A much-respected committee-member of Cardiff Camera Club for several years, Idris was well known in South Wales for his lectures on macro & micro-photography, including photographing crystals through polarizing filters with remarkable effects.

Among my many memories, one of the happiest was to meet him at the annual Nature Group field-meeting in June at Kenfig: the weather always seemed set fair and the dunes full of flowers and insects. Afterwards we would be welcomed back at his home for a fine meal provided by his wife, Dilys. This would be followed by an evening of talk well into the evening.

He will be missed by all who knew him.
Andy Callow ARPS

Field Meeting

Ebernoe Common NNR

14th October 2006 10am

Meet at car park next to Ebernoe church, Grid Ref SU 976 278

Cost £2 donation

Ancient woodland with 600 fungi species recorded

Directions: From A283, 3.5 miles North of Petworth, 1.5 miles south of Northchapel, turn East into a minor road signposted Ebernoe (sign missing last year). 1.5 miles along this road turn right, just past telephone & post boxes, into access road signposted Ebernoe church.

Bring packed lunch

Leader: Chris Wood

Contact leader before travelling.

Tel: 01932 750597 or (better!)

Email: cjwood2000@hotmail.com

David Osborn Photo-tours

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Wildlife of the Falkland Islands

November 2007 *

Birds of Florida

March 2007

Southern Texas Ranches

May 2007

Ascension Island

May 2007

The Canadian Rockies

September 2007

In order to maintain the exclusivity of photo-opportunities, the group size for all of the above tours is limited.

* only two places available for the 2007 Falklands Tour

For full details on these and other tours

Tel: 01263 511221 or

Email Poppyland3@aol.com



CHAIRMAN'S DAY

A full day of Nature Photography hosted by David Osborn FRPS

Saturday 21st October 2006, 10 a.m.

Smethwick Photographic Society,
The Old Schoolhouse, Oldbury, West Midlands

PROGRAMME

10.00 am	Arrival - Coffee/Tea	2.00 pm	Choir Boys & Lady's Slippers by Robert Hawkesworth FRPS
10.30 am	Introduction & presentation from the Chairman, David Osborn FRPS	2.45 pm	The Trials & Tribulations of Insect Photography by John Bebbington FRPS
11.15 am	Flashing Wild and Free - Richard Revels FRPS	3.30 pm	A selection of recent successful A&F panels including an F from Dawn Osborn FRPS and an A from Jane Greateorex ARPS
12.00 noon	Colin Smith FRPS presents a selection of his work	4.30 pm	Approximate finish time
12.45 pm	Lunch		

Tickets are available now, priced at £15 each incl Lunch, Teas and Coffees.

Ensure your place - Book now!

Complete the reply slip below and send with your cheque to arrive not later than Monday 15th September 2006.

Please send to: **David Osborn FRPS, Flat 2, 19 Mount Street, Cromer, Norfolk, NR27 9DB**

Please make cheques payable to: **The RPS Nature Group**



Please send me _____ tickets for Chairman's Day I enclose my cheque for £ _____

Name _____

Address _____

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Telephone _____

Email _____

Book Reviews

Roberts 'Birds of Southern Africa'

Hockey, Dean and Ryan

John Voelcker Bird Book Fund 7th Ed. (2005)
£110.00

The first six editions of Roberts have, over the past 65 years, been the Southern African bird-watchers' Bible. The arrival of the seventh edition was eagerly awaited and did not disappoint.

The earlier editions were in the form of a field guide. This seventh edition has grown to slightly more than A4 size, pages have increased by nearly 50% to just under 1300 and there are 80 new plates from seven leading South African bird artists. No wonder the book weighs a colossal 5.5 kilos!

More than fifty contributing authors have ensured that this work summarises all the available biological information on each of the 951 species covered by the book. Indeed, the sources from which material has been drawn are set out in 136 closely-printed pages arranged by

species and, additionally, cross-referenced in the index. The order in which species follow in the book has changed to accord with the latest taxonomic information. Distribution maps have been improved by showing, on a scale of greys, the prevalence of a species in any part of its territory. The new names adopted by the International Ornithological Committee have been used but, for the benefit of oldies like myself, the authors have also included in the index and the body of the work the earlier official 'common' English names.

In short, Roberts has morphed from a field guide into a work of reference, supplementing, but not replacing, the excellent South African field guides already available, such as Sasol and Newman, which will remain the first choice in the field and for anyone new to this area. On the other hand, if you have more than a passing interest in the birds of Southern Africa, the new Roberts is a 'must'.

Ludi Lochner

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Book Reviews

Fungi

(Volume 96 in The New Naturalist Library)

Brian Spooner and Peter Roberts

Publisher: Collins

ISBN: Hardback 0002201526

Paperback 0002201534

This is a sumptuous book, the first in the New Naturalist series to be published in full colour and with a wonderful cover by Robert Gillmor as well as being close on 600 pages long. It is now over fifty years since John Ramsbottom wrote 'Mushrooms and Toadstools' volume 7 in the series and good though it was and remains, the time was ripe for an up-to-date account of fungal natural history.

The authors are authoritative, Brian Spooner is Head of Mycology at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and John Roberts also works there as a Senior Mycologist, so their academic background is excellent. However I suspect that they are both Field Mycologists at heart for the book is full of their enthusiasm and you feel that they would like nothing better than to be out there exploring with the rest of us.

The book is divided into two parts, the first dealing with what fungi are and how they work, and my goodness what a huge subject that is, from microscopic moulds to mushrooms. They explore the many and often complex ways in which they interact with plants and animals and manage to do this by writing attractively in good accessible English making it a joy to read. The second part takes us to more familiar ground, fungal habitats and communities, fields and woodlands certainly, but kerosene in jet engines, coal mines, camera lenses and the sea?

It is a good book to dip into since each chapter is quite self-contained and also the sections within the chapters. At times it flows in the manner of a good novel and I found it quite hard to put down.

The New Naturalist series of books fill the wide gulf between identification guides and academic treatises. This book is a winner, taking the world of Field Mycology forward into the new century, I can thoroughly recommend it.

Robert Hawkesworth FRPS

Fungi

(Pocket Nature Series)

Shelley Evans and Geoffrey Kibby

Publisher: Dorling Kindersley

ISBN 07513 3696 3

Published in 2004 this guide is well worth a place in any naturalist's library and daypack or pocket (it measures only 7 inches by 4 inches), if only for the fact that it uses the accepted English names for the 440 species of fungi covered. Some of the names are old friends so to speak, Honey Fungus and Butter Cap for example, but others are new, at least to me, Chestnut Dapperling (*Lepiota castanea*), Stump Puffball (*Lycoperdon pyriforme*), Funeral Bell (*Galerina marginata*) are just three examples.

The fungi are divided into three groups, Cap and Stem; Bracket and Shelf; then Ball, Club and Others. In each of the groups they are then arranged by colour and for example in the Cap and Stem group also those with gills then spines then pores. The other groups are also appropriately sub-divided. Each of the species is accompanied by two photographs, one of the fungus and one of the habitat also diagrams are used where necessary, it is relatively easy to use once you get used to it, though I must say that dividing by colour does not always work particularly well.

The photographs (from many sources) are generally good and the colours reasonably accurate, always remembering that fungi are always variable.

The authors are authoritative; Shelley Evans is Conservation Officer for the British Mycological Society and Geoffrey Kibby, with over thirty five years of fungi study behind him, is currently Senior Editor of 'Field Mycology' the journal of the British Mycological Society. Consequently the descriptions and information are well written and accurate.

In every field of natural history it is never enough simply to have just one book, each will have its particular strengths and weaknesses and this book, I am sure, will prove to be a welcome addition to the fungus section in our collections.

Robert Hawkesworth FRPS

Book Reviews

The Birds of Islay

A Celebration in Photographs

Gordon Langsbury and Malcolm Ogilvie

Lochindaal Press

ISBN 0-9551146-0-8

Text Malcolm Ogilvie

Photo's in the main Gordon Langsbury

I was fortunate indeed to have been offered the opportunity to review the book 'The Birds of Islay' for The Iris, by photographer and fellow group member Gordon Langsbury. And what a pleasant book it turned out to be.

A 'coffee table' style edit in which after a 6 page introduction an informative text is kept to a minimum, just giving the reader enough information to advise whilst not deterring from the central theme of the book, which after all is the birds and the photography.

As it should, the cover sets the standard for the whole book and what could be more appropriate than Gordon's beautiful flight shot of a large group of Islay's infamous Barnacle Geese, surely one of the UK's finest winter wildlife spectacles.

Once into the book it soon becomes obvious that it is the result of many years hard work, patience and effort. Within its 160 pages Gordon has put together a collection of fine images depicting exactly what it says on the cover 'The Birds of Islay' a celebration in photographs and cover to cover that's exactly what you get.

The book adopts a 4 part seasonal approach and from Spring onwards shows a seasonal bias to the birds, their habitat and plumage variations. In 180 photographs we're shown the island and the variety of its birds including lekking Black Cock, a beautiful shot of a Curlew with chick, to migratory Curlew Sandpiper and an over wintering Purple Sandpiper.

As you would expect from Gordon, the standard of photography shown throughout the book is generally high, with the majority of images being of high quality.

This is a very pleasing book which gives the viewer an insight into the birdlife of this very beautiful area in the Western Scottish Islands. It will appeal to both the casual reader as well as those familiar with Islay.

David Osborn FRPS

'An Interactive Guide to Obtaining your Nature Associateship'

Updated V2.0 CD-ROM now available - for PC only.

Approved by the RPS Council as an official RPS publication.

Over 140 copies sold to date.

The best advice for anyone considering applying for an Associateship in Nature Photography is to attend a Nature Distinctions Workshop. However for many it is not always possible to attend, and this CD is designed to cater for such applicants.

The guide is the result of collaboration between past panel members and RPS Distinctions Manager, Carol Agar, and produced by John Myring. Benefitting from the authors' extensive experience of viewing numerous applications, both successful and otherwise, the Guide leads the user through all of the aspects that need to be considered. Advice on selection and presentation of both prints and slides as well as the additional requirements needed to make a Digital application. The main sections include:

The CD-ROM (PC only) is available for only £10 - including p&p.

To purchase your copy send a cheque for £10 payable to 'RPS Nature Group' to

Nature Group Treasurer, Trevor Hyman LRPS, 3 Northcourt Lane, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 1QA.



Highly Commended Slide
Greater Spotted Woodpecker
Richard Revels FRPS



Commended Print
Brown Pelicans Dive-fishing
John Bulpitt FRPS



Award Winning Images Class A (Birds) Prints and Slides



John Bebbington's Award - Class A Slide - Male Cuckoo displaying with moss - William Middleton ARPS



Award Winning Images - Digital Section

Gold Medal - Best Digital Image in the Exhibition

Richard Revels FRPS - **Brown Hare in snow** (above)

Top left to bottom left

Colin Smith's Award

Adrian Langdon ARPS

Barn Owl hunting

John Bebbington's Award

John Bulpitt FRPS

Migrant Hawke

patrolling reed bed

Highly Commended

Dawn Osborn FRPS

Gentoo Penguin

coming ashore

Commended

Margaret Sixsmith ARPS

Three Reindeer

An AV of the accepted digital images is available on CD for £2.00 from Andrew Parsons ARPS, The Lodge, Main Street Sutton on Trent, Newark NG23 6PF

Please make cheques payable to Andrew