



Chair's Report for AGM 2026

Duncan Locke ARPS

Fiftieth Anniversary of the Group:

Surely you can't have failed to notice that 2026 is the Nature Group's Fiftieth Anniversary! Our Inaugural Meeting, which was attended by thirty four photographers and naturalists, was held at RPS House in London at 7.30pm on Thursday the 29th January 1976. The meeting, which was chaired by Heather Angel FRPS, discussed numerous activities for the newly formed Group. These included: field weekends and day outings during the spring and summer; talks and visits during the autumn and winter, as well as workshop sessions, postal portfolios and exhibitions. So that's how it all started and I think that it is fair to say that the Group hit the ground running – and has been running ever since!

I really must thank Bruce Kendrick on behalf of the Nature Group for the considerable amount of hard work that he put into our Fiftieth Anniversary issue of The Iris, which included a supplement celebrating the Group's first Fifty Years. Later in the year we are planning a one day celebratory event, with high quality speakers and of course a 50th Birthday Cake!

Committee:

As in previous years, I must start my Report proper by thanking all of the Group Committee for their hard work over the last year to maintain and improve the services provided for our Members. We are continually looking for new Committee Members and this year we welcomed Ann Healey FRPS and André Neves ARPS onto the Committee.

I must thank our Group Secretary, Greg Lovett, for keeping us under control and providing Minutes of our Committee Meetings and Peter Ward, our Group Finance Officer, for ensuring our finances are kept in good order. I must also thank Dawn Osborn, who is now producing a Group eNewsletter midway between issues of The Iris.

Ralph Snook, our Exhibition Secretary has announced that he will be standing down from the Committee once he has completed work on this year's Exhibition. Ralph started as Exhibition Secretary in 2014 and I really would like to thank him on behalf of the Nature Group for the absolutely excellent job that he has done in running the Annual Exhibition for the past 12 years.

Nature Group Membership:

The membership of the Group as of the 1st March 2026 was 973 as compared to 981 Members on the 1st March 2025, giving a just under 1.0% decrease in membership during the year. The Nature Group remains the third largest of the RPS Special Interest Groups (SIGs).

As of the 1st March 2026, the Group had 910 Members in the UK, Eire, the Isle of Man and Channel Islands plus 63 overseas Members. The biggest single overseas Group was in the USA, with 17 Members.

The Group continues to have a high turnover of Members to keep our Membership Secretary, Christine Holt, very busy.

RPS Developments:

I sit on the Members Committee (MemCom) along with the Chairs of the other SIGs and Regional Organisers. As you will be aware, in summer 2025 the RPS sold RPS House in Bristol and moved to a close-by office block. Shortly before this move, Victoria Humphries replaced Dan Jones as RPS CEO. Subsequently there have been a number of staff changes including the retirement of Andy Moore as Distinctions Manager after 21 years at the RPS.

There has been considerable discussion about Distinctions at MemCom over the past year. This started in summer 2025 when the RPS proposed significant changes to way that ARPS and FRPS are assessed following on from the changes to the LRPS assessment process in 2024. These proposals were not well received by the Assessors and MemCom Members and so a rethink is now underway led by the new Director of Education, Anthony Luvera. The existing ARPS and FRPS Distinction process will remain in place until the end of 2026.

Group Website:

You should all be aware that the Group has its own website separate from the RPS. We have about 475 Members, almost half of the Group membership registered on the site. I must thank Ian Wilson for all of his hard work in providing and maintaining this website.

The website really is the place to find out what is going on in the Group. We use it to advertise Group events, report on past events and share Group news with our Members. I encourage you to make use of some or all of the additional features that the website provides:

- Lightbox: Greg Lovett has developed this as a place where Members, particularly those working towards ARPS, can get constructive criticism on their images
- Galleries: this provides an easy to use place for Members to share images from successful Distinction Panels, Field Meetings, etc.
- Exhibition: this provides a place for Members to view the accepted images in our Annual Exhibition
- Competitions: this has enabled us to provide our Monthly Competition

Monthly Competition:

It seems only yesterday that we started our Monthly Competition, but it has now been running since October 2023 with a competition year that runs from April to March to fit in with our AGM in April. There is a winner each month and, based on the accumulated scores, there is also an overall winner for the year with a prize

presented at the AGM. The overall winner for 2025-2026 will be announced at our AGM in April.

The Competition continues to prove popular and attracts very high quality images. In the first 11 months of the competition year 2025 – 2026, 86 Members entered at least one image. On average 28 Members entered each month and 33 scored the images. Birds continue to be the most popular subject with 54% of the images submitted being birds, mammals came second with 22%, invertebrates third with 16% and the remaining 8% was made up of mainly fungi, plants and underwater images.

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 are listed in her Events Officer's Report. In 2025 the Group organised close to one event a week, all thanks to Ann's and others hard work.

I am still 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.

For last year's Residential Weekend, the Group returned to Preston Montford Field Studies Centre in Shropshire. Despite the less than encouraging weather forecast, thirteen Group Members visited five Shropshire Nature Reserves 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 is booked for the 2026 Residential Weekend and it is already fully booked with 16 Members due to attend. I would like to thank Julia Andrew on taking on the organisation of this event.

The Group would very much like to hear from any Members interested in joining the Committee to oversee and organise Residential Weekends on behalf of the Group.

Going Forward:

Sadly this will be my last AGM as Chair. I have been Chair for three years, which is I believe longer than any previous Group Chair and I feel that it is more than time for the injection of some fresh blood and fresh ideas into the Group. I will not be disappearing as I will continue to administer the Monthly Competition and maybe, finally after talking about it for over five years, make some real progress at revising the Nature Photographers' Code of Practice.

As I have 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 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.

Duncan Locke ARPS
23rd March 2026