



*Fallow Deer buck sparring*

© Dawn Osborn FRPS

Autumn is fast approaching, the days noticeably shorter and cooler, the leaves beginning to change their hue. As always at this time of year, many nature group members will be looking forward to a good season for fungus photography. Depending upon where in the British Isles you call home, the variety and quantity of fungus has been variable in recent years, but its always worth paying a visit to your local woodland for a look. Autumn of course is also the start of the rutting season for a variety of deer species in the UK and can be witnessed in country parks across the British Isles.

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Welcome to the seventh issue of the Nature Group eNews.

In this issue there are reports of three Field Meetings that have taken place this summer and also the Residential Weekend. There is also news of an Autumn Residential Weekend being organised for 2020. There is still some availability for the Autumn Residential Weekend this coming October. Please support these events. Could you lead a one day Field Meeting near to where you live? No specialised knowledge is required other than familiarity of the area. For more information about what is expected, please contact the Nature Group Programme Coordinator, Ann Miles, at: [annmiles70@gmail.com](mailto:annmiles70@gmail.com).

As promised, this issue includes an article from Nature Distinctions Chairman, David Osborn FRPS. David has given some helpful advice about how best to go about preparing a submission and avoiding some of the common pitfalls to give yourself the best opportunity of being successful.

**eNews** enables members to share information with fellow members, such as sites of photographic interest, field meetings, natural history and photography book reviews, items of photographic kit for sale. Anything that might be of interest to you as a nature photographer will almost certainly be of interest to your fellow Nature Group members.

eNews can only continue if members support it by sharing items of interest.

Nature Group members are a well travelled group of people, so why not share your trip experiences and see your images in print?

Gerald Griffin ARPS, also needs articles for the next issue of The Iris.

We both look forward to hearing from you soon.

Dawn Osborn FRPS  
eNews Editor

# RPS Distinctions

by David Osborn FRPS, Chair of the Natural History Genre Distinctions Panel.

There's no doubt that the RPS still holds the position as one of the world's premier photographic societies, its mission statement is to promote the highest standards of achievement in photography and in part it does that through its prestigious flagship distinctions which are amongst the most sought after titles in the photographic world.

I'm David Osborn and for those of you who don't know me, I've been involved with the RPS Distinctions process for nearly 20 years, during which time I've been a Panel Member, progressed to Deputy Chairperson and currently the Chairperson of the Natural History Genre.

## What is a Distinction?

Distinctions offer people the opportunity to develop their own ability and understanding of photography by applying for one of the three levels.

- **Licentiate** - for those who have started their photographic journey. An open and approachable level for those to develop their competence in camera work, visual awareness and technical quality.
- **Associate** - Photographers who want to submit a body of work that demonstrates a high technical competence and comprehensive knowledge of their chosen genre, that also shows an individual approach.
- **Fellowship** - Photographers working at the highest level in their chosen field, with an established distinguished and distinctive style.

The path to distinctions success is an interesting and challenging journey to embark upon and one that I would encourage all enthusiastic photographers to take. It's a journey of learning and by setting goals and targets of achievement, it's one that will hopefully lead to improvements in your imaging and to great pride once successful – as they say, nothing ventured, nothing gained.

## Taking up the challenge.

One of the first things you'll probably ask yourself is this, "Is my work good enough?" Short term, the best way to find out is by viewing successful panels on the RPS web-site and then, through self-assessment based on what you've seen, ask yourself again.

If you think it is and you've got an in-depth collection of images that might fit a theme, the next step would be to sort out a selection of your images to see if you've got the numbers required. For an Associate application collect 30 or 40 of your best images and see how they might fit together. Sometimes you'll find you've got some great images but they're just not connected by a common

theme. If that is the case it might be best to start from scratch, which I'd probably recommend. Think of a couple of themes that you'd like to pursue and go out and get the images that represent that theme. I always think it best to have a couple of different projects to work to as you never know what subjects and seasonal availability might or might not provide. Themes could be the flora and fauna of a local area, a specific nature reserve or river. Garden birds or insect predators. The themes are endless, but whatever you choose, storyboard it and get out there and take the photographs you need to support your project.

When you think you're approaching having a body of work ready, it would probably be best to seek some formal advice. The common mistake here is in seeking advice from friends or the local expert at your camera club! In truth, at this stage it's best to speak to the experts, so contact the RPS Distinctions team in Bristol and discuss what options are available.

One option would be to attend an Advisory Day where you would be able to have your work reviewed. Advisory Days are a great source of useful advice. Feedback is provided on the suitability of your proposed submission and recommendations are provided for possible amendments. You may or may not come away feeling ready to submit, but either way, you will be given advice on how to proceed and how to make suggested improvements. But most importantly, don't make the application for an assessment until you feel ready!

All the details you need on how to make an application, together with the relevant rules and regulations are all readily available on the RPS website [www.rps.org](http://www.rps.org). With each distinction, you can submit your work in one of 3 different formats; Prints, Images for Screen or Book.

Natural History Genre applications are accepted and viewed twice a year. Images will be viewed by a panel of nature photographers, all of whom are Fellows of the RPS. The proceedings are overseen by a Chairperson and a member of the Distinctions Committee. The images are assessed and the Panel Members vote individually for or against the submission. A final decision is made based on the majority vote.

Of course, we all hope we're successful, but in truth, the majority of us aren't first time around and we need advice and guidance on how to proceed, which is subsequently given in a Feedback letter.

If you're not recommended, take on board the comments provided in the Feedback letter and plan your move forward. Most unsuccessful panels do have good content, but many show failings in photographic technique, so remember, this is a distinction based on imaging standards and that is always paramount. Good natural history is required but it's never going to trump poor imaging technique.

## Some of the most common shortfalls:-

- **Focus issues.**

Soft images which are not correctly focused or do not show any appropriate areas of critical focus. Unsharp images just don't make the grade. In an era of top quality autofocus systems, there really is no way in which you'll be successful if any of your images are soft or out of focus.

Appropriately focused images – Make sure the subject is in focus where it's supposed to be and shows an appropriate amount of depth of field.

- **Compositional issues.**

Whilst we're quite flexible on this matter and generally leave the choice of composition to the photographer, images that inappropriately cut off bits of the main subject clearly won't work.

- **Image processing issues.**

Levels control. It's quite common to see burned out highlights and blocked up shadow areas.

Colour casts and saturation issues. Make sure images don't exhibit colour casts and are not under or over-saturated. With nature work, it is important to record colour accurately.

Over sharpening and halos. It's essential to show that not only can you take a sharp image but can also present it at its best using your imaging software. A soft image is never going to be improved by over-sharpening.

Dust spots – It's quite surprising how many images we still see with dust spots.

- **Printing and presentation issues.**

*This is very relevant to print submissions.*

Take care when choosing the paper that the images are finally printed on, it needs to be complementary to your image, as does the choice of mount board and colour.

- **The running order and presentation of the panel.**

The panel will be viewed as a body of work and the images need to sit and blend together as such. This applies to all three formats, but especially so with Images for Screen.

- **Statement of Intent.**

This in itself is very important. It's the first thing about you and your images that the assessors see or hear. In order to make a good first impression ensure that your Statement of Intent is relevant and sets the scene to what you're trying to achieve. A few lines of text telling us that we're about to see some shots from a great set of holidays isn't really what we're hoping for. Include a species list.

## What does the panel require?

To start with we aren't here to criticise you or your photography, we aren't judging your achievements or results, we're here on behalf of the RPS to gauge, uphold and maintain standards within the genre of Natural History photography and in short, if your work is good enough then you'll walk it, if it isn't, then we'll offer the best advice we can to help you, where possible, to achieve the standards required.

Remember, we can only assess what we're shown. You're responsible for the final choice of images selected, so make sure we see your best work.

We're looking for:

- Well captured Natural History images that illustrate a competent level of photography. Don't be tempted to include an image showing great behaviour if it's blurred or not sharp. In fact, don't use anything unsharp or blurred. There is no room for substandard images included to make up the number.
- A set of images that are all of a similar standard. They need to match or complement one another and should be presented as a coherent body of work supported by a relevant Statement of Intent, informing the assessors of what your aims were.
- A variety of imaging techniques to be shown. We wouldn't expect to see that every image was exactly the same. A poor analogy but a panel of static birds taken on similar perches wouldn't show any variation in technique or thought. Try to avoid repetition amongst the images selected.
- Images relevant to your Statement of Intent. A panel showing 13 birds with 2 moths included to make up the number will not work.

## Common myths.

*"It's really hard to achieve success in the natural history genre".*

Rubbish! If your work is good enough you'll walk it.

*"You need to visit exotic locations to guarantee success".*

Rubbish! We are more than happy to see shots taken from a photographer's home patch and encourage such submissions regardless of where home is.

*"You won't be successful with a single species submission".*

Yes, you will! It is difficult but it's definitely achievable.

*"You have a better chance of success submitting images of birds or animals".*

Unfortunately, we do receive more submissions of birds and mammals, but you can achieve success with any natural history subject.

*"You're better using prints than projected images".*

It truly doesn't matter. Choose the medium that suits your work best and remember to work to your strengths. If you're good with printing then submit prints or perhaps a book, but if you're more accustomed to working digitally then submit Images for Screen.



# Field Meeting Report: Martin Down National Nature Reserve.

At 350 hectares, Martin Down is one of the largest areas of uninterrupted chalk downland in Britain. It is home to an exceptional collection of plants, animals and butterflies associated with chalk downland and scrub habitats, including a number of rare or threatened species.

On the morning of Wednesday 22nd May 2019, nine Nature Group Members plus a non-member, gathered in the car park on the main Salisbury to Blandford Forum road at 9.30am. The weather was excellent - warm and sunny - and lasted throughout the day. We were keen to photograph a wide variety of butterflies and plants including a number of species of orchid. Martin Down is good for Burnt-tip, Greater Butterfly and the more common species of orchids although Burnt-tip Orchids can be hard to find!

Once in the Reserve, the group spread out and most worked along the main path which runs along Bokerley Ditch on the South West side of the Reserve. It was already known that there were Burnt-tip Orchids in full flower part way along this path so that was an initial target for some of the group. Others concentrated initially on some of the more common species of orchid. It was too early in the season for the Greater Butterfly Orchids, which were still in bud.



Later in the day and after a working lunch, most of the group moved over to photographing the abundance of butterflies that were brought out by the good weather. Species reported were: Adonis Blue, Brimstone, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Dingy Skipper, Grizzled Skipper, Holly Blue, Marsh Fritillary, Small Blue, Small Copper and Speckled Wood - but there were more!





# Martin Down National Nature Reserve Field Meeting Report continued...

We were not alone! There were at least two other groups on site at the same time, but no problem as Martin Down is very big and when we did see them we were able to exchange information on where to find butterflies, flowers, etc., which was very helpful all round! This emphasised the advantages of working as a group.

The images that accompany this article are only a small selection of many taken during the course of the meeting, but illustrate what an excellent day of photography it was.

Duncan Locke LRPS



1. Burnt-tip Orchid by Gill Cardy FRPS
2. Adonis Blue by Duncan Locke LRPS
3. Adonis Blues by Annette Beardsley LRPS
4. Marsh Fritillary by Keith Polwin ARPS
5. Oak Eggar Moth Caterpillar by Geoff Hughes ARPS
6. Small Heath by Yealand Kalfayan
7. Dingy Skipper by Duncan Locke LRPS
8. Photographing Burnt-tip Orchids.



# RPS Nature Group Autumn Residential Weekend 18th -21st October 2019

## Margam Discovery Centre

Margam Park, Port Talbot, South Wales. SA13 2UA

### Leader: James Foad LRPS

There are places available for this Residential Field Meeting at Margam, nr Port Talbot, South Wales.

#### Main subjects of interest:

Deer rut, Fungi, autumn colours and waterfalls.

#### Cost per person for 3 nights:

£170.25 Single room

£147.75 Shared room, per person.

All rooms are en-suite.

Price includes full board accommodation, packed lunch and VAT at 20%.

We will have the use of the Centre's 16 seater mini bus for which there will be a small extra charge per mile.

#### To Book

To confirm availability, contact James Foad (details below). Payment will be required in full to secure your place. Cheques should be made payable to: Field Studies Council Ltd. and mailed to:

Mr James C. Foad, LRPS,  
24b Queens Road,  
Ramsgate, Kent.  
CT11 8DZ

If further information is required please contact:

James Foad LRPS

Phone: 07834 810430

Email: [jamesfoadlrps@inbox.com](mailto:jamesfoadlrps@inbox.com):

Emails must state "RPS, NG Autumn Residential Weekend 2019" in the Subject line.



*This Weekend may not be suitable for disabled members and members with walking difficulties. There will be some walking on uneven and slippery ground as one of the waterfalls we will be visiting has steep paths with tree roots and loose stones to cross.*



# Field Meeting Report:

## Upton Warren Nature Reserve, Worcestershire.

Upton Warren Wetland Reserve is located about half way between Bromsgrove and Droitwich in Worcestershire. It is unusual for an inland reserve as it consists of both freshwater and saline pools, created by land subsidence resulting from local brine extraction. It is Worcestershire's premier bird reserve and attracts a wide variety of birds while the saline pools are an important inland site for saltmarsh plants.

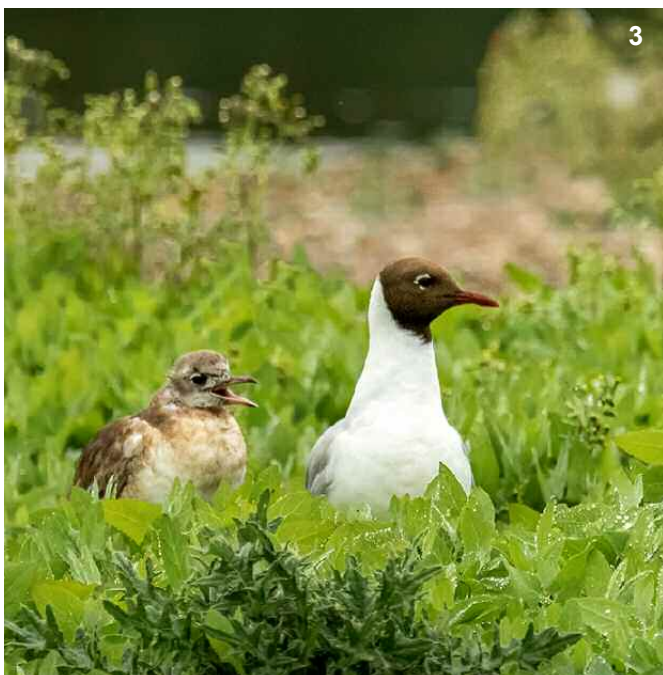
This meeting, held on Wednesday 29th May this year, was organised by local Nature Group Member Jeff Steady LRPS. It was very well attended - ten Nature Group Members, some of whom had travelled a good distance to get there, plus five guests, members of Worcestershire Camera Club - making a total of 15. Jeff had the excellent idea of inviting two volunteers from Worcestershire Wildlife Trust to accompany the group. Both were extremely helpful and knowledgeable and pointed out many items of interest, plus one was a keen bird photographer.

Situated between the freshwater and saline pools is a third lake used for water sports. This provides good amenities including large car park and café, etc. and was where the group met at the start of the day. In the morning the majority of the group visited the bird hides around the fresh water Moors Pools and after lunch in the café, those around the saline Flashes Pools in the afternoon.

Birds seen and photographed included: Avocets with chicks, Black Headed Gulls with chicks, Common Tern, Crested Grebe, Gadwall, Lapwing, Little Grebe, Ringed Plover, Tufted Duck plus common water birds: Canada Geese, Coot, Mallard, Moorhen, Swans, etc. and almost certainly more.



There were also bird feeders close to some of the hides, which attracted a large variety of local birds providing more photographic opportunities.



Unfortunately the weather on the day was overcast with a tendency to rain so the light could have been better! Upton Warren can be a great place for dragonflies, damsel flies, etc., but it was insufficiently warm and dry for much activity - a few damselflies and demoiselles were seen, but not photographed.





## Upton Warren Nature Reserve, Worcs, Field Meeting Report, continued...

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The images accompanying this article are just a small selection of those taken, but illustrate what was a great day of photography despite the lack of sunshine.

Duncan Locke LRPS



Images:

1. Black-headed Gulls by Duncan Locke LRPS
2. Blue Tit by Maggie Bullock ARPS
3. Black-headed Gull with chick by Margaret Beardsmore LRPS
4. Canada Geese with goslings by Duncan Locke LRPS
5. Avocet landing by Duncan Locke LRPS
6. Avocet in undergrowth by Maggie Bullock ARPS
7. Group photo by Jeff Steady LRPS





# **RPS Nature Group Autumn Residential Weekend**

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## **Foxlease, New Forrest.**

**Friday 16th - Monday 19th October 2020**



James Foad LRPS, organiser of this event, is now accepting bookings on a first come first served basis for the

## **2020 Autumn Residential Weekend**

to be held at

**Foxlease Girl Guiding Activities Centre,  
Lyndhurst, Hampshire.**

Foxlease combines the classic charm of a Georgian manor house  
and the beauty of the surrounding area of the New Forrest.

The cost for a Single room is £310.00  
A deposit of £125.00 is required to secure your place.

For further details please contact the organiser:  
James Foad LRPS Tel: 07834 810430  
E-mail: [jamesfoadlrps@inbox.com](mailto:jamesfoadlrps@inbox.com)

Please include "Nature Group Autumn Residential Weekend 2020" in the Subject line.

# Summer Residential Weekend at Slapton Ley Field Study Centre

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The Summer Residential Weekend at Slapton Ley Field Study Centre from the 2nd to 5th August 2019, was fully booked within two days and had a waiting list of eight people within three months of the event appearing in The Iris. Two people had to withdraw and so the first two people on the waiting list were able to attend in their place. Unfortunately, on the Friday we had another person unable to attend at the last minute and although, James went through the waiting list, everyone had already made other plans. This goes to show that it is always worth putting your name down on the waiting list if you can be available at very short notice.

Some members had requested to stay extra nights and I owe Kerry at Slapton Ley, a very big thank you for finding a place for everyone who wanted to stay an extra night at the centre.

The staff were really helpful throughout our stay. The food was really good with a great selection and in the afternoon, when we returned from our trips, there was always tea and cake for us to tuck into.

It was great meeting up with old friends as well as making new friends in the group which included two members from as far away as Dumfries, Scotland.

Some members of the group had been on several of our Residential Weekends.

We had good weather throughout the weekend, except for the day we visited Bovey Tracey Heathland when we experienced a light shower.

The places we visited were Andrews Wood, one of a few places where the rare Heath Lobelia can be found as well as many insect species. At Prawle Point there were coastal habitats and some good rock pools to explore. Pullerbrooke Woods, part of Bovey Tracey Woodland, where we did a river walk and Bovey Heathland offered plenty of insects. On the final day some members left for home and others went to Bystock Pools, while I stayed behind at Slapton and went onto the Nature Reserve with two other members as I had no way of getting back to the centre.

Those of us who arrived on Thursday were treated to a field trip around Slapton Ley. A big "Thank You" to Duncan Locke LRPS for leading it so I could spend the day with my partner, Samantha. Also another thank you, again to Duncan, for assisting me with the final recess of potential sites especially as we got drenched at two of them!

*Small White by Chuck Ecclestone ARPS*



*Silver-washed Fritillary by Annette Beardsley LRPS*





## Summer Residential Weekend Slapton Ley Field Study Centre continued...



*Six-spot Burnet Moth by Paul Lund*

Thank you to Duncan Locke LRPS and Edmund Fellows FRPS who gave talks on two of the evenings and my thanks also to Jeremy Malley-Smith LRPS for driving the minibus on the Sunday



*Shortnecked Oil Beetle by Jon Ashton ARPS*

Finally thank you to all the participants for making my partner Samantha feel very welcome She too enjoyed your company.

A full report will be in the winter edition of The Iris



*Painted Lady by Chuck Ecclestone ARPS*



*Photographers at Bovey Valley Woods by Duncan Locke LRPS*



*Meadow Grasshopper by Jon Ashton ARPS*



*Purple Loosestrife by Edmund Fellows FRPS*



*Harvestman by Edmund Fellows FRPS*

# Field Meeting Report

## Strumpshaw Fen, Norfolk.

Sunday June 2nd was chosen as the day for this joint meeting at the Norfolk Wildlife Trust's Strumpshaw Fen Reserve. The event had been advertised to both RPS Nature Group and East Anglia members via the RPS Bulletin. On the day, a group of nine made up primarily of Nature Group members, some with their spouses attended.

The weather was very warm and sunny all day and was timed just right for Swallowtails and Dragonflies. Unfortunately it was too windy for many butterflies and other insects to be on the wing. We can't choose the weather but it could have been a lot worse for insect photography

It was a busy day at the Reserve but the group found sufficient quiet spots to look for subjects. We met a very helpful 'dragonfly expert' who helped us identify Scarce Chasers and Norfolk Hawkers on the wing

Flowers were surprisingly retarded or very dwarfed compared with other years, but birds were in abundance although generally at a distance. Pairs of Marsh Harriers were seen exchanging food items. We had glimpses of Kingfishers and lots of Warblers. Coots and Black-headed

Gulls were very active. Most of the group resorted to insect photography and a good variety were found - many of them mating or eating each other. Butterflies and Dragonflies were not as abundant as we had hoped but Scarce Chaser (female and male), Black-tailed Skimmer, Four-spot Chaser, Red-eyed Damselfly, Banded Demoiselle, Azure and Variable Damselflies, Brimstone and Swallowtail were all photographed. The star was a female Scarce Chaser that repeatedly returned to the same post and was very approachable. Other insects included Cardinal Beetle, Sailor Beetle, Golden-bloomed Grey Longhorn Beetle, Nettle Weevil, Down-facing Snipe Fly, Harlequin Ladybirds, Xylota cristatus (Spider), Long-jawed Spider, Longhorn Moths and Lacewing.

We met up at the visitor centre for lunch and all in all it proved to be a very enjoyable day spent with excellent company. Our only complaint was that the Swallowtails didn't offer the expected challenge as they were feeding right at the entrance to the reserve.

Ann Miles FRPS, Meeting Leader/Programme Secretary

## The Nature Group Annual Exhibition 2019



A DVD containing all of the accepted images from the 2019 Exhibition is now available to order online from the RPS Shop. Priced at only £10

See the RPS website for more details



# Obituary - Robert Brinsley Burbidge

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Robert Brinsley Burbidge died on May 20th, 2019 in Cambridgeshire, England, following five long months in hospital and five tender days in a hospice. He was 75 years old. He is survived by his sisters Diana and Georgina and his nieces Alex, Emma and Sara; his first wife, Vicki Matthews and their nephews, Ben, Luke and Bash; and by his wife Julie Loquidis and his stepdaughters, Emily and Lulu.

Brinsley was the firstborn child of Ivor and Vera Burbidge in 1943 and became an older brother four years later with the birth of twin sisters. The strong bond formed between these siblings would prove to last a lifetime. Brinsley explored the natural world taking special interest in the hedgerow wild flowers and butterflies of Stamford, his home town. He set up a home-based photography studio and learned the power of understanding lenses. Brinsley performed well at Stamford School, which earned him a place at St. Andrews University in Scotland. Later, he attained a PhD (a study of the South African genus *Tulbaghia*) at the University of Edinburgh and worked for the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh overseeing exhibitions, where his botanical knowledge and skills as a photographer were noted and appreciated.

He and Vicki Matthews, also a botanist, were married at this time and bought their first home together in Edinburgh's India Street. While at RBGE, Brinsley joined an expedition to collect plants in Colombia and discovered he liked to travel and to interact with people from different cultures. Word of his botanical knowledge, creativity and people skills was spreading and he accepted the position to head the Dept. of Information and Education at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. With a mutual passion for botanical illustration, Brinsley and Vicki would meet Dr Shirley Sherwood. A relationship formed which would result in Shirley building up one of

the largest collections of botanical art in private hands and resulted in the Shirley Sherwood Gallery of Botanical Art at Kew. Also during his tenure at Kew, Brinsley travelled to many countries for botanical research and to offer expertise. His travels to tropical places engendered a special interest in palms and when new leadership was required at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden in Florida after Hurricane Andrew struck in 1992, Brinsley was appointed as Director to oversee operations there. Likewise, when fresh leadership was required at Denver Botanic Garden in Colorado, Brinsley took the helm and steered the Garden through a major renovation, new construction and a national conference.

While working in Denver he met Julie Loquidis, a gardener, artist, and mother of Emily and Lulu who he would come to nurture as his own children. With a love of the tropics compelling him southwards again, Brinsley's next move was to accept the position of Director of St. George Village Botanical Gardens in the US Virgin Islands. Brinsley, Julie, and Lulu (and frequent visitor Emily) instantly fell in love with St. Croix and they contributed full-heartedly to their island community. Brinsley and Julie were married on a boat before reporting to a shared position managing the landscape of a private island near St. Thomas.

One of the truly great passions in Brinsley's life was photography: he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society. He was a technical genius with a close-up lens and made many beautiful, abstract images by zooming in on patterns of leaves. He honed a sensitivity to landscape and developed a unique style that had all the hallmarks of a master. His dignified portraits of people demonstrated a respectful approach to getting to know his subjects. Brinsley loved people and people loved him.

Soon after choosing Cottage Grove, Oregon as a place for retirement, Brinsley and Julie set up a photography and art business which they enjoyed very much. Eventually though, Brinsley began to feel the tug of home and wished to share his homeland with Julie. They had been back in England for only two years when Brinsley's heart disease first made itself known. It was not the plan, but the families take consolation that as he wished, he is buried "*in England, on a hillside with wild flowers and sunshine*". A very beautiful hillside for a very beautiful person.

## *Editor's Note:*

*I had the pleasure of meeting Brinsley at Richard Revel's Chairman's Day in 2016, shortly after he returned to England. In 1994 Brinsley was the Chairman of the Nature Distinctions Panel when I achieved my Associateship. It was so nice to meet him again and I was touched that he remembered me. He was a lovely person and I am sure that many members will remember him as I do.*

# Putting the right name to it

by the late Robert Hawkesworth FRPS

I always regard it as both a privilege and honour to be asked to select photographs for an exhibition, or judge at a competition. I get real pleasure from looking at the work of fellow photographers and sense the pride and effort which has gone into the work on show. Often entries are so high that good work does not always gain admission and all of us have no doubt received our fair share of failed entries. As a selector I know only too well the disappointment of returned work, but what is particularly upsetting for me is to have to reject work, not for a lack of photographic merit, but because it is incorrectly titled. I can imagine the horror and embarrassment of receiving that I would put this article together, entirely in the spirit of giving a helping hand to those who may feel in need of it and certainly not from any judgmental position, I am far too humble for that, having made my fair share of mistakes in the past.

Let's begin with British mammals; we do not have a rich mammal fauna in comparison with many other countries so that should make things easier from a recognition point of view, a case of knowing your Rabbits from your Hares or your Fallow Deer from your Red Deer so to speak. There are other deer I know but those two are the most frequently photographed. Other mammals do not seem to cause any problems. More and more people are travelling world-wide and I begin to think I am the only nature photographer left who has not been on an African Safari! It is however a certainty that at least one of the selectors for an exhibition will have done and consequently do make sure you have the mammals correctly identified. Tour Guides should be correct, but not always your fellow holiday makers! British birds seem to be fairly accurately identified but there are some pitfalls, 'Seagull' is unacceptable so do make sure whether it is a Herring Gull, Common Gull, Black-headed Gull, Kittiwake, Lesser Black-backed Gull or Greater Black-backed Gull. Winter waders are a nightmare for the unwary so if you are unsure do get advice at the time if possible. Raptors can be very photogenic and can also be difficult in certain lighting conditions, again either check at the time or seek advice later. Foreign birds tend to be fairly accurately identified, probably due to good information from the Tour Guides and other knowledgeable travelling companions. Reptiles and Amphibians, whether British or Foreign, also seem to be well identified (although I have known Adder and Grass Snake to cause problems).

Before we consider other groups let us look at scientific names. I am often asked why we have to use them when there is a perfectly good English name. Well English names are fine but only understood here in the UK and what is more, not always consistent across the whole British Isles! Let me give you an example. There

is a strange fungus which looks somewhat like a discoloured cauliflower and not surprisingly it is named the 'Cauliflower Fungus', however in some parts of the country it is known as 'Brain Fungus' and to confuse it even further there is another much smaller yellow coloured fungus which grows on trees which is also known as 'Brain Fungus'. The scientific names are *Sparassis crispa* for the Cauliflower/Brain Fungus and *Tremella mesenterica* for the Yellow Brain Fungus, which of course nicely separates them. Zoologists, Botanists, Mycologists and most experienced Naturalists have as it were grown up with these scientific names, but for those who are new to the game they are, I know, difficult. I'm afraid however you just have to bite on the bullet and do your best.

There are two parts to the name, the first is the Generic name, and describes the organism's Genus, and so for example the Bee Orchid belongs to the Genus *Ophrys*. The second part is the specific name and describes the species, so the Bee Orchid is *Ophrys apifera*. Notice that the first letter of the Generic name is always a capital and the specific name is always in lower case throughout. The names are Latinised ones and stem usually from either Latin or Greek but occasionally are entirely invented. Many of my generation probably studied either or both of those languages at school, I know I did, but younger generations may not have done and consequently may find getting used to the names even more difficult. But stick with it! Incidentally do not ever worry about the pronunciation of the names, there are not too many people around who were there with the Romans and the Ancient Greeks and so pronunciation is essentially an accepted one. Some people do get somewhat toffee-nosed about it, once more don't worry about it is my advice, as I said even though I studied both I probably mispronounce with the best of them.

Now we come to butterflies, moths and dragonflies. These are normally pretty well accurately identified and if you photograph them you either know what they are or are with someone who does. Other invertebrates do give problems for there are not always English names at all and there is no doubt that the subjects can be quite photogenic. Take advice here, see later in this article about suggestions for how to seek this.

The Botanical Kingdom is well furnished with English names, even for foreign flowers! The identification guides are amongst the best of such produced. But do be careful, all gentians are not Spring Gentian (*Gentiana verna*), there are many of them and some Genera are fraught with difficulties. For example, what I will call the 'Dandelion Group' is a minefield, my advice is do not go there unless you really know what you are about.



Grasses are rarely photographed and I can't recall ever seeing a mis-identification in an exhibition selection. The lower plants such as ferns, mosses, liverworts and algae obviously are potentially areas of great difficulty and unless you are an expert, advice is almost certainly necessary.

Fungi is probably the area with the greatest number of problems. Identification is often very difficult and even mycologists will not always commit themselves in the field. There really is only a handful of common and very distinct species, so fungi photography is an area where if you can identify the Genus you have done well and it is best left there; so *Mycena* sp. is perfectly acceptable (sp. being the abbreviation for species). If you are not knowledgeable and you are on your own you will have problems and fungi are so variable that identification guides are not always a great deal of use. Seek advice, but remember even mycologists may have difficulty with identification from photographs and some will not attempt to do so, but they should manage the Genus. That has probably put you off but don't dismay there are still plenty of well-known fungi to give you a sufficient quantity of subjects for your camera and there are some helpful folk around to give you advice.

Lichens include some very beautiful subjects, but there are almost no English named species and many are very similar to another, so advice is vital.

That now brings me to what I will call the 'Advice Section'. You may frequently ask yourself "where can I go to find out what this is?" The identification guides published in this country are amongst the best in the world and if you don't have the one you need perhaps one of your chums does. The Internet is now widely used by many and I am sure it can help if you are able to access the correct site. Should book or Internet searches prove unsuccessful there are those of us in the Nature Group who will always help if possible. Members of the committee may be contacted and if the individual concerned cannot personally help he or she will probably know someone who may be able to, so please don't hesitate to ask for advice.

I do hope that this has been of help. As your mother told you, 'do your best'. The bottom line however is that if all enquiries fail and identification eludes you, then the photograph, however good it is, should not really be entered for consideration in a Natural History Exhibition. 'Autumn Fungus', 'Birds at Dawn' or 'Meadow Flowers' are not acceptable titles for such an event, appropriate though they may be for a Pictorial Exhibition. I know it sounds tough but a Natural History Exhibition is slightly different from a general one. Don't forget either that the selectors are quite normal people (they are really!) also, if I'm anything to go by, they'll have made mistakes as well, and sometimes you'll get away with it! Remember that the Nature Group Exhibition goes on tour and so we really must be as accurate as possible. Above all keep smiling and enjoy your photography.

Over the years I have collected more identification guides than you could shake a stick at, but it may be helpful if I list some of the titles which have been of help to me over the years. Some may be out of print, but there will be derivations, no doubt. Please remember that where books are concerned the maxim "one man's meat is another man's poison" is never more true.

### A Very Personal Book List

#### Moths, Butterflies and Dragonflies/Damselflies

There are three very recent publications which are as good as they get. These are:

- Field Guide to the Moths of Great Britain & Ireland,
- Pocket Guide to the Butterflies of Great Britain & Ireland
- Field Guide to the Dragonflies and Damselflies of Great Britain & Ireland.

Available directly from:

British Wildlife Publishing, Lower Barn, Rooks Farm, Rotherwick, Hook, Hampshire RG27 9BG.

#### Insects

- Guide to the Insects of Britain & Western Europe, by Michael Chinery. Published by Collins.

Quite good, however, my copy was published in 1986, so it may no longer be available.

#### Lichens

The best Lichen guide and the only one of its kind as far as I am aware is:

- Lichens, an Illustrated Guide to the British and Irish Species by Frank Dobson.  
Obtainable directly from the publisher, Richmond.  
Tel 01753 643104.

#### Fungi

I may be among a minority of folk who enjoy using it, but I find it very comprehensive and whilst the diagrams are not very large the information is good, it suits me anyway.

- Fungi of Britain & Europe, by Stefan Buczacki, published by Collins

#### Birds, Mammals and Wildflowers

We could almost certainly fill *The Iris* with book titles covering these species so I shall not list any. There are very many excellent publications and good bookshops are usually well stocked. Browse through the selection and choose those which suit you, but do ensure that they are identification guides and not encyclopaedias.

I hope that this will prove to have been of some use.

#### Editor's Note:

*Robert Hawkesworth FRPS was a long serving Nature Group Committee Member and also Group Chairman from 2003 to 2005. This article was first published in issue 89 of The Iris, Summer 2004. What Robert wrote 15 years ago, is as true today as it was then!*

# Announcements & For Sale

## Dates for your diary

### Entries Invited

*The following National and International Exhibitions with Nature sections are now open for entries:*

#### October

##### **International Sillian Organisation ISO 2019**

Digital Projection (DPI)

Entries close: 20th October

[www.ddcontest.com](http://www.ddcontest.com)

#### November

##### **Frome Wessex Salon of Photography\***

Digital Projection (DPI)

Entries close: 03rd November

[www.fromewessexcameraclub.co.uk](http://www.fromewessexcameraclub.co.uk)

#### November

##### **Smethwick International Exhibition of Photography**

Print & Projected Digital Images

Entries close: 13th November.

[www.SmethwickInternational.com](http://www.SmethwickInternational.com)

#### November

##### **Bebington Salon of Photography**

Projected Digital Images (submitted on CD)

Entries close: 14th November

Entry form by download at: [www.bebingtonps.org.uk](http://www.bebingtonps.org.uk)

#### December

##### **Yorkshire International Salon of Photography**

Projected Digital Image

Entries close: 9th December.

Website: [www.yorkshiresalon.co.uk](http://www.yorkshiresalon.co.uk)

*Members are advised to confirm details of closing dates on Salon websites.*

## For Sale

**If you have items of photographic equipment that you no longer need or use, why not advertise them for sale in eNews?**

It costs members nothing to advertise and the advert will be read by over 900 members of the Nature Group.

**To advertise your items contact the Editor at:**  
[naturegroup\\_enews\\_editor@btinternet.com](mailto:naturegroup_enews_editor@btinternet.com)

## For Sale



### **Sigma APO Nikon fit Tele Converter 2X EX DG**

Comes with original pouch.

In excellent condition.

£120 or very near offer.

**Contact: James Foad LRPS**

**E-mail: [jamesfoadlrps@inbox.com](mailto:jamesfoadlrps@inbox.com)**

Please put "Sigma 2X Converter" in the Subject line.

## For Sale

### **Sony Lens Hoods**

SH134 & SH152. As new.

£15 each or £25 the pair, plus p&p.

### **Sony RM-VPR1 Cyber-shot Remote Release.**

As new. £25 plus p&p

### **Sony NP-FZ100 battery.**

As new. £30 including p&p.

### **Wimberley P50 Quick Release Plate.**

Slight signs of wear, but good condition.

£25 including p&p.

### **LensCoat Travel Lens Hood.**

As new. £55 including p&p.

**Contact: David Osborn FRPS**

**Email: [poppyland3@btinternet.com](mailto:poppyland3@btinternet.com)**



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All contributions should be submitted to the Editor at: [naturegroup\\_eneews\\_editor@btinternet.com](mailto:naturegroup_eneews_editor@btinternet.com). Any item of interest to nature photographers is welcomed, including reviews on equipment and relevant books. Copy should be submitted as .txt or .doc files by email. Please do not send hand written copy.

Digitally captured photographic images should be supplied as flattened 8bit sRGB tif or jpg files, 6" x 4" at 300 pixels per inch. Please do not email larger images.

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Vice-President of the Society;  
Director General of the Society;  
Hon. Treasurer of the Society;  
Chairman of the Nature A & F Distinctions Panel

### \* Members please note:

David O'Neill is currently acting as Nature Group Hon.Treasurer. He cannot continue to perform this role indefinitely on top of his other commitments to the Nature Group. If you have the necessary experience, please help the Nature Group by volunteering for this very important role. Please contact David O'Neill for further information. Email: [david.oneill@newhorizons.uk.com](mailto:david.oneill@newhorizons.uk.com)

## Nature Group Exhibitions:

CDs/DVDs of Nature Group Exhibitions are available for purchase by camera clubs/photo-graphic societies for use in their programme. Please contact the Exhibition Secretary, E-mail: [rpsngexsec@btinternet.com](mailto:rpsngexsec@btinternet.com)

