

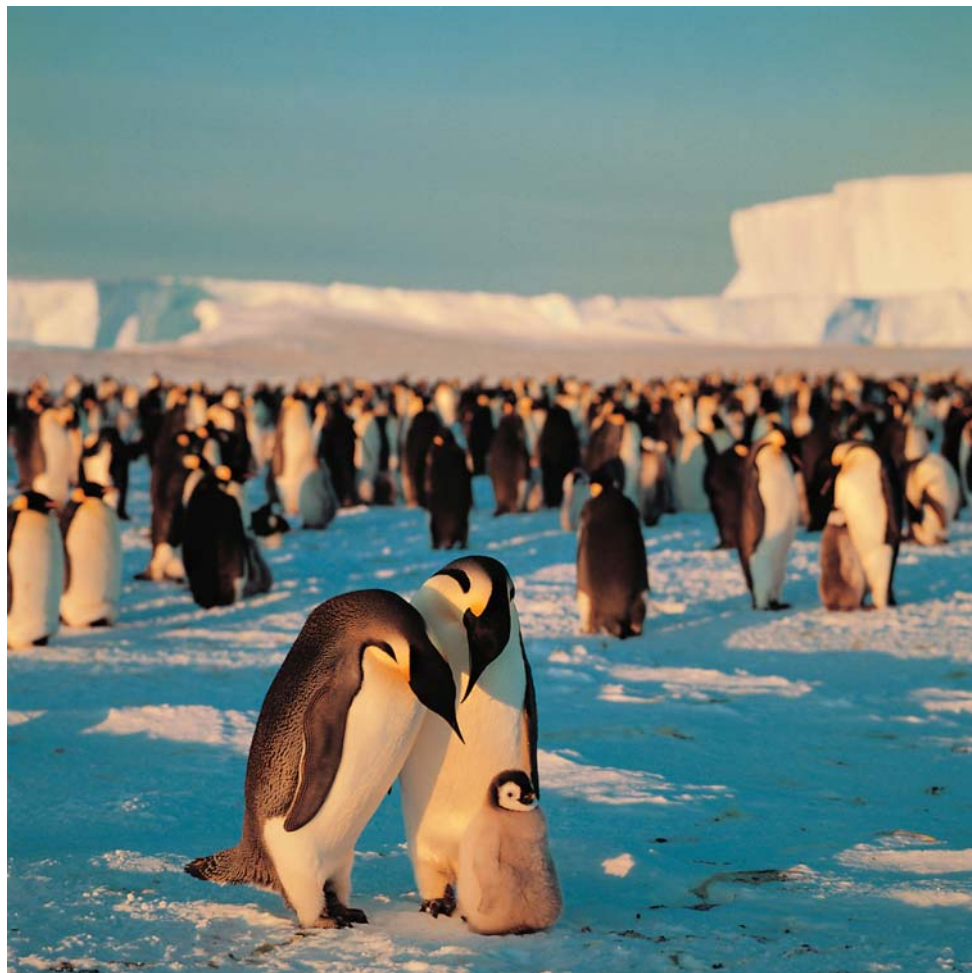
THE ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY



SILVER JUBILEE

THE IRIS

25th Anniversary Issue  
No. 79 - Spring 2001



**Above photo by** Heather Angel Hon. FRPS  
5.5 cm x 5.5 cm transparency. - “Emperor Penguins (*Aptenodytes forsteri*) with chick,  
Atka Bay, Antarctica, November”.

**Back outer cover by** Heather Angel Hon. FRPS  
“Bottle-nosed Dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) leaping from sea against setting sun.  
Roatan, Honduras, May.



# ***The 25th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING and SPRING MEETING***

The 2001 Annual General Meeting of the RPS NATURE GROUP  
will be held at:-

*Smethwick Photographic Society, The Old Schoolhouse,  
Oldbury, West Midlands (for directions see below).*

***on Saturday 28th April 2001***

## ***TIMETABLE***

10.30 a.m. - Assemble for 11.00 a.m. start

11.00 a.m. - A slide presentation by *Dr. Anne Owen FRPS* who will take us into the underwater world, an environment with which few of us have any experience.

12.30 p.m. - Break for lunch. No formal arrangements have been made, there are local hosteleries. *The clubhouse has a dining area if you wish to bring sandwiches.*

## ***LUNCH***

2.00 p.m. - Annual General Meeting.

### ***Agenda:-***

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Minutes of the 24th AGM 2000, printed in issue 77 of "The Iris".
3. Matters arising.
4. To adopt "The Regulations of The Nature Group of the RPS of Great Britain", enclosed with this issue of "The Iris".
5. Chairman's Report.
6. Treasurer's Report.
7. Secretary's Report.
8. Election of Officers and Committee.
9. The 25th Anniversary Convention.
10. Any Other Business.
11. Date and venue of the 26th AGM 2002.

2.45 p.m. Opening of the 2001 Exhibition followed by a presentation of the accepted slides. The Exhibition Prints will also be on display.

Robert Hawkesworth FRPS Group Hon. Sec

*All nominations for Officers and Committee, as well as Matters for consideration under Any Other Business, must be made in writing and should be received by the Secretary on, or before, Thursday 12th April 2001.*

### ***DIRECTIONS:-***

Leave the M5 at Junction 2 and get into right hand lane. At roundabout (with traffic lights) approximately 200 yards from motorway take A4034 right towards West Bromwich and immediately get into left hand lane of dual carriageway . At first traffic lights (approx 1/3 mile) turn left into Park Street. After a hundred or so yards right at T junction into Churchbridge (cul-de-sac). The Old Schoolhouse is last but one building on left. *If map required send sae to Editor.*

## NATURE GROUP COMMITTEE

### OFFICERS

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### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Peter Basterfield ARPS "Scotia" 22, Morris Lane, Bath, Avon, BA1 7PP. Tel:- 01225-859094.*  
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*Tony Wharton FRPS 2, Ashfield Grove, Halesowen, West Midlands, B63 4LH. Tel:- 0121-550-3326.*

### EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

**Immediate Past Chairman - N/G Rep to Advisory Panel:-** *Mrs. Kath Bull ARPS (also holds Archival Exhibition Slides) "Segsbury", St. John's Road, Crowborough, East Sussex, TN6 1RT. Tel:- 01892 663751*  
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**Exhibition Secretary:-** *Peter Jones ARPS 3, Curlew Close, Mountsorrel, Loughborough, Leicestershire, LE12 7ED. Tel:-01509-412286*

*The Royal Photographic Society's President; Secretary General; Hon.Treasurer and Finance Officer are also ex-officio members, as is the Chairman of the A & F Nature Distinctions Panel.*

## PUBLICATION INFORMATION

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**Copy and publication dates are:-**

### Spring Issue.

*Copy Deadline - 23rd January*  
U.K Members by 18th March.

### Summer Issue.

*Copy Deadline - 23rd May*  
U.K Members by 15th July.

### Winter Issue.

*Copy Deadline - 23rd September*  
U.K. Members by 15th November.

**CONTRIBUTIONS** on all aspects of Nature Photography & Natural History are welcomed, including reviews on relevant books & equipment. Copy can be accepted on floppy disc (RTF or Microsoft 'Word') accompanied by printed copy. As an E-mail (**please not as an attachment**) or simply typed, double spaced, on one side of the paper only. Please send submissions to The Editor.

*No payment is made for material used and whilst every care is taken neither the Editor, nor the Nature Group, nor Printers accept liability for any damage that may occur to photographic material submitted.*

*The views expressed are solely those of the contributor.*

**Magazine Distribution:-** The IRIS is posted using 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 Editor will be pleased to post single copies to those who have failed to receive them.

# CONTENTS

Annual General Meeting -28th April 2001 - venue & agenda.	3
Nature Group Committee and Publication Details.	4
Editorial.	6
From The Chair - Martin Withers FRPS	7
25th Anniversary Weekend Convention - venue & details.	7
“The State of Nature Photography Across the Pond” by Rick Cloran FPSA.	8
“In Search of Polar Bears” by Martin Withers FRPS.	10
“25 Years Onward” by Heather Angel Hon. FRPS	14
Members Letters.	17
“Antarctica - The End of the Earth” by Tony Wharton FRPS.	18
“RPS Nature Group - Silver Jubilee” by Prof. Raymond Clark FRPS ASIS.	24
The Royal Photographic Society Picture Library.	26
Portfolio - Andy Callow.	28
Members Web Sites.	31
Reports of Meetings.	31
Details for two residential Field Events in 2001.	33
Details of Members Lectures.	33
Venues for Field Meetings in 2001 - <i>make sure to book in advance if requested..</i>	34
Adverts.	37

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29th January 2001, our 25th Anniversary, our Silver Jubilee. Completely illogically it seems to me to be an auspicious omen that our second quarter century commences not only in the first month of a new year, but also in the first month of the new millennium. I wish all of you enjoyable photography, happiness and good health. Hopefully you will all have enough of the celebratory spirit left (this is being typed in January!) to join me in a toast to the Nature Group, long may it prosper.

In many ways it is invidious to single out individual contributors to any issue of our magazine. However, for this slightly larger Silver Jubilee issue, it is both pleasing and appropriate to acknowledge pieces from Prof. Ray Clark FRPS ASIS, President of the RPS and Heather Angel Hon. FRPS, our founder Chairman plus Rick Cloran FPSA, immediate Past Chairman PSA Nature Division.

On such anniversaries as this we look to both the past and the future. With the past in mind I thought it would be interesting to print some monochrome nature pictures from the RPS Collection. At very short notice Sam (Samantha) Johnson, the Picture Library Manager at The Octagon, kindly gave myself and our sub-editor free access to the copy print files. Whilst these contained many interesting photographs [*we could have spent days poring through them*] only a few could be classed as true natural history. However our attention was caught by some amusing prints applicable to all early photographers, also one of the Kearton brothers demonstrating a really rigid tripod! We hope you enjoy them.

What though of the future? Will the Nature Group be in existence on 29th January 2026 to celebrate its 50th anniversary? How will we be taking photographs (if that is what they will be called) and will there be any 'natural history' for us left to photograph? In issue 71 (Summer '98) Roger Barnes ARPS wrote a splendidly humorous article about cameras etc., in 2058. It was pure fantasy and could never happen ... ?

What of our membership? Will we all have embraced the latest technology? In Heather Angel's article she refers to the possibility of *The Iris* being published as an 'on-line' edition [*maybe even as a CD-ROM?*]. Even as I write Nick Jarvis is kindly experimenting with an Internet 'Nature Group Notice Board / Chat Room' which only N.G. members will be able to access. He will report his findings to the committee in due course and further details will appear in future issues.

For those of you who eschew computers don't worry; *The Iris* will continue to appear in print. As do many others, I suspect, I much prefer to read a book or magazine than stare for hours at the computer screen. I believe we should, and must, continue to cater for those who prefer more traditional communication as well as those using the latest technology.

How large will our Group be in 2026? Big is not necessarily best but a certain number is required to ensure viability. Currently we are the third largest group and also one of the only three with an increasing membership.

In the opening paragraph I deliberately wished everyone *enjoyable*, not 'successful', photography. There are many criteria which could be used to judge whether your photography is 'successful'. Is it accepted at exhibitions and well received in club competitions? Do 'non-photographers' like it? Does it make money? I submit though that it cannot be truly successful for the photographer *unless they are enjoying it*, irrespective of whether it is achieving any other criteria. *That photography can be enjoyed simply for its own pleasure.*

So, once again, enjoyable photography to you all. Oh, for those missing the front page photograph don't worry it will be back in the next issue ❀

Many of you will have read in the last issue of the Iris, under 'From the Chair', the committee's plans to hold a Nature Group Convention in August (10th - 12th) of this year to mark the 25th Anniversary of the formation of our group. I am pleased to inform you all that sufficient bookings have been received to ensure that this very special event will take place. I am equally sure that many of you placed the booking form behind the mantelpiece clock fully intending to fill it in and forward it to me within a few weeks - if this has not yet happened, may I urge all those members wishing to attend to post the completed form to me as soon as possible, as this will help us enormously in finalising the arrangements for the weekend.



I also hope that many of you will have supported our Annual Nature Group Exhibition. A selection of helpers under the guidance of Sue Wilson and Peter Jones ARPS are hoping that this years Annual Exhibition will be as successful as in previous years. Opening as it does at our AGM at Smethwick on April 28th the Exhibition will then be touring the country at a wide selection of regional venues. I encourage all members to make an effort to see the Exhibition if and when it visits their region; it is always beneficial for nature photographers to view the images of others working in the same field.

In this issue of the Iris you will also find a list of Field Meetings that you the members have volunteered to stage throughout the country in the coming year. Our Programme Co-ordinator Roy Place FRPS, has again done sterling work behind the scenes in ensuring that we have a varied selection of meetings in the season ahead - it is generally a thankless task attempting to get members to offer to hold a meeting in their own region and without Roy's constant encouragement and gentle badgering the list of meetings would be very small indeed. If you find that there is no meeting in your area, it's your fault - please try to organise one for the benefit of all other members and encourage distant Nature Group friends to do the same.

I am actually writing these notes on Carcass Island in the Falklands, staring out of the window at a dull, grey and rather wet day - much like being at home really. As UK based nature photographers the weather was not particularly kind to us in the year 2000, let's hope that the first year of this new millennium sees an upturn in weather patterns from which we can all benefit ❀

## **25TH ANNIVERSARY NATURE GROUP WEEKEND CONVENTION**

*AT BROOKSBY AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE, MELTON MOWBRAY, LEICESTERSHIRE  
from the evening of Friday 10th August to lunch Sunday 12th August 2001.*

**BOOK NOW !**

**ONLY A LIMITED NUMBER OF PLACES!**

*Booking Forms (which were enclosed with the previous issue of The Iris) should be sent to Martin Withers FRPS*

*For those of you who cannot find their booking form send sae to The Editor who will forward another.*

**A WEEKEND OF GOOD COMPANY AND EXCELLENT LECTURES**

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## ***“THE STATE OF NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY ACROSS THE POND”***

***BY RICK CLORAN, FPSA - IMMEDIATE  
PAST CHAIRMAN, PSA NATURE DIVISION***

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The pursuit of natural history and more specifically nature photography is no less ardent in the States (oops, Colonies) than in the UK. There are, however, several distinct (or at least perceived) differences.

One of the primary differences is that what constitutes nature photography is interpreted more broadly in the States. We include photographs taken in zoos, studios and at game farms in addition to wildlife, with the latter being the more traditional photography of subjects in their natural habitat. The distinction is made to encompass controlled condition work with subjects that can not be readily found and photographed in the wild. This last group ranges from endangered or secretive species such as Black-footed Ferrets or Lynx that might be photographed at a zoo or game farm, to underwater insects that are more easily photographed in an aquarium than in a pond. The fundamental difference here is that we also use a looser definition from a technical perspective to provide for the lack of scientific accuracy in the backgrounds or habitat shown in much of the work done in these venues. That said, our puritanical side shows in our exclusion of anthropology and archaeology in an effort to minimize the “hand of man”.

A second difference is that there tends to be three distinct levels of participation in the States at the amateur level. The “incidental” nature photographers are often just learning how to make effective nature photographs and are generally content to confine the majority of their shooting to zoos, studios and other controlled conditions. They typically will not spend serious effort on understanding the biology of the subject and so background, habitat, etc. are likely to be what was provided, at hand or felt to be artistic in a pictorial sense. They are prone to use cute titles or mislabel subjects. Although recommended, titles are not always read in US nature salons and judges are inconsistent in their response to mislabelling. With few penalties this bad habit lingers on.

Our “transitional” workers are more seriously interested in natural history and will tend to do research on the subjects they are photographing. While they continue to shoot controlled condition situations, they also venture out into the field to do bona fide in situ (wildlife) work. As they develop, their work moves more and more into true natural history (i.e., scientifically accurate backgrounds, etc.). The most advanced group is our “naturalists”. They have come up through the ranks of either the nature photography or natural history branches and are now trying to put the two together. They tend to do predominantly wildlife work and often will have as much fun observing a subject as photographing it. This group is also marked by a willingness to travel to where the wildlife is, even when it is out of the country. Hence, many of our more recognized makers may be better known for African wildlife, Polar Bears, etc., than for native American species.

The regulatory climate is also different in the States. We tend to have fewer restrictions on photographing subjects with the exception of “endangered” or “protected” species such as the Bald Eagle. Even on these subjects the restrictions tend to be enforced primarily during the most sensitive points in the life cycle (e.g., breeding, winter survival, etc.). The level of enforcement is also often dependent on the population of the species in that area. An example is the relative ease with which you can photograph Bald Eagles in Alaska as opposed to the lower 48 States. In Massachusetts we will close portions of (or even entire) beaches to the public if Piping Plovers decide to nest on them due to the rarity of the species here. Once closed, the sections or beaches are closed to all comers. You would need a ranger or warden with you to photograph within the closed areas. There is no general licence or permit that would provide an exception.



The National Parks and refuges provide havens for our wildlife and naturalists, and excellent learning locations for our incidental and transitional groups. The volume of human traffic through many of the more popular parks and refuges has partially acclimated the resident animals to humans. Even those with lower field skills can make a reasonable approach and get good photographs. As you might expect, we are faced with the transgressors who just do not or will not use common sense, field ethics or obey a set of rules. The truly unfortunate part is that they are not restricted to the “incidental” photographers, but can be from any group including our professionals. On a brighter note PSA’s Nature Division, the Nature Group of the RPS, and our fellow societies around the world are not alone in trying to promote good ethics in nature photography. The North American Nature Photographers Association (NANPA) was formed about five years ago and is comprised of both amateurs and professionals with more professionals and want-to-be professionals than amateurs. NANPA has developed a code of ethics for nature photographers which emphasizes enforcement of the ethics and practices set out in the code.

Game farms are likely our most controversial subject next to digital imaging. These are outfits that raise (breed) less common species, including raptors as well as mammals, and “rent” them for photography in natural settings as a sideline. If you go to where the game farm is located you will likely have a totally natural setting. The resulting photographs are often indistinguishable from a true wildlife shot. Most Stateside salons suspect pictures of a roaring Grizzly Bear standing on its hind legs, Grey Wolves on a deer kill, a Mountain Lion in the back country or with its kitten etc., are game farm shots. We must rely on the photographers ethics to NOT label it as “wildlife”. The subject is not free and unrestrained, since there is a handler nearby. These pictures therefore fail a key test in the PSA definition of wildlife even when the habitat is natural to the subject.

Digital imaging is new and its place and proper use are still under debate. The Nature Division of PSA has stressed that any manipulation, digital or otherwise, must not alter the truth of the event observed and photographed. Hours of debate over where the line falls on “minor” corrections in a computer and what had been done by others in a darkroom in the past have been distilled into a single clause in the Nature Photography Definition used by PSA nature exhibitions and many clubs in the US. This clause, “...are ineligible, *as is any form of manipulation that alters the truth of the photographic statement*” has been pared to the bone by the need to keep the definition brief enough for exhibitions with a PSA sanctioned nature section to reproduce it in their entry forms. I was intrigued and impressed by the digital imaging guidelines for the RPS Nature Distinctions [*drafted by the Distinctions Panel Chairman, Martin Withers FRPS*] that I ran across in a copy of The IRIS forwarded by our good friend Terry Ridgely, LRPS. So impressed in fact, that I secured permission from John Myring ARPS [*magazine editor*] to reproduce that section, which so well states the essence of our common intent, in a column for the PSA Journal.

A final point that I am sure has proven frustrating to overseas salon exhibitors is the tendency of Stateside judging panels and photographers to bias toward portraits with little habitat. This is a valid criticism and stems from the camera club background that many of us grew up in. After years of being told “get closer” and “simplify”, those of us in nature photography have to unlearn that ingrained bias to show more habitat and so improve on the nature story. We are attempting to do so by stressing to all including the judges, that the nature story value in a shot should outweigh the pictorial consideration. It is a gradual change, however, that will likely take a photographic “generation” to become the norm.

This brings me full circle on the interpretation of nature photography in the States. As I noted at the outset, we define nature photography more broadly than it is normally construed in the rest of the world. It is not a matter of disagreement that pictures of underwa-

ter insects taken in an aquarium or rare species taken in game farms or zoos are “nature” subjects. It seems, however, that the majority of our cousins throughout the world have a strong belief that, to be a nature photograph it has to have been taken in situ, or what we in the states would classify as “wildlife” (i.e. a strict adherence to complete scientific accuracy). We do appreciate the distinction and appreciate the difficulty in making such shots. Our method of dealing with the difference has been to have a special category within the boundaries of the definition of nature for “wildlife” rather than narrowing the definition. In this way we do not exclude what we still consider to be some excellent photography that can be appreciated for what it is without the need to label it specifically as controlled condition work ❀

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## ***“IN SEARCH ...***

### ***...OF POLAR BEARS”***

*BY MARTIN WITHERS FRPS*

of one or more of my ‘special species’. Kenya and Tanzania proved fruitful for Cheetahs and Leopards, Uganda for Chimpanzees and Mountain Gorillas, India for Tigers and Australia for Dingo’s and Tasmanian Devils. All of these ‘specials’ have one thing in common, they all live in relatively warm climates and, as far as I am concerned that is ideal. As all my friends will tell you, I am very much a man of the tropics, rarely shedding a layer of outermost clothing until the temperature reaches the mid 80’s Fahrenheit. With this fact in mind, you can imagine my foreboding when my wife suggested the next ‘special species’ should be Polar Bear. Even with my patchy knowledge of mammals I was aware that you don’t find Polar Bears on the equator! Photographing in a temperature of -30 centigrade was a daunting prospect for me; nevertheless we forged ahead with our plans. A close friend, Terry Andrewartha, kindly invited Sally and I to join him and a group of American pro photographers on a Polar Bear trip commencing in mid November - this was an invitation too good to miss.

Since I first became involved in nature photography, well over 20 years ago, there have been mammal species that have held a special fascination for me. Over the years I have made a conscious effort every so often, to visit areas of the world in search

The first surprise of the trip occurred at 31,000 feet somewhere over Newfoundland when, stretching my legs on our outward flight to Winnipeg, I bumped into Bert Crawshaw ARPS who, along with his wife Dreen and friends Jean Fisher and Ann Harris LRPS were heading for the same destination. It was pleasing to know that the Nature Group was to be well represented on our search for the bears.

Having over-nighted on arrival in Winnipeg, the following day saw us continuing north on a flight to Churchill, the ‘Polar Bear capital of the World’. Churchill is situated on the western shore of Hudson Bay and is the point at which, each October/November, large numbers of polar bears gather on their annual pilgrimage to hunt for seals once the sea ice freezes. Churchill is home to about 1000 people and owes it’s existence to the farmers of the wheat-producing prairies of the Hudson Bay area, who ship their grain to the town for transportation south by rail. In more recent times many of Churchill’s inhabitants have become involved in eco-tourism, catering for the needs of the 10,000 plus visitors that flock to the town during the short summer and the late autumn/early winter ‘bear season’.

The polar bear is the largest terrestrial predator in the world, females range in size from 330 to 800 lbs, while males weigh in at between 660 to 1500 lbs. Stood on its hind legs the largest of the males will stand over 10 feet tall. Thousands of years of adaptation have resulted in the polar bear becoming a true arctic specialist, being able to survive in one of



Photo by Martin Withers FRPS. - "Male Polar Bear rolling in snow".  
Canon EOS 1N with Canon 500mm + 1.4 convertor. 1/250th @ f6.3 Sensia 100 rated at 200 ISO.



Photo by Martin Withers FRPS - "Female Polar Bear with cub".  
Canon EOS 1N with Canon 70 - 200 mm. 1/250th @ f8. Sensia 100 rated at 200 ISO.



the most challenging environments the world has to offer. Temperatures can reach extremely low levels. A snowstorm raged through Churchill some years ago with winds of 50 mph, the outside temperature dropped to minus 22 degrees Fahrenheit but, with a wind-chill factor of 2600, the ambient temperature was the equivalent of minus 90 degrees Fahrenheit. At this temperature unprotected skin will freeze solid in less than a minute. To survive in such conditions the polar bear has an extremely warm 'coat', comprised of a fat layer, thick warmth/light absorbing black skin and dense fur. This 'coat' is so efficient that almost no radiating body heat can be detected even when scanned by thermal imaging equipment. Over the course of the winter, foraging polar bears may wander hundreds of miles over the ice in search of seals. Polar bears will mate out on the ice during April and May, to coincide with the births of thousands of seal pups, which provide an easy food supply to females during the early stages of their eight month pregnancy. By late June polar bears are forced to leave the sea ice as it begins to break up and thaw. During the rich winter feeding period, polar bears can increase their body weight by three to four times. This weight increase is essential for pregnant females who will spend the following winter in an earth or snow den, giving birth to cubs and nursing them for at least five months before being able to hunt again. Cubs are born during the period November to February, with two or three cubs being the normal litter size, only once has a litter of four cubs been recorded. At birth the cubs weigh about two lbs, are blind, deaf and completely helpless. However, cubs develop rapidly on the rich fatty milk produced by the female. At six weeks old their eyes are open and usually, at about ten weeks, the cubs will venture from the den for the first time. A few days after emerging from the den, the female and cubs will commence their walk towards the coast from the denning area. In the case of the Churchill bears this can mean a walk of between forty to sixty miles and can take up to five days. On reaching the coast the female will commence hunting for seals and the rich fats found on seal carcasses will enable the cubs to maintain their fast rate of growth. The cubs will stay with the female for around two years, before taking on the challenges of adulthood alone or with their siblings.

Having, at long last, reached the Polar Bear Lodge, a series of mobile trailers consisting of two bunkhouses, a diner, a lounge and one or two utility carriages, we quickly settled into our quarters. Although space aboard the lodge was rather meagre, the benefit of being able to live out on the ice with the bears was a real bonus. For the next eight days we spent the daylight hours driving around in Tundra Buggies searching for polar bears. We rarely had to search for long, as the smells emitted from the lodge diner attracted the bears to us. During the course of our stay we saw in excess of twenty bears, at very close quarters and, as expected, they proved to be a very 'special species'. Females with cubs, lone adults and sparring males put on a wonderful show for us. I anticipated some difficulties photographically with polar bears on snow, so before leaving the UK, I undertook some tests to establish the required compensation for my particular cameras. The tests indicated that plus one stop would be about right and so it proved. Of course the best results were taken on bright sunny days when the snow surface showed texture, on dull, overcast days things were generally flat. The weather was reasonably kind to us, although more sunshine would have been welcome. Temperatures were bearable for most of the time, but I don't think I shall ever become a lover of cold climates.

All too quickly our time with this 'special species' came to an end - where to next? Grizzly bears have always held a fascination for me, so too have lemurs! Now which of these 'specials' lives closest to the equator? ❀

## **“25 YEARS ONWARD”**

BY

**HEATHER ANGEL HON FRPS**  
**FOUNDER CHAIRMAN OF**  
**THE NATURE GROUP**

As the Group celebrates 25 years this year, it is a fitting time to reminisce and to look to the future. From the time that the Kearton brothers began to work around the turn of the nineteenth century, Britain has maintained a long tradition of natural history photography. Many fine examples are held in the National Collection of Nature Photographs, which I arranged to be

transferred to the RPS in 1981 from the (then) National Nature Conservancy Council. In the early part of the twentieth century, bulky cameras and slow speed film limited the choice of subjects and the distance travelled on location. In calm weather, plants were a safe bet and since nesting birds could be guaranteed to return to a fixed point, nest shots using hides were much in vogue. By the time the RPS Nature Group was formed in January 1976, 35 mm SLR cameras were popular with many nature photographers.

When the Society was based at South Audley Street in London the Secretary, Kenneth Warr wrote to several Nature Fellows – including myself – to enquire whether we were willing to help form a special interest group. My reaction was enthusiastic and not long afterwards, thirty-four photographers and naturalists attended an inaugural meeting on the 29th January 1976, when I was appointed the first Chairman of the Nature Group.

Within a few weeks we had arranged two lectures, four field outings and two field weekends – at Monks Wood NNR in Huntingdonshire and at Rogate Field Centre in Sussex. By the 1st March 1976, when the first Newsletter was issued, the membership had risen to 43. Some four years later, in 1980, we held 16 one-day field meetings, two field weekends, one field week at Oriulton Field Centre and a one-day workshop. By the mid 1980's the Group could boast some 950 members –virtually one tenth of the Society's membership.

The Nature Group Newsletter gradually evolved from several pages of A4 cyclostyled sheets (issues 1–4) to an A5 format with text throughout (issues 5–8). From issue 9 in June 1978, I took over as Editor and we had the first cover picture (albeit in monochrome). In those pre-computer days, our dining room floor had to be cleared so that we could laboriously cut and paste each feature onto A4 pages, two of which were joined down the long axis to make a horizontal A3 page. The printer then reduced each A3 page to an A4 printed on each side with two A5 pages.

The distinctive Nature Group logo first appeared on the autumn 1980 (18) Newsletter; six years later in autumn 1986 (36) the monochrome cover picture became set in a pale green surround and the first colour reproductions appeared inside. Another decade was to pass before colour appeared on the front and back covers in the spring 1996 (64) issue. Not all animals can see colour, but it nonetheless plays an important role for survival, courtship and pollination within the natural world. Moreover, since many NG members work exclusively in colour, it is appropriate that their work should be seen in colour.

Whilst preparing this article I browsed back issues of *The Iris* to gauge whether the style of photography amongst Nature Group members has, like the Newsletter, evolved over the years! Essentially, it appears not. Portraits still feature prominently – notably of birds. We do, however, see more wide-angle shots depicting animals and plants within their habitat. As the cost of overseas travel has become more competitive, coupled with the rapid expansion of tour companies specialising in wildlife and nature tours; we have seen a greater preponderance of pictures taken beyond Britain's shores, both in *The Iris* and in the Nature Group's Annual Exhibition.

By 1976, when Kodachrome 25 was *the* colour film for landscapes and plants, we strove

to produce pin-sharp portraits in fading light using 200 ASA films with obvious grain. The huge advances made in the chemistry of colour film emulsions during the last quarter century, now provide us with colour transparency film stock with wide-ranging speeds. When the light is poor, not only do we have several acceptable 200 ISO speed films, but some – such as Ektachrome 200 and Fujichrome MS (Multispeed) 100/1000 – which are designed to be pushed. Film speed is therefore no longer a limiting factor for achieving a nature photograph when the available light is low and it is impractical to use flash. It is ironic that now we have the ability for producing high definition images in fading light, there is a current vogue for portraying action with intentional blur – by using slow shutter speeds and either panning the camera or using sync flash!

Since the Group was formed, we have seen the introduction of an increasing number of automated features incorporated within the camera design; sometimes, I regret to say, at the expense of basic, yet essential, features to the nature photographer – such as a depth of field preview facility.

Does automation aid the production of better pictures? Not always. Take auto-focus for example, while it may decrease the odds of getting action shots in focus, it does not maximise potential depth of field for close-ups by focusing on the front of the subject. Also, I have little doubt that the first generation auto-focus systems with a single central auto-focus area reduced the scope for a creative composition because it takes more effort to place the subject off-centre.

From my experience of working with many of the winners of the Young Wildlife Photographer of the Year (each of whom spends a day in the field with me), I have found that without having been weaned on manual cameras, some are far too reliant on their camera doing all the work. In particular, they do not always appreciate the need to think about exposure in terms of tones; also relying on auto-bracketing will help to ensure one correct exposure, it will not increase the learning curve for coping with tricky exposures.

Don't get me wrong. I am not knocking technical progress; far from it. For many years I used a succession of handheld meters – Westons, Lunasix and Minolta – in preference to an in-camera meter. When cameras were produced with multi-choice TTL metering modes, I dispensed with a separate light meter. However, my preferred way of determining exposure – which I use 99% of the time – is to manually spot-meter an average tone.

I firmly believe that going back to basics will ensure a better grasp of when to select a particular shutter speed or aperture for maximum effect. Only by knowing the pros and cons of manual, versus automated, actions is it possible to select the most appropriate approach for each subject and thereby to develop a more individual approach to nature photography.

The introduction of TTL flash with off-the-film metering revolutionised flash photography in the field – by day or night. No longer did we have to calculate the subject-to-flash distance on the back of a film pack. Fill-flash is now such an easy technique, it is possible to resuscitate a sombre shot by providing a catch light to dark eyes or illuminating shadow areas in three-dimensional flowers.

No serious nature photographers can survive without an ethical approach to their work. I suspect we have all experienced losing a shot by an overzealous person rushing forward and spooking an animal. A recent experience in Namibia with a group of 'snappers', makes me wish for an obligatory ban on all cameras with any audible feature which cannot be silenced in a wilderness situation. Before we entered a hide we had been briefed not to rustle bags, open Velcro fastenings, speak or even whisper, if we were to have any chance of seeing wild leopards coming to feed. When one leopard followed by another

appeared, the group whispered incessantly, their basic point and shoot cameras audibly zooming in and out and beeping repeatedly as they came into focus! Not surprisingly, both leopards retreated. We glared at the offenders and, fortunately, they got the message and eventually our patience was rewarded when the leopards returned walking down onto red rocks bathed in a glorious golden light.

Now the facility of digital enhancement adds an extra dimension to the question of ethics. Digital manipulation is a highly creative tool, but it can result in the production of misleading – or even biologically untruthful – pictures. We have all seen images of wall-to-wall zebras achieved by the duplication of individual animals to infill the grassy patches; impressive but unrealistic and certainly misleading. But is the removal of an out-of-focus leaf (which could be blown out of shot by the next breeze) or a twig unethical? By gaining an uncluttered picture, the subject's natural history may be easier to interpret.

As someone whom infinitely prefers to work on location than to be cooped up in a dark-room, (yet, when I submitted my Fellowship application in the days before colour was accepted, I had no option but to produce monochrome prints), I am especially excited by the ability to have my images converted to digital files. In this way substantially more people can view them – either via my web-site or as exhibition prints on digital fine art paper. This is not a retrospect step; on the contrary, it has revitalised my whole approach to working at a time when it would be easy to remain in a rut, just because writing articles and books remains a 'safe' way for me to earn a living. It is a sobering thought that my son, Giles, who is younger than the Nature Group, now designs web-sites – including my own – which can be viewed by anyone anywhere in the world.

The current Group membership may be below the 1980's peak, but I have little doubt that the decline in numbers has more to do with increased Membership fees of the RPS and the larger number of special interest groups than any dwindling interest in natural history photography.

It is encouraging that field meetings still form a substantial part of the Nature Group's calendar. Whilst lectures, competitions and *The Iris* are all excellent ways of networking amongst members, there is nothing to beat being out there. I would endorse the periodic plea for more field trip leaders to come forward. Why not share your favourite local area with other members?

What of the future? It is not inconceivable that *The Iris* will be published as an on-line edition, which would help to reduce the postage bill. As more members obtain an e-mail address, networks for the exchange of information – on gadgets, film, equipment, maybe even a database of locations and a chat-line could be set up.

But whatever way the Nature Group evolves, and make no mistake evolve it will, it is imperative that members never lose sight of their love and desire to portray the natural world in the best way possible, whether it be simply for their own pleasure or for the education or enjoyment of others.

May I wish the Group every success within the next quarter century ☘

*Heather Angel's major exhibition - "Natural Visions" - which began touring Britain last year, can be seen at the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh from 18th January - 11th February 2001 and at the Aberystwyth Arts Centre from 31st March - 19th May 2001. Additional venues and full details appear on her web-site [www.naturalvisions.co.uk](http://www.naturalvisions.co.uk). All exhibition prints were digitally produced from drum scans by Heather and Giles Angel, on Lyson Fine Art paper using Lyson Fotonic archival inks.*





Dear John,

### Digital Photography

Your introduction to Dennis Toft's letter in the Winter edition of *The Iris* clearly sets out the present situation that digital photography is a non starter for serious natural history photographers.

Having recently read an article praising the Nikon Coolpix 990 I still believe, as you do, that a digital SLR such as the Nikon D1 or the Fuji S1, when they become more affordable, will be the only digital cameras of any interest.

However were one to spend a fortune to get a digital SLR would one be any better off? There are two reasons why I have thought it might be beneficial to have one.

**Firstly** to be able to 'improve' digital images.

I can make satisfactory A4 prints from scanned slides but have jibbed at the cost of converting the slightly improved, 'gardened', images back into slides. Now I gather, from what you say, that the resulting quality is likely to be too poor to be of value.

**Secondly** to see on-site the success or failure of each shot.

My main reason for thinking a digital camera might be of value is in being able to see, 'on location', whether one's efforts have been successful. We all know the frustration of having to await one's return from a foreign trip to see the results with no opportunity to have another go. Similarly whilst nearer to home waiting for one's film to be processed one's subject may have gone over, or gone completely, and not be available for retakes.

The thought of being able to inspect on a LCD Screen what one has taken and accept it, or discard it and have another go, seems very attractive. At present with a conventional SLR, even if one brackets exposures to ensure a correct one, it may not be possible to judge sufficiently the depth of field or the sharpness of the image by inspection through the camera viewfinder. Would these important factors be obvious from a digital's LCD I wondered?

Now I have read the article in the November RPS Journal by Karen Parker who has gone completely digital and learnt that she has to transfer her images to her '*Powerbook on location*'. *As the image is shown on screen and not on a small LCD pose, exposure and focussing can be checked before final selection*'. The thought of having to take out a laptop, or its equivalent, as well as a Digital SLR on one's trips seems ridiculous.

**So**, not being able to return to a slide or to check one's results on location seems to me to put the whole idea out of the question!

I should be most interested to know if other Nature Group members have been thinking along the same lines.

Yours truly, John Fairbank ARPS (Hove)

**"ANTARCTICA -  
- THE END OF THE EARTH"  
BY TONY WHARTON FRPS  
A FORMER GROUP CHAIRMAN**

When I was a youngster, my imagination was fired by accounts of the Antarctic explorations of Scott and of Shackleton and their respective teams. Much more recently, a number of excellent television documentaries about the Antarctic region and its

wildlife added fuel to my interest, and it was, therefore, far too good an opportunity to miss when, in 1998, Photo Travellers of Godalming offered me the chance to lead a photographic trip to the area.

Although there are now many companies offering trips down to Antarctica, almost all of them offer itineraries which are, of necessity, limited to the sub-Antarctic islands and the magnificent Antarctica peninsula. Opportunities to see the rest of the Antarctic mainland or to spend a really extended period of time in the region become available to very few people and are usually made in a work context. None of the trips which are open to the ordinary tourist can realistically be regarded as cheap, although price differentials for tours which are basically similar in scope can be amazingly large.

From the outset, therefore, it was clear that we were not going to be able to see and photograph wildlife in the diversity and quantity seen, for example, in *Life in the Freezer*, a series which took a long time to make, and was dependent on visits to places well outside the scope of our trip. Our itinerary, nevertheless, was a fascinating one, which would surely result in a never-to-be-forgotten experience; to use a familiar cliché, it would be the "trip of a lifetime". That's precisely how things turned out!

My party of fifteen left Heathrow, bound for Buenos Aires via Madrid, on 29th January, 2000. We spent a couple of days at the Presidente Hotel in Buenos Aires, during which time we explored parts of the city and visited an estancia about an hour's drive away. On 1st February we flew on to Ushuaia in the Terra del Fuego, where we embarked on our Expedition vessel, the Marine Adventurer, which still bore its original name, the *Akademik Ioffe*. A former research ship, built in Finland and registered out of Kaliningrad, it had a completely Russian crew of 43 and took well over 100 passengers. The vessel was extremely well appointed and, we were told, was the best stabilized ship in Antarctica, which was just as well, as our second day in Drake's Passage was extremely rough. I was in my element with a Russian crew, as I taught Russian for most of my teaching career and was provided, therefore, with an opportunity to polish off some of the rust, especially as we all had open access to the very large bridge, where Captain Apekhtin and his officers were only too happy to chat at any time.

Our first sight of Antarctica was in the early morning of 4th. February, when, in glorious sunny weather, we sailed through the magnificent Lemaire Channel, with its incredibly photogenic ice cliffs, icebergs and 'bergy bits'. After breakfast just over 100 of us were put ashore on Petermann Island in 10-seater Zodiacs, driven by members of our accompanying 12-strong Marine Expeditions team, most of whom were Canadians, although there were also two Argentinians and a Hungarian among them. They were all extremely knowledgeable and helpful, especially the leader, Brad Rhees.

The fine weather continued as we photographed the many Gentoo and Adélie Penguins, the Antarctic Skuas and the magnificent scenery. I had made a conscious decision to use only one lens during the trip, a Tamron 28 - 300 mm zoom, so that I could be comparatively unencumbered when being ferried backwards and forwards to the many islands we were going to visit. I had some apprehension about adopting this policy, especially in view of the fact that the lens is not a fast one, of course, and that I intended to use it handheld -



Photo by Tony Wharton FRPS - "Crabeater Seals at Paradise Bay, Antarctic Peninsula".





Photo by Tony Wharton FRPS - "Petermann Island, Antarctic Peninsula".





Photo by Tony Wharton FRPS - “Young Southern Fur Seal, South Georgia” .





Photo by Tony Wharton FRPS - "Young Wandering Albatrosses, Albatross Island, South Georgia".

not my usual way of doing things at all, as I'm very decidedly a tripod man! I used Kodachrome 200 for most of the photography and, in total, exposed more than 50 rolls of film with very few problems, as there was nearly always plenty of light. The lens performed impeccably and, in retrospect, I'm glad I adopted the policy I did. I had gone with the intention of photographing everything connected with the experience in as uncomplicated a manner as possible - wildlife, habitats, landscapes, people, towns, the ship, everything - and I was delighted with the results and can thoroughly recommend the lens for its optical quality and its compact nature, provided you can cope with its slow maximum aperture at the long end of the zoom range.

After lunch back on board ship, we went ashore again to the base at Port Lockroy and onto Wiencke Island, where we had a very inquisitive Leopard Seal investigate our comings and goings. Again, plenty of penguins here.

Probably the main highlight of the trip came for me on the following day, when the ship arrived in Paradise Bay - so aptly named! The sun was shining, the turquoise sea was dead calm, and the views of the surrounding cliffs, massive icebergs, glaciers and bergy bits were stunning. Cruising around the bay in the Zodiacs, threading our way between the bergy bits, some of which had Blue-eyed Shags, Antarctic Terns and Crabeater Seals sitting on them, was absolutely breathtaking! One young couple, Lorraine and Danny, actually went ashore, with a small entourage from the crew - to get married on the top of a hill, tobogganing down afterwards! How's that for breathtaking? That same afternoon we landed at Neko Harbour, where we saw more Gentoos and several Weddell Seals, and actually witnessed two avalanches and the calving of a glacier. Sailing up the Gerlache Strait afterwards we encountered a group of about 25 Minke Whales.

It is clearly impossible, within the constraints of a short article such as this, to describe all the places we visited and to give more than a very sketchy account of those which I regard as highlights. I can't, however leave out our landing in Whaler's Bay, part of Deception Island, on the following day. We had to navigate through Neptune's Bellows to enter what is basically a volcanic caldera, with black volcanic ash along the vast beach, and a 2-metre wide belt of really warm water at its edge, where several members of the Russian crew took a dip, taking care to avoid the Fur Seals. Not one of the prettiest sites in Antarctica, it nevertheless provided a grim reminder of the past, with its ugly remains of the whaling industry, which had been mellowed by the growth of many different colourful lichens. The afternoon of the same day was spent on Half Moon Island, surrounded by thousands of Chinstrap Penguins - a memorable experience in its own right! Between the two landings we encountered two superb Humpback Whales, which were obviously sponsored by Kodak.

The following day was spent crossing the Scotia Sea, en route for the South Orkney Islands. Wildlife watching from the bridge provided glimpses of Sooty and Wandering Albatrosses, and some people saw a Southern Bottlenose Whale.

Our visit to the Argentinian navy's Orcados Base in the South Orkneys was remarkable in several respects. Views of huge tabular icebergs as we approached, excellent hospitality from the Argentinians while we were ashore - and lots of wildlife, including 800 Fur Seals and large numbers of Chinstraps, seen against a background of shimmering blue icebergs and high mountains. Also in the area we saw Minke Whales, as well as Snow and Pintado Petrels.

Another whole day on the Scotia Sea brought us, in splendid weather, to The Bay of Pots, better known as Grytviken, on South Georgia. This former Norwegian whaling station  
*continued on page25*

## ***“RPS NATURE GROUP - SILVER JUBILEE 2001”***

*BY PROFESSOR RAYMOND CLARK FRPS ASIS*

*PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY*

First of all may I congratulate the Nature Group on its Silver Jubilee, its first 25 years - long may it prosper. The Group was inaugurated on the 29th January 1976 and has grown steadily; it now boasts more than 650 members. I was very pleased when John Myring asked me to write a piece for *The Iris* at this important anniversary

As President, I see all of the Group newsletters and magazines and I always look forward to receiving my copy of *The Iris*. It is a very high quality publication full of splendid authoritative articles and the most gorgeous pictures. Members of the Group are particularly active and engage in all manner of visits and field trips to places of interest throughout the country.

Nature Group members are not only committed naturalists but they have a tremendous expertise in photography and imaging. In the best traditions of accurate observation and recording they seek the truth about form and function in the natural world. They are passionate about quality and picture integrity as well as producing visually stunning images.

In my own field of medical science I have been involved with many different aspects of imaging over the last 30 years. I have always taken the view that scientific and medical imaging has to be of top quality if it is to produce maximum scientific information. I well remember some of the exciting and beautiful images of the natural world that I was able to obtain using the technique of scanning electron microscopy when it first became available in the 1970's. At that time I was particularly interested in the ability of skin particles, shed from the human body to fly through the air for considerable distances and retain the ability to cause infections. As part of this research programme I used to compare the ability of spores and pollens to travel the same distances.

Using the electron microscope it was possible to visualise the extraordinary delicate aerodynamic surface features of pollens which enabled them to have trajectories and flight distances appropriate for them to pollinate and survive

I also recall the first spectacular high speed pictures which demonstrated the mechanism by which raindrops, at the beginning of a rain shower, would fall on dry leaves and create “bow waves” of water that would sweep up spores and pollens making them airborne. This is the mechanism that raises the airborne pollen count at the beginning of a rainstorm.

What of the next 25 years? In the future, digital imaging will continue to develop in many ways, not the least being improved picture definition and print quality, and I expect that with such improvements many members of the Nature Group will be able to find an increasing relevance of the technique to their work without sacrificing any of the quality that has become their hallmark. Nevertheless, conventional film photography is likely for some time as the benchmark for quality in many applications

I am sure that the debate will continue about the relationship between representational and creative photography in a wildlife context. Here we enter dangerous waters particularly when talking about photography as art. The advent of digital techniques could be said to bring photographic imaging philosophically nearer in concept to painting and drawing and therefore to traditional (true?) art.

Whilst technology limited a photograph (to a large extent) to the scene as viewed through



the lens, it could never give the photographer the full freedom of expression of the artist - except maybe by chance. Now that practically every component of a photograph can be digitally changed, could the skilled manipulator be said to become more like a true artist who can add creativity and individuality to a picture - even though the totality of what the final picture shows never actually existed?

Clearly such ideas may not be well accepted by those who value photography as a powerful and true representational tool having the precision and detachment of the draughtsman. Certainly from my professional standpoint, images had to demonstrate scientific truth (preferably new!) without embellishment or ambiguity. Having said that many of my own images have subsequently become popular for their (secondary) artistic qualities. However, it seems to me that both philosophies can co-exist side by side and it will be very interesting to see how these debates develop in the context of wildlife imaging.

We are now in a time of major change for the Society as we leave our home of the last 20 years in Bath. The future looks bright and as the Society approaches its 150th anniversary in 2003 it will salute the past, celebrate the present and look forward to the future - a future in which I have no doubt the Nature Group will continue to play an important part.

I wish the Nature Group every success and I look forward to seeing many more splendid images - digital or otherwise - of our natural world ❀

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***“ANTARCTICA - THE END OF THE EARTH” continued from page 23***

proved to be a fascinating place, both in historical terms and in a photographic context.

The Zodiacs put us ashore yards from the grave of Sir Ernest Shackleton, which was guarded by smelly, burping Elephant Seals. There were several groups of King Penguins by the edge of the water in the couple of hundred metres between our landing point and the main complex of buildings and rusting equipment. Young fur seals played in the water among the rocks. What remains of the settlement, last used by whalers as recently as 1965, is highly photogenic, as are the rusty old whaling ships, leaning at all angles along the waterfront. Surprisingly perhaps, there is a well-presented museum and a picturesque Norwegian church, which is in the process of being renovated.

Other landings on South Georgia were at Fortuna Bay, Moltke Harbour, Gold Harbour and Albatross Island, all of which had good numbers of Fur Seals, Elephant Seals and King Penguins, although, as its name suggests, the last of these is best remembered for its colony of immense Wandering Albatrosses, even though a steep trek up through a jungle of Tussock Grass was needed to get to them.

Two more full days at sea in the South Atlantic Ocean brought us to the Falkland Islands. Our first landing was on Sea Lion Island, where I had stayed on four occasions in the past. As I knew the island well, I took my group off on its own, and we were lucky to find a very cooperative Snipe, an equally amenable Striated Caracara, as well as large flocks of adolescent Magellanic Penguins and a very big group of massive Elephant Seals. Tragically, during that landing, a Canadian lady with another group had a heart attack, collapsed and died, shortly after being taken to the lodge by Landrover, despite the attentions of three doctors, two of them fellow tourists and the third who flew in by helicopter from Stanley.

The following day was spent exploring Stanley's quaint streets and shops, while the day after that, we made landings on West Point and New Islands, both of which were fresh ter-

ritory for me. The weather was not good for either landing, although both islands offered a lot of wildlife interest, with large colonies of Black-browed Albatrosses, Rockhopper Penguins and Imperial Cormorants, as well as numerous Dark-faced Ground Tyrants, Kelp Geese and very colourful Long-tailed Meadowlarks or Military Starlings.

Thirty six hours later, having enjoyed a very gentle passage from the Falklands back to South America, we disembarked from the *Ioffe* for the last time in Ushuaia and headed to the new airport to catch internal flights back to Buenos Aires. It had been an unforgettably spectacular trip, characterized by good food, good companionship and, above all, remarkably good photographic opportunities ❀

## ***THE ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY PICTURE LIBRARY - RPS COLLECTION***

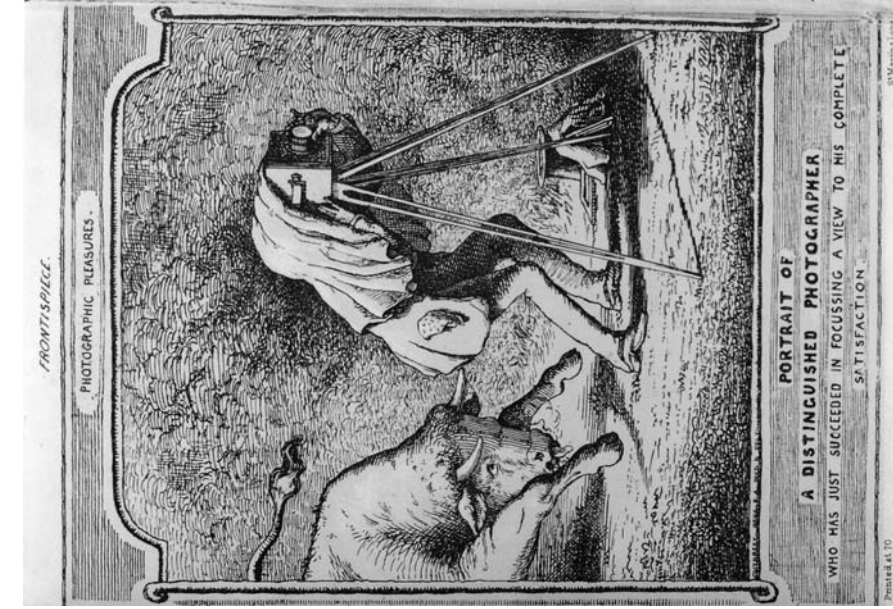
I am indebted to Samantha (Sam) Johnson, Picture Library Manager for allowing myself and our sub-editor to browse through the print copies at very short notice. Initially we were looking for early natural history pictures but there was a limited choice from those ready copied. Whilst Sam kindly offered to make copies of other material the prints reproduced here caught our attention.

It is not unusual to hear modern photographers complaining about the amount of equipment they have to carry but prints 1 & 2 should put this into perspective. Print 3 shows that working in the field (pun intended) was always dangerous whilst the tripod in print 4 puts the ubiquitous Benbo to shame!

*continued on page 28*



From the RPS Picture Library:- *Print No. 1* “Mr. Fenton’s photographic van”.  
*see page 28*

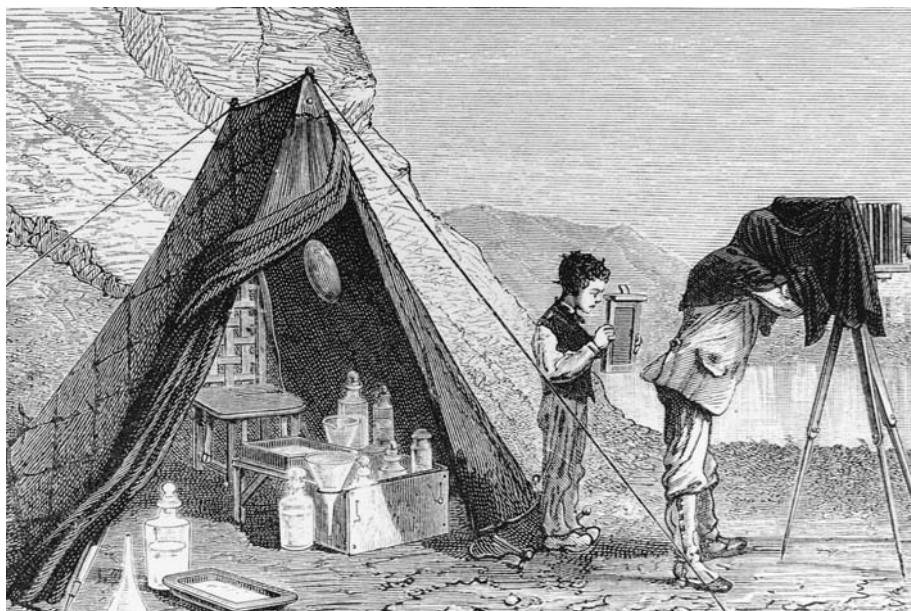


From the RPS Picture Library:- *Print No. 2* "Portrait of a distinguished photographer" see *page 28*



From the RPS Picture Library:- *Print No. 3* "Cherry & Richard Kearton photographing a nest" see *page 28*





From the RPS Picture Library:- *Print No. 4 "The Wet Plate Process".*  
*see below*

*continued from page 26*

*Print 1.* - This was on page 557 of the Illustrated London News 10th November 1855. It is from the Crimean Collection and shows Mr. Fenton's photographic van.

*Print 2.* - By Bede Cuthbert - 'Portrait of a Distinguished Photographer (who has just succeeded in focussing a view to his complete satisfaction). Frontispiece to 'Photographic Pleasures' - Pen & Pencil published 1855 by T. McLean London.

*Print 3.* - Cherry and Richard Kearton photographing a nest, Cherry standing on Richard's shoulders. Gelatin Silver print 1899

*Print 4.* - 'The Wet Plate Process'. 'La photographie dans les voyages d'exploration' from Les Merveilles de la photographie - Gaston Tissander 1874.

**Please note prints cannot be reproduced without permission in writing from RPS.**

## ***PORTFOLIO - ANDY CALLOW***

### *A FORMER GROUP CHAIRMAN*

This is another of the occasional members' portfolios. I have always been a great admirer of Andy's work and it is a pleasure to feature just a few of his transparencies on the next two pages. I only wish there had been room for more.

I still have a vivid picture in my mind from my first meeting with Andy on a Nature Group field meeting. Wearing shorts and sandals he worked his way slowly into the midst of a bramble thicket apparently oblivious to the scratches he was receiving. Once in position he proceeded to take several shots of an insect that most of us still couldn't spot. The rest of the party, although wearing more protective clothing, declined the chance to take his place.





Photo by Andy Callow -  
 “Aphid on rose thorn” (*Macrosiphum rosae*) x3.8. Velvia



Photo by Andy Callow  
 “Spider and prey” (*Meta segmentata*) x1.8. Provia 100



Photo by Andy Callow  
 “Lacewing larva and Spangle galls on oak leaf” (*Nineta flava*) x2.4. Velvia



Photo by Andy Callow  
 “Soldier beetles paired”. (*Rhagonycha fulva*) x2.2 Velvia



### MEMBERS WEB SITES

Stephen Street LRPS has written suggesting that The Iris should carry a list of **members own** web sites which could be updated every other issue. This could tie in with Nick Jarvis's experimental 'RPS Nature Group Message Board' referred to in the Editorial. *In the interim would any member wishing to provide details of their own site simply send web address to The Editor marked 'Members Web Site'.*

Stephen's site (which is his first attempt) is well worth visiting at 'www.wildsight.bigstep.com' to see how it can be done. Congratulations Stephen.

## REPORTS OF MEETINGS

### Stockgrove Park – Sunday 8th October 2000 - Leader Nick Jarvis ARPS

We started the day by crossing the road into King's Wood, where we soon found numerous examples of Stinkhorn (*Phallus impudicus*) in various stages of maturity. Owing to relatively cool conditions, there were not *too* many flies on them! The group quickly spread out, so I did not record all the finds. However, I do know they included good examples of Spotted Tough-shank (*Collybia maculata*), False Deathcap (*Amanita citrina*), Black Bulgar (*Bulgaria inquinans*), Blusher (*Amanita rubescens*), *Gymnopilus penetrans*, and *Ascocoryne sarcoides*.

After lunch the group split in two, half choosing to return to King's Wood while the rest of us explored Stockgrove Park. There were fewer fungi here, but we did find Fly Agaric (*Amanita muscaria*), Tawny Grisette (*Amanita fulva*), and Parasol (*Macrolepiota procera*). We also saw the rare Tasmanian Stinkhorn (*Clathrus archeri*), which was well past its best but nonetheless fascinating.

Interestingly, of the nine people who turned out only three were group members, the rest having got the details from the Journal. I am not sure if there is a moral there, but anyway I plan to repeat the venue next year ☘

### Ebernoe Common - 14 th October 2000. - Leader -John Fairbank ARPS

It is always difficult, nine months in advance, to predict the best date for one's intended Field Trip; that is to know when the featured specimens, fungi in this instance, will be at their best. One is also in the lap of the gods regarding the weather.

On my trip to Ebernoe this year both went wrong. This was the poorest year I remember for the fungi there - a National Nature Reserve with over 600 recorded species. Also the habitat was suffering from the recent heavy rains and the day itself was rather wet.

I had done a recce the previous Wednesday and thought the prospects poor with only a limited selection of the possible species showing, with sodden ground, and an impassably muddy track. In fact I put off members, who 'phoned me, and also those I knew intended to join. However six keen members and friends turned up and we had a surprisingly good day - though many of the fungi there were over or washed out there were enough to keep us busy from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. In a very wooded area where it is easy to lose one's way, even with the maps provided by the Reserve Manager, we did a circuit together and there had to be some chivvying of the tail-enders but I think most members had sufficient time to photograph the species we found.

We went firstly to the sites of two spectacular species the Giant Polypore (*Meripilus giganteus*) and the rare Coral Fungus (*Hericium ramosum*). The latter grew on a dead tree that had been propped up but had recently fallen so the fungus was easily accessible but not at its photogenic best as on previous occasions. There was a trio of Surrey photographers also after these species so we alternated with them to get good view points.

On the way to the South of the Reserve we found Dog Stinkhorns (*Mutinus caninus*) and masses of minute rare *Clavaria* spindles, as well as several unidentified species.

After picnic lunch in a colourful Beech glade we found attractive clumps of Sulphur Tufts (*Hypholoma fasciculare*), Puff Balls (*Lycoperdon* sp.) and 'Moss Cups' (*Peziza* sp.).

On the return part of the circuit we were pleased to find several groups of Fly Agaric (*Amanita muscaria*) and had the choice of large, small, spotted and unspotted specimens. There were also Magpies (*Coprinus picaceus*), Clouded Agarics (*Clitocybe nebularis*) and Parasols (*Lepiota procera*) that kept us busy until the light was too poor to continue and we packed up for home.

The success of the trip was largely due to the kind help of the Reserve Manager and the members contributions to the Reserve Equipment Fund will go towards additional 'lop-pers' needed to clear the tracks there. Once again, in 2000, this was the only Nature Group Field Trip in the South / South East though the majority of the members live there! ☘

### **Padley Gorge - 17th October 2000 - Leader Robert Hawkesworth FRPS**

In what must have been a record breaking wet autumn we were most fortunate to hit on a bright and sunny day. Seventeen of us met at the roadside parking at the head of Padley Gorge and with all the previous rain the Burbage Brook was a spectacular sight as it crashed and banged its way down towards Upper Padley and Grindleford Railway Station (I can't get round to calling them "Train Stations"; Anno Domini I think!). Incidentally the name "Brook" always seems inappropriate to me when applied to this particular stream, "Torrent" would be better.

Those of a more pictorial bent spent a good deal of time and film attempting to capture this watery world. The Sessile Oak woodland surrounding the stream did not yield many fungi this year but as always lichens and mosses were very photogenic. On the other side of the road is the Longshaw Estate and an area of open mixed woodland proved very rich for fungi fanatics, a young group of *Clitocybe geotropa* had a constant queue, wide angle, tele-photo, with and without reflectors ... , you all know the pattern. Lots of Amethyst Deceivers (*Laccaria amethystea*), Plums and Custard (*Tricholomopsis rutilans*), and Sulphur Tuft (*Hypholoma fasciculare*) and of course *Mycena* spp. most proving almost impossible to identify at specific level, apart from one small group of the Bleeding *Mycena* (*Mycena haematopus*).

The café at the station has long been famous in rambling and climbing circles and some members were brave enough to order bacon and egg butties, five rashers and an egg in the largest bap you can imagine, I don't think they were in a fit state to climb up the gorge afterwards but they tried it. Others went back up to the Longshaw side where we found a very attractive group of *Pholiota squarrosa* and a bolete which I'm still scratching my head over, in fact that happens a lot, three thousand five hundred or so of larger fungi and many are smallish and brown. It was a great day with people gathering from places as far as Hereford, Leigh, the West Midlands as well as the usual East Midland members, lots of fun and laughter, you don't have to be thin skinned certainly. Many thanks to all who supported the meeting ☘



## ***TWO RESIDENTIAL FIELD EVENTS IN 2001***

### **DORSET FIELD WEEKEND**

**FRIDAY 8TH JUNE TO MONDAY 11TH JUNE 2001**

**AT THE BURTON CLIFF HOTEL, BURTON BRADSTOCK, DORSET  
WITH COLIN VARDELL**

**COST:- £130 TO £150 ACCORDING TO ACCOMMODATION.  
£25 DEPOSIT REQUIRED.**

*PLEASE MAKE CHEQUE PAYABLE TO 'THE BURTON CLIFF HOTEL'.*

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON EITHER EVENT PLEASE CONTACT  
KATH BULL ARPS - TEL:- 01892 663751  
SEND RESERVATIONS & DEPOSITS TO HER WITH SAE**

### **A WEEK IN THE SCOTTISH ISLANDS**

**7 NIGHTS - DEPART SATURDAY 16TH JUNE RETURN 23RD JUNE 2001.**

**VISIT CRAIGLEITH, THE FARNES, BASS ROCK ETC.,  
FOR FABULOUS BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY WITH COLIN VARDELL.  
COST:- £450 MAXIMUM - SINGLE ROOM SUPPLEMENT £40.**

*£50 DEPOSIT REQUIRED.*

*PLEASE MAKE CHEQUE PAYABLE TO 'COLIN VARDELL'.*

## **MEMBERS' LECTURES**

**RPS Region:-** *Info not supplied*  
Terry Wall ARPS

**Venue:-** Walsall Photographic Society, Lecture Theatre - Central Teaching Tower,  
Walsall Campus of the University of Wolverhampton Gorway Road. Walsall.  
**Contact No:-** 0121 526 2100

**Monday 19th March 2001 @ 7.30 p.m.**  
"Year in the Life of a Wall"

**Cost:-** *Info not supplied.*

**RPS Region:-** *Info not supplied*  
Terry Wall ARPS

**Venue:-** King's Norton Photo Society, Saracen's Head, The Green, King's Norton B'ham  
**Contact No:-** 0121 476 2888

**Wednesday 4th April 2001 @ 7.30 p.m.**  
"View from a Wall."

**Cost:-** *Info not supplied.*

**RPS Region:-** *Info not supplied*  
Terry Wall ARPS

**Venue:-** Halesowen U3A, Hasbury Conservative Club, Blackberry Lane, Halesowen  
**Contact No:-** 0121 422 3753

**Wednesday 9th May @ 10.30 am**  
"View from a Wall"

**Cost:-** *Info not supplied.*

**RPS Region:-** *Info not supplied*  
Terry Wall ARPS

**Venue:-** Redditch U3A, Masonic Hall, Ease More Road, Redditch  
**Contact No:-** 01527 524967

**Tuesday 3rd July @ 2.00 p.m.**  
*Title not supplied*

**Cost:-** *Info not supplied.*

Barrie Taylor FRPS sent a list of 25 lectures in his current portfolio but no other information. Anyone requiring further information should contact Barrie at 178, Tamworth Road, Sutton Coldfield, B75 6DL. Tel 0121- 308 - 8726.

*Editor:- All things considered a disappointing response. In future there is no guarantee that material sent for this section will be printed unless all requested information (see page 30, Issue No.78) is provided, including RPS Region details.*

# FIELD MEETINGS IN 2001

MEMBERS ARE ASKED TO GIVE FULL SUPPORT  
TO THESE MEETINGS.



*Please assume, unless specifically stated otherwise, that it will be an all day meeting. ALWAYS take stout walking shoes & wellingtons, also a packed lunch and drink. Check individual meeting details for any other requirements. New members will appreciate that given the vagaries of our climate anticipated subject matter cannot be guaranteed!*

## MAY

### **Tuesday 15th May - Lathkill Dale.**

*Meet:-* 10 am at lay-bye at the head of the dale on the B5055, ½ mile east of Moneyash. Grid ref sheet 119- 156 665.

*Interest:-* Limestone flora. Please book for this meeting because of car parking limitations - fill up cars if possible.

*Leader:-* Robert Hawkesworth FRPS Tel:- 0115-928-1050.

### **Saturday 19th May -1st venue RSPB West Sedgemoor - 2nd venue Shapwick Heath National Nature Reserve.**

*Meet:-* 10 am at RSPB - West Sedgemoor, west of Curry Rivel on main Taunton to Langport Road A378. There is an RSPB sign Grid ref ST 361 239..

*Interest:-* RSPB - West Sedgemoor there is a Heronry with hides. At Shapwick Heath (approx 2300 acres of wetland) various orchids and wild flowers. Hides for possibly Bitterns & Marsh Harriers.

*Leader:-* Ethne Conlin Tel:- 01935-850593.

## JUNE

### **Sunday 3rd June - Oxwich, South Gower, West Glamorgan.**

*Meet:-* 10 am Car park at Oxwich Grid ref 502 864 - OS 1:50,000.

*Interest:-* Marine life of seashore, flowers and insects of dune system. SHOES FOR PADDLING IN OR WELLINGTONS. SUN CREAM & HAT. **Cost £2.50 for car park.**

*Leader:-* Margaret Hodge FRPS Tel:-01792-207001

### **Sunday 3rd June - Clattinger Farm Reserve (Wiltshire Wildlife Trust) & Somerford Common Reserve (Butterfly Conservation).**

*Meet:-* 10.30 am Neigh Bridge car park just off the Spine road through the Cotswold Water Park near Somerford Keynes. Grid ref SU 017 946.

*Interest:-* Clattinger Reserve (Grid ref SU 017 937) approx 150 acres of preserved, unimproved hay meadows, excellent for orchids (in 2000 Burnt-tip, Bee & Green-winged) plus wide range of meadow and hedgerow flowers & butterflies. Somerford Common Reserve (Grid ref SU 028 867) is Forestry Commission woodland run by Butterfly Conservation. Species may include Marsh Fritillary, Duke of Burgundy, Dingy & Grizzled Skippers. Orchids include Twayblade, Greater Butterfly & Common Spotted.

*Leader:-* John Hankin LRPS Tel:- 01249-720917. *Members intending to go to this meeting are asked to telephone John approximately two weeks beforehand.*

### **Wednesday 6th June - Aston Clinton Ragpits, Nr. Aylesbury, Bucks.**

*Meet:-* 10 am at Aston Hill Woods car park. From Aylesbury take the A41T east towards

Hemel Hempstead, after about 3 miles turn right onto A4011 towards Wendover. After 1 mile turn left into minor road (signed Wendover Woods). Car park is ½ mile on left. Grid ref sheet 165 - SP 891 101. *WELLINGTONS MIGHT BE NEEDED FOR AFTERNOON.*  
*Interest:-* Chalk grassland with several orchid species including Fragrant and Pyramidal. Butterflies include Chalkhill blue, Duke of Burgundy. Afternoon venue decided on day.  
*Leader:-* Nick Jarvis ARPS Tel:-01908-607257.

**Sunday 10th June - Kingsbury Water Park, Bodymoor Heath, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands.**

*Meet:-* 10 am main entrance car park by visitors centre. OS sheet 139 grid ref:- 205 965.  
*Cost:-* car park fees approx £2.  
*Interest:-* Dragonflies, butterflies and wild flowers, particularly Bee, Southern Marsh and Common Spotted Orchids.  
*Leader:-* Roy Place FRPS Tel:-0121-308-4162.

**Sunday 24th June - Nob End, Farnworth, Nr. Bolton (Moses Gate Country Park).**

*Meet:-* 1 pm Moses Gate Country Park Visitor's centre. Look out for 'Brown Signs' and continue up drive as far as possible. Grid ref:- SD 743 068. (Off A6053 Farnworth - Radcliffe Road).  
*Interest:-* Orchids. A former industrial site used for manufacture of washing soda by the Leblanc process ('O' level chemistry). The Flowers of Nob End are there because of the pollution resulting from a chemical tip; its importance was first recognised in the 1950's. It now has SSSI status and is being actively managed to deter invading hawthorn scrub.  
*Leader:-* Tony Bond FRPS Tel:- 01942 - 674773.

**JULY**

**Saturday 7th July - Millers Dale, Derbyshire.**

*Meet:-* 10 am Millers Dale car park (old railway station). Grid ref:- SK 140 734.  
*Cost -* there is a car parking fee.  
*Interest:-* Limestone flora and butterflies, also some excellent scenery.  
*Leader:-* Dawn Osborn ARPS Tel:- 01889-881928.

**Sunday 8th July - Monkwood Nature Reserve, Near Worcester.**

*Meet:-* 10 am at Monkwood car park. Grid ref:- SO 804 606.  
*Interest:-* Woodland, grassland, ponds all excellent for both insects and plants. It is hoped that a moth trap will have been set up nearby to provide early morning subjects. STRICTLY LIMITED TO 20 - ADVANCE BOOKING NECESSARY. Please try to arrive in good time.  
*Cost* £1.50 donation to Worcs Wildlife Trust.  
*Leader:-* Tony Wharton FRPS Tel:- 0121-550 3326.

**Sunday 8th July - Marford Quarry - Wrexham.**

*Meet:-* 10 am at Spring Field Lane, Trevor Arms, Marford. Grid ref:- SJ 357 560.  
*Interest:-* Marford Quarry is 26 acres of old sand and gravel with grassland and scrub. Excellent for orchids, other wild flowers and butterflies.  
*Leader:-* Gordon Buck Tel:- 01978 - 356745.

**AUGUST**

**Thursday 16th August - Hanson Environmental Education Centre, Milton Keynes.**

*Meet:-* 9 am at Hanson Centre (formerly ARC Wildfowl Centre). From Wolverton to Newport Pagnell Road turn north (signed Marle Inn) then immediately left over a cattle grid. Follow single track ½ mile to the centre. *For a map go to [www.multimap.com](http://www.multimap.com).* Find post code 'MK16' and look for Wildfowl Centre. Grid ref OS Map 152 - SP 843 428.

*Interest:-* A moth trap will be set up overnight. The site is also noted for dragonflies.  
THIS EVENT IS LIMITED TO 20 SO PLEASE E-MAIL OR CALL NICK TO RESERVE YOUR PLACE.  
*Event cost* £2.50. Bring wellingtons.  
*Leader:-* Nick Jarvis ARPS Tel:- 01908 - 607257. E-mail NickJarvis@aol.com.

## SEPTEMBER

### **Sunday 30th September - Alvecote Pools, Nr Tamworth, Staffordshire.**

*Meet:-* 10 am Alvecote Priory car park which is on Roby's Lane, off B5000 Tamworth to Polesworth Road.

*Interest:-* Fungi and autumn colours. *Bring Wellingtons.*

*Leader:-* Frank Young ARPS Tel:-01827-284862.

## OCTOBER

### **Saturday 6th October - Ebernoe Common National Nature Reserve, West Sussex.**

*Meet:-* 10 am car park next to Ebernoe Church. Grid ref:- 197 SU 976 278. Take A283 and 3½ miles north of Petworth (1½ miles south of Northchapel) turn east into minor road signposted Ebernoe. 1½ miles along this road turn right just past telephone and post boxes into Church and Reserve access road signposted 'Ebernoe Church / Schoolhouse'.

*Cost* £1 contribution to reserve funds.

*Interest:-* Ancient Woodland with over 600 recorded species of fungi.

*Leader:-* John Fairbank ARPS Tel:- 01273-732589.

### **Sunday 7th October - Stockgrove Park and King's Wood near Milton Keynes.**

*Meet:-* 10 am at Stockgrove Park car park. From Milton Keynes take the A5T south east towards Dunstable. After about 5 miles turn right onto the A418 towards Leighton Buzzard. After 1 mile turn right into minor road (signed Stockgrove Park). Car park is ½ mile on the left. Grid ref:- OS map 165 SP 920 294 .

*Interest:-* Fungi and autumn colour.

*Leader:-* Nick Jarvis Tel:-01908-607257.

### **Sunday 14th October - Beacon Wood Country Park, Bean, Kent.**

*Meet:-* 11 am at Country Park car park. Leave M25 at Junction 2 which is about 3 miles south of Dartford Tunnel. Take the A2 eastwards for 1½ miles to the junction signed 'Bean Interchange'. Slip off left keeping to the right hand lane and at the roundabout turn right onto B235 for Bean. About 1 mile from Bean interchange there is a green sign stating Country Park entrance 100 yards. Grid ref OS Landranger 177 GR 593 716.

*Interest:-* Old clay pits colonised by Birch and 1000's of Fly Agaric, many others species of fungi present. *Cost* £1 car park fee.

*Leader:-* Eileen Taylor ARPS Tel 020 - 8393-2120.

### **Sunday 14th October - Earlswood, West Midlands.**

*Meet:-* 10 am car park at Clowes Wood, near Solihull. Grid ref SP 0942 073 413

*Interest:-* Fungi and autumn colours.

*Leader:-* Roger Pinn ARPS Tel:- 01564 - 793616.

### **Tuesday 16th October - Clumber Park.**

*Meet:-* 10 am at main car park near Visitors Centre (use main entrance off A614). Grid Ref OS sheet 120 625 745. There is a restaurant serving light lunches / or bring own.

*Interest:-* Fungi and autumn colour.

*Cost:-* NT members free *non* NT members £3 per car

*Leader:-* Robert Hawkesworth FRPS Tel:- 0115 -928 -1050.



## ADVERTISEMENTS

*Advertisements are accepted subject to suitability, availability of space and in good faith by the Editor. However neither he, nor The Nature Group, nor the RPS accept liability in any respect for any advert printed in this magazine. Please contact the Editor for rates etc.*

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## **HOSKING TOURS**

### **NATURE PHOTOGRAPHIC HOLIDAYS**

Many of our 2001 tours are already fully booked, listed below are those tours with places still available:

**NAMIBIA**, Landscapes & big game, *June 2nd to 16th*

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**SOUTH AFRICA**, Namaqualand in bloom, *Sept. 1st to 15th*

**AUSTRALIA**, Weird & wonderful creatures plus superb flowers, *Sept 15th to Oct 7th*

**CANADA**, Dramatic landscapes & autumn colour, *Sept 15th to 29th*

**FALKLAND ISLANDS**, Penguins and much more, *Dec 3rd to 20th*

**TANZANIA**, Big game animals and birds, *Jan 19th to Feb 3rd 2002*

*For further details contact: David Hosking FRPS, Pages Green House, Wetheringsett, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 5QA. Tel: 01728 861113*

E-mail:- david@hosking-tours.co.uk    Web-site: www.hosking-tours.co.uk

## **COURSES. WORKSHOPS AND PHOTO TOURS BY TONY WHARTON FRPS. IN 2001**

**May 10th-14th - Orielson Field Centre, Pembrokeshire** "Nature Photography in Spring" Details from:- Centre Director, Orielson Field Centre, Pembrokeshire, SA71 5EZ Tel:- (01646) 661225.

**May 20th-27th - Blencathra Centre, Cumbria** "Nature Photography in Spring". Details from:- Centre Director, Blencathra Centre, Threlkeld, Keswick, Cumbria. CA12 4SG Tel:- (01768) 779601.

**Jun 1st- 4th Preston Montford Field Centre, Shropshire** "Nature Photography in Early Summer". Details from:- Centre Director, Preston Montford Field Centre, Montford Bridge, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY4 1DX Tel:- (01743) 850380.

**Jun 23rd -30th Kandersteg, Bernese Oberland, Switzerland** "Landscapes and Wild Flowers". Another return trip to one of my favourite Alpine locations for wild flowers and landscapes. Details from:- Photo Travellers, PO Box 58, Godalming, Surrey, GU7 2SE Tel:- (01483) 425448.

**Jul 27th- Aug 3rd Flatford Mill Field Centre, Suffolk** "The Seeing Eye" - a general colour photography course which encourages participants to look adventurously and creatively at the world about us. The heart of Constable country, the area around Flatford will help you foster your photographic creativity. Details from:- Centre Director, Flatford Mill Field Centre, East Bergholt, Colchester, Essex, C07 6UL Tel:- (01206) 298283.

**Sep 21st -24th Preston Montford Field Centre, Shropshire** "Autumn Nature Photography". Details from:- Centre Director, Preston Montford Field Centre, - above.

**Sep 28th- Oct 1st Blencathra Centre, Cumbria.** "Autumn Nature Photography". Details from:- Centre Director, Blencathra Centre, Threlkeld - above.

**Oct 13th -28th The Okavango Delta, Botswana** "Wildlife of the Okavango". Join me on a tour of what has been described as one of the most spectacular wildlife areas in the world. The trip also includes visits to the Chobe National Park and to Victoria Falls. Details from:- Photo Travellers, - above.



Photo by Heather Angel Hon. FRPS - “African elephants (*Loxodonta africana*) kicking up dust while feeding on *Ludwigia*”.  
Moremi Game Reserve, Botswana, November.



