



Summer is over, the swallows are gone and Autumn is on the way. You can see the days getting shorter and even though it may have been a warm sunny day, there's that chill in the air when the sun drops away. I can't help but hope that this Autumn will be one of those 'mellow' ones with good opportunities for photographing nice specimens of fungus in our ancient woodlands and hedgedrows. If fungus isn't your thing, the Deer Ruts are coming soon. Get out to one of the country parks that have Red Deer herds and photograph the action. If you miss the Red Deer, the Fallow Deer will be at it later in October/early November. Lots of stately homes have Deer Parks - you're sure to have at least one in your region.

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Welcome to Issue 18 of Nature Group eNews.

It grieves me to have to report more sad news. Sadly, a long serving committee member and Past Chair of the Group, Barbara Lawton FRPS passed away during the night of 31st August - 1st September. A tribute to Barbara appears on pages 6 to 8.

In this issue of eNews Robert Thompson FRPS provides us with his thoughts on using the Nikon Z7 and shares his experiences of photographing with it in the field.

Plus news from our Programme Co-ordinator, Ann Miles FRPS, of future Field Meetings this Autumn.

How was your summer? What interesting photography did you get up to? Why not share your nature experiences and images with your fellow members in the January issue of eNews. All offers - trip reports, kit reports, book reviews, observations, projects, etc., will be welcomed provided that they are of interest to nature photographers.

Next month eNews will be another Distinctions Special. Seven applicants were successful - two at Fellowship level and five at Associate. Six of the seven were Nature Group Members.

Whatever your plans, I wish you all a very pleasant Autumn with lots of opportunities to photograph the wildlife, fungus and autumn colours in your area.

Bye for now.

Dawn Osborn FRPS,
eNews Editor

Nikon Z7 II - A Field-Based Review

by Robert Thompson FRPS

INTRODUCTION

The last couple of years has seen an expansion in the full-frame mirrorless sector. All the major camera manufacturers, including Nikon, have stepped up their commitment to the mirrorless world with the addition of new cameras to their line-ups. While many thought that Nikon entered the full-frame mirrorless race a little later than others, they have more than proved in the last three years what they're capable of. With their flagship model, the Z9 due later this year, it is likely to set the bar even higher. Actually, Nikon is not a recent contender in the mirrorless field, they have been making mirrorless cameras as far back as 2011 with the launch of the Nikon 1. Although the mirrorless market is more competitive today with so many cameras to suit a wide range of consumer and professional needs. Nikon still stands out as a brand that is synonymous with innovation, quality and remains a powerful force in the camera world.

The Nikon Z7 first made its appearance back in the summer of 2018. Like many professional photographers, I watched with interest as mirrorless began to break into what was essentially a DSLR stronghold. For me, and the type of work I do, mirrorless was not at that point on my radar. I was more than happy to continue using my D850s, and like many, felt that the mirrorless landscape was still evolving. However, more importantly, the lens selection and diversity was still catching up but was not at the point where it could match the range of lenses that the F mount had for DSLRs. When the Nikon Z7 II was announced, in October 2020. I felt that this could be the entry point for me where I could, at least, begin to look more seriously at the possibility of



entering the mirrorless world and getting a feel for what will undoubtedly be the future of photography in the years ahead. The Z7 II is Nikon's current flagship second-generation high-resolution full-frame mirrorless camera. It's not a replacement for the Z7, but a refinement, updating and building on what was an already highly successful predecessor.

I should point out that this is not an in-depth technical analysis of the Z7 II, there are a plethora of reviews out there if it's every last specification and function that you want to know. The purpose of this article is to give an account of my thoughts and experience of using the Z7 II in the field primarily for stills and how it compares to using a DSLR for much of my routine

work. To be honest I have never been one to jump from one brand to another. I have been with Nikon for almost 25 years and in that time I have never felt the need at any point to migrate to another brand just because something new was added or particular features were improved. I often wonder how did we all manage pre-digital when we worked with what we had but still managed to produce some great imagery.

Today's photographic platform is a very different one from the pre-digital era that many will remember. I think we have become a profession obsessed with technical change and feature-driven to the point where we want, or almost demand a camera that is capable of virtually performing every single

task and procedure flawlessly; reducing our own contribution to merely pointing the camera in the right direction. It will be challenging for leading camera manufacturers in the years ahead to keep innovation at its current level. I suspect we are getting to the point where increased pixel counts will no longer be enough and perhaps exploring other challenges for example, dynamic range and in-camera processing features etc. is where improvements are likely to be made in future models.

I think what's more important is to evaluate what you currently have and does it meet your needs for the work that you routinely undertake. Most photographers would agree that cameras these days are capable of producing outstanding imagery, even those at the lower end of the market. It's the specifications and features where cameras begin to diverge. There will always be those that want to have the very best of what's currently out there even though many may never fully utilise all of the functions and features that the camera is capable of doing. I can speak with experience on this front having had photographers on some of my workshops who have the ultimate in gear but struggle to understand and get the best from it!

As a natural history photographer, I have to cover a wide range of subjects and topics, these can involve shooting from helicopters to photographing the subterranean landscape. Macro is also one of my main specialities and I was keen to see if mirrorless would be an advantage for some of the work I currently undertake in this field. I'm not going to dwell too much on technical details; it's already well documented on the web. But there are some important things for me to consider before committing to the mirrorless world.

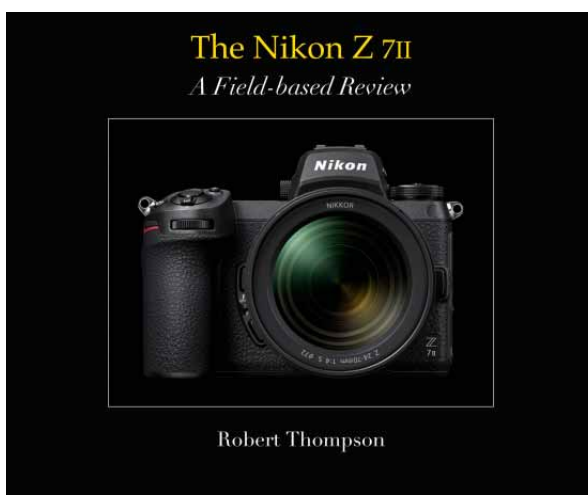
To read or download the full report click on the cover page opposite.



Nudaurelia macrothyris



Vapourer Moth Larva - Orgyia antiqua



Great Spotted Opportunists

by Michael Cook

A very determined Great Spotted Woodpecker set about dismantling an insect house in our garden to get at whatever had taken up residence in the hollow canes.

A regular, yet timid, visitor to our garden - it would feed from the bird table, particularly if we pressed sunflower hearts into the splits in the legs but also from a mesh seed feeder. It has also been observed drinking from a ground-level bird bath which is about two metres from the house. Most of its visits are of short duration, though it has been accompanied by a juvenile bird which lingered for a much longer period of time (opposite). However, plundering the insect house was a first.

A south-facing garden may be much prized by gardeners but from a bird-watching perspective has the disadvantage that the sun illuminates any movement inside the house close to the windows, which can scatter the birds before any observation can be made or picture taken.

Luckily a 200 - 500mm zoom was already mounted on the camera body, though there was no time to add the tele-extender, so these shots at 500mm were hand-held through a doubled glazed window - not ideal, but Photoshop Elements 15 haze removal and shake reduction filters did a passable job of producing an acceptable record of this bird's behaviour.

The bird has returned, unseen, to the garden since these shots were taken and continued its destruction of this and another insect house, but has recently reverted to its usual feeding habits.



Committee Member Profile

Julia Wainwright FRPS - Nature Group Facebook Administrator

Julia came to photography seriously in 2010 when she bought her first DSLR. A few months later she became a member of her local camera club - Harrow Camera Club - where she has now been on the committee for several years. Her skillset was developed through attending short courses, workshops, photographic holidays and entering competitions. She specialises in natural history photography but also enjoys long exposure and travel photography.

In 2015 Julia gained both her LRPS and her ARPS in Natural History Photography. She then spent a few years working through PAGB awards, successfully obtaining her DPAGB in 2017 and her MPAGB in 2019. In 2021 Julia returned to the RPS Distinctions pathway and achieved her FRPS in Natural History Photography in April 2021 with her panel of monochrome images entitled "Lions of East Africa".

Julia joined the Committee in April 2019 and is now the Administrator of the Group's Facebook presence. She uses Canon equipment and recently moved from DSLR to mirrorless.



Barbara Lawton FRPS

A Tribute to a dedicated member and past Chair of the Nature Group



Barbara worked as a teacher of Business Studies and Information Technology at Penkridge High School in Staffordshire. Her work commitments left her with few opportunities for photography which until retirement had to be done at week-ends and during school holidays.

Barbara said she first took up an interest in photography in the early 80s and became enthusiastic about photographing plants and insects a couple of years later. She often attended courses at field studies centres to improve her technical skills and as time passed she widened her horizons considerably to include most aspects of nature.



Until the early 90s, all her photography was done within the UK but then was able to travel to East Africa on three occasions which gave opportunities to do more bird and mammal photography.

Since the outset Barbara was always a user of Pentax equipment and once said that if pressed she would say that her 105mm macro lens was the one she enjoyed using the most. Indeed, the majority of images in this tribute were taken with her 105mm macro lens.





Barbara joined the RPS Nature Group in 1985 and served her first term on the Committee, sixteen years, from April 1987 to April 2003. During that time she took on the role of Programme Co-ordinator for four years before becoming Vice-Chair in 1993 and Group Chair from 1995 to 1997. She continued as a Committee member until 2003. In 2015 Barbara returned to the Committee and served for another four years, again in the role of Programme Co-ordinator.





In 1988 Barbara obtained her Associateship of the RPS with a set of pictures of flowers, insects and fungi. In 1995 she was successful in her Fellowship application with a series of pictures of non-flowering plants.

Barbara was also a long time member of the Smethwick Photographic Society and served as President in 1997. She was well known and respected in Midlands Clubs as an MCPF accredited Judge and enjoyed the opportunities to see the great diversity of photography that invitations to judge gave her. She was also invited to be a selector at a number of International Exhibitions and on two occasions, our own Nature Group Exhibition.

Undoubtedly Barbara will be missed by members of her family, but also by members of Smethwick P.S. and other Clubs within the MCPF region, plus all those members of the Nature Group who had the pleasure of knowing and serving on Committee with her.



News from the Programme Coordinator

by Ann Miles FRPS

Upcoming Zoom Events

Saturday 9th October, 16.00 to 17.30

Roger Hance - Photographing Wildlife in the Garden

In this talk, Roger shows what can be achieved in the confines of a small town garden. It covers birds, both static and in flight, (pro capture) as well as amphibians, mammals, moths, butterflies and insects. He will show us lots of the set ups that he uses to obtain the pictures and how to use hides, both proprietary and more natural hides. A valuable guide to projects that we all can do over the approaching winter months and beyond.

Book here:

<https://rps.org/events/groups/nature/2021/october/photographing-wildlife-in-the-garden-by-roger-hance-frps/>

Upcoming Field Events

Please note if the outing is FULL when you go to book, email me (annmiles70@gmail.com) and I will put you on the waiting list. If no place becomes available, we will try to fit in a second visit on another date.

Wednesday 22nd September Meeting 10am

Lakenheath Fen RSPB Reserve, Suffolk

Lakenheath is a good location for one of our 'days out' offering a variety of potential photographic opportunities: Bitterns / Great White Egrets / Egrets / Marsh Harriers / Grey Heron / Kingfisher / Bearded Tits, woodlands birds including the photography hide, lots of insects & spiders for macro, Otters, Muntjac, etc. For members who don't want to walk too far there is a large pond by the Visitor Centre and the photo hide is close-by. The walk from one end of the reserve to the other is flat but circa 1.5 miles.

Book here:

<https://rps.org/events/groups/nature/2021/september/rsb-lakenheath-fen/>

Monday 11th October

Holkham Hall Estate, Norfolk

This is a stunning location on the North Norfolk coast and at the heart of a thriving 25,000-acre estate. During the morning we will concentrate on photographing the herd of Fallow Deer and hopefully see some rutting. After lunch we will move to Lady Anne Drive to explore wildlife flora & fauna of the pine woods, brackish pools and beach.

Book here:

<https://rps.org/events/groups/nature/2021/october/holkham-hall-estate/>

Wednesday 10th November

RSPB Frampton Marshes, Lincs

Frampton Marsh has a variety of freshwater habitats and at the far end of the reserve you have the Wash offering a very different landscape. There are thousands of Ducks gathering on the freshwater scrapes in the winter, a variety of Waders, and Woodland birds. Good chance of seeing Peregrine and other raptors. For those who don't want to wander too far there are several large ponds by the Visitor Centre and several hides close-by.

Book here:

<https://rps.org/events/groups/nature/2021/november/rspb-frampton-marshes/>

Residential Weekend 22nd – 25th April 2022

Blencathra, Cumbria

The weekend includes 8-10 photographic sessions, evening speakers, three nights accommodation in single or twin rooms, all meals and soft drinks. Transportation to all sites will be provided though a small fee may be payable.

This Residential Weekend is rearranged from June 2021. The planned sites will be rescheduled to maximise opportunities to capture active wildlife at that time of year, hopefully including visits to a red squirrel site and known bird locations. There should be opportunity for macro with spring flowers coming into bloom and insects starting to become active.

There are 2 places remaining in single rooms (£260) and 1 place (£245) in a shared room. A great way to spend a weekend in the company of other nature photography enthusiasts.

Online link:

<https://rps.org/events/groups/nature/2022/april/residential-weekend-blencathra-fsc-centre-2022/>

Field Events

See all Nature Group Events at:

<https://rps.org/groups/nature>

We are still looking to extend the number and range of outings so please consider sharing a visit to one of your favourite locations (contact Ann Miles).

annmiles70@gmail.com

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All contributions should be submitted to the Editor at: 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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Design & layout

by Dawn Osborn FRPS

Nature Group Committee

Officers:

Chair: David O'Neill LRPS
Reading, Berkshire,
Email: david.oneill_nh@outlook.com

Hon. Secretary: Duncan Locke ARPS
Kempsey, Worcestershire
Email: duncan.locke@btinternet.com

Hon. Treasurer: Peter Ward
Ashbourne, Derbyshire
E-mail: peter.ward448@btinternet.com

Committee Members:

Vice Chair: Duncan Locke ARPS
Kempsey, Worcester.
E-mail: duncan.locke@btinternet.com

eNews Editor: Dawn Osborn FRPS
Dereham, Norfolk.
Email: naturegroup_eneews_editor@btinternet.com

Editor of The Iris: Gerald Griffin ARPS
Penkridge, Staffordshire.
E-mail: iris_editor@griff45.com

Exhibition Secretary: Ralph Snook ARPS
Almondsbury, Bristol
E-mail: rpsngexsec@btinternet.com

NG Rep to SIG Committee: David O'Neill LRPS
Reading, Berkshire,
Email: david.oneill_nh@outlook.com

Programme Co-ordinator: Ann Miles FRPS
Toft, Cambridgeshire,
Email: annmiles70@gmail.com

Webmaster: Ralph Snook ARPS
Almondsbury, Bristol
E-mail: rpsngexsec@btinternet.com

Residential Weekend Advisor: James Foad LRPS
Ramsgate, Kent
email: jamesfoadlrps@inbox.com

Julia Andrew LRPS
Bromley, London
Email: andrew.julia@gmail.com

Julia Wainwright FRPS
Pinner, Middlesex
Email: julia@julasimagesuk.com

Ex officio Committee members:

Immediate Past Chair: Thomas Hanahoe FRPS
Biggleswade, Bedfordshire
Email: thomhanahoe@gmail.com

**President of the Society;
Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Society;
Honorary Treasurer of the Society;
Chair of the Natural History Distinctions Panel**

* Members please note:

The Nature Group is seeking a new Honorary Secretary to take over from Duncan Locke before he becomes Group Chair in April 2023. If you have the necessary experience, please help your Nature Group by volunteering for this very important role. Please contact Duncan Locke for further information. Email: duncan.locke@btinternet.com

Nature Group Exhibitions:

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



The Royal Photographic Society,

RPS House, 337 Paintworks, Arncliffe, BRISTOL BS4 3AR, UK.

Tel: 0117 316 4450 VAT Registration No. GB 753 3057 41 Registered Charity No. 1107831

www.rps.org | www.rps.org/contact Follow us: twitter.com/The_RPS Like us: facebook.com/royalphotographic.society