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THE IRIS

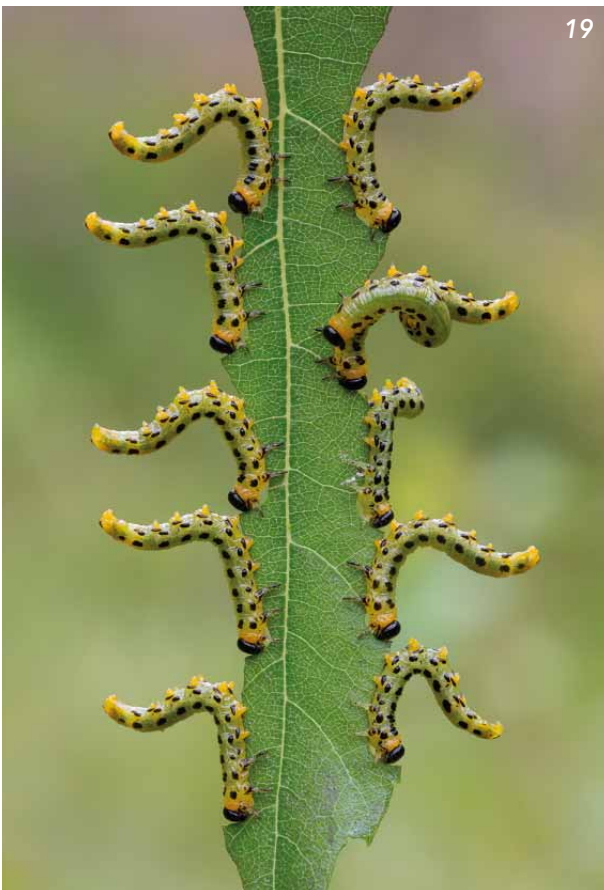




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Images from Andrew McCarthy's successful Fellowship Panel.

See page 10 for more images and the full story.



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- Copy should be sent as .txt or .doc files by email. Please do not send typed or hand written copy.
- Digitally captured photographic images to support your article (whether vertical or horizontal) should be supplied as 8bit jpg files, 216mm (2555 pixels) on the longest edge, at 300 pixels per inch, quality 12, file size approx 5 MB. Please send images via WeTransfer.
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Cover Image:
Male Common Darter landing
by Andrew McCarthy FRPS

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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, details above.

Editorial

As I write this mid-February, despite forecasts of rain, wind and snow in the coming week, it seems that Spring is in the air. I have crocuses and daffodils blooming in the garden and many of the small birds who visit are either displaying or seem to have already paired up. Spring is an exciting time of year, full of expectation and longer daylight hours every day.

On the subject of expectation. I hope that you have entered the Nature Group's own Annual Exhibition. If so you will be anticipating your report cards soon; Fingers crossed that you will have some acceptances or maybe an award. Whether or not you are successful, why not come along to the Spring Meeting (See page 55). It's always an enjoyable day; an excellent speaker in the morning; opportunities to view the accepted prints and pdi images; participate in the AGM and meet some like minded individuals with similar interests.

At the AGM in 2017 there was a lot of discussion about encouraging young people interested in nature photography and what the Nature Group could do to help with this. The RPS were approached; progress has been slow but recently they have added a section for 'Young Persons' to their website. It remains to be seen how it will aid young nature photographers, but in the spirit of encouragement, I have included an article from a fourteen year old girl with a keen interest in nature photography. Last year, with members of her family, she visited Tanzania. I hope you enjoy her images. Please let me know if you have any budding nature photographers in your family.

This issue contains some spectacular images - a Fellowship panel, four Associate panels, all but one of which contain images taken in the UK. There are five other articles also concerning UK subject matter and two others from further afield. Enjoy!
The next issue will include award winning images from our Exhibition and successful distinction panels from the Spring assessment. Nevertheless, please keep those articles coming. Don't hide your light under a bushel! Get in touch.

I'm sometimes away, so don't be too concerned if you don't get a quick response as I take my vacations very seriously. However, if you don't receive a reply in 2-3 weeks, please contact me again.



Dawn Osborn FRPS - Editor

From the Chair

The RPS Website

There have been further signs of improvement with the website for both administration and events and it is now less disruptive to group activities. However, we still have compromises in place for events and some aspects of administration are still causing issues.

Photographic Competition

There are plans to launch our inaugural photographic competition in April or May and Julia Wainwright and myself are currently working on the setup and testing of the Photocomp software. We are also getting advice from Ralph Snook who has experience of the related Photex software that he uses for Exhibitions. The main advantage of Photocomp is that it has the same look and feel as Photex, which means that members who have entered exhibitions before should already be familiar with the way it works.

Events

Unfortunately, Nick Bowman has recently needed to step down from the committee. I would like to thank him for the valuable support he has given Ann in planning and running events.

Ann Miles is continuing her work to extend our range of events to as many Counties as possible and we are hoping to encourage more members across the UK to offer to host events in their local areas. If you are a regular visitor to a local nature spot, then please consider organising an event and sharing your knowledge with other members. If you are interested in doing this, then please contact Ann Miles or another committee member.

Advisory days have also become a regular feature of our calendar, which has proved to be both popular and successful.

We are also looking for Zoom speakers so that we can continue to offer a variety of talks that are available to members and I would like to encourage anyone who has experience of giving talks on nature to consider presenting a talk for the group.

Environmental and Social Responsibility

There has been no progress to report from the Environmental and Social Responsibility Committee, so our current approach is to be mindful of the environment and make common sense decisions to reduce our impact. Our current initiatives include:

- Holding all committee meetings on Zoom.
- Planning members talks on Zoom, allowing us to reach a wider audience without related travel costs.
- Encouraging more local events to reduce travel, which has the added advantage of being more inclusive for members across the UK.

Young Persons Membership

There is now a section on the website for Young Photographers. <https://rps.org/youngphotographers> This can be used to monitor the progress of the RPS offering. This is planned to include a specific magazine for young people, workshops throughout the year and online digital content for them to access such as activities and competitions. This includes "Coming Soon - RPS Young Photographers", a survey aimed at young photographers between the ages of 12 – 16.

"The Royal Photographic Society strive to make photography exciting and accessible to everyone. Our education team are looking at ways that they can give young people interested in photography the resources and opportunities that are important to them. We really value the opinions of young people that want to engage with us and our programme and want to hear what it is that you want from the Royal Photographic Society and the things that will help you on your journey as a young photographer."

The Sharp Shots Photo Club section covers workshops and courses, which includes Duke of Edinburgh awards. There are many other articles on this page including a section on Activities and Resources.

Other Committee Business

This is my last report as Chair, so I would like to take the opportunity to thank everyone on the committee for the support that they give to the Nature Group.

Duncan Locke as Secretary and Membership Secretary has a strategically important role with organising committee events and supporting new members, but is now taking over from me as Chair. Christine Holt will take on the Membership Secretary role but, at the time of writing (Feb 19th), we still need a new Secretary.

Peter Ward as Treasurer takes care of our Finances, a vital and often overlooked role. Ralph Snook looks after the website and continues to manage the Exhibition every year - a major event in our calendar celebrating the photographic achievements of our members.

Dawn Osborn managed the transition of *The Iris* into an A4 magazine, which has received a lot of highly positive feedback from members of the group. James Foad continues to manage residential meetings, which despite the setbacks of Covid have all been popular and well attended. Ann Miles in addition to her work as Programme Secretary, also manages Advisory Days. Julia Wainwright oversees a thriving Facebook community of 285 Nature Group members in addition to the new Photography Competition.

David

Variations in three of Britain's Common Wild Orchids.

by Richard Revels FRPS

Nature Group (NG) members looking for either a personal project, or perhaps a theme for putting together pictures for an RPS Distinction submission, could find that British Wild Orchids could be a suitable subject. The devastating effects that Bird Flu is having on our bird populations may mean some NG member's plans for 2023 will need to be amended, so perhaps the wild flora of these islands will receive more attention than previously. Our wild orchids can provide very colourful and interesting pictures.

No special lenses will be required to get started, as most standard range zoom lenses now focus quite close on most orchid flower heads. However a Macro lens has the advantage of being able to focus much closer when needed and will produce up to life size images. If you want to take pictures of anything very small you will need specialist equipment such as a bellows unit, or the Canon MP-E 65 mm Macro lens which is what I use. Both are able to produce images of at least 5 times life size but are only required if photographing very small subjects of only a few mm in size. Robert Thompson FRPS covers the subject of extreme close-up photography well in his article in the summer 2022 issue of *The Iris*. Most NG members will already have a suitable lens amongst their general photo kit, so that just leaves the question of where are the best places to start searching.

Wild orchids can show up in a wide range of places providing they're not covered by dense vegetation as our orchid flora is unable to compete well with coarse vegetation. I always think a good starting point is to check out places close to home so that if the flowers are not quite at their best, or perhaps you want to take more pictures in different lighting conditions, a return visit is easy and quick to make. Sometimes uncultivated areas of ground that have been left that way for several years can be productive for orchids, but as it takes several years from seed germination before plants grow large enough to produce a flower spike, a little patience may be needed. Orchid seeds also require a fungus 'partner' present in the soil before seed germination can take place, so they will not grow everywhere, which is probably why orchid colonies on some hillsides and other habitats are often rather patchy.

Roadside grass verges are always worth checking, but unfortunately in my area many verges are cut far too frequently by council contractors to be of great value to wildlife, with sometimes promising looking areas of wild flowers being cut down just as flowering starts. There are, I am pleased to say, other councils in the country that care for their road verges in a more wildlife friendly way and are justly proud of the colourful displays of wild flowers their verges display each summer, some of which are likely to contain orchids as well as other wildlife.

Many local nature reserves will hold a selection of orchid species, so are well worth a visit. Unimproved ancient chalk downland and disused chalk and limestone pits are likely to provide good orchid habitats. When not kept too tidy and well trimmed Churchyards and cemeteries can also hold orchid populations, as they are often sited on ancient meadowland and may hold many species of wild flowers including orchids that could have disappeared from most other places nearby. Some cemeteries contain a rich flora and may have a small area put aside as a nature reserve such as has happened at Whipsnade Churchyard, Bedfordshire, where the first known Common Spotted Orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* was recorded flowering in June 2008. Good management of the site involving mostly just an autumn cut, resulted in numbers increasing and by June 2018 there were over 200 flower spikes. Suburban and urban gardens in towns and villages can also hold wild orchids, with some owners being very happy to leave an area of their garden for orchids and other wild flowers. These will of course also attract a range of insects and other wildlife.

The three orchid species I have chosen for this article are the Bee, *Ophrys apifera*, Common Spotted *D. fuchsii*, and the Pyramidal Orchid *Anacamptis pyramidalis*. These three species are not only common in my home county of Bedfordshire, but are also fairly widespread in many lowland areas across Britain and Ireland; so many NG members may find them growing close to their homes, soil type and other environmental factors determining which species will grow where. Our warming and more volatile climate in recent decades is changing the

distribution of much of our wildlife including several orchid species, and in recent decades the Bee Orchid is now found much further north from its old strongholds that were mostly in the southern half of England and lowland Wales. It now occurs in many areas of Northern England, and for the first time there are now a number of colonies in parts of southern Scotland. It seems our warming climate is benefiting the Bee Orchid.

As its name implies the Common Spotted is Britain's most widespread and common Orchid; being found in a wide variety of places throughout lowland areas of Britain and Ireland, including some coastal areas in northern Scotland, and is also found on some of the Scottish islands. This is quite a variable orchid in its flower colour and markings and occasionally, also its lip shape; so making it a good subject for our cameras when building up a portfolio of pictures.

Although the Pyramidal orchid is far less common in Scotland being mostly confined to a few coastal areas, it is widespread in many suitable areas of England, Wales and Ireland, and can even be abundant in some places that have calcareous soils. It can often found growing on road verges and similar places, but it does not do well in wetter habitats that may become waterlogged at times.

Variations to watch out for.

As with all things in nature, many orchid species will show a degree of minor variation in both their colour and markings and sometimes also the shape of their flowers. A small amount of variation is normal, but major variation is usually rare - orchid species with greenish yellow flowers seldom varying at all. Below is a brief description of some of the variation of each of the three species that I have found in Bedfordshire in recent years.

The Bee orchid has several very distinctive variant forms that are occasionally found in some colonies, with the "wasp" form var. *trollii* probably the best known that has a long pointed yellow and light brown petal lip. It is so different from normal Bee orchids that at one time it was thought to be a different species. This wasp form is most frequently found in colonies on the Cotswold Hills of Gloucestershire and nearby counties, but is rare in Eastern England, with only two recorded flowering in Bedfordshire during the past 30 years.

Another very distinctive form is var. *chlorantha* that has white sepals and a plain unmarked greenish yellow lip (petal). This form lacks the anthocyanin pigment that is responsible for producing pink and purple colours in its flowers and although generally rare it is not uncommon in some colonies in parts of East Anglia. The most



Bee Orchid *Ophrys apifera*



Bee Orchid, Wasp form var. *trollii*. Barton Hills, Beds.



Bee Orchid, *Ophrys apifera*, var. *chlorantha*

frequently found variety in my area is var. *belgarum* that has an oval lip with small well tucked-in side lobes and a yellow band across the lip, and although far from common, it is frequently found in some colonies but unknown in others. A very rare form var. *fulvofusca* that has unmarked dark brown lips, flowered on a rough uncut area of lawn in a Bedford Business Park in June 2022. This shows that both urban and rural areas should be checked when searching for orchids, as you never know what may be found.



Bee x Fly Orchid *Ophrys insectifera* Hybrid



Bee Orchid seed



Bee Orchid var. *fulvofusca*.



Bee Orchid var. *belgarum* and spider

The Common Spotted orchid is very variable with the ground colour of most flowers normally being a shade of pink or lilac, but there is much variation in this species, with the flowers ranging in colour from pure white var. *albiflora*, to a much rarer dark reddish-purple var. *rhodochila*; with some very attractive intermediate forms. The flower lip shape can also vary, ranging from being rather rotund, to dagger shaped. So there is plenty of scope for taking a range of different pictures of this widespread species, which will add interest to any portfolio of orchid pictures, all that is needed is to find them!

The Pyramidal orchid flower ground colour is usually a fairly constant pink, and only rarely produces different colour forms, but plants with pure white flowers var. *albiflora*, occasionally occur in some colonies. The lip shape can also vary, with var. *emarginata* having a broad unlobed lip shaped like a scallop. Several of this rare form recently flowered in a small colony of only about 200 plants on a nature reserve in Bedfordshire, however the recent drought and heatwave conditions has resulted in no Pyramidal orchids at all flowering in this colony during 2021 and 2022. Hopefully when weather conditions return to a more normal mixture of at least some moderate summer rainfall, this orchid will again flower in this location.



Common Spotted Orchids on Bison Hill, Beds.

At times a hybrid between two different species will occur with the hybrid plants usually displaying 'hybrid vigour' - large lush plants with extra bold markings - they usually display characters of both parent species. While most wild hybrid plants are great rarities, there are a few that can be abundant. The cross between the Common Spotted and Southern Marsh orchid *D. praetermissa* is fairly common where both species occur on the same site. This hybrid produces large showy and colourful plants (*D. x grandis*) which can outnumber both parent species in a locality. Another hybrid that occasionally occurs on chalk downland is between the Common Spotted and Chalk Fragrant orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea*, these hybrid plants produce larger than normal plants and mostly resemble the Fragrant orchid, but have spotting and marks on both the leaves and flowers, that the Fragrant orchids lacks.



Common Spotted and Southern Marsh Orchid Hybrid



Hybrid of Common Spotted X Chalk Fragrant Orchid

Back in the spring of 2015 I learnt of a hybrid cross between the Bee and Fly *Ophrys insectifera* orchid that was in flower, so I soon visited the site to photograph this great rarity. In Britain the Bee orchid is thought to be self-pollinating, and not attracting any pollinating insects, whereas the Fly orchid is mostly pollinated by the Digger Wasp *Argogorytes mystaceus*; with the flower producing a pheromone scent similar to that of the female wasp and so attracting male wasps. When a male wasp tries to pseudocopulate with a Fly orchid flower, pollinia are attached to the wasp's head, and when that wasp then visits another Fly orchid flower, the pollen is transferred to the stigma of that flower. But as far as I know there is no record of that wasp species visiting Bee orchids. Perhaps one visited a Bee orchid by mistake after first visiting a Fly orchid? Maybe, maybe not, but while watching over an area with several flowering Fly Orchids in the hope of photographing a visiting wasp, a Tree Bumblebee *Bombus hypnorum* visited one of the Fly Orchid flowers several times, making a determined attempt to copulate with the flower. Being ready with my camera I was able to record the event. This raises the question, does this Bumblebee, which is fairly new to Britain (first record 2001), also occasionally visit Bee orchids? If you should see this happening in your area please photograph the event and report it to your local Plant and Bee recorders.

All British orchids produce large quantities of very small (c1 mm long) seeds that are wind dispersed, so orchids can turn up almost anywhere if conditions are suitable. In the wild seed germination to flowering varies, for example the Common Spotted is said to take only 2 or 3 years to produce a flower spike; compared with 5 years in the case of the Bee Orchid. Some other species taking even longer.

The pictures that accompany this article show a range of orchid flower variation that I have found and photographed in my home county, with the only exception being the Fly x Bee hybrid. The three orchid species I have chosen for this article are by far the most widespread and plentiful in both Bedfordshire and Britain, therefore it's likely that a similar range of variation in these and other species also occurs in other areas. I wish NG members good luck in their searches.

For guidance of the best places to search for wild orchids in any area, the local Wildlife Trust and Natural History Society would be my first port of call, and they may have guide books available of what's known on various reserves in that area, and I am sure they will be pleased to receive details of your findings. By joining The Hardy Orchid Society you will be able to contact other members who will I am sure welcome and advise you. The Society also organize regular field meetings in Britain throughout the orchid flowering season.

Common Spotted Orchid with Bumble Bee

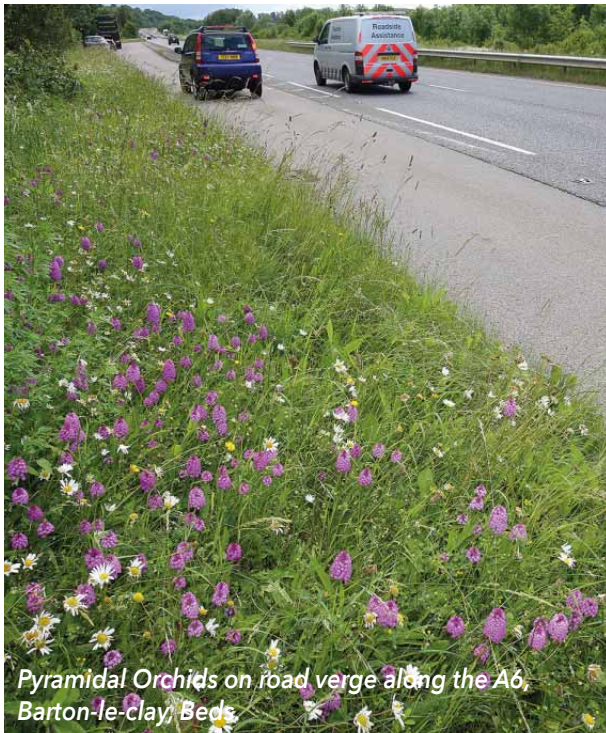


Common Spotted Orchid and Six spot Burnet moth with pollinia stuck to its tongue.



If planning to submit your orchid pictures for an RPS Distinction I would suggest members should first take their portfolio to an RPS Nature Advisory Day; or book a session for a private appraisal and discussion with a current member of the Distinctions Panel. Getting everything right before submitting your pictures will save you money and time should it fail.

¹ The Hardy Orchid Society membership secretary contact is: moira.tarrant@outlook.com



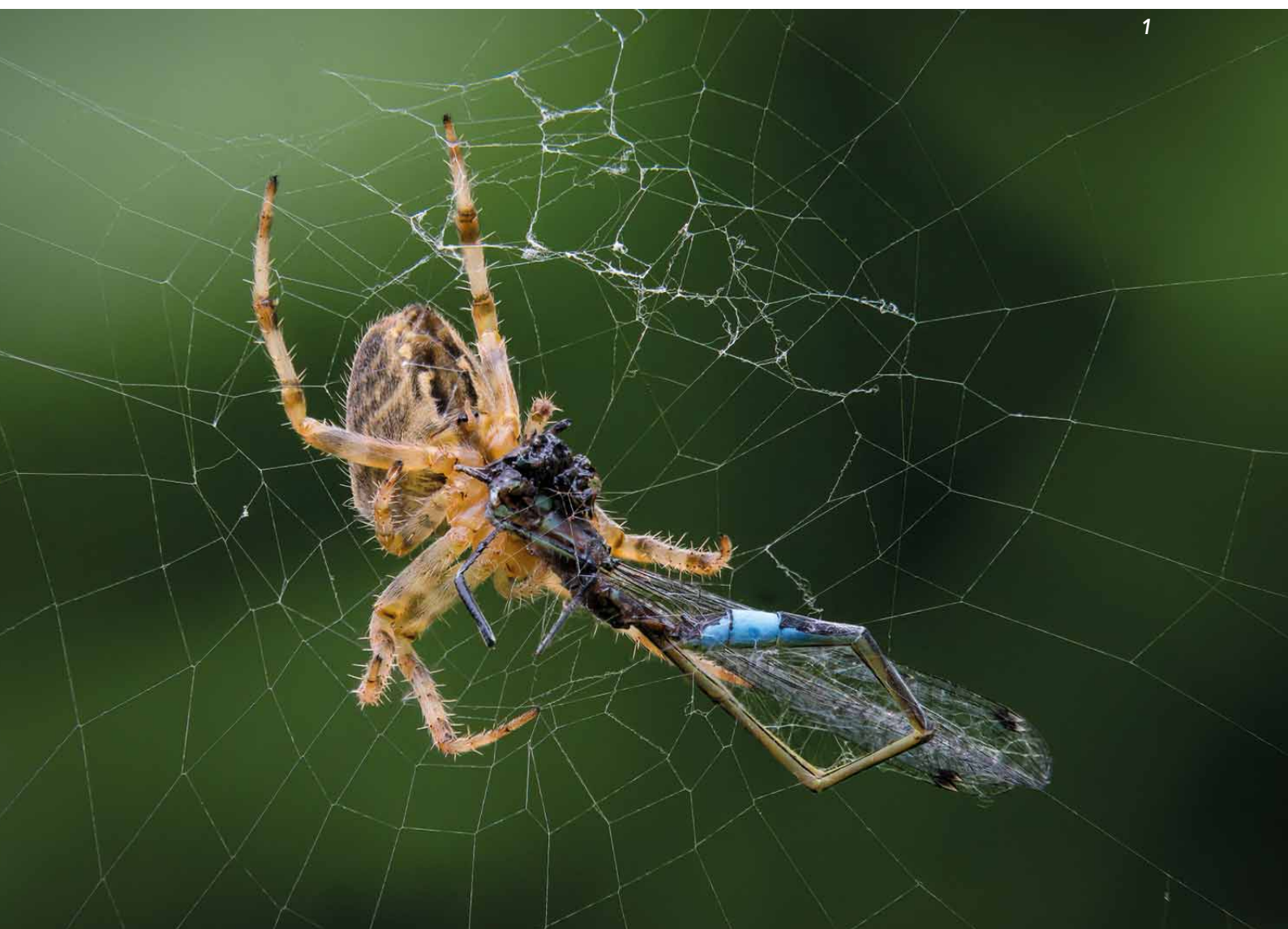
From L to F - an extended trek through the RPS Distinction process!

by Andrew McCarthy FRPS

My interest in wildlife photography began when I changed from analogue to digital around 2003. I dipped in and out of various photographic genres over the next decade, always accompanied by my trusty Canon kit, but I kept coming back to a long held passion for wildlife. By the start of the 2010's I had a reasonable nature portfolio, which prompted my wife to mention an advert she had seen for the RPS distinction process - she suggested attempting the 'L' might be a good way of improving my photography. Having a 'project' seemed like a great idea, so I duly joined the RPS in 2011 and immediately applied with a panel of ten mounted wildlife prints, all drawn from my 'archive' of existing shots. We nervously took the panel to RPS HQ in Bath for the assessment day, and I was very pleased indeed when I passed first time round.

Buoyed by my success (and with the rather inflated ego that comes from seeing ones work praised in front of an audience!) I decided the following year to try for my Associate distinction in Natural History. Following the submission of a panel of potential images to my allocated Mentor, Tony Wharton (sadly no longer with us), I still recall my disappointment when his bruising (but completely realistic) email arrived in my inbox... It can be hard to take tough love, so for a year or so, I spent my time working up my travel and street photography portfolios, but always with a focus on improving my photographic knowledge, technical skills and creative 'vision'.

By late 2012, I realised that the best way for me to get my coveted 'A' distinction (which clearly was not as easy



as I had originally thought!) was to treat the exercise as I would any other professional assignment - firstly find out exactly what the 'client' wants (in this case by getting as much advice as possible from those with relevant experience/expertise). Then, - rather than simply drawing from an existing image archive, shoot with the intention of building a technically solid portfolio. Around this time, the RPS allocated John Bebbington to me as a mentor; John was very encouraging as well as pivotal in helping me understand the level required. I duly submitted a panel of 15 prints (of UK mammals, reptiles, amphibians and insects) in early 2014 and was really pleased to pass at my first attempt - so far so good.

Since joining the RPS in 2011, I had been aware of the Fellowship as the ultimate distinction level, but for a good number of years I simply ignored it, as it seemed unattainable. Following my A success, I worked hard at further improving my technical skills, building a stronger portfolio, writing photographic articles, doing numerous presentations, and working with photography clients - in particular those who wanted to focus on insect macro photography. As my photography (in particular my macro work) improved so did my confidence and at the back of my mind was a growing sense that I had unfinished business - I needed to try for the 'F'.

In early 2018, I switched camera systems from the large and heavy Canon full frame kit to Olympus - in part because I wanted to rediscover some of my old nature photo mojo which had waned a bit, following a shoulder operation. There is no doubt in my mind that switching to a small mirrorless system with functions such as in-camera stacking resulted in a significant step up in the quality of my work, as well as an increase in my photographic confidence.

After a couple of years working with micro four thirds, I began to think again about submitting an F panel and provisionally earmarked this for summer 2020, but of course Covid 19 intervened! Instead of working on a potential F panel, in summer 2020 I started a time-consuming project photographing bats in flight as part of my professional (ecology) work. Like all good projects this got me completely hooked and the F panel was punted into the long grass for the time being. But by early 2021, I had begun to pull an experimental panel together - in part to see what I had in my archive and in part to see (realistically) how close I might be to an F panel that had a reasonable prospect of success. My





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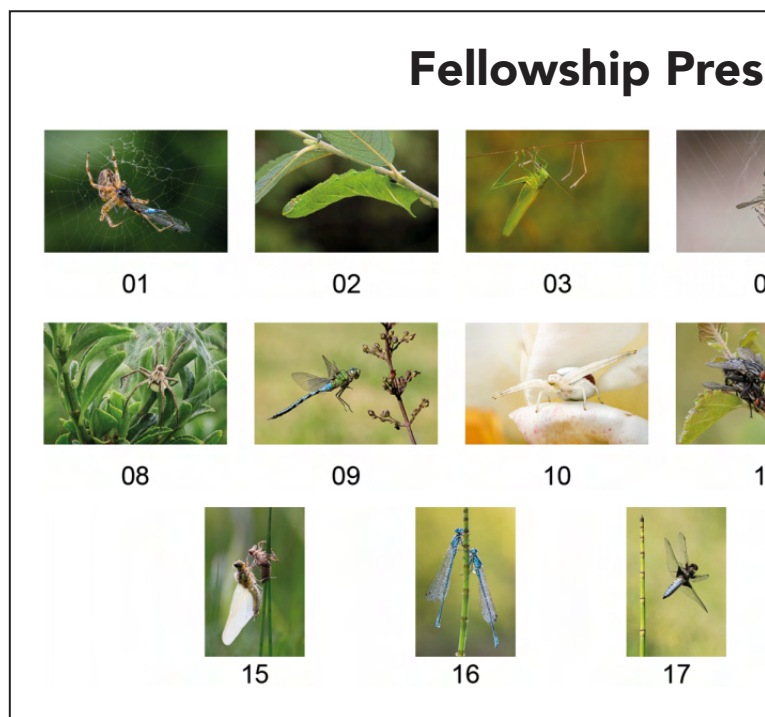


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first step was to choose a theme. Scanning past copies of *The Iris*, it was clear that a panel would need to be very tightly focussed on a single subject; therefore I decided to focus on my long-held passion for insect photography and began working towards putting together a set of images of our larger UK invertebrates, mainly from my garden and the area around my home in Devon. I then booked an initial online assessment with Mick Durham and Kevin Elsby whose feedback was reasonably encouraging - clearly some of my prospective images had potential. This was a positive start.



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One of the major problems I encountered early on was how to work out the standard needed for a successful Fellowship panel. Whilst subconsciously I probably already knew what was required, I needed a yardstick against which I could compare each of my potential images. I visited the RPS website to check on recent Nature F panels. Unfortunately though, this did not prove to be helpful for me personally - whilst the two recent panels were excellent in their own way (one was a monochrome panel of African wildlife, whilst the other was a panel of flash-illuminated rainforest wildlife) neither of which was any help to someone working on a panel of British invertebrates! Despite this, in late 2020 I decided to book an assessment anyway – my logic being that this might focus my mind!



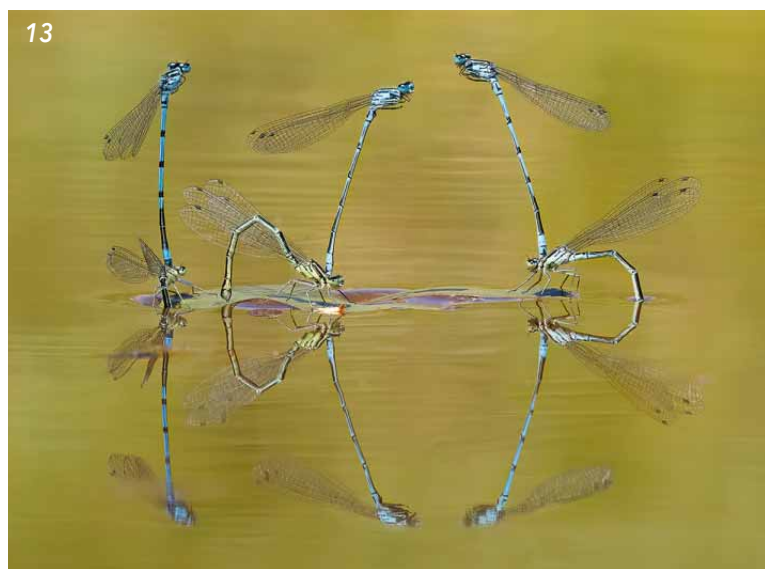
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entation Layout



The assessment (with digital images only because of Covid) was in April 2021, and I duly submitted the required documentation and kept my fingers crossed. I was not particularly confident. I'd had no opportunity during summer 2020 to shoot any new images as I was still occupied with the bats in flight project. Deep down I probably suspected that some images were not up to the required standard. The day of the assessment arrived and, as expected, my panel failed. The judging panel recommended resubmission, but when I received their feedback form I was disappointed to see that only eight of the 21 images were found to be acceptable. Twelve new images of Fellowship standard images seemed an awful lot to find. It was clear that if I was to achieve that elusive Fellowship I had a great deal of work to do.

During summer and autumn 2021, I managed to take a number of new insect and spider images which I thought might be up to Fellowship standard and I had half a mind to re-submit in early 2022. However, experimenting with these and other images in a new panel arrangement did not give me great confidence that I would be successful, so the idea was dropped again as other types of photography took over. At the end of 2021, I re-contacted the RPS and was allocated a mentor from the nature panel - Mick Durham. Mick was incredibly patient and did not seem to mind my regular emailed questions as I tried to get to grips with the slippery term that is 'distinctiveness'!





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In spring 2021 I was distracted from building my F portfolio by yet another non-macro photo project and by summer I realised that it was time to finish what I had started - I booked the F resubmission for October. I had a corrective eye operation scheduled for the end of July and this really focussed my mind - I knew I had only a few months to shoot at least ten F standard images in order to build an acceptable panel. A tough assignment followed by a brutal reappraisal of the original panel and together with close scrutiny of the



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assessor's' comments from the previous failure, I eventually culled over 75% of the original acceptable images and effectively began again from scratch. I especially wanted to include a series of dragonfly flight shots in the new panel, as this would add something a little different. I discussed this with Mick in late 2021 and he suggested this would not be easy - F criteria would demand that the moving wings be tack sharp, which is not easy to achieve. However, by early 2022 I was using the new Olympus OM-1 which has a much



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better high ISO performance than my previous camera, which meant I could push shutter speeds as high as 1/16,000th of a second to freeze wing motion. By early July, I was pleased with the way the panel was shaping up, but I wanted this to be a no-brainer for the RPS judges - in my opinion the new panel needed to be pretty much flawless. The rest of June and July was therefore spent in the field looking for opportunities for images that had suitable tones and compositions to fit remaining gaps in the panel. By the end of July, the panel was complete. Images were processed and resized, the Statement of Intent was pored over and repeatedly re-edited, and the accompanying 'paperwork' was prepared - I was finally ready for submission.

It seemed a very long wait until the assessment in October. I watched the assessment on zoom and anticipated fairly early on that the panel would be successful. The Assessors' comments were very positive, and I was incredibly pleased when Mick confirmed that my long journey was finally over and I was to be awarded the coveted Fellowship.

Statement of Intent

The aim of my panel is to showcase the diversity of the UKs more conspicuous invertebrate fauna.

Images are of Odonata (in which I have a particular photographic interest) as well as species from the Lepidoptera, Arachnida, Diptera and Orthoptera groups.

Wherever possible I have chosen images which display a wide variety of form and colour, as well as typical behavioural and ecological adaptations such as flight, feeding, mating, egg-laying, predation, camouflage and metamorphosis. Images include both larval as well as adult life stages.

The subjects were all photographed under natural light, principally in my garden or close to my home in Devon. I used a range of focal lengths from macro to super telephoto, as well as techniques such as focus stacking where

Image list

- 01 Cross Spider *Araneus diadematus* with Blue-tailed Damselfly *Ischnura elegans* prey (22 image stack)
- 02 Eyed Hawk Moth *Smerinthus ocellata* larvae (12 image stack)
- 03 Great Green Bush-cricket *Tettigonia viridissima* adult eating final instar case (7 image stack)
- 04 Female Orb-weaver Spider (*Metellina* – probably *segmentata*) with captured male Hoverfly (probably *Melanostoma scalare*) (22 image stack)
- 05 Hummingbird Hawk-moth *Macroglossum stellatarum* in flight
- 06 Pair of female Emperor Dragonflies *Anax imperator* laying (blue form left and green form on the right)
- 07 Large Elephant Hawkmoth *Deilephila elpenor* (15 image stack)
- 08 Nursery web spider *Pisaura mirabilis* female with egg-sack (30 image stack)
- 09 Emperor Dragonfly *Anax imperator* male in flight
- 10 Flower Crab Spider *Misumena vatia* (white/red form) in ambush position on rose petal (31 image stack)
- 11 Pair of Flesh Flies *Sarcophaga* sp. mating (15 image stack)
- 12 Flower Crab Spider *Misumena vatia* (all white form) with captured male Thick-legged Hoverfly *Syrirta pipiens* on *Leucanthemum* flower (26 image stack)
- 13 Three pairs of Azure Damselflies *Coenagrion puella* mating and egg laying
- 14 Beautiful Demoiselle *Calopteryx virgo* in flight
- 15 Four-spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata* emerging from larval case
- 16 Roosting pair of Azure Damselflies *Coenagrion puella*
- 17 Broad-bodied Chaser *Libellula depressa* dragonfly in flight
- 18 Male Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum* dragonfly taking off from perch on figwort
- 19 Birch Sawfly *Craesus septentrionalis* larvae in alarm posture
- 20 Angle Shades Moth *Phlogophora meticulosa* camouflaged against *Nigella* seed-head (22 image stack).

Colours of Costa Rica

by Paddy Beck ARPS

I've had a lifelong interest in photography and can just about remember using my mother's box Brownie. My first real camera was an Olympus Pen S, a 35mm half-frame camera which was a sort of APS-C for film, an ideal camera for a cash-strapped schoolboy as, with care when loading, it allowed me to get 74 or 75 frames from a standard 35mm film cassette. Working largely in black and white, I would develop the film at home and then use the school darkroom to print. Colour printing was too expensive but the half-frame savings also manifested themselves when using slide film so this was my medium for colour work. Over the years I've had Praktica, Olympus and Canon SLR's but have been using Nikon for the past 25 years and currently have a D500 and D850 - although with advancing years I can see the weight attraction of mirrorless, so watch this space.

My main photographic interests are wildlife, landscape and astro-landscape. Over the last 30 years

I've been lucky to have been able to travel extensively throughout Southern Africa visiting game lodges in Tanzania, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Namibia and have visited the Kruger Park in South Africa at least once almost every year over this period. I've been a member of the RPS for a few years and when Covid put a stop to travel I thought this would be an opportunity to pull together a distinction submission from my back catalogue. Unfortunately, lethargy took over and I never got round to it.

As Covid restrictions started to ease and it became possible to travel again I came across a photography tour to Costa Rica organised by Naturetrek. Costa Rica had been on my 'must visit' list for some time so once I had ascertained that the tour was also suitable for non-photographers I booked places for my wife Jill and me and set about organising Covid testing and generating all of the documentation required for international travel in the new post-covid world.

ARPS Presentation Layout



The tour was superbly led by Dr Kevin Elsby FRPS. We first met Kevin when he combed the departure lounge at Gatwick looking for travellers with large camera bags and Naturetrek baggage labels; however the tour group really came together after landing at San Jose and clearing customs and immigration. Apart from us, there were six other participants, five of whom were photographers. Adding local guide Lenin and driver Roger we had a tour party of eleven who would spend the next fifteen days finding and photographing Costa Rican wildlife.

After an overnight stop in San Jose we headed south about 60 miles climbing into the Talamanca Mountains to Saverge Mountain Lodge at a height of about 2200 metres. During the three days here it was possible to photograph the Talamanca Hummingbird (09), Flame-coloured Tanager (02), Acorn Woodpecker (13) and Blue-gray Tanager (14) along with many other birds which didn't make it into the final panel. The only slight disappointment was spending a couple of hours staking out the nest of a Resplendent Quetzal without being able to get a decent shot. We did see the male but he steadfastly refused to return to the nest.

Leaving Saverge we first climbed to the highest point on the pan American highway where we were able to photograph the Volcano Junco but on examining the photographs I found that all showed the birds with prominent rings on their legs so unsuitable for inclusion in the panel. Descending from this high point, we travelled to Sarapiquí and Selva Verde Lodge for four nights. Selva Verde is about 60 miles north of San Jose. Here I photographed the Black-throated Trogon (11). Although the Trogon was the only bird at Selva Verde to make it into the panel, there were many other birds, tree frogs, Mantled Howler Monkeys and a Two-toed Sloth that were successfully photographed.

We left Sarapiquí and continued our journey 35 miles north to Laguna de Lagarto Lodge which is more or less at sea level. This lodge had excellent facilities for photography from a large observation deck and over four days eight of the images in the final panel were captured along with many more that didn't feature. It was also the location that allowed us to visit two hides where it was possible to photograph the King Vulture (08). King Vultures are not considered threatened, however there are less than 10,000 birds widely distributed across central and south America so sightings are rare.

From Laguna de Lagarto we headed south 50 miles to Bosque de Paz Lodge which is situated at about





1400 metres above sea level. Over two days here I photo-graphed the Green-crowned Brilliant (07) and the Green Honeycreeper (female) (10).

We then returned to San Jose where the rest of the group spent two days waiting for the direct BA flight back to the UK. Jill and I had a prior commitment so flew back a day early via Miami which, from previous visits, is not my favourite airport but this time surprised us with a very smooth transit.

I can thoroughly recommend the Naturetrek trip. Under the leadership of Dr Kevin Elsbey FRPS the experience was great fun, informative and from a photographic perspective very productive. Costa Rica is a wonderful country to visit and has a very enlightened approach to nature conservation which provides countless opportunities for interaction with the natural environment.

During the trip Kevin had talked about RPS distinctions which made me think again about applying.

When in the field, my policy is not to delete anything but rather make sure it's properly backed up to a laptop and portable hard drive. As a result, I arrived back home with several thousand images from which I felt fairly confident I could pull together a panel of fifteen. I logged on to the RPS site and booked an assessment date of 12th October, some five months hence. Plenty of time I thought.

First thing to consider was what my statement of intent would be as this sets the tone for selecting the images to make up the panel. The majority of images were of birds, so this subject was a suitable anchor. I was aware that we had travelled through several eco-systems mostly dictated by height above sea level and that a major differentiator between tropical birds and those found in the UK was colour, so these three factors became the basis of my statement. During the trip there were several occasions when flash became necessary. I am not a great fan of flash from a nature perspective and therefore not particularly experienced (or competent) in its use. Despite some excellent coaching from Kevin, I found that most of my flash images were poor so none would feature in the panel.

With the Statement of Intent drafted, I could now select some appropriate images. As usual, wading through several thousand images took far longer than I expected (I seem to be a slow learner as far as time is concerned). Once I had fifteen images and at least five spares I decided it would be a good idea to book a one-to-one, so with just three and a half months to the assessment date, it was back to the RPS website.

Unfortunately, I now discovered that the website would not accept bookings because it was being upgraded, not a major problem as this was only going to take two weeks.





08



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One month later, new RPS website now working, I booked a one-to-one fully expecting this to be sometime in the future.

Two days later, an email arrived from Ann Miles FRPS asking what advice I needed, telling me how to send her my images and giving me some dates. We agreed on four days hence to allow Ann time to look at the images and make some notes. This was a fantastic turnaround time which I really appreciated given the approaching deadline.

Ann reviewed my twenty candidate images, layout plan and statement of intent and made very helpful suggestions on changes to the statement and layout replacing some of the images I had chosen with alternatives. She also pointed out some technical errors mostly around sharpening (or lack of it), size of image in the frame and the need to tone down a couple of backgrounds. She made a very helpful suggestion that I use Topaz Sharpen AI for selective sharpening. I had not used this tool before and am now a convert, it can produce truly amazing results.

After making the improvements suggested by Ann, I found that no matter what I did, two of the images were not up to standard so I replaced them. In doing this, the panel became unbalanced necessitating the replacement of a further two images.

In discussions with Ann I had debated the pros & cons of whether to make my submission with a digital panel or with prints. The pro with respect to digital is that it's cheap and my work would be finished but a big con is that I would have no control over how the final images appeared. On balance I decided that a print submission was the way to go as I could see exactly what the assessors would see.

As my submission contained both portrait and landscape images, I was concerned as to how these would appear on the display rails, Ann made a suggestion that

mounting them all in portrait mode with the landscape images centralised would work, so this is the approach I adopted. All prints were A4 mounted in 40 x 50 mounts.

I ordered the mounts and sorted out the printing. My original intention had been to get the prints done professionally; however the fast approaching deadline for submission caused a rethink with some being done professionally and some being done by me.

The prints needed to be submitted not later than 21st September and I had intended to deliver them by hand on the 19th but this was not possible when it became a bank holiday for Queen Elizabeth's funeral. As I was flying to South Africa on 21st I arranged for a courier to pick up the prints on the 20th. Job done.

On arrival in Johannesburg I checked the tracking app to make sure my prints had been delivered. They had, or at least delivery had according to the tracker been attempted at 21:00 and again at 21:55!! It was no surprise to discover that the delivery had not been successful, but alarming to discover that the package was now marked "Return to Sender". Trying to find a human to talk to in the courier company was like looking for hens' teeth but eventually I did speak to someone and explained that I was 5,000 miles away so returning to me was not going to be a winner. He eventually agreed to try and deliver again, phew, problem solved.

The next day I got a WhatsApp message from my next-door neighbour saying I'd had a package delivered from the RPS – clearly the problem was not solved. Fortunately, I have a very helpful neighbour so I rebooked a courier pickup from his house for the following day. I was now outside the time limit for submission but on contacting Ben Fox ARPS at RPS HQ he reassured me that there is some discretion for circumstances like this and not to worry.



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Consulting the tracking app the next day, I discovered that my prints had been delivered and this was confirmed by Ben. Breathing a sigh of relief I now just had to wait for the assessment.

On assessment day I was still in Cape Town but thanks to Zoom was able to join the proceedings which began at 10:00. I knew that I was number 4 in the running order, so I got to see how those before me got on. Then it was time for my panel. All the assessors examined the prints picking one or two up for closer inspection after which the chairman invited one of them to comment. The comments were quite extensive, largely positive with one observation that there looked like a small amount of flash had been used in one image, possibly from another photographer the assessor thought. A second assessor was then asked by the chairman for any further comments, but she felt that everything had already been well covered. The assessors then voted – a process that is not visible on the zoom screen. After what seemed to me to be an eternity but in reality was probably only a few seconds, the Chairman announced that the panel had been successful and I had been awarded ARPS.

My feeling throughout the process was that everyone with whom I came into contact tried hard to help me succeed. Any criticism was always positive and given in a supportive fashion and I learned a great deal from the experience. Whilst there is no doubt the intention is to uphold a high standard, the way it is done should not be considered intimidating and I would encourage anyone considering a distinction to go for it.

So, what's next? To Fellow or not to Fellow, that is the question!!

Species List

Image Number	English Name	Latin Name
01	Keel-billed toucan	Ramphastos sulfuratus
02	Flame-coloured Tanager	Piranga bidentata
03	Brown-hooded Parrot	Pyrilia haematotis
04	Green Honeycreeper (male)	Chlorophanes spiza
05	Collared Aracari	Peteroglossus torquatus
06	Montezuma Oropendola	Psarocolius montezuma
07	Green-crowned Brilliant	Heliodoxa jacula
08	King Vulture	Sarcorampus papa
09	Talamanca Hummingbird	Eugenes spectabilis
10	Green Honeycreeper (female)	Chlorophanes spiza
11	Black-throated Trogon	Trogon rufus
12	Summer Tanager	Piranga bidentata
13	Acorn Woodpecker	Melanerpes formicivorus
14	Blue-gray Tanager	Thraupis episcopus
15	Brown-hooded Parrot	Pyrilia haematotis



15

A suburban garden ARPS

by David Belton ARPS

In December 2021 I was successful in applying for my Licentiate of the RPS and so decided to try for the Associate distinction. My favourite genre is natural history, so I decided to put together a nature panel. The only problem was COVID-19. With the COVID pandemic affecting the world we were advised to stay at home and not travel. However, looking back through the multitude of images I had taken in our garden during the first lockdown, I thought that garden insects may be a suitable subject and set about capturing some images.

I thought I already had some good images but I wasn't certain that what I thought was a good image, was up to ARPS standard. The first step was to assemble an example panel of existing images plus a Statement of Intent and submit it for an Advisory session. Because of COVID this was held via Zoom. The session was useful - I received some very helpful feedback about image quality, the wording of the Statement of Intent and the panel layout. What I discovered from this process was that I was generally heading in the right direction. I also viewed a couple of Assessment days as an observer, by zoom. Again, this was useful, the two main things I learned were not to crop images too close (something I am prone to do) and ensure the images in the panel correspond to what is written in the Statement of Intent.

Later I also paid for a 1 to 1 session, which was with Mick Durham FRPS. Whilst not a guarantee of success, it is well worth getting the opinion of an experienced panel member, especially when you're getting close to final preparation. I am very thankful to Mick Durham for his guidance.

One of the benefits of taking images in your garden is that it is literally on your door step. You can spend much more time out there, than if you had to travel to see some exotic animal in the wild. Over the summers of 2021 and 2022 I spent hundreds of hours searching for and photographing the insects in the garden. One thing that became apparent was that there were a lot more visitors than I realised, not only in the number of insects, but also in the variety of species, most of which I had never seen before. By spending more time looking, you are also more likely to see behaviour that you have never noticed before. I didn't just want to have a panel of insects sitting on flowers, I was hoping to get action or behaviour of some sort, whether it was feeding, mating, moulting etc. Thankfully I found quite a few examples of this. One was of a fly 'bubbling'. The experts say there are two possible reasons for this behaviour. The first is to help cool the fly down, by allowing the liquid to evaporate slightly which cools the

David Belton Associate Panel Presentation Layout



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1 Mating Red Mason Bees



4 *Polydrusus formosus* mating



2 Acorn Weevil

droplet down, then drinking the cooled liquid again. The second reason simply disposes of excess body fluid.

As well as putting in the hours, sometimes you also need a bit of luck. One day, having spent a couple of hours plodding round the garden, I was sitting on the patio with my camera, when something flew across in front of me and landed on the Spiraea in a flower bed.



3 Large Red Damselfly emerging adult and exuvia

I picked up my camera and had a closer look to find it was an Acorn Weevil, a new species for me. It didn't mind me taking photos, in fact it wasn't even bothered when I went inside to get a pair of scissors to remove the leaf behind it that was spoiling the composition. But when my wife came out and pointed a finger at the weevil it simply rolled over and played dead.

Another advantage of a back garden project, is that you get to see the environment throughout the seasons. You can see all the stages of insect development, from eggs, to larvae, to adults. One such instance was a Speckled Wood caterpillar, which I saw preparing itself for transformation into its chrysalis. Over the next 3 weeks I observed the chrysalis daily, waiting to hopefully photograph the butterfly as it emerged. Unfortunately, on day 21 the chrysalis disappeared. I believe it had been predated by birds, so never got the chance to see the completion of this life cycle. I had some really good photos of the caterpillar and chrysalis and would have loved to put two of these images into my panel, but at the time they just didn't fit into the panel layout.

Later in the summer I saw a caterpillar moulting, something I had never seen before. A beautiful Mullein Moth caterpillar was openly shedding its skin on one of our Buddleia bushes. I loved the colours and detail in the picture, especially the remnants of the old skin still on the caterpillar's head. I realised that this image, in its landscape format, together with the images of the



5 *Coenosia tigrine* mating

Speckled Wood caterpillar and chrysalis, would work in the panel, so all three were included. The panel and layout were in constant flux. I would take a nice image and it would become my favourite to use, but this wasn't always possible because it also needed to fit in with the panel layout. In fact, my panel changed on a weekly basis, right up to the day before I made my submission. The hardest part wasn't what to put in, but rather what to leave out.

I did have some help in finding subjects to photograph. I had to spend quite a bit of time indoors, processing the images I had taken, but I had a secret weapon. My wife, who's beautiful garden I was using as the location for my project, would bang on our metal watering can with a broom to alert me that there was something photo worthy in the garden. I would then grab my camera and run outside to see what she had found.

The majority of my insect images were taken hand held, using a Canon 80D DSLR and Sigma 105mm F2.8 Macro lens. In my experience tripods are not much use



6 Orange Tip Butterfly



10 Speckled Wood Butterfly



8 Mullein Moth caterpillar moulting



7 Speckled Wood caterpillar



9 Speckled Wood Chrysalis

as they take too long to set up and the insect has gone long before you're ready. Even hand held you sometimes don't get a chance to take a shot before the subject has flown off or crawled behind a leaf. The one exception to this was an emerging Large Red Damselfly. We have a small pond, actually a 60cm diameter plastic tub, submerged in the ground and filled with plants and



11 *Rhingia campestris*



12 *Helina reverio bubbling*

rocks to allow the insects and other creature access. Even such a small pond is large enough for damselflies to breed. When the nymphs finally transform into the adult damselfly, they climb a plant stem and then remain still while the adult emerges. You have plenty of time to set up the tripod and take photos. I can't think of anything better than sitting on my patio, camera remote in one hand, bacon sandwich in the other, waiting for the adult damselfly to emerge to get a photo.

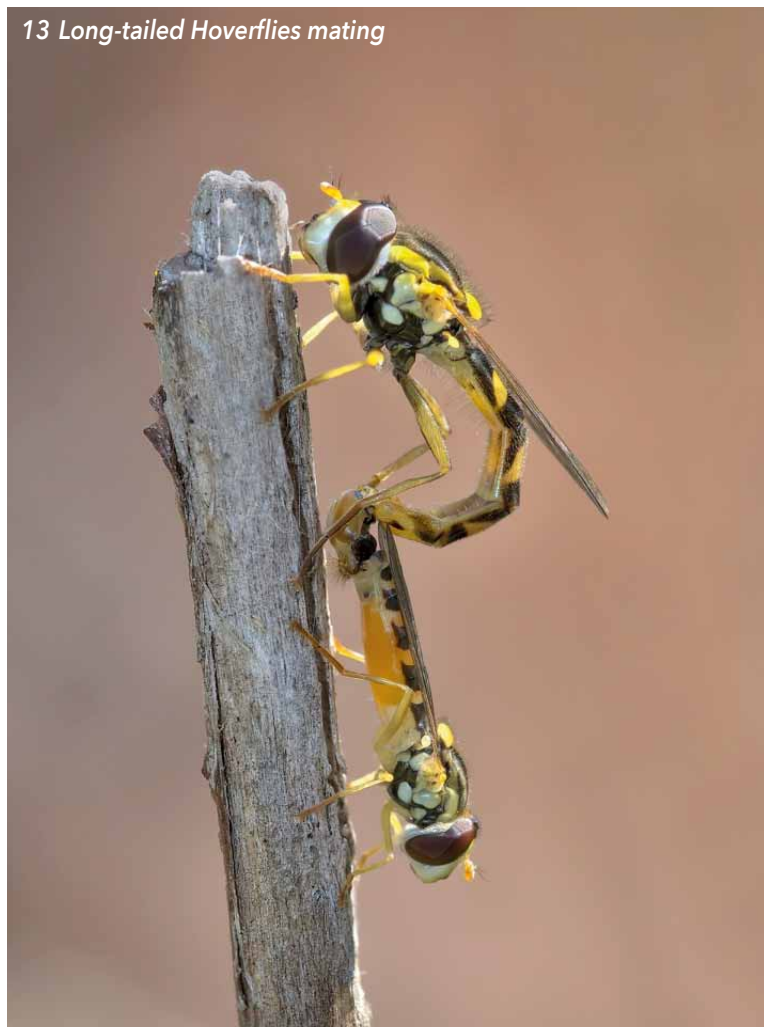
When taking hand held photos, I use a ring flash. This allows me to get consistent lighting especially in the shady parts of the garden. I use an old Yungnuo YN14EX flash which has seen better days. The battery door is broken and it isn't 100% compatible with my Canon 80D camera as it only works at ISO 320 or 400, but the setup works for me. You do get some additional image noise using higher ISOs but this can easily be cleaned up using Topaz Sharpen AI software, which as well as sharpening the image, also does a very good job at removing the noise.

My assessment date was mid October 2022 and submission had to be in by the end of September, so I thought I would have all summer to complete my panel. But things didn't quite work out that way. The hottest UK day on record in July 2022, which in our garden measured 41.3C, severely impacted the garden. Most flowering plants had finished much earlier than usual. In 2021 the garden was still in bloom in late September, but in 2022 there was hardly anything by the beginning of August. This severely affected the number of insects visiting the garden but whether the lack of insects was due to the shortage of food plants, or whether the insects were also affected by the heat I am not sure. But luckily, I had enough images to complete my panel.

I decided to make the trip to Bristol to observe my assessment live. It was a bit nerve wracking, especially as the first couple of print panels failed to achieve the required level. Mine was a projected image panel, so I had to sit through all the print entries first. The projector in the assessment theatre is excellent and when my images were shown I was delighted by how they looked. My trepidation was short lived as I received really good comments about my panel and was absolutely thrilled when it was announced I had been successful.

I learned a lot from doing my ARPS. My later images were much better than my earlier ones. My camera skills had improved, together with my ability to find the

13 Long-tailed Hoverflies mating



subjects. Also the way I use post processing software to remove noise and sharpen my pictures evolved, making a big difference to the appearance and quality of the final image. I also learned a great deal about my subjects and recorded all the different species I had seen; my garden list is currently at 260 species and counting.

I am currently considering trying for a Fellowship in the near future.

14 Greenbottle



Statement of Intent

Through this panel I wanted to show some of the variety of insects that can be found in a typical suburban garden.

I live in a suburban house whose garden is less than 100 sq meters in size. Even with a small garden, by growing the correct plants and installing a pond, you can encourage wildlife to visit, especially insects.

The photographs of visiting insects can be used to help identify and record the insect species. They also allow you to see the amazing detail of these fascinating creatures not normally visible to the naked eye. Being at home allows easy access to regularly observe their natural habitat throughout the year. By studying an area in detail like this you can see the various stages of their development, discover new species and observe behaviour you have never seen before.

15 Hornet Mimic Hoverfly



My 50 Year Photography Journey to ARPS

by Jon Mullin ARPS

I was first entrusted with a camera in 1971 for a school summer trip to Austria and Switzerland, being dispatched with three slide films for the three weeks away. The results were pleasing for a 13 year old and with various cameras, including the obligatory Instamatic, I have documented my life as it has evolved. University saw practical work requiring the "hit and miss" of developing black and white wet film taken of metallurgical micro-structures. The purchase of an Olympus XA, a robust pocket 35mm camera, allowed me to take photographs around the world including during the rather cold and wet Falklands' Campaign. My first digital photographs were taken on a borrowed camera on the reconnaissance for the Kosovo Campaign in 1999, the immediacy of which through PowerPoint allowed me to secure the capabilities needed for my Regiment in the enablement works through Greece and Macedonia.

Photography continued, but I did not get off auto mode until early 2018 (47 years after first picking up a camera!). A 'Go Digital' Workshop with my wife began

the process and, along with the purchase of a Canon 5D MkIV, a week with Laurie Campbell on wildlife photography at Aigas in Spring 2019 resulted in me having been 'fully manual' ever since. Four weeks of travelling Alaska in a camper van reinforced our enjoyment of photography through capturing this extraordinary place and its varied inhabitants. I was hooked. So on return to the UK, it was back to fundamentals with the Open University Digital Imaging Course. This propelled me into the RPS as well as leading to a core of our OU group continuing to meet up and even holding an exhibition of our work in Chichester in 2021.

Lockdown was made bearable through combining photography with my love of birds and walking in the local countryside. The need to move on-line saw the Nature Group stage a whole series of excellent Zoom sessions, particularly those by Ian Wilson on post-processing. My enjoyment and development continued rapidly. It was at this point that I decided to go for my LRPS and the process was aided significantly by Robert Harvey through his on-line courses on landscape, astro- and wildlife photography. The requirement to formally demonstrate proficiency over a wide range of subject matter and techniques brought my photography skills on significantly and I was able to secure LRPS in June 2021, submitting just in time before acquiring the new knee I needed to aid my mobility for wildlife photography.

So, it was against this background that I decided to give ARPS a go by submitting a panel for an Advisory Day last March. My idea was to go for local flora and fauna and thereby develop a wide-ranging panel. "Not there yet" was the verdict and my central image of a Dog Rose flower was ruled "out of bounds" as it had been cut from a large bush just outside my house. It was also clear that my bird photographs (unsurprisingly as I spend most of my time on these) were seemingly of the standard and five of these survived to the successful panel of fifteen. Sadly, my fungi did not make the cut and there was no time to re-shoot for a 2022 submission.

Spring and early summer were spent concentrating on flora, insects and amphibians. The frogs in my pond eventually objected to being models and voted with their feet. There were not too many insects and reptiles about and even though I attended the most enjoyable Kingcombe Nature Group Weekend I failed to get any

01 - Buzzard



02 - Young Peregrine Falcon





03 Barn Owl



04 - Kestrel

really good ARPS standard flora. I was also concerned that the bar was rising at the 'macro' level as mirrorless cameras with rapid stacking abilities could prove an absolute game changer over manual methods. Anyway, I had a great deal of fun attempting to get good images and a few isolated ones got to standard, but in the end they proved unsuitable for the coherence of my panel.

At this stage, I need to say that I do not do 'staged' shoots and part of the fun with nature photography is finding the subjects yourself and capturing them. This is probably not the most efficient way of securing 15 top class 'clean' ARPS standard images, but I enjoy the pleasure of walking the ground and inevitably finding at least one good subject each time. My standard rig is the 5D MkIV with a 500mm Canon f4 lens and x1.4 extender. Twelve of the fifteen panel images were shot with such. It seems that this combination hits a 'sweet spot' and buying it (second hand) was influenced by a superb book entitled "Mastering Bird Photography" by Marie Read. I shot the other three with a 100-400mm f4.5-5.6. Carrying my normal rig on a Manfrotto carbon fibre tripod (also second hand) takes a bit of an effort – but the sheer weight forces you to stand awhile and this has the advantage of letting things come to you.



05 Red Kite

The One-2-One I had with Ann Miles was pivotal in putting together both the images that were of ARPS standard and very importantly the design of the panel. It very much helped to shape the submission against the art of the possible and encouraged me to focus on a clear and simple statement;
"The aim for this project has been to capture the diversity and beauty of local species with the main emphasis on the varied bird life that inhabits my area".



06 Reed Warbler



08 Dartford Warbler



10 Whinchat



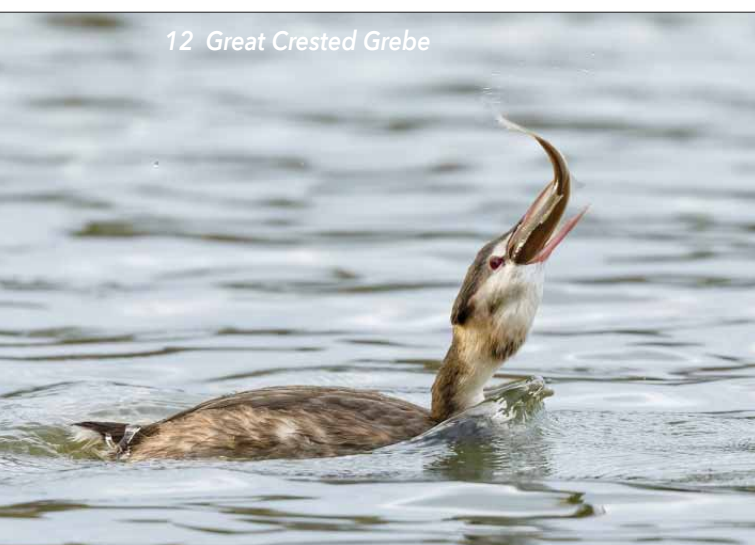
07 Roe Deer



09 Fox



Greater Spotted Woodpecker 11



12 Great Crested Grebe

Literally thousands of images were taken to get to the fifteen that would hang together.

On the top line I decided to have raptors in flight centred around a Barn Owl. I am fortunate to have a whole range of raptors in my local area. Buzzards are quite common but getting a good shot for the panel was the result of many. Woking has its' own Peregrines and I have enjoyed many hours on the top of the car park capturing their behaviour. I have favoured early mornings to get the rising sun illuminating the underside of the wings and focusing on when the young are being trained by the adults. The shot I had for the Advisory Day was an actual food pass but was judged indistinct so I re-shot several months later, but my best this time was a juvenile with the pigeon after the pass. Better luck in 2023! The Barn Owl was captured after hiding up in a field where I had seen them hunting. I chose a sunny autumn afternoon after rain in the hope that they would hunt in daylight. A trudge into semi-concealment and a camouflage net gave me the opportunity and fortunately, the owl went round twice. The Kestrel was one of a series of shots I had taken in evening sunlight having found where they roosted and concealed myself with a good line of sight (again after several attempts!). The Red Kite was an opportunity shot over my garden shed with a hand-held 100-400mm at dusk with the golden hour light illuminating under the wings.

My favourite local small bird is the Dartford Warbler, the icon of my local area, Horsell Common, and hence I decided that it would be my central image. Not easy to get close to them but knowing where they frequent I secured a shot when one popped up in the right place. Either side, I wanted some variety of species and had good shots of two of my local mammals. The fox was another opportunity shot when I was resting by a track gateway. It simply did not see me and blithely wondered into view against interesting backlight. The Roe Deer was captured at quite close range by sitting in a hedgerow with the 100-400mm to get a clean background in a meadow. I used a narrow aperture to secure the depth of field needed for its size. To bound the middle line, I used Reed Warbler and Stonechat "bird on a stick" shots – both the result of long waits in the appropriate habitat.

For the bottom line, I used a shot of a Greater Spotted Woodpecker who visited my garden looking for insects on an old tree stump. My camera had been set up in my conservatory on a tripod and I was lucky that the bird went behind the tree and so allowed me to rush unseen into position. The Great Crested Grebe



13 Grey Heron



14 Little Egret

swallowing the Common Bream was the result of many trips to Goldsworth Park Lake at different times of year. Effectively, it was down to persistence and I was able to shoot at 1/1250th and 1250 ISO on an autumn afternoon. However, the image took some careful processing to overcome the light of a gloomy day. The Grey Heron shot was the best of some 50 keepers – I had been too close and the images were almost full frame, but only one or two had a clean enough foreground for submission. The Little Egret was captured fortuitously on a beautiful autumn day and the Grebe family was taken on a specific trip to the lake on a sunny afternoon aiming to capture the striking juveniles with the adults.

Post-processing was undertaken in Lightroom, with Topaz Denoise used as a plug-in in Photoshop. I used layer masks to differentially sharpen some of the subjects, notably the deer, but beyond that the choice of clean images effectively ruled out the need to remove any significant background distractions. In many cases,

it was the actual background that shaped the choice for submission and precluded the use of numerous good subject captures, as did the need to select my raptor shots from those with a matching blue sky.

As I concluded in my statement –

"I have greatly enjoyed finding and capturing some of the beauty and action that is happening all around us on a daily basis".

Physically finding the wildlife living amongst us has given me great personal satisfaction and joy, and the journey to ARPS has certainly developed me as a photographer. I am pleased that it has been possible to join the RPS in 2020 and move rapidly to ARPS through LRPS by autumn 2022. That has been due to some excellent help from many in the Nature Group to whom I am most indebted. Further development will need a step change, but I am having a think about suitable projects. Please don't tell my wife just yet!



15 Great Crested Grebe family

From Bird Watcher to Bird Photographer - my journey to RPS Nature Associate

by Bruce Kendrick ARPS

I'm a septuagenarian and been a naturalist of one sort or another for a good sixty of those years, but it's only during the last six that I have carried a serious camera on my nature travels. Confession time. As a young lad I had also been a bird watcher; some would say a twitcher. My life total for the UK is just less than 400 bird species and in the twitching world that is not something to brag about. The record is over 500. But nature had me in its grip. I wanted to find out more and as the years went by, I grew into an ornithologist with a wider appreciation of nature.

One of my more recent nature quests took me to a bird hide on Tresco, the Isles of Scilly, overlooking a fresh-water lake. It must have been 8 years ago. I shared the hide with a photographer bedecked in serious Canon gear. We were watching a juvenile Citrine Wagtail as it patrolled a narrow stretch of mud bank between dense reeds and the water's edge. I got chatting to my Canon friend; it turned out he was free-lance and often works with David Attenborough. Respect!! Surprisingly he suggested I should go with Nikon if I was thinking of taking up wildlife photography. Upon returning home I promptly bought myself a Nikon body and a few suitable lenses.

That chance meeting was the trigger for my interest in wildlife photography. Would I have taken to this hobby if the hide had been empty? I can recommend a film called *Sliding Doors*, which explores this idea of chance encounters dictating a life's direction.

The next chance encounter was when my wife picked up one of those small monthly magazines covering local life. You know the sort; it manages to regale the reader with local stories and happenings, but its revenue is all from advertising and it's delivered free through your letter box. She skim reads the small periodical but notices a half-page insert about a photography exhibition in Poynton, not far from where I live. She looks my way and says "you might want to go along, now that you're a photographer!" There was more than a hint of irony in her choice of words. "Why not" I replied. "It's this Saturday," she said, "at the Civic Centre." We went along and looked at the work on display. "This lot know what they're doing" I said to myself and always one to act impulsively, I joined the North Cheshire Photographic Society (NCPS) on the way out. That was in March of 2018. And the rest is history is the cliché which normally follows. But let's explore that history a little.

1 Great Skua



2 Goldfinches (European)



The NCPS runs serious competitions. This would be a first for me but my main reason for joining was to improve my images, so I entered the fray. I was encouraged that my images were not totally trashed and anyway I was there to learn. Several members of NCPS helped me on this steep learning curve which including the formidable process of understanding how to edit images using Lightroom and Photoshop.



3 Arctic Tern



4 Whooper Swans



5 (Black-legged) Kittiwake

After a couple of years and much tutoring by our President-Elect, Noel, it was time to think of entering the world of photographic distinctions. My club colleagues recommended I start with the 'C' under the direction of the PAGB. I was helped again by a mentor, this time Chris Widdall of Oldham PS. Her support has been invaluable. I submitted my ten nature images and fortunately they made it with some room to spare but nevertheless it was quite a harrowing experience. I was now CPAGB. But something wasn't right. So many of the nature images which did score well were taken at set-ups; the same baited perch appeared in several images,



6 Atlantic Grey Seal



7 Black-necked Grebe



8 Black-tailed Godwit



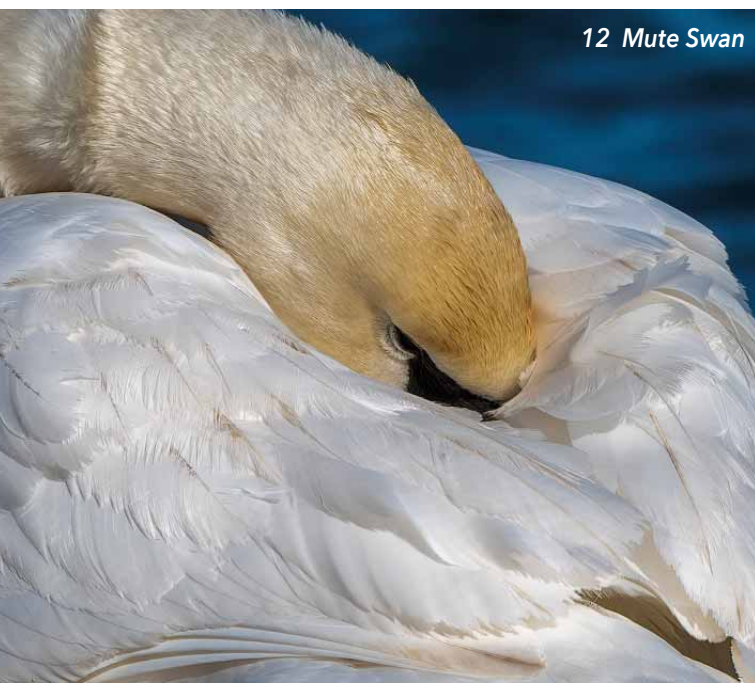
9 (Common) Snipe



10 Red-legged Partridge dust bath



11 (Eurasian) Otter



12 Mute Swan

and I wondered was this right for me. The hard work and necessary fieldcraft getting the Kingfisher to come and fish was done by the individual running, and charging, for the set-up – all the photographer had to do was turn up with the necessary gear and press the shutter button. An oversimplification but you get the drift. I think it was around this time that I vowed I would not use a set up again for competition images. I will still visit Gordon in Aviemore to photograph Ospreys. It is such a magical experience to sit there and try and get that shot with the bird's feet outstretched as it enters the water, but I felt strongly that my wildlife photography should call on my own experience as a naturalist, my own fieldcraft.

A few of our club were members of RPS and I joined in 2020. I attended my first Field Meeting organized by Ann Miles at Summer Leys in Northampton. As an introduction to the RPS, I could not have wished for more. I met several experienced nature photographers on the field trip. It was time, once again, to listen and learn. Time to up my game for sure but I've always been one for a challenge.

I had a choice for my next distinction award. Should I go for the D in PAGB or look at how the RPS manages distinction awards. When Ann told me "if you have already have a C in PAGB then I would suggest you look at going for the A with RPS." She then said something which convinced me to follow the RPS route. "If you go for an A only three of your fifteen images can be from set-ups. None are allowed for an F." That'll do for me!

I was already aware that the RPS required a panel of work accompanied by a statement of intent. After some thought and chats with other NCPS members, I reached the conclusion that my ideas about wildlife photography and my efforts, were better suited to a panel of work using my own fieldcraft and where assessors can take as long as they want.

My next step was to use the RPS advisory day for distinction awards and I put forward 15 images as PDI's. The outcome was not too bad. Two or three images were not up to scratch and another 4 or 5 required further work. The adjudicators on the day suggested I use their one-to-one mentoring service. This proved so helpful. No. Let me change that to 'essential'.

I then had a couple of weeks before I had to submit my 15 images for a one2one with Mick Durham. I was happy to work on the images which the advisors had suggested required more attention. I agreed with their criticisms, all had made sense to me. New images were not difficult to find - I spent a wonderful two weeks in Iceland in June. Birds everywhere, literally everywhere!

My one-to-one session with Mick was crucial. Again, I learned a lot, not just about my images but about the standards required for an A. Mick made a few technical suggestions which I followed up and off they went.

I told a few members of my camera club, or should I say 'photographic society', that I had entered images for an A - they all suggested that I get myself down to Bristol to be part of the process. A sort of 'Rite of Passage'. Apparently, you have to suffer for your art.

There were 8 print panels, which came before lunch. The afternoon was dedicated to a dozen PDI entries. My panel was second to last. I have to say it was a nerve wracking 20 minutes when the assessors focused on my images.

There were several complimentary comments, but one especially stood out for me. Pointing to my image of a Dipper in flight carrying a caddis fly larva he said, "This is technically sound, but you have no idea just how difficult it is to take this image". That'll do for me - it took a lot of fieldcraft and yes, when my panel was accepted, I was one very happy bunny.

Statement of Intent

My aim is to offer photographs that reflect nature as it is; the natural world as seen through the eyes of a sensitive observer. I want to produce images that show each creature in its own environment.

I am attempting to capture something ephemeral - the wonder, fascination and majesty that nature can bestow on the onlooker. Can this 'awe' be communicated to others through my images?



13 Brown Hare

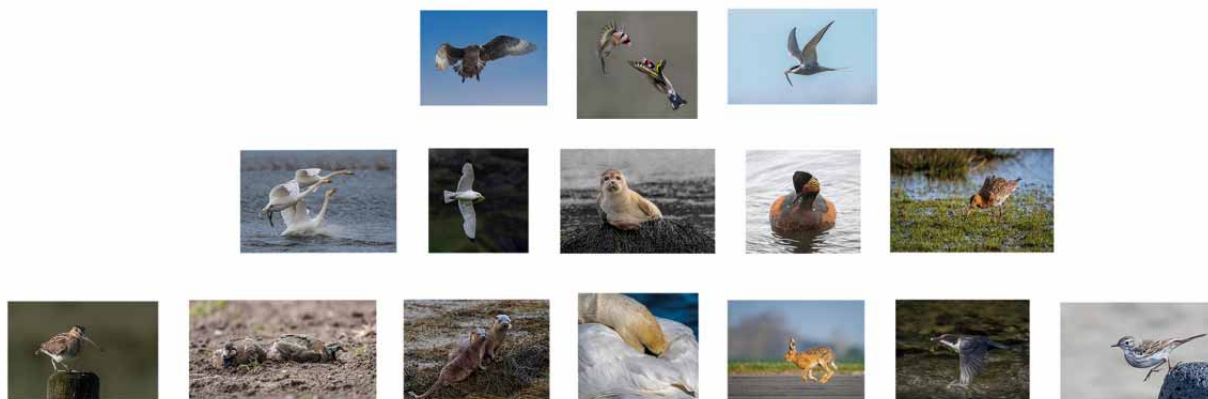


14 (White fronted) Dipper



15 Berthelot's Pipit

Bruce Kendrick Associate Presentation Layout



Kingfishers on the River Tiffey

by Gavin Bickerton-Jones

I went for a walk on the River Tiffey footpath in Norfolk during early January and was amazed to see a male Kingfisher sitting on a branch taking in the winter sun! A friend had told me that one had been spotted and I knew they had nested along the river in the past, but it was great to see one within 10 minutes of arriving! Kingfishers like shallow, slow moving rivers and streams, with plenty of branches to perch on and fish from. The Tiffey is perfect for this, especially after a lot of work was done last year to clean up the river and encourage more fish.

I went a few times in February and once again got some nice shots as the male fished from an over hanging branch in the winter sun. They don't really think about pairing up until around March, so a quiet month with just a couple of visits to keep tabs on his behaviour to see where he was using to fish from. The main way to distinguish the sex of Kingfishers is the beak, the male's is completely black, whereas the female has a red lower mandrel, completely red or sometimes just half red.

Things were hotting up now, and from early March onwards I spent 3-4 hours most days at all different times from morning to evening. I noticed the area he seemed to use as a central point and he was still zipping up and down the river. It was a precarious position sitting on the riverbank trying not to slide in the water, but as the vegetation grew it became easier to gain purchase. A few other photographers and members of the public would come and go on the footpath and I'm sure some residents thought I must be crazy sitting in the nettles with my big camera, but I can't think of a better place than to sit in the sun by a tranquil river becoming part of the kingfishers' world. There were some people who popped over with a camera saying it was a boost to mental health sitting there watching wildlife, and I can relate to that. From around 17th March he was very busy up and down, fishing and flying around, and then on the 18th I heard the distinctive 'peep peep' and two Kingfishers zipped by, chasing each other as part of a courtship routine. This was

Ready to mate



becoming promising. I had only seen the female flying past, not perched, but was hoping to witness the next stage of courtship, a fish pass, for the first time.

Whilst sitting there waiting there were times with no Kingfisher, but there were Water Voles swimming and feeding on the vegetation, Egrets, Buzzards and Red Kites overhead, a Little Owl and, in an old ivy covered tree opposite my spot, there was a Tawny Owl roosting in a hole at the top.

I concentrated on getting different action shots as the male Kingfisher landed on a stick in the water and noticed mud on his beak - he appeared to be digging a nest. The female appeared now and then, also with mud on her beak, and then it happened. At around 6.30 AM on the 22nd, the male appeared with a fish in his beak, and he was holding it head first. Kingfishers always eat fish head first so the scales and fins and stickles don't stick in their throat as they swallow it down whole. So when you see one holding a fish head first it means they are giving it to another kingfisher! Sure enough, a little 'peep' and whistle and the female appeared on the stick and I got my first fish pass shots as the male pushed the fish into the females beak, showing what a good provider he would be. I saw two more fish passes on the 24th and 27th, all early in the morning at first light. Its amazing they can fish in such dim light. Then late in the month he



First fish pass



Rising from the river after washing off nest mud



Male bringing in fish



Bringing in fish



Bigger fish

came and whistled but without a fish, the female came and looked at him as if to say, 'where is it then', but I think he felt it was time to take things further. The female appears to be a first year bird - her plumage is a little greener and paler than the male and she still has some mottling on her breast feathers like a youngster. Early one morning at the beginning of April, the male came and whistled the female - she arrived on the branch and they mated. That was another first for me to witness!

After that it was a bit quiet on riverside, a few fly pasts and fishing, but definitely looked like they were incubating eggs, taking turns going in the nest that I could see was now in the bank right next to the footpath. It always made me smile when someone would ask what I was photographing, and when I told them they would say "I've always wanted to see a Kingfisher", so I would tell them that if they kept quiet and still, he would return to that branch in about 15mins and sure enough he did. Quite a few people got their first Kingfisher experience like that!

The eggs normally take around 20 days to hatch, and on the 20th at around 6am, the male turned up with a fish, headfirst, and flew to the nest. So I knew the chicks must have hatched. I made a mental note of when the young would fledge - approximately 23-25 days later.

2nd fish pass



From this point on it was all action, at first light the male was taking in six fish in the space of 30 mins, so I guessed on 6 chicks. From then on all through the day until last light there was a lot of action, the male doing the morning session bringing in fish (each chick needs up to 10 fish a day!), then he would splash in the water to clean off the mud from the nest and preen his feathers, and the female would do a turn. The male would fly in and land on a handy stick that someone had put in the water, then fly to the nest. The female seemed a lot more 'skittish' and would fly past the nest to an overhanging branch, then fly straight in the nest from there. There would be intense action for 45mins, then about half an hour of nothing, then it would start again.

At first the fish would be quite small, but as the month went on, they got bigger and bigger. By May, the fish size seemed to drop from a fat minnow longer than his beak, back to half beak long Sticklebacks. Maybe a tactic they use to make the chicks hungry - to encourage them to leave the nest. By the 10th they were chasing each other again as part of bonding for the next clutch, as well as taking fish to the nest. I went again on the 12th and 13th, but still no sign of chicks, so I braced myself for an early (4.30am) start on the 14th. As I arrived the male turned up with a small fish and took it into the nest. The female took one in about 15mins later, so it appeared the chicks were still there. About 20mins later I suddenly realised (through my sleepy eyes) that there was a smaller, paler bird on the stick. A chick! It stayed there for a while, then the male returned with a fish, they did a fish pass, then another chick appeared on the branch! Next another chick appeared, fluttering around like a drunk on a Saturday night, bumping into reeds trying to land eventually crash landing near the branch and climbing up to see the big world for the first time. It was amazing how they soon were zipping about, flying up and down the river, making it hard to see how many there were. They were perching under branches at water level, with the parents flying about with fish to keep feeding them. It was a great sight to see, a privilege to be sharing their world for a short while.

I went back over the next few days to see if the chicks were around, but no sign and the adults were not carrying fish any more. I think they had chased the youngsters off and were preparing for another clutch. I went early a few days later and the male came to the branch a few times with mud on his beak - I guessed that they were excavating a new nest hole. The female also made a few fly pasts.

And so the story begins again!



Fledgeling



Water Vole



Little Owl

Grey Seals on the North East Norfolk Coast

by John Bulpitt FRPS

Over the past seven years I have paid many visits to the large grey seal colony that stretches from Winterton, through Horsey, to Waxham. My visits have usually been in November/December to coincide with the pupping season.

The colony is continually expanding and may well encompass Sea Palling and Hemsby beaches before too long. In 2022 there were about 3800 recorded births compared with 2700 in 2021 and less than 100 at the turn of the century.

Atlantic grey seals (*Halycoeurus grypus*) are one of the rarest seal species. This may come as a surprise to readers in the UK. But nearly 50% of the world's population of about 150,000 reside in and around our shores and numbers have expanded dramatically since a ban on commercial hunting was introduced in the 1980s.

Pregnant grey seal cows come ashore from the end of October until the end of December, and give birth to a

single pup within a day of arrival. Images 2 and 3.

However, there is one record of a twin birth: this was at Horsey in 2016 and was confirmed by DNA testing.

The pups had to be rescued shortly after I took this photograph, as the mother had abandoned any attempt to feed them. (The seal on the edge of the dune is a bull waiting for the cow to come into oestrus). Image 4.

Whilst nursing, cows will observe a strict 'social distancing'. If another cow or pup comes within 2 metres or so, the intruder will quickly be seen off. Image 5.

Pups are born with a thick white coat, although about 1 in 400 are black/melanistic. (Image 13 page 42).

Their coat is not waterproof and pups must seek higher ground at high tide. On a large stretch of Waxham beach the sea defences prevent the seals from moving into the dunes. This can cause real problems and when I was there on December 3rd 2022, five pups had been marooned and had to be rescued by the "Friends of Horsey Seals".



1. Grey Seal colony



2. Cow with newborn pup, 1 minute old.



3. Cow with 6 minute old newborn pup



4. Cow with twins



5. Cow enforcing social distancing.

The birth weight of a typical pup is 12 kgs. They gain around 2 kgs per day on a diet of rich milk (60% fat content compared with 10% for a Jersey cow). Image 6. The pups are weaned after about 18 days and the cow will then return to the sea to feed, having lost about

25% of her body weight whilst nursing. The pup will remain ashore for another two/three weeks until its adult/waterproof coat has developed. During this time it will live off its fat reserves.



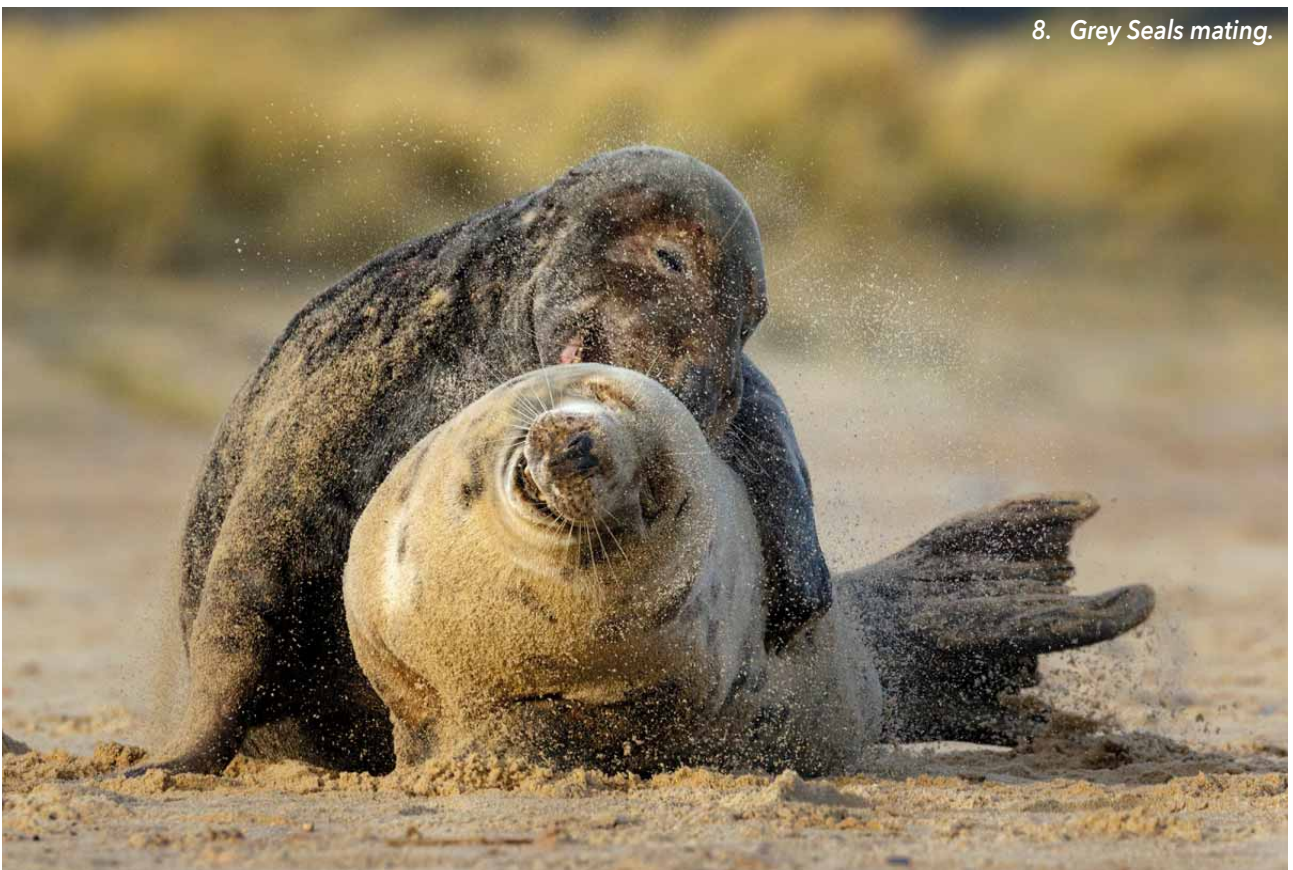
6. Grey Seal pup feeding



7. Grey Seal courtship.

Cows come into oestrus about 14 days after giving birth and will normally mate before returning to sea. Grey seal courtship is an aggressive if not violent affair. Images 7 and 8. Even when sexually receptive, cows will initially resist a bull's advances. Although mature bulls, typically weigh 250 kgs which may be as much as twice the weight of cows, they are wary

because the claws of the cows can do a lot of damage to the face and eyes. I have sometimes seen a bull retreat only for a rival to mate shortly afterwards. Bulls require a strong determination to overcome the aggressive responses of the cows' and scientists believe that this reinforces the selective advantage of aggressive dominance in bulls. Image 9.



8. Grey Seals mating.



9. Cow spurning Bull's advances.

During this time pups are in danger of being seriously hurt. Although a bull will not deliberately kill a pup they can easily be collateral damage in the struggle to mate. Image 10.

The gestation period for a pregnant seal is about 12 months but there is a 3 month delay in the implantation of the egg. It is believed that this allows the cow to recover from the considerable weight loss experienced whilst nursing her pup.

10. Bull attacking pup



11. Bulls in combat





12. Young bulls play fighting.

Usually only the largest bulls mate. Although they do not assemble a harem, experienced males seem to know when a cow is receptive and will drive off other males. A threat display or mock charge usually suffices but when bulls are evenly matched fights may break out which can lead to serious injury or death, but these are relatively rare. Image 11. Younger males who stand little or no chance of mating can often be seen play-fighting. This, presumably, is to hone the skills they will require to breed successfully later in life. Image 12.

During November/December mature bulls may be ashore for up to 8 weeks. They do not feed during this time and can lose up to one-third of their body weight.

Because of the bad behaviour of a minority of photographers and dog-walkers, it is becoming more difficult to photograph grey seals in NE Norfolk. Volunteer

wardens are out in force in November and December to dissuade visitors from going onto the best-known and most accessible beaches. But there are still safe opportunities if you research the location well and are prepared to walk a mile or two. The golden rule is to maintain a distance of at least 10 meters between you and the subject. Cows, if disturbed, may abandon their pups. Adult seals can move surprisingly quickly and deliver a nasty bite.

Seal colonies are characterised by long periods of inactivity interrupted by occasional bursts of action. My advice is to find a likely spot, probably in the dunes, and sit quietly and patiently. When the action starts hit the motor drive! I find that my Canon 7D Mk11 (1.6 crop factor) coupled with a 100-400 lens is a good combination for seal photography. Occasionally I've been 'over-lensed' but I'm often reluctant to change lenses on a sandy and often windswept beach/dune. And be warned -the north east Norfolk coast can feel like the coldest place on earth during midwinter!

Bird life on a seal beach during the breeding season is somewhat restricted. But there are occasional photographic opportunities. Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls patrol the beaches and will quickly Hoover-up the afterbirth. Small flocks of Snow Buntings over-winter on this part of the coast and Turnstones are ever-present. Images 15-17 - for these and other images see inside the back cover.



13. Black seal pup

Visiting The Chillingham Wild Cattle

by Jean Robson



01 Chillingham Wild Cattle resting in the shade

All domestic cattle developed from the extinct auroch, a wild ox. The first cattle arrived in Britain about 5000 years ago and from them the Chillingham cattle are descended. The beasts have lived wild in Chillingham Park for about 800 years, on a site now managed by The Chillingham Wild Cattle Association. In recent years the animals have been given additional hay in very hard weather conditions, but no other support. The only contact with humans is when wardens monitor the site, or escort visitors, the animals are not handled at all.

The Chillingham Park in Northumberland was once a medieval hunting forest, inhabited by deer and wild cattle. The cattle have remained an isolated population within the park, with no new introductions for at least 300 years. Breeding patterns have been studied since 1860, when Lord Tankerville was encouraged by Charles Darwin to keep records. Over the centuries the population has fluctuated, falling to 13 individuals in 1947 after a harsh winter, but has gradually recovered since then to number around 140 today.

It is perhaps surprising that so small a gene pool can produce a healthy population, but that is exactly what has happened, the animals are extremely genetically homogenous, but apart from minor teeth deformities do not show any genetic problems. As the animals are never handled studying behaviour can provide interesting comparisons with domestic cattle.

The cattle are white with black noses, red ears, some spotting, and impressive horns.

02 Cows



03 Calf





4 Young bulls jousting and honing their confrontation skills.



05 Cows, showing secondary curve on the older animal's horns



06 Calf developing horn buds

The herd is approximately half bulls and half cows and can be visited only in the company of wardens. At the entrance biosecurity rules require disinfection of footwear, essential to prevent diseases entering the population, which is never treated by vets.

The animals may be observed relaxing and slowly chewing their cud, looking docile, but this can change in short periods to aggressive behaviour. The bulls and sometimes the cows show many scars of jousting to exert their mating rights. Most disputes start with bellowing, pawing the ground, but can go on to real fighting (even to death on occasions).

Bulls and cows both have horns, which start to develop as calves. The cows have horns which are slightly less splayed than those of the bulls, and as the females age their horns develop a secondary curve. In some cases, injury in early life can lead to disfigurement as the horn grows, the bull in image 8 appears to be able to function normally despite his rather odd horn, however the wardens were unable to say if he had ever succeeded in fathering a calf.

Unlike many other ungulates there is no rutting season, so bulls need to be ready for mating conflicts all year! We observed a cow in season chased by a posse of bulls, all intent on claiming her, and gather that the chase continued for many hours. Bulls are frequently seen smelling a cow to establish her state, and the more sexually active a bull is, the dirtier his rear, as courting is associated with much tail swinging.

The reaction of the cattle to our presence was interesting, often they did not react to us quietly leaving the Landrover. However, we were warned that a human lying on the ground to get a low angled shot can produce more reaction than an upright one, possibly the warden suggested, evoking innate anxiety about predatory stalking behaviour. The same can occur if groups of visitors separate, again possibly mimicking behaviour associated with wolf packs, and producing



07 Tempers fraying!



8 Bull with damaged horn



09 Bull checking mating readiness of the cow.

innate anxiety. The bull in image 10 appeared interested, but the fact that whilst observing me lying down to get a better angle, he continued cudding provided the reassurance that he was not stressed.

The cows separate from the herd to give birth, and leave the calf hidden in vegetation for about a week, they then introduce the calf to the herd, to be accepted. Thereafter, even at a very young age, the calves seem to spend a lot of their time a considerable distance from the mother, the cows made no move when we stepped from the vehicle to photograph very young resting calves. Maybe because they have no experiences of calves being removed, as in commercial herds? After periods of separation the cow and calf re-unite to feed, feeding goes on until the calf is about 12 months old, during that time the cow has surprisingly clean teats from the suckling! After weaning cows are not mature for another 2 years.

In medieval times white cattle with red ears were particularly prized, and having spent time with these animals we understand why! The fluffy white calves are incredibly cute, a cow faced with a posse of excited bulls looks exhausted and big bulls ooze strength and power.

References

Chillingham. Its cattle, castle and church.

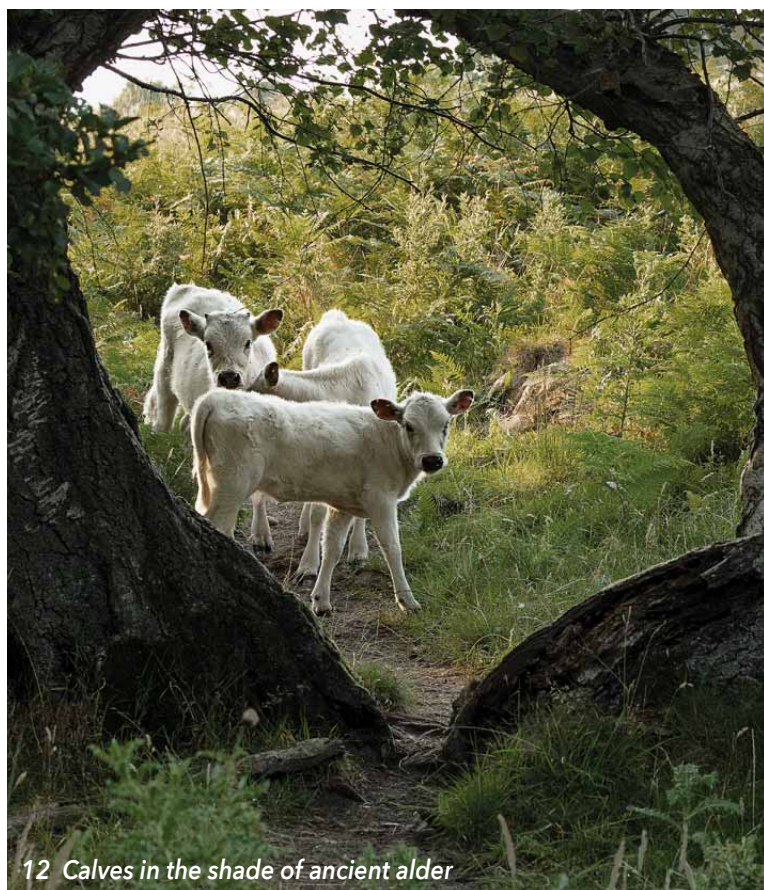
Bahn P and Mutimer V., FonthillMedia Ltd. 2016



10 Bull still cudding (chewing) whilst watching me.



11 Very young calf resting



12 Calves in the shade of ancient alder

Game viewing in Botswana

by Michael Cook

Feet up! Not an invitation to relax, but an instruction from our driver/guide to lift our feet as we forded a deep pool and water flowed in through the cutaway sides of the Toyota Land Cruiser and out through the tailgate.

Booked originally for 2020 but twice deferred by the pandemic, it was third time lucky to be on safari in Botswana, visiting one camp in Chobe National Park and two camps in the Okavango delta, each for three nights.

Our journey began on 31 October 2022, flying first to Johannesburg, connecting with a flight to Maun then onward by light aircraft to the first camp.

Pre-departure planning involved the difficult choice of what camera gear to take and what to leave behind. To some extent the choice was made for us; we were strongly advised to take a full set of spare clothes and essential toiletries in cabin baggage as, should our checked baggage not make it to Johannesburg or Maun, the chances of it catching up with us as we moved from camp to camp by light aircraft was remote,

though the same day laundry service provided by the camps would keep us going. Also, the connecting flight to Maun had a weight limit of 7kgs for cabin baggage and the light aircraft transfers between camps had strict limits on the dimensions of baggage.

Reluctantly I dispensed with a second camera body and batteries, packing a full frame camera body, 80-400mm zoom, 1.4x teleconverter, 24-85mm zoom, two additional batteries, charger and sensor cleaning kit. The decision to leave behind the second body was helped by reviewing pictures taken on a previous safari from which it was apparent that the 80-400mm would be versatile enough to deal with most situations, so I would be unlikely to be changing lenses in the field where the dust hazard would be greatest.

Weatherwise we were on the cusp of the wet season, but we hoped that with water holes in short supply at the end of a hot dry period animals would be drawn to the remaining ones, which proved to be the case.



Kori Bustard - National Bird of Botswana

Life on safari followed the usual format, wake-up call at 5.30am, breakfast at 6.00am, game drive at 6.30am returning at 11.00am, lunch at 12.00 noon, free time until high tea at 3.30pm, game drive at 4.00pm until 7.00pm (including the traditional sundowner en-route), dinner at 8.00pm. Apart from the early start, being driven around for seven and a half hours a day may not sound too arduous, but the tracks are quite undulating and rutted resulting in an 'African massage' as you respond to the movement of the vehicle.

The Toyota Land Cruiser is ubiquitous – open sided and with an overhead canopy to provide shade from the sun, it has padded, height adjustable armrests which double as a beanbag for steadying the camera (though requiring a rather contorted posture). Practice may vary from camp to camp, but those we stayed at had a policy of no more than four persons per vehicle; we were travelling with another couple which worked very well for photography even though it was not a specialist photography tour.

Game viewing in Botswana tends to be about quality rather than quantity – we had plenty of variety including close encounters, but not huge herds. Elephant, Giraffe, Wildebeest, Hippo and Zebra numbered no more than twenty at any one time, but it is hard to describe the thrill of being in close proximity to Lions and Leopard. Sightings of Wild/Painted Dogs, Jackal, Striped Mongoose, Roan and other antelopes added to the diversity of wildlife. The birdlife was abundant both in numbers and species, from the strutting Kori-bustard to the dazzling Lilac-breasted Roller.



Black-backed Jackal



Zebra



Leopard



Roan Antelope



Vervet Monkey



Dung Beetle



Fungi on Elephant dung



Papyrus Grass

Helpfully, the camps provided check-lists of many of the flora and fauna that might be encountered, which greatly assisted identifying images back home.

The guides were knowledgeable and accommodating - always trying to manoeuvre into a position with good light on the subject - important when you can't leave the vehicle to choose a viewpoint. Apart from the morning coffee stop/comfort break and the afternoon sundowner, all photography was done from the vehicle; these breaks were an opportunity to dismount and explore the ground thereabouts for insects and plants. Whilst the objective of the game drive is to have as many encounters with wildlife as possible, the guides were willing to linger at a location for longer if all in the party agreed, though a specialist photography tour might be more accommodating in that respect.

Whilst the main purpose might be to see the larger animals, there were plenty of birds, insects, plants and fungi for variety, (I think the guides were somewhat bemused by our curiosity with dung beetles). We also had the opportunity of two boat rides, one in the traditional mokoro canoe and the other in a powered craft. The lush waterside vegetation and grasses made an interesting alternative to the land-based plants and shrubs.

I have been a convert to back-button focussing for some time which suited the safari experience, especially for subjects which might take flight at any moment. With focus and image stabilisation accomplished it only remained to choose the moment at which to release the shutter. An unimpeded line of sight from camera to subject, though ideal, is not always achievable on safari; acquiring focus when there was vegetation between the camera and subject, especially when the vegetation was well-lit and the subject in partial shade was sometimes challenging; releasing the back button and tweaking the focus manually usually did the trick, with no risk of auto-focus hunting for an alternative 'lock'.

Not all subjects presented themselves in open view - there were some reclusive birds, particularly Owls, which concealed themselves in the tree canopy, necessitating some experimentation with exposure metering modes. Nevertheless, overall this was a successful wildlife watching trip with plenty of photo opportunities included.



Lilac-breasted Roller

My Tanzania Safari

by Grace Prescott

I'm not an RPS member but two members of my family are and one day I hope to be a member too. I'm a fourteen year old who loves wildlife and photography and in October 2022 my Great Aunt and Uncle made a dream come true and took my family and I to Tanzania.

Where do I begin? Perhaps the huge numbers of Elephant in Tarangire, or the freezing cold mornings down in the Ngorongoro Crater; maybe the Lion cubs on the plains of the Serengeti or the Mara River where two million animals must face the challenge of crossing the river to continue their annual migration. These were places where I found myself during our two week safari.

Our journey began very early at our local airport from where we flew to Amsterdam for our direct flight to Kilimanjaro Airport near Arusha. After landing and going through immigration and customs formalities, we were met by our agents, Unique Safaris and introduced to Fazal who was to be our guide for the next two weeks. We spent our first night at a lovely villa not too far from the airport and had breakfast the next morning on the patio while we watched Dik Diks (a tiny antelope species) grazing on the lawns. After breakfast our safari began.

We spent the first four days of our safari at Tarangire N.P. We saw so many different species of animals and birds, including Elephant, Giraffe, Zebra, Lion, Warthog, Impala & Gazelles, Baboons, Storks and Pelican to name but a few. Among my favourites at Tarangire were the Elephants, many who had very young infants. One place we visited was the Sand River where the water is below the surface; the Elephants would use their trunks to make deep holes in the sand until they reached the water and could drink. It was fascinating to watch. Another favourite was to watch the Baboons as they jumped, climbed, dug and foraged for food, the babies sitting on their mothers' backs. We were also fortunate to see a huge Rock Python up in a tree while shedding its skin. We also saw Cape Buffalo, and at a lake in the south of the park there were thousands of Pelican and birds like Storks and Plovers.

Tarangire has a great many Baobab Trees and also Termite Mounds. Our Guide explained to us how the Termites work to defend their home against invaders and the elements by opening and closing ventilation holes in the mound. Some of the termite mounds were taller than a man.



Elephants drinking at the Sand River, Tarangire.



Olive Baboon Mother with infant - Tarangire.



Cape Buffalo - Tarangire.



African White Pelican, Tarangire.



Serval - Ngorongoro Crater.



Two Lions feeding on zebra carcass with Black-backed Jackal nearby - Ngorongoro Crater.



Lion cubs at Sametu Kopje - Serengeti.



Bat-eared Foxes - Serengeti.

The morning of our last breakfast at Maramboi, the staff sang to us and presented us with a special leaving cake. It was delicious!

Ngorongoro Crater From Tarangire we journeyed up to Ngorongoro Crater where we stayed at the Lion's Paw camp on the rim of the crater. I had imagined that in Africa the temperature would be very high but this was not the case. In the Crater the temperatures drop rapidly after sunset and during our early morning game drives it was so cold that I had to wear several layers. However, I soon forgot about the cold because the Crater was so full of wildlife. I had hopes of seeing Rhino but we were unfortunate and did not see any close but we were able to spot them with binoculars from a higher viewpoint. Huge numbers of Wildebeest, Impala, Grants & Thomsons Gazelle, Zebra, Warthog, Hippo and Hyena were all present plus a large number of birds including Lesser Flamingo, Augur Buzzard, Tawny Eagle, Crowned Plover and Kori Bustard. We also had a lovely sighting of a Serval - a very beautiful member of the cat family.

One of the highlights of our visit was when we spotted three male Lions feeding on a Zebra carcass. One of them was clearly the 'boss' and the two younger males waited patiently for him to take his fill and leave before they started feeding. But they were not the only ones who were hungry that morning - a Black-backed Jackal kept attempting to steal some of the kill. The lions shooed him off a few times, but he managed to steal enough to fill his belly.

On our last evening at Lion's Paw camp we were extremely lucky to receive a visit from the local Maasai people who came to entertain us with their traditional dances - my younger brother joined in and enjoyed himself immensely.

Central Serengeti We left our camp on the rim of the Crater early for our long drive up to the Central Serengeti but on the way found time to visit Olduvai Gorge, the site of George and Mary Leaky's discovery of 'early man' in 1959. We spent four nights at Sametu Camp - it was a long drive but we stopped several times along the way to photograph Hartbeest, Eland (the largest African Antelope) and Bat-eared Fox amongst others. For me, the Serengeti was the best part of the trip. There we saw Lion cubs playing with each other - occasionally irritating their mothers - and we stopped every evening on our way back to our camp to check in on them. It was lovely to just sit and watch them play while the sun was falling below the horizon.



Cheetah mother dragging Thomson's Gazelle with one of the cubs following behind - Serengeti

A very memorable time for me was the morning we spotted a Cheetah with two cubs moving across the plain, pausing at termite mounds to survey their surroundings and an approaching herd of Thomson's Gazelle. A Cheetah hunt is a magical thing to witness and only by watching it do you realise just how fast they actually move. Her hunt was successful and after she had killed her prey she dragged it back near to where she had left her cubs and called for them to come. We left them to enjoy their breakfast and continued with our drive. We also witnessed a similar behaviour to what we had seen in the Serengeti with a Jackal, but this time it was four Cheetah brothers who had made a kill. I think it safe to say that on this occasion the Jackal bit off more than he could chew and ended up being chased by the fastest animal on the planet, earning some minor injuries for its trouble. We also saw a Leopard with its cub in a tree, the cub getting its teeth into a gazelle its mother had killed while she rested on a bough. My love of big cats is what made the Serengeti stand out as a very special place for me.

Mara River After four days, we continued north to the Mara River - where we stayed at River Camp. Again, it was a long drive but interspersed with animals and birds we could stop to photograph.

On our first morning there we discovered the real meaning of 'mass migration'. Our Guide told us that about two million would make the crossing that season. We had seen very large herds of Wildebeest and Zebra on our journey north but the sheer numbers gathering to cross the river was amazing. The river crossing would be the hardest part of their journey, they would have to face the dangers of the water - both the strength of the

current and the crocodiles. The Wildebeest seem anxious to begin the crossing and you may have to wait patiently for many hours. Eventually one will make the decision and then they are all on the move. Witnessing the river crossing of so many animals was a very humbling and emotional experience. As the first to cross made landfall on our side suddenly there were wet animals all around us shaking water from their coats and the air filled with the sound of Mothers and young trying to locate each other in the crush. I couldn't say how long it took for them all to cross but eventually they did. The Zebra all seemed to hang back until the Wildebeest had crossed. It really was one of those 'once in a lifetime' experiences and one that I will never forget.

Of course, there were more Leopard and Cheetah sightings, Elephant and a host of other species of mammals and birds too many to mention. Then, just like that, our safari was over - we would fly back to Arusha the next day. 14 days, 7,000+ pictures and so many memories later our safari had come to an end, but not before we enjoyed one final dinner together. Our guide had arranged for us to have our evening meal out in the bush. It was so wonderful to be dining under the stars, around a campfire in the bush with wild animals nearby.

We had an amazing time thanks to my Great Aunt & Uncle who made it all possible, and also our Guide who taught my Brother and I so much about what we were seeing and found us so many animals to photograph. Tanzania is an amazing country and a wildlife safari there should be an experience on everyone's bucket list.

More of Grace's pictures on the back cover.
She used her EOS 60D and EF 100-400mm Mk I lens.



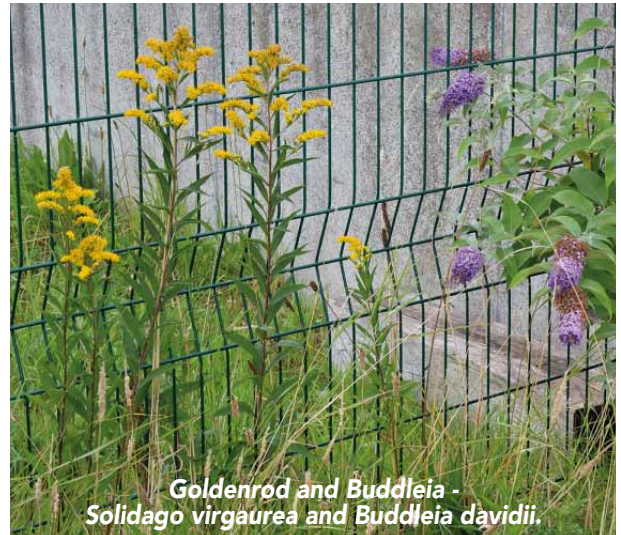
Biting Stonecrop - *Sedum acre*.



Field Bindweed - *Convolvulus arvensis*.



Bristly Oxtongue - *Picris echioides*.



Goldenrod and Buddleia - *Solidago virgaurea* and *Buddleia davidii*.



Common Mallow - *Malva sylvestris*.



Great willowherb - *Epilobium hirsutum*.



Common Ragwort - *Senecio jacobaea*.



Field Bindweed - *Convolvulus arvensis*.

Plants of the Peri-Urban Interface

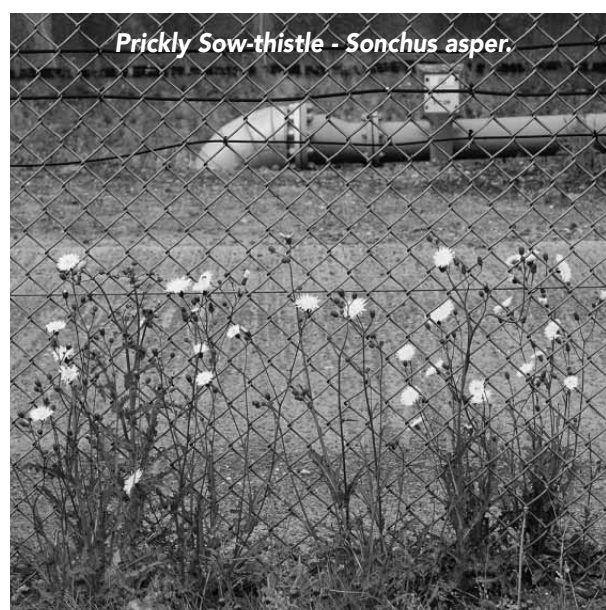
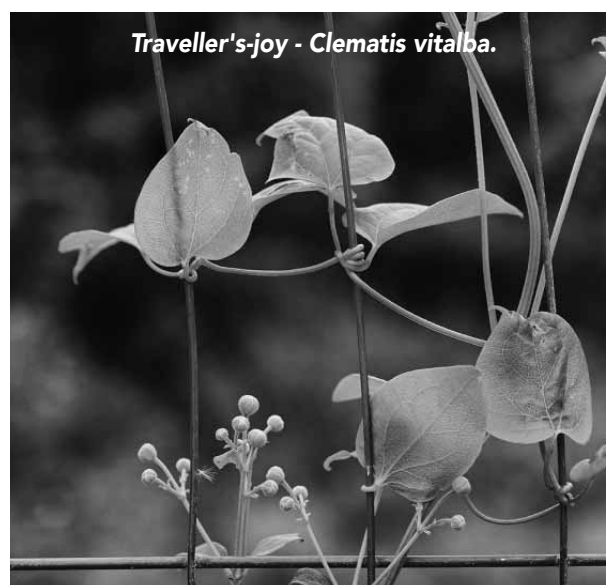
by Peter Roworth FRPS.

UNESCO defines peri-urban areas as zones of transition from rural to urban land uses, located between the outer limits of urban and regional centres and the rural environment. The boundaries of peri-urban areas are porous and transitory as urban development extends into rural and industrial land.

Visualising the peri-urban interface began at a Zoom meeting in 2020 between RPS Regional Hub organisers Stewart Wall ARPS of East Midlands, Rhys Jones of South Wales and Rolf Kraehenbuehl of North Wales. Their original idea was to organise a project and raise awareness amongst RPS members; to create a body of work and showcase this work in an exhibition. RPS members of the East Midlands and the Benelux International Chapter were invited to express an interest in this project which was called 'The Peri-Urban Interface' and it was launched on August 1st 2021. The aim was to give all participants freedom to create work without boundaries or direction and it was to be a collaboration of shared practice between RPS members. In total 38 photographers took part, but instead of an exhibition the results of the project were produced in a book, '*Visualising The Peri-Urban Interface*' published in December 2021 by Future Heritage. This is a collection of photographs with supporting text and was designed by Stewart and Shona Wall.

The photographers interpreted the concept of the peri-urban in many ways which included residential building development; the value of green spaces for recreation, mindfulness and environmental practise; transport systems of rivers, canals, railways, motorways, bypasses, cycleways and footpaths; renewable energy generation facilities; industrial dereliction; windmills in the Dutch landscape; community gardens; and Austrian ski facilities in winter and summer. My contribution was to photograph a range of plants found in the peri-urban interface and I called the project 'Space Invaders'. The timeframe for the project was tight but I was able to photograph some late-flowering species.

Plants that colonise the peri-urban landscape are opportunists; most are prolific seeders that can establish quickly on any available ground in this ever-changing interface environment. Native and alien species can be found, with seeds spread by the wind, by birds and animals, and on the wheels and tracks of vehicles. Many require just the smallest of gaps in hard surfaces, growing in cracks in tarmac and concrete; others take advantage of bare or abandoned ground and can flourish for a number of years until their sites are developed. Some are scramblers taking full advantage of the temporary support of security fencing or heaps of rubble. All exist in a chaotic state of abandonment in semi-natural or artificial habitats, away from the control of man.



Nature Group Events April and May 2023

01 April Nature Group Spring Meeting at 09.30

Smethwick P.S., Park St., Churchbridge,
Oldbury, West Midlands, B69 2AS
See opposite page for full details.

02 April Meeting at WWT Slimbridge at 09.30

Slimbridge, Gloucestershire GL2 7BT

Large numbers of wild birds busy displaying, nesting and feeding, offering opportunities for photography at fairly close range; also a wide range of captive birds.
Entry free for WWT Members, Adults £16.50 with Gift Aid, Concession £15 with Gift Aid.
Extensive catering and toilet facilities.

16 April Potteric Carr Reserve, at 09.30

nr Doncaster, Yorkshire DN4 8DB

One of Yorkshire Wildlife Trust's flagship reserves, Potteric Carr attracts huge numbers of wetland birds. Around 65 species breed there each year, including Bittern, Black-necked Grebe, Marsh Harrier and Cetti's Warbler. There are hides around the reserve.
Car Park opens at 9:30 and closes at 17:00

27 April Paxton Pits, Nature Reserve, at 10.00

Paxton, Cambridgeshire PE19 6ET

Conveniently located just off the A1, Paxton Pits has a rich mosaic of habitats. In springtime, Warblers, Kingfishers, Grebes, Herons and numerous other birds nest here. If warm, there should also be insects to photograph.
Visitor centre may serve drinks and there are toilets.

07 May Attenborough Nature Reserve, at 09.30

Chilwell, Notts, NG96DY

Opened by Sir David Attenborough in 1966. Best known for birds with over 160 species recorded, it also hosts rare wildlife including Bitterns and Otters; cited as one of the best places in the UK to see Kingfisher and also home to hundreds of species of plants and insects
Access: 8am-8pm. Parking & Reserve Fee: £3

10 May Cribbs Meadow, at 10.00

Sewstern, Leicestershire LE15 7RQ

Cribb's Meadow has a small but intricate mosaic of diverse habitats. Target species include Green-winged and Common Spotted Orchids, Adder's Tongue and Cowslips. Summer migrants should be in full song.

After lunch a visit to Barnack Hills and Holes where we hope to find Man Orchids plus a variety of insects. Late Pasque flowers may also be found.

Leader: Ken Rasmussen ARPS

Further details will be sent to participants nearer the date.

16 May RSPB Frampton Marsh, at 10.00

Frampton, Boston, Lincolnshire PE20 1AY

A variety of freshwater habitats and, at the far end of the reserve, the Wash. The reserve offers a good variety of birds: numerous Waders including Avocet, Lapwing, Redshank, Egrets and Snipe, also Brent Geese and Hen Harriers. May is a good month to visit.
Free car park. Visitor Centre with light refreshments, toilets, Picnic area (suggest bringing a picnic) and several large ponds and hides nearby.

Free to RSPB members or £3 per person if not.

19 May Bonsai Bank & Denge Wood, at 09.30

Penny Pot Lane, Nr Canterbury, Kent CT4 7EY

Denge Wood is a large complex of woodland in a remote part of the Stour Valley. It includes a flower rich area of chalk grassland known as Bonsai Bank which is excellent for Lady Orchids, which we should find in full flower. Fly Orchids and White Helleborines are also present as well as the more common types of Orchid such as Twayblades, Common Spotted Orchids, etc. It is also an excellent area for butterflies, particularly Duke of Burgundy.
The site is 3/4 mile walk from the car park along an almost level forest vehicle track. There are no facilities on site so bring a packed lunch. Free parking at the site

21 May Rutland Water Nature Reserve, at 09.00

Eggleton, Oakham, Rutland.

One of the best places in the UK to watch birds and other wildlife. Internationally famous, the reserve is managed by Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust in partnership with Anglian Water. There are over 20 wildlife hides to explore. The site lists Great White Egrets, rafts of ducks, Terns, Grebes, Coot, Moorhen, Herons, Waders and Osprey. Visitor centre with full facilities
Parking and Reserve Fee: £6/adult, £5/Concession

24 May Martin Down National Nature Reserve, 09.30

A354 between Salisbury and Blandford Forum,
Salisbury, Hampshire SP55RH

Martin Down is one of the largest areas of uninterrupted chalk downland in Britain and home to an exceptional collection of plants, animals and butterflies, including a number of rare or threatened species. Twelve orchid species have been identified, including Burnt-tip, Green-winged, Greater Butterfly and Frog. Brown Hares are found throughout the site. Birds include Turtle Dove, Grey Partridge, Nightingale, Skylark, Yellowhammer and Linnet. Hobby and Quail may be seen and Montagu's Harrier and Stone Curlew sometimes visit the site.
The car park is free.

31 May Whixall Moss National Nature Reserve, 09.30

Canal Side, Whixall, Shropshire SY13 2PH

Straddling the English - Welsh Border near Whitchurch in Shropshire. Fenn's, Whixall and Bettisfield Mosses are a National Nature Reserve, Site of Special Scientific Interest, European Special Area of Conservation and a Wetland of International Importance. Covering nearly 1000 hectares, the Mosses are the third largest and one of the most southerly raised bogs in Britain.

A haven for dragonflies, incl. the rare White-faced Darter and many other species including Raft Spiders and Large Heath Butterflies. Plants include, Bog Rosemary, Bog Asphodels and Sundew. Birds include wildfowl, waders, Hobby and Nightjar.

The car park is free but there are no facilities on site so please bring a packed lunch

For full details of these and other events, or to book, please visit the Nature Group pages of the RPS website at:

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

and click on Events.

RPS Nature Group Spring Meeting

47th Annual General Meeting

Opening of the Annual Exhibition

Saturday 1st April 2023

Smethwick Photographic Society
The Old Schoolhouse, Churchbridge, Oldbury, West Midlands, B69 2AS
(for directions see below)

Programme:

- 09:30hrs** Doors open, tea and coffee available
- 10:00hrs** Welcome and Introduction by the Chair of the RPS Nature Group, David O'Neill LRPS
- 10:10hrs** Presentation: 'From Sea Lions to Sharks' by David Keep FRPS, Wildlife Photographer and Group Member.
David will talk about how he captures his award winning underwater images. Behind the scenes videos accompany the stories as he covers sharks, crocodiles, diving gannets, turtles, sea lions and many more.
- 12:00hrs** Break for Lunch and to view the Exhibition*
- 13:15hrs** 47th Annual General Meeting of the RPS Nature Group
Agenda:
1. Apologies for Absence
 2. Minutes of the 46th AGM 2022 (printed in Issue 143 of 'The Iris')
 3. Matters arising
 4. Chair's Report
 5. Treasurer's Report
 6. Secretary's Report
 7. Programme Coordinator's Report
 8. Any Other Business
 9. Date and Venue of the 48th AGM 2024
- 14:00hrs** Opening of the 2023 Exhibition
The accepted prints will be on display throughout the day.
Presentation of the Awards
Projection of the Accepted Images
- 16:00hrs** Close

*Please bring your own packed lunch as lunches will not be available.

There is a dining area. Tea, coffee and drinks will be available at the bar.

To attend, please book your place through the RPS Nature Group website.

Please note that this is a live face-to-face meeting only. It will not be available online and it will not be recorded.

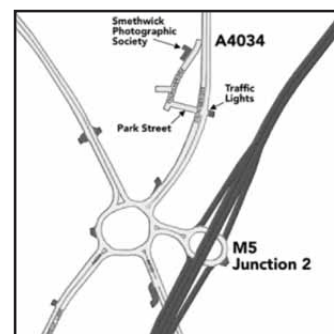
Duncan Locke ARPS, acting Honorary Secretary

E-mail: duncan.locke@btinternet.com Tel: 07989 494232

Directions to Smethwick Photographic Society:

From Junction 2 of the M5 follow the signs for the A4034 north towards West Bromwich. Once on the A4034 stay in the left hand lane and after about 1/3 mile turn left at the first set of traffic lights into Park Street. At the end of Park Street turn right into Churchbridge (cul-de-sac).

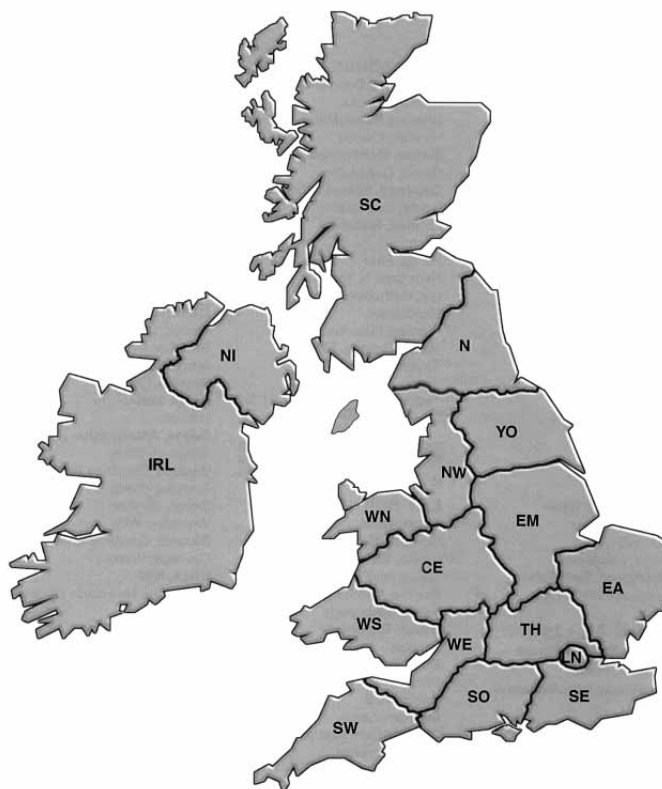
The Old Schoolhouse is the last but one building on the left. If you're using a SatNav use postcode: B69 2AS Google Maps Coordinates: 52.497771, -2.019776



Membership Statistics

Shown below are Nature Group members per RPS Region, together with regional codes and other statistics.

Regions:	Jan 2023	Jan 2022
1 - Central	59	57
2 - East Anglia	93	104
3 - East Midlands	60	60
4 - Eire	8	7
6 - London	66	74
7 - North Wales	8	11
8 - North Western	51	56
9 - Northern	25	27
10 - Northern Ireland	3	2
11 - Scotland	58	60
12 - South Eastern	84	90
13 - South Wales	17	18
14 - South Western	33	34
15 - Southern	76	79
16 - Thames Valley	68	77
17 - Western	77	78
18 - Yorkshire	48	49
Total UK + Eire:	834	883
*Overseas:	65	72
Total Membership:	899	955
<i>*Includes the Isle of Man and Channel Islands</i>		
Distinctions:	Jan 2023	Jan 2022
Honorary FRPS:	3	3
FRPS:	66	63
ARPS:	250	256
LRPS:	239	246
No Distinction:	341	387
Total:	899	955



Obituary - Trevor Hyman LRPS

We are very sorry to report that our past Treasurer and friend, Trevor Hyman passed away on 4th November 2022.

Trevor spent his early days in Melton Mowbray where he was born on 11th December 1931. Later, in 1946 his family moved to Bexleyheath in Kent. As a child Trevor suffered badly with asthma and therefore did not participate in sporting activities. To assist with his breathing, he took up singing and became a member of G&S Operatic Society, where he met his wife, Marianne, in 1948. He had also developed an interest in photography and used his talents to photograph the activities of the Operatic Society.

From 1950 to 1956 Trevor attended Queen Mary College, London, becoming a Chartered Electrical Engineer. During his student days he earned pocket money by photographing various student groups, including the French Drama Society. In 1956 he moved to Abingdon, Oxfordshire where he was employed at Rutherford Laboratory until his retirement in 1992, including 4 years in the early 70s at CERN, Switzerland, where he worked for four years and lived in Geneva.

Trevor replaced John Myring ARPS as Nature Group Treasurer at the AGM in 2001 and held the post until 2007. He was always happy to help with admin even when he stepped down from the Committee. He enjoyed his membership of the group and also loved to travel. He participated in several trips organised by the late Tony Wharton FRPS including Skokholm, Switzerland, the Falkland Islands and Antarctica plus others. Trevor put much effort into his Licentiate submission and was delighted when it was awarded.





Bull Seal threat display

**More images from John Bulpitt's article
'Grey Seals on the North East Norfolk Coast'
page 38**



Turnstone



Snow Bunting



Juvenile Herring Gull with Seal placenta



1



2

**Images by
Grace Prescott.**
Article on page 49

1. Hartbeest
2. Lioness
3. Cheetah with cubs
4. Crowned Cranes
5. Zebra
6. Kori Bustard
7. Wildebeest crossing the Mara River



4



3



6



5



7