

ISSN 1757-2991



THE **RPS**  
ROYAL  
PHOTOGRAPHIC  
SOCIETY

MAGAZINE OF THE NATURE GROUP OF THE RPS  
Issue No. 144 / Winter 2022/23

# THE IRIS





13



18

### Statement of Intent

My objective is to present a submission demonstrating the incredible diversity of life that relies on our oceans for its existence.

From the largest predator to the smallest scavenger, they all contribute to a complex ecosystem. Harmonious, symbiotic relationships are plentiful, but just as common is the aggression and trepidation that characterises the lives of the hunters and their prey.

I'm privileged to observe some of these scenes first-hand; relaxed feeding, boisterous play-fighting, curious juveniles and stealthy hunters. I find it challenging, exciting and often tragic - but I'm always moved, either by their beauty or their behaviour.

Using a pictorial style, my aim is to convey the emotions I feel as I take the shot, recording one moment of their largely unseen lives.

David Keep

### David Keep FRPS

### Fellowship Presentation Layout



01



02



03



04



05



06



07



08



09



10



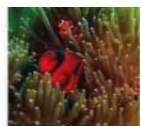
11



12



13



14



15



16



17



18



19



20



21 (Optional)



## Publication information

'The Iris' is published by the RPS Nature Group three times a year. Copy and publication dates are as follows:

Spring	Copy deadline 8th December Published mid March.
Summer	Copy deadline 30th April Published early July.
Winter	Copy deadline 31st August Published early November.

All contributions should be submitted to the Editor. Items covering any aspect of nature photography and/or natural history are welcomed, including reviews on equipment and relevant books. The Editor can be contacted at: natureeditor@rps.org

- Copy should be sent as .txt or .doc files by email. Please do not send 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.
- If your image is selected for use on the cover of The Iris you will be asked to supply a larger file.
- No payment will be made for material used.

The views expressed within The Iris are solely those of the contributor and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Nature Group Committee or the Editor.

### Distribution:

'The Iris' is forwarded to members using addresses provided by the RPS Membership Dept in Bristol. Any member not receiving their copy should contact that department to confirm that their correct address is recorded. The Secretary will be pleased to post single copies to members who have failed to receive them.

### Copyright:

- © All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means without prior permission of the copyright holder.
- © Photographs and articles - individual contributors. All other material the Nature Group of the Royal Photographic Society.

### Printed by:

Partridges Limited  
6-8 Bradfield Road, Wellingborough, NN8 4HB

**Design & layout:** by Dawn Osborn FRPS

## Contents

- ifc Images from the Fellowship Panel of David Keep FRPS**
- 2 Committee and Editorial**
- 3 From the Chair**  
by David O'Neill LRPS
- 4 The Nikon Z MC 105mm f/2.8 VR S Macro Lens - A Review**  
by Robert Thompson FRPS
- 9 Underwater Photography - A Fellowship**  
by David Keep FRPS
- 14 Wildlife of the Falkland Islands**  
by Jeremy Richards ARPS
- 18 Birds and Mammals of the UK**  
by John Harvey ARPS
- 22 An ARPS with Barn Owls**  
by Gavin Bickerton-Jones ARPS
- 26 A Focus on Animal Behaviours**  
by Jeff Steady ARPS
- 30 My Journey to an ARPS in Natural History**  
by Mike Harris ARPS
- 34 South African Birds - An Associate Panel**  
by Sandeep Seeripat ARPS
- 38 Tawny Owls of the Exmoor National Park**  
by Harvey Grenville
- 43 Incidents of Wildlife Photography in sub-Saharan Africa**  
by John Cucksey ARPS
- 49 NG Residential Weekend at FSC Blencathra**  
by Jeremy Malley Smith LRPS
- 53 Nature Group Committee Elections and Nominations Form**
- 55 Nature Group Annual Exhibition Entry Form**
- bc Fellowship Images by David Keep FRPS**



*Cover Image:*  
*Mayfly*  
*by Mike Harris ARPS*

# Committee

---

## Officers

**Chairman: David O'Neill LRPS**  
Reading, Berkshire, RG1 6DG  
Email: david.oneill\_nh@outlook.com

**Hon. Secretary: Duncan Locke ARPS**  
Kempsey, Worcester. WR5 3JZ  
E-mail: duncan.locke@btinternet.com

**Hon. Treasurer: Peter Ward**  
Ashbourne, Derbyshire CM23 5DW  
Email: peter.ward448@btinternet.com

## Committee Members

**Vice Chairman: Duncan Locke ARPS**  
Kempsey, Worcester. WR5 3JZ  
E-mail: duncan.locke@btinternet.com

**Editor of The Iris: Dawn Osborn FRPS**  
Breckland, Norfolk,  
Email: natureeditor@rps.org

**Exhibition Secretary: Ralph Snook ARPS**  
Bristol BS32 4EJ  
E-mail: rpsngexsec@btinternet.com

**NG Rep to SIG Committee: David O'Neill LRPS**  
Reading, Berkshire, RG1 6DG  
Email: david.oneill\_nh@outlook.com

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

**Assistant Programme Co-ordinator: Nick Bowman ARPS**  
Ely, Cambridgeshire  
E-mail: nickbowman55@hotmail.com

**Webmaster: Ralph Snook ARPS**  
Bristol BS32 4EJ  
E-mail: rpsngexsec@btinternet.com

**Residential Weeked Administrator: James Foad LRPS**  
Ramsgate, Kent  
email: jamesfoadlrps@inbox.com

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

**Membership Secretary: Christine Holt LRPS**  
Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire  
E-mail: chrisandged93@gmail.com

## Ex officio Committee members

**NG Immediate Past Chairman: Thomas Hanahoe FRPS**  
Biggleswade, SG18 0AN  
Email: t.hanahoe@ntlworld.com

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

## 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

---

What a hot dry Summer we experienced this year. Here in East Anglia we experienced record high temperatures and record low rainfall. We returned from our Summer vacation to find that most of our garden had turned brown and crisp - many plants completely dead! Some things have recovered and others may (or may not) return next spring. Our Swifts had migrated south by mid August with Swallows and House Martins leaving soon after, in early September. A sure sign that Autumn is on its way. We are now past the Autumnal Equinox, with shorter days, returning migrants, leaves changing colour and (hopefully) emerging fungus.

This is our biggest issue to date. It is unlikely that every issue of The Iris will be contain as many pages as this one but it would be nice to think that members will continue their support and share their experiences with their fellow members. As always, I hope to hear from some of you with your ideas for an article for a future issue.

This Winter issue is full of interesting stories, images and information. We have a detailed report about the new Nikkor Z f/2.8 105mm Macro lens provided by Robert Thompson FRPS. Also, from the Nature Distinctions Assessment last June, a number of our members successful Associate panels are featured, plus a wonderful underwater Fellowship Panel by David Keep. Harvey Grenville has written about his experiences of photographing Tawny Owls in Exmoor National Park, complete with a selection of images. Longstanding member, John Cucksey ARPS has shared some of his past experiences in Sub-Saharan Africa complete with a selection of his images. Finally, we have a report on the Nature Group Residential Weekend that took place at Field Studies Centre, Blencathra, in April this year. The report is illustrated by images taken by the members who attended the weekend.

I do hope to hear from some of you about future articles. If you don't receive a reply after two weeks, please contact me again - as it is possible that I may not have received it. Don't be shy!





# From the Chair

---

## The RPS Website

At the time of writing, the implementation of the new website has created disruption across a range of RPS activities, including the running of Groups and Regions.

For the Nature Group, much of the committee's general admin has been disrupted by a lack of data and some members have had difficulties with their memberships, which is regrettable, but will hopefully have been resolved by the time *The Iris* is published.

Events have been a particular concern, because the website is an essential requirement for planning and running these, which has led to a great deal of frustration for all concerned.

The new process for events appears to be working, and we have recently started receiving the training we need to set these up. We still have concerns about how usable it is at the moment, but we are hopeful that things will continue to improve, so that we are able to plan and run events, without further disruption.

On a more positive note, I have been encouraged by recent communications with George Thomas the RPS Website & Digital Engagement Officer, who has acknowledged the issues and advised on plans to rectify these in the weeks/months ahead.

## Events

Ann Miles and Nick Bowman are continuing their work to extend our range of events to as many counties as possible. We are hoping to encourage more members across the UK to offer to host events in their local areas.

In my experience, members events allow us to socialise with and learn from the experience of others who share a similar passion for nature photography. If you have places that you regularly visit, then we would ask you to consider organising an event that encourages other nature group members to share your passion and knowledge.

We are also looking for Zoom speakers so that we can continue to offer a variety of talks that are available to all members regardless of geographical location.

Please contact Ann, Nick or any other committee member if you have any suggestions regarding events, locations or zoom speakers.

## Photographic Competitions

We are still intending to launch a member's photographic competition, but I don't think it makes sense to try and

overlap its launch with our Exhibition, so realistically our earliest possible start date is likely to be March next year.

In the meantime, we can work on setting up and testing the competition software that will be required, so that we can properly evaluate how much work this will be for the committee and any judges that may be needed to support it on an ongoing basis.

## Young Persons Membership

I have a request from the Young Persons Engagement Officer, Elise Wootten, which I am pleased to share as it shows the progress the RPS is making with encouraging young photographers.

*"I have been developing our offer for young people since our last meeting and I'm reaching out for a quote from the Nature Group for young photographers.*

*The new offer will be for young photographers aged 12 - 16. This offer will include a specific magazine for young people, workshops throughout the year and online digital content for them to access such as activities and competitions.*

*Young Photographer members will also receive a welcome pack, very similar to our current members welcome pack, with printed leaflets aimed at younger audiences to welcome them to the RPS community. For one of the welcome pack's leaflets I'd really love to have a Top-Tip from each special interest group to show the variety and breadth of photography, and the knowledge and support of our members. It would be of great help if you could put this idea to your group and ask for a tip that members would give to a young photographer at the start of their journey."*

If anyone has advice that they would like to share with a young photographer, then please send your replies to myself or any other committee member, so that they can be collated and forwarded to Elise.

## Other Committee Business

Duncan Locke is working on updating the *Nature Group Code of Practice*.

We are pleased with members support for *The Iris* and have a wealth of submissions available that is very encouraging for the future.



# Nikon Z MC 105mm f/2.8 VR S Macro Lens

by Robert Thompson FRPS

## Introduction

Nikon announced the release of two macro lenses at the beginning of June 2021 for the Z mount, the Z MC 50mm f/2.8 and the Z MC 105mm f/2.8 VR S. These are the first native macro lenses to be added to an already expanding line up of lenses for the Z mirrorless system. I have been using the Z 105mm since its release last year and testing it with a range of subjects and in combination with the Z 7II, the Z 9 and other macro setups that I currently use. The Z MC 105mm f/2.8 VR S is intended for full-frame cameras such as the Z 6II, Z 7II and the Z 9. It is, without doubt, Nikon's most popular focal length macro. Its F-mount predecessor has a long and well documented history with modifications and upgrades since its development back in the early 1970s.

The Z MC 105mm had been in the pipeline for a while and is an important addition to the Z lens line up not only in the professional sector, but it will also be welcomed by macro photographers in general who have, up until its release, been using the F-mount AF-S VR 105mm f/2.8G IF-ED version via the FTZ adapter. Although lighter than its F-mount equivalent, the new medium-range macro is slightly larger in size, but the filter diameter remains the same.

Historically, Nikon chose the word 'Micro' rather than 'Macro' for its description of these specialist lenses which dates back to the 1950's. The word 'Micro' can be misleading for many photographers who are not familiar with the conventional definition between macro and micro. Photomacrography is normally defined as reproduction from 1:1 (lifesize) up to around 10:1. Photomicrography is reproduction of subjects greater than 10:1 using a microscope. The Z MC 105mm is optimised for conventional and general close-up photography up to 1:1 and is normally referred to as a macro lens. The word 'macro' is frequently misused to define for the most part close-up photography. As I've already stated, true macro reproduction begins from 1:1 and above.

Nikon has supported the macro community over the years with a varied range of focal lengths. Historically the 105mm was and still is the most popular focal length among all the Micro Nikkor lenses. In 1993 they introduced the 200mm f/4 AF-D macro. It was another milestone for Nikon being the first 1:1 200mm macro produced. Surprisingly, and to my disappointment, the

original lens remains unchanged to this day with no design updates despite being one of the most important focal length macros among professional and committed macro enthusiasts. For me it is the most essential lens of all the macro glass in my kit. Sadly discontinued, the optics are still superb by today's standards and the majority of my close-up imagery is shot on this lens. To date, Nikon have given no indication that they will produce a redesigned Z version of this lens, although I sincerely hope they do. There are many photographers out there who would gladly buy a new Z equivalent of this lens. It has become much harder to find second-hand and despite its age, it still holds its value. Having owned three of the 105mm Nikon macros, also the 85mm PCE and the 200mm f/4 AF-D, I can testify to just how sharp and well-designed all these lenses are.

Before discussing the Z MC 105mm f/2.8 VR S in detail, it's worth charting the history of this remarkable focal length lens since its introduction back in 1974.

## History of the Nikon 105mm Micro Nikkor Lens

The Nikon 105mm macro lens has a long-chronicled history. The short-mount f/4 version first appeared back in 1974 and was originally designed for bellows. The AI version appeared in 1977 and was updated to AI-s f/4. It received another upgrade to the AI-s f/2.8 in 1983. The optical and mechanical characteristics of these lenses had excellent reputations and were widely used among the macro fraternity at that time. These earlier lenses were an all-manual helical design, with maximum magnification of 1:2. Using a manual macro is not a disadvantage even today. I use all my macros in manual most of the time, so I have complete control over the point of focus etc. One of the downsides of the helical design is the fall-off in light as the magnification increases and the lens-to-subject distance is reduced. The f/4 version was replaced in 1983 with the f/2.8 AI-s to help alleviate this problem. Nikon also developed a short-mount version of this lens for bellows work with the same optical configuration.

The lens had a further update in 1990 when the new nine-element f/2.8 AF version became available. The new lens design was also capable of 1:1 reproduction, allowing greater magnifications which was a welcome upgrade from its predecessor removing the need for extension tubes to achieve lifesize. The increased

reproduction ratio made it the ideal choice for many photographers engaged in commercial and general close-up photography. The lens had another tweak in 1993 and became the 105 AF-D which I owned for many years. The lens had its final update in 2006 and became the Nikon AF-S VR f/4 G IF-ED and was the first macro lens to have VR (Vibration Reduction) incorporated into it: the ED signifying extra-low dispersion glass to reduce the effect of chromatic aberration. The current F-mount version is not compatible with earlier cameras, but it is still an outstanding lens in my opinion. I used this lens a lot before I went mirrorless especially in combination with the 1.7 and 2X converters to push the reproduction ratio up and when working in restricted situations where it's difficult to use Nikon's 200mm f/4.

Z MC 105mm f/2.8 VR S



Nikon AF-S VR f/2.8 G IF-ED left, Z MC 105mm f/2.8 S right.



### Z MC 105mm f/2.8 VR S Macro Overview

The Z MC 105mm f/2.8 is Nikon's first medium range macro in the Z lens line up. It was widely anticipated that this classic focal length would be the most obvious choice to complement the already expanding range of lenses for their mirrorless cameras. The lens bears the 'S' insignia which defines it as part of the S-line series, a name given to a range of Z lenses developed by Nikon that are manufactured to the highest professional standards, incorporating state-of-the-art optical performance delivering edge-to-edge sharpness across the frame. All the lenses in S-line range have the best in terms of construction and weather sealing around the mount and other vulnerable parts. I have had this lens out in all sorts of weather with no issue of the rain or dust penetrating through any of the exposed parts.

Other macro lenses in the Nikon line up for full frame include the new Z 50mm, (launched at the same time as the Z 105mm) an 85mm PCE and the 200mm, the latter two belong to the F-mount range and have been around for quite some time. The 105mm has always been the most popular choice for the vast majority of photographers engaged in close-up photography. Macro lenses in this focal range are reasonably light, exceptionally sharp, suffer to a lesser extent from chromatic related issues and are well corrected for flatness of field. It is an ideal balance when it comes to handholding and weight compared to longer focal length macros in the 180-200mm range which have tripod collars and best supported on a tripod. The Z 105mm internal floating element system ensures that it is optimised to deliver the best in terms of sharpness throughout the range of focusing points.

Optically the Z 105mm has a more complex lens arrangement than its F-mount equivalent. The Nikon AF-S VR f/2.8 G IF-ED has 14 elements arranged in a 12-group configuration with single ED (extra-low dispersion glass) component. The redesigned Z 105mm macro has 16-elements arranged in 11 groups with three ED elements to reduce chromatic aberration. There is a single aspherical element to reduce coma distortion and maintain sharpness throughout the frame. In addition to the Nano Crystal Coating, Nikon has also added an ARENO coating to some elements which helps to reduce ghosting and flare when photographing into direct sunlight. It also has a special fluoride coating on the front element which helps to repel dust and water.

As with the F-mount version, it has a nine-blade arrangement with a maximum aperture of f/2.8 which changes to f/4.5 when the lens is at its maximum





Early Thorn Moth *Selenia dentaria*



Vapourer moth *Orgyia antiqua*



*Nudaurelia macrothyris*



Common Hawker *Aeshna juncea*

magnification of 1:1. The minimum aperture is the same as the F-mount lens f/32. The Z MC 105mm is a slightly longer macro at 140mm (5.5in) compared to 116mm (4.6in) on the F-mount lens. However, the addition of the FTZ adapter increases the overall length of the lens. The maximum diameter of the lens is 85mm (3.3in).

The minimum focusing distance is also closer at 0.29m from the sensor compared to 0.31m on the F-mount 105mm. The newly developed Z mount has allowed Nikon to take advantage of the latest advances in optical design and are no longer restricted by the limitations imposed by the smaller F-mount. The Z lens range are generally lighter than their F-mount equivalents and that is the case here with a saving of 120g not including the FTZ adapter. Weighing only 630g you are immediately aware of this when you hold the lens in your hand for the first time. Mounting the lens on a Z 6II or Z 7II the combined setup is much lighter compared to the F-mount version on a D850.

The auto/manual and restricted focus switches (while more retracted) are easily accessible with your thumb or index finger. When activated, it confines the focusing range between 0.5m to 0.29m making the lens more responsive in the macro range and restricts focus hunting. Further along the lens on the left are the DISP and L-Fn switches. The DISP switch when pressed activates a small OLED screen on the top of the lens. Pressing the button allows you to scroll through a series of options which you can program to the lens such as ISO, aperture, depth of field and focus distance.

The resistance on the focus and control ring is nicely balanced and much more responsive than the F-mount version in my opinion. On rotation it moves extremely smoothly making it easy to make very small but precise adjustments to the focus point. The control ring is customisable via the camera's menu system for ISO, aperture, and exposure compensation etc. Some photographers will find this useful; I tend to use it for exposure compensation. The screen and viewfinder can display the distance scale once the ring is rotated. You can also reverse the direction of rotation of the ring if you own a Z 6II or Z 7II. The lens also has VR technology giving you 4.5 stops of VR and 5-axis compensation controlled internally by the camera and not via a switch on the lens. However, this is less effective when shooting macro, but ideal for normal routine photography.

The filter diameter remains at 62mm ensuring compatibility with other Nikon accessories and filters you might already own. One feature I would like to have seen on this lens is a tripod collar: it's extremely useful

when switching between formats without having to disengage the camera from the tripod head each time which can be annoying.

I also find it very useful as a short telephoto for general landscapes and the quality of the images is excellent even wide open. Most macro's these days are not completely corrected for true flatness of field and show a slight softening towards the edges, this would be evident if you were photographing documents but not that apparent with dimensional subjects. Stopping the lens down does improve overall sharpness just a little and I also found the results I got at f/11 to be very acceptable. Chromatic aberration is extremely well controlled in this lens and barely evident at all.

### In the Field

I have been using the Z MC 105mm with the Z 7II since its release last June and also now with the Z9. I am impressed with how just good it is compared to its predecessor, which is an excellent lens. However, the advancement in optical technology really does put these modern lenses in a class of their own.

I guess what most people want to know is whether there is a difference and does it justify the cost of purchase or updating from the existing F-mount version. I have to say yes, without a doubt. I can see a difference in the digital files in terms of colour, contrast, and it's extremely sharp with virtually no chromatic aberrations which I always found noticeable when focus stacking with the F-mount version, particularly against a well-diffused background. While I use focus stacking in some aspects of my work, I do not use the technique in every



Angel's Bonnet *Mycena arcangeliana*

situation and wouldn't want to do so. I tend to employ it when working with small static subjects at higher magnifications or when it would be beneficial to the subject. I tend not to employ the technique with mobile subjects for obvious reasons.



Scarlet Elf Cup *Sarcoscypha austriaca*

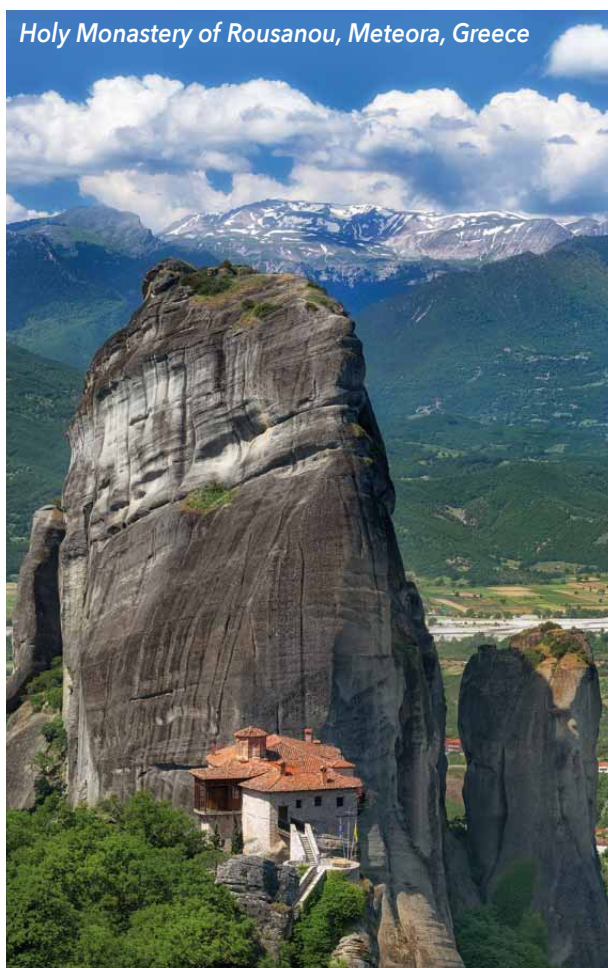
I must admit, I've been choosing the Z 105mm in preference to my favourite 200mm f/4 when shooting fungi, lichens and some other static subjects, especially where the background does not demand a longer length macro. The redesign, although lighter has not compromised the lens in any way. The distribution of weight is evenly spread creating a nice overall balance in the hand. The materials and design are in keeping with the other Z lenses in the line-up and although at first glance it seems a little less robust, this is certainly not the case. The optical performance is outstanding and autofocus is very responsive when I need it. The lens VR works in unison with any of the IBIS Z cameras. When shooting at higher magnifications, camera shake is always going to be intensified especially with high megapixel cameras such as the Z 9 or Z 7II. VR in these situations is a welcome inclusion if you are not a devoted tripod user. I rarely shoot without a tripod and only when actively stalking insects during the day.

As mentioned earlier, the maximum aperture on the lens is f/2.8 dropping to f/4.5 when the lens is at 0.29. Aperture variation is controlled seamlessly by the camera automatically. The bokeh with this lens is also excellent even in the mid-range and up close, producing a nice soft diffused background. The lens delivers superb sharpness with excellent contrast when used as a conventional telephoto as well as a dedicated macro. I always liked the colour balance of Nikon glass and much prefer it over other independent makes simply to have continuity in colour and contrast throughout my lenses



and images. Manually focusing the lens is routine for me and the redesigned focusing ring works seamlessly. The lens seems to have variable focusing capabilities especially when working at distances close to infinity where it focuses quickly with only a small rotation of the focusing ring. In the macro zone the lens advancement seems to be shorter for a similar rotation which I find to be beneficial, making it easier to make small precise incremental changes to the focus position.

Being a mid-telephoto lens, I have been using it not only in close-up but also shooting landscapes and other routine subjects when I need a bit more reach than the 24-70mm can give me. Shooting from a tripod does make a big difference and you should always use one where possible to get the best from any lens including this one. Having the option to program the lens is also an advantage for me. I can change the configuration depending on what I am shooting: a feature that was not possible with the previous F-mount version of the lens. The addition of a control ring is another useful feature when you need to react to a changing situation quickly. Or the L-FN button which I often use as a depth of field indicator. is another example of the advantages of a programmable lens.



Some of my work involves working at reproduction ratios greater than 1:1. The Z 105mm used in combination with the Novoflex BAL-F or BALPRO-1 bellows allows for magnifications much greater than 1:1. The bellows are fully automatic and with the appropriate Retro Reverse Adapter for your camera, magnifications in the region of 3:1 are possible. I normally recommend magnifications greater than 2:1 are best achieved with an electronic rail attached to a bellows unit. Magnifications up to 2:1 can be successfully achieved in the field with a manual focusing rail such as the Novoflex XQ II. The working distance between lens and subject is also good making it easy to add lighting or flash if required.

### **Final Word**

Considering the improvements Nikon have made over the F-mount version, the Z MC 105mm f/2.8 is an exceptional lens in my opinion. It has outstanding image quality not only as a macro, but as a mid-telephoto for landscape and general portraiture making it possible to capture images with elaborate detail and clarity. It also represents excellent value for money considering its a pro-line lens and can cover a wide range of photographic situations. The majority of macro photographers will find the focal length of this lens ideal for mainstream macro with a reasonable working distance. The only disappointing aspect for me is not being able to add a converter for higher reproduction ratios. Achieving 2:1 reproduction, as with the F-mount version, is therefore not possible with this lens except through 3rd party accessories. Perhaps Nikon have plans in the future to bridge that shortcoming with a 2:1 macro which would solve the problem, let's hope they do! After all, third party lens manufacturers are already doing this. Overall, this long-awaited lens is an important addition to the Z line up. It's one that every photographer should seriously consider adding to their kit because of its all-round versatility and reasonable price.





# Underwater Photography

by David Keep FRPS MPAGB MBPE EFIAP

Underwater photography combines the two things I'm really passionate about - diving and photography. Given the chance, I would do it every day.

I've been a scuba diver for over twenty years and as I became more interested in photography it was a natural progression for me to shoot and share the incredible sights I've seen underwater over the last two decades. This is what I especially love about underwater photography: as with all things, if you see the extraordinary enough times, it becomes ordinary and you stop seeing it through the eyes of someone seeing it for the first time. But, with a camera in my hand, I can do that all over again.

I took the plunge seven years ago. I realised I would be learning about a specialised and technically challenging form of photography. I also knew I would have to spend a fair amount of money acquiring the best possible kit to enable me to achieve quality shots.

Unfortunately, underwater photography is pretty technology dependent if you want good results. I would be misleading you if I said otherwise. Of all the branches of photography I have tried, this one makes the most demands on your kit and there is no doubt that better results come from good kit. Yes, you still need good technique, but I am afraid that without the right gear it is going to be a struggle.

I use a Canon 5DS R in a Nauticam underwater housing. Really important additions are the two powerful strobes (flashes) that restore the colour back into the underwater scene. Water filters out colour from sunlight and the deeper you go the more colours disappear, that's why many underwater images appear grey and colourless. The colour is there but the camera cannot record it. The strobes bring artificial sunlight and restore colour.

Getting sufficient light on your subject is challenging, but the angle of the light is also important if you want to show all the glorious details. Flat light does not show them off at their best - but this is when being underwater is an advantage. The strobes are mounted on two articulated arms, giving a reach of almost 1m from the camera per strobe. It's easy to position them, and indeed yourself, to get the best lighting effect, because you can move effortlessly in all

three dimensions. On land we would have to alter tripods & off camera flash stands, but underwater it can be achieved quickly without difficulty. My workflow is to decide camera settings, manually alter the strobes for the required light intensity and then think about the direction I want the light to hit the subject. With practice it becomes second nature to be honest.

It wasn't too difficult to adapt my diving style to photography, but I soon discovered that underwater currents are your main enemy. It's difficult to free up the mental capacity to select the correct camera settings and composition when you are holding on for dear life to stop yourself being swept away! But, as composition is everything in photography, you must find a way to remain stable so you can frame your picture. This usually involves jamming yourself into some crevice or holding the camera close into your body so you can stabilise it.



David Keep (left) making way for a large Tiger shark (Grand Bahama) - Photo by Debra Canabal from Epic Diving





I try to tell stories with my images, so I look for situations that help convey the character of my subject and (I hope) allow you to make a connection with the creature. Here are the stories behind four of my favourite underwater images included in my FRPS panel.



### **Hammerhead Sharks, Northern Bahamas**

The two weeks I spent in the Bahamas photographing sharks was, without a doubt, one of the best trips of my life. For sheer adrenalin-pumping excitement, it cannot be beaten.

I deliver a talk on underwater photography to local camera clubs and natural history groups and it is always the shark section that makes people sit up the most. I use the opportunity to present sharks in a positive light as I actually find them graceful and gentle.

The thriller movie 'Jaws' has a lot to answer for – sharks are not the man-eating killing machines they are often portrayed as being.

Having previously photographed Tiger Sharks in this region, it was shots of Great Hammerheads that I was after on this occasion.

The unusual shape of their heads puts their eyes further apart, making them great hunters, particularly in low light. I found that they were difficult to photograph because to show the head in all its glory the body often ends up at an awkward angle but I got lucky with the shot above and feel it shows the power and beauty of this remarkable fish.



## The Green Turtles of Bunaken

I travelled to the Indonesian island of Bunaken specifically to photograph Green Turtles because they are abundant there.

Whenever I come across turtles on dives I am always struck by their calm demeanour – they really don't do anything in a hurry.

A large turtle has an eye which is roughly the same size as ours and as you approach you can clearly see that you are being observed. I think we associate best with creatures on which we can imbue human characteristics, and to me a turtle seems like a wise old sage, quietly observing you before passing judgement on your worth.

I particularly wanted to get a head-on shot so I could see the eye - and that was the real challenge. Turtles breathe air, surfacing roughly every 20 minutes, so as they headed off for the surface, I would swim alongside trying to get that head-on shot. I had lots of failed attempts – it's par for the course with underwater photography - but eventually I got the shot (below) - I am so happy with it because, of course, you can see that beautiful eye!





### The Diving Gannets of Shetland

My interest in gannets was piqued when I visited RSPB Bempton near Bridlington in the UK. The chalk cliffs at this nature reserve are home to the UK's largest mainland breeding gannet colony. I discovered that the gannet is a beautiful bird which is extremely agile on the wing, if a little boisterous in nature. Gannets sight fish from the air then dive down at literally breakneck speeds of up to 60mph (97km/hr), folding their wings back and hitting the water like a dart. Forward momentum takes them around three metres down and then they then use their wings to fly underwater up to 15 metres deep. After observing them from the cliff tops, I decided that to photograph them underwater, as they made their headlong dive to capture fish, would be a real challenge - but one worth pursuing.

I went to Shetland to try this because the water is much clearer there. However, it is also very cold - around 10 Celsius - so I had to wear a thermal diving suit. I used a local tour boat to take me to the gannet colony at Noss Point and, on arrival, the gannets gathered in their hundreds around the boat. When I first went under I was concerned about getting hit by one of them, but I quickly saw that they are far too agile for that. After all, they always avoid hitting each other - and I am a much bigger target to avoid. The sound of the birds hitting the water all around me was like bombs going off. It's a sensation I will never forget and overall this shoot was an experience I will remember for the rest of my days. I was thrilled with the shots and this one especially as everything came together perfectly. I vow to return.





### Crocodiles in Cuba

I have always had a bizarre fascination with crocodiles ever since I was a child watching Tarzan wrestle them weekly on TV. I spend ages watching crocs in wildlife parks – are they asleep or just waiting for an opportunity to pounce? I found a dive operator in Cuba offering excursions where you could observe crocodiles. When I asked if I could photograph them, I think they saw me as a bit mad. However, they assured me that my shoot could be done 'relatively safely'.

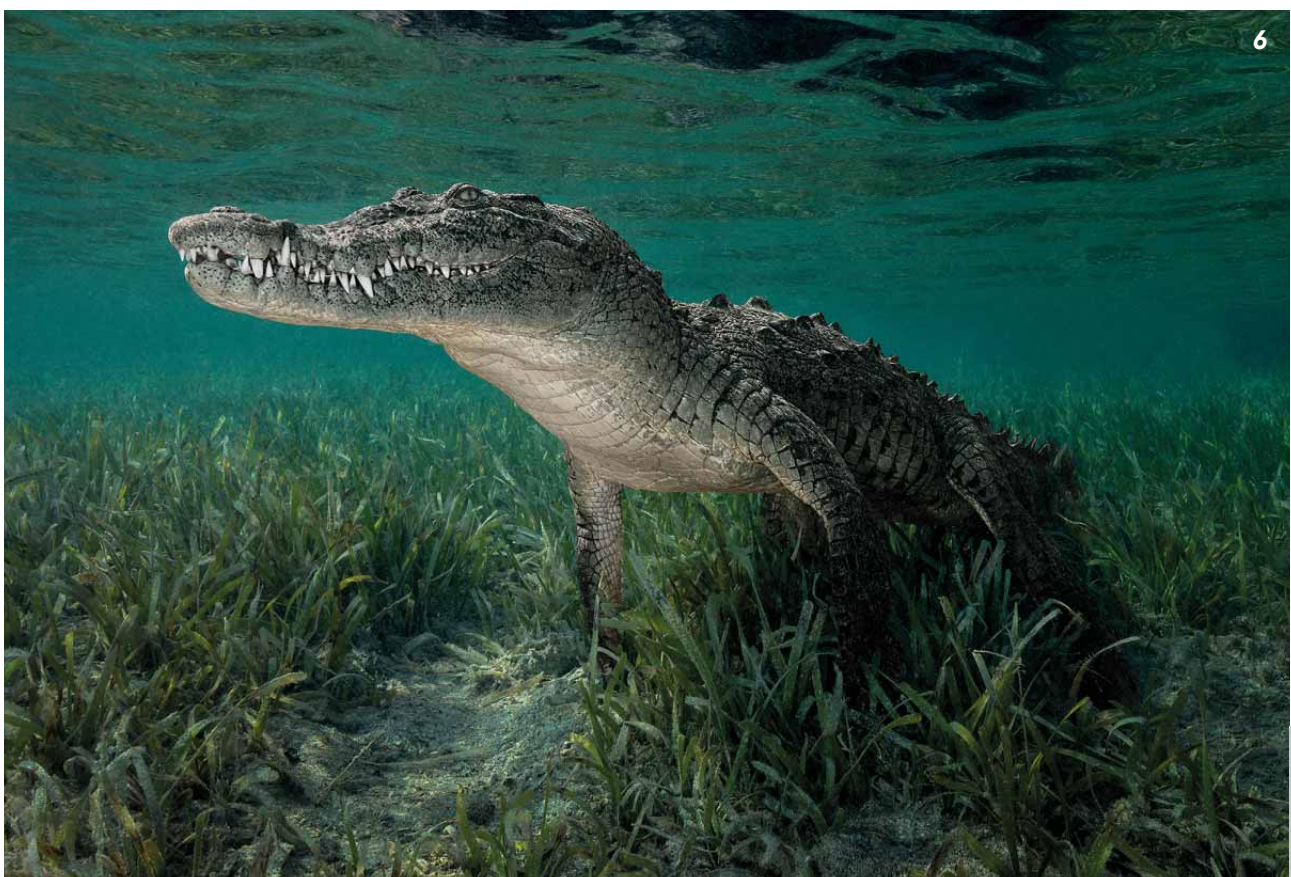
I was taken to a labyrinth of mangrove islands within a marine sanctuary. It took us two days to find a crocodile the right size: too big and it would be too dangerous; too small and the images would have no impact. When we did find a suitably sized male, my guide slipped into the water first and, after sensing the mood of our new friend, he invited me to join him. Was I nervous? You bet I was! As soon as I entered the water the crocodile swam straight over to me to investigate. After a few seconds he decided I was of no interest and proceeded to find a spot to settle on the sea floor. He may have settled, but over the two hours I spent in the water, I never settled once.

It was another great experience ticked off and I am delighted with the shots I got. But would I do it again? Definitely not!

*If you would like to see more of David's work, or book him for a 90-minute talk on underwater photography, either in person or via Zoom, you can find details on his website - [www.davidkeepphotography.co.uk](http://www.davidkeepphotography.co.uk)*



*More of David's Fellowship Panel images plus his Statement of Intent and presentation layout are shown on the inside front, inside back and back covers.*



# Wildlife of the Falkland Islands

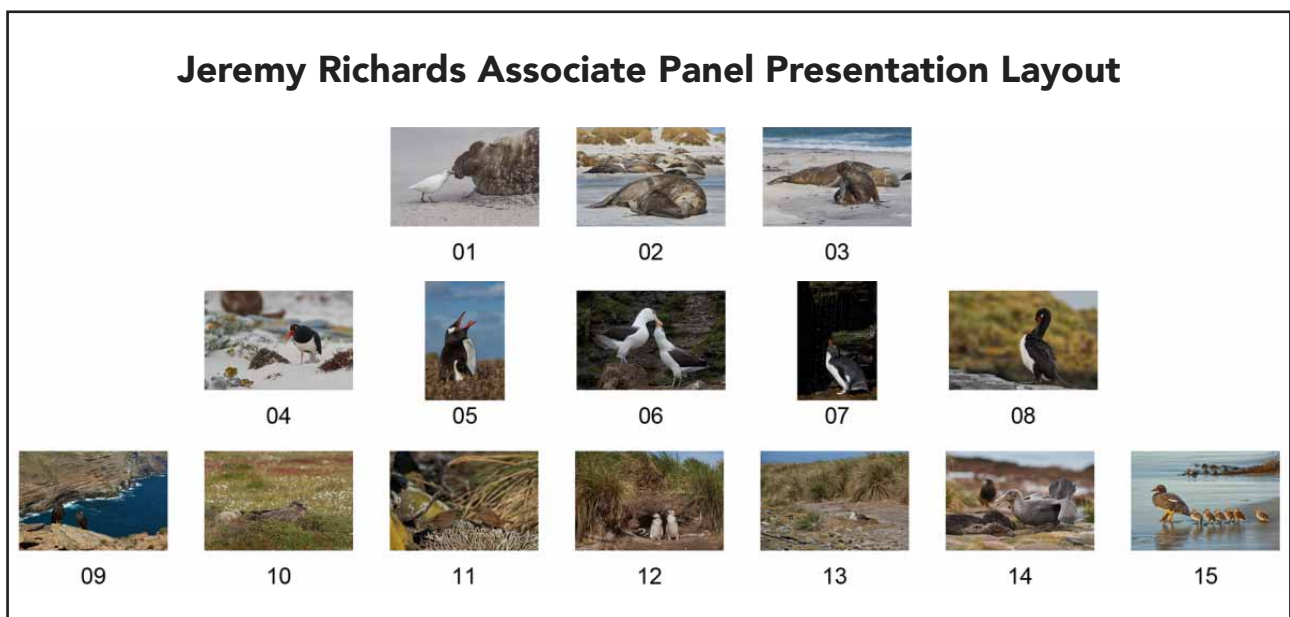
by **Jeremy Richards ARPS**

For as long as I can remember I have been interested in nature, an interest that was influenced and encouraged by my father. My enthusiasm for photography started in earnest when I first visited the Falkland Islands in 1985 en route to join HMS ENDURANCE, the ice patrol ship. Although only briefly on these remote islands, I was captivated by its people and wildlife. I tried in vain to capture on film the stunning beauty of the animals and landscape in and around the Falklands and, as the ship travelled further south, in Antarctica. On my return to the UK, and disappointed by the results of my foray into photography, I set about developing my photographic skills and acquired my first SLR camera. From then on my passion for photography grew alongside my passion for nature.

Over the years I continued developing my nature photography in the UK and Africa, but it was not until 2015, whilst living in Chile, that I had the opportunity to visit the Falkland Islands again. It took no time at all for me to renew my love of the islands and their wildlife. From October to April the birds and mammals, almost without exception, are so focussed on raising the next generation before the harsh southern winter returns that they pay little or no attention to people, including photographers. Since rediscovering the Falklands, I have returned at least once every year since 2015, apart from when the islands were closed to visitors in 2020 and 2021

due to the pandemic. By the time this piece is published I hope to have just returned from yet another visit. The opportunity to visit the islands on many occasions and at different times of the year has given me the time to study the birds and mammals in their natural habitat and to learn more about their behaviour from observation. As a regular visitor I have also been able to talk to and learn from the islanders and researchers. This in turn has helped me to capture on camera more of the daily lives of the creatures that inhabit these remote lands as well as the landscapes and habitats in which they live.

In 2018 I returned to the UK from Chile and rejoined my local photographic club, Bath Photographic Society, and was encouraged by a number of its established members to join the RPS, which I did, and later, to apply for a distinction. At that time I was somewhat unsure if my photographs were to a high enough standard or if I could put together a coherent panel of 15 images. However, after receiving positive feedback from a talk I gave on the Falkland Islands and achieving some success in club and regional competitions with nature images taken in the region, I decided to explore in more detail what was involved in applying for ARPS. I read the various guidance on the RPS website, looked at successful nature panels and watched the very helpful and informative online video "Guidance on Distinctions in Natural History" by Mick Durham FRPS. There is also





no doubt that constraints arising from the pandemic played a part in my decision to apply for a distinction as I had more time than expected to both research what was involved and to develop a submission. Having decided to proceed with an application for ARPS, there was no real question in my mind about the subject; it had to be the Wildlife of the Falkland Islands.

I have a large portfolio of images from the Falklands and had a fairly clear idea of what I wanted to present in a panel. I also knew that given the constraints of the pandemic, I would not be able to return to fill any gaps until after I was required to submit my panel. As it turned out this was not a problem. In completing my ARPS application I also made the decision to submit a digital panel; mainly because at that time the pandemic was still raging and I concluded that there was a risk that panel members would not be able to meet in person to assess prints.

It took me a couple of months to select 15 images that I thought were of a suitable standard and met my Statement of Intent. I found this a challenge, partly because of the quantity of images I have, but also because I was wrestling with a conflict between selecting images that I liked and which had particular meaning for me, as opposed to selecting images based on which were the better photographs. Once I had a draft panel of 15 images, I was very fortunate to be provided with informal advice and feedback by David Osborn FRPS and Jane Rees ARPS. I am extremely grateful for the expert feedback I received, which was very constructive and helpful. It led me to replace six images. Some of those replaced had been included because they were favourites of mine and a couple had been included because they were of rare visitors to the Falkland Islands, rather than my best photographs. I also made some changes to cropping where the subject was either too tight in the frame or did not show sufficient habitat. In addition I amended my Statement of Intent to include greater emphasis on the habitat in which the wildlife is found. A consequence of all these changes was that the balance of my panel shifted from illustrating 15 different species of mammals and birds to including greater coverage of the wide variety of different habitats to be found in the Falkland Islands and a wider variety of animal behaviours.

One key piece of advice I received was to arrange a formal RPS 1-1 review, which I did, and which I also found very helpful. The feedback from the 1-1 was positive and very encouraging, but did include some very useful critical points on 2 of the images. One of these was a processing issue, which I was able to



1 *Pale-faced Shearwater & Southern Elephant Seal*



2 *Southern Elephant Seal*



3 *Southern Sea Lion & Southern Elephant Seal*



4 *Magellanic Oystercatcher*





6 *Black-browed Albatross*



8 *Rock Shag*

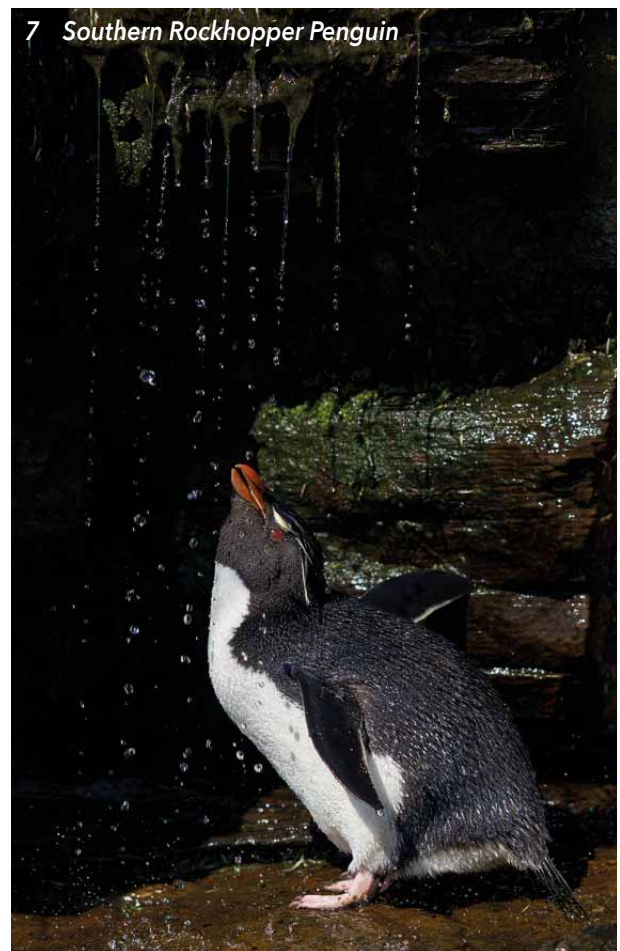


5 *Gentoo Penguin*

address, the other required replacing an image with a different one. Unfortunately none of the reserve images I had submitted were considered suitable, so I selected a new image that was not covered during the 1-1. One of the other key points that came out of the 1-1 was that even though I was making a digital submission, I had set out my panel in three rows of 5 as if it were a print panel. Up to this point I had not fully appreciated that for a digital panel what matters is how the images flow when projected in sequence rather than how all 15 images look when seen together. After consideration of this information, I did make a few changes to the order in which the images appeared so that the flow was better when projected and started and ended with images that had impact. I also changed the format to a 3-5-7 layout.

The resulting panel illustrates what to me are some of the key aspects of the Falkland Islands: 15 of the many different species of mammals and birds along with a variety of animal behaviours and some of the many and varied habitats that are found on the islands. I also hope that my panel will serve to encourage fellow nature photographers to visit the Falkland Islands and see for themselves the remarkable variety of wildlife that live and breed on the islands and as a consequence, support conservation in this remote region.

I am delighted to have been awarded the Associate distinction in natural history. What comes next? Who knows but it will most likely feature the Falkland Islands.



7 *Southern Rockhopper Penguin*





9 Striated Caracara



11 . Cobb's Wren



10 Falkland Skua



12 Magellanic Penguin

**Statement of Intent**

I first visited the Falkland Islands in 1985 and have been captivated with the region and its wildlife ever since.

The islands come to life in early spring when migrant species return in peak condition ready for the challenges of courtship, mating and rearing young before the return of the southern winter.

The aim of my panel is to provide a glimpse of the Falkland Islands as a haven for wildlife by illustrating some of the species that can be found during the breeding season.

My objective is to show 15 different mammals and birds along with a range of behaviours and habitats that exemplify nature as found on the Falkland Islands.

I have developed my fieldcraft over many years through research, observation, practice and discussion with islanders. Photographs were taken on multiple trips across a five year period whilst visiting the islands



13 Northern Giant Petrel



14 Southern Giant Petrel



15 Falkland Steamer Duck



# Birds and Mammals of the UK

by John Harvey ARPS

As with many amateur photographers, I started out by taking holiday snaps. This was back in 2006 with a Sony Cyber Shot with all of 7 MP. Its small size meant it fitted in a pocket so was there for any opportunity, something we rely on today with our smart phones. Gradually I became more interested in photography as a hobby and purchased my first DSLR in 2010, a Sony a330 with a huge 10.2MP APS-C sensor and 50mm kit lens. I don't know why I went for Sony rather than Canon or Nikon but as things have turned out it wasn't a bad decision.

My photography back then was more about visiting places and being in the location rather than the photography - initially mostly landscapes and architecture centred around holidays and trips.

I started to build up a collection of images, but what to do with them? This started some long discussions with a friend about camera clubs and that I should join one. I was quite resistant, having been a member of football club committees and the problems associated with such things was still in the back of my mind.

However, I weakened and joined Ely Photographic Club in September 2019. It was more enjoyable than I had expected and although I'm not a fan of competitions, I did enjoy the internal critique evenings, discussions and presentations. I joined Cambridge Camera Club, in September 2020, whilst remaining a member at Ely.

As I noted earlier, my photography had mainly been landscapes and architecture - it wasn't until 2017 that I began to photograph wildlife. This turned out to be a good choice as during the Covid outbreak travel was difficult and staying local was the only sensible solution for the two years from February 2020 until March 2022. Wildlife and landscape photography share similarities in as much as being surrounded by nature, away from everyone was great especially during this period.

Obviously, the photography equipment is different for wildlife with the requirement for some longer lenses, more frames per second and most importantly a fast and accurate focusing system. As time progressed and I became more involved with wildlife photography it resulted in a few additional purchases, so I was covered for both landscapes and natural history.

Technique too is very different. With wildlife/Natural history things can happen so fast you only have time to react. Landscape photography can be similar with changing light but you have more time to react. Really for any type of photography understanding your camera and lenses is important but for wildlife its critical.

I had always been keen on learning about photography and had purchased many books on the subject. When YouTube came along I became an avid watcher of videos on all things photographic including Lightroom and Photoshop.

01 - Curlew (*Numenius arquata*)



02 - Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*)



03 - Northern Gannets (*Morus bassanus*)



Cambridge Camera Club have quite a few Special Interest Groups. It was suggested that something similar should be done at Ely Photography Club and I was volunteered for the job. I agreed to have a go and shamelessly copied Aperture Group, presented by Ann Miles FRPS and Jonathan Vaines LRPS, CPAGB and one dedicated to digital techniques presented by Ian Wilson ARPS. I combined these into a single group called 'Advanced Photography Group' and began presenting similar content on Lightroom Classic and Photoshop plus composition, ideas on camera functions, depth of field, etc., to members at Ely Photography Club once a month separate to the main club meetings. Surprisingly these became quite popular. I learned so much when I was researching material for these presentations.

You can turn up at a location and get lucky but generally I found that it required many hours patiently watching wildlife, developing field-craft skills, and understanding their habitat, behaviour, activity, feeding and migratory patterns, etc, all critical to getting the best results. Chasing after wildlife rarely works. I have found that getting to a location early, selecting a suitable background wherever possible and laying or sitting quietly in place, allowing the animals and birds to come to you, works best. Even if you don't get a photo, observing the activities of the wildlife is a joy.

As some East Anglian RPS members will know, when I photograph shore birds at RSPB Titchwell I just get my low stool and sit close to the waterline on the beach. Initially the birds may fly away but sitting quietly and still they soon return, enabling you to be very close to them. Having a long lens doesn't mean taking photos at long range but rather filling more of the frame with the subject so you crop less and subsequently more detail.

In early 2021, despite my reservations about competitions, I had done quite well in club and external competitions with natural history images. Ann Milles FRPS suggested that I should try for an RPS Associate Distinction in Natural History. I hadn't given this any thought and wasn't even a member of the RPS, so my first step was to join, which I did in February 2021. I examined the requirements for the ARPS distinction on the website and spoke to other RPS members who had achieved this standard. It all seemed a bit daunting at first given the quality of the images in the examples.

As it turned out this was exactly the kick my photography needed. Apart from working for a distinction, I discovered that days out with the RPS were good fun and opportunities to meet fellow members and pick up a few tips along the way.



04 - Sanderling (*Calidris alba*)



05 - Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*)



06 - Green Woodpecker (*Picus viridis*)



07 - Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)





08 - Little Owl (*Athene noctua*)



09 - Crested Tit (*Lophophanes cristatus*)



10 - Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*)



The next step was to go back through my recent images to see what might be of the appropriate standard and would also work in a 15-image panel, plus say five possible replacement images. I was pleasantly surprised to find that I did have a reasonable number of contenders, but would they work in a panel? I soon found out that you can't just use your best images as they may not be suitable due to colour or subject. Gradually I sorted the contenders into possibilities and used the RPS templates downloaded from the website to try alternative layouts and combinations. Quite tricky, as you select and move repeatedly to find the best option.

I felt a panel of three rows of five images would work for me as my initial idea was to have mammals on the bottom row (as they are usually found on the ground), birds on branches or water for the middle row (given this is their resting place) and birds in flight or doing something on the top row - the colours representing nature, with the greens and browns at the bottom and blue at the top. It soon became apparent that I was three or four images short, which leads to the difficult bit, in that you find you need three or four photos of certain species in specific conditions with specific backgrounds and colours to complete the panel. You may have some great photos but if they don't work with both the panel and the Statement of Intent they can't safely be used. Filling the gaps was in fact the part I enjoyed the most. Planning, getting out in the field, setting up for the background and light and then hoping the wildlife would behave, which of course it didn't. It took many trips to various locations to fill the gaps but the satisfaction when you have them makes up for the frustration. I was glad it was only three or four images required though rather than starting from scratch.

I now had a 15-image panel that was close to my initial idea with colours that worked well across the panel. However, was the panel up to the required standard for ARPS, I thought so but decided I would like a 1-1 to be sure that my understanding of the standard required was correct. I arranged a 1-1 via Zoom with Mick Durham FRPS in early January 2022. Fortunately he felt my images were of sufficient standard with a few tweaks on some minor processing points (slight colour cast on one image, a bit too much noise on one, and over sharpening on another). It was suggested that one image, where the rear wing of a kestrel in flight showed some slight movement blur, could divide opinion so one of the replacement images might be a safer choice. This proved the value of having a few replacements of equal quality and colour.





11 - Red Squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*)



12 - Red Deer Hind (*Cervus elaphus*)

The 1-1 was a very worthwhile process - I recommend that everyone does this before submitting their panel, it's always good to have a fresh set of eyes take a look at your images as you can become too familiar with them and miss some obvious things. Its your choice how you proceed. My view was that this exercise was not an exhibition with wide ranging content and interpretation but about achieving and conforming to a standard. I therefore made the minor processing changes and used a replacement image.

Now everything was ready and in early March 2022 I submitted my fifteen images, completed panel template and Statement of Intent. The Assessment date 6th April 2022. Now it was just a matter of waiting a month. However, on 1st April 2022 (a good date for this), I received an email from the RPS to advise that the assessment was postponed due to some of the assessors contracting Covid and an alternative date was unavailable at that time. On May 6th I was advised that the new assessment date was 20th June 2022. Only six weeks more to wait but it seemed a long time since my submission back in March.

I attended the assessment via zoom, saving a long trip to Bristol and overnight stay. My assessment was the first one of the morning session, which was very good as I didn't have to sit and worry for long. Fortunately the comments from the assessors were all very positive and I passed, gaining my ARPS distinction, which felt great .

The process was challenging but overall I can see the improvements that it's made to my photography both in the taking of images and subsequent processing. I would recommend others to have a go.



13 - Brown Hare (*Lepus europaeus*)



14 - Red Deer Stag (*Cervus elaphus*)

**Statement of Intent**

*My passion is wildlife photography and the aim of my panel is to illustrate a selection of the mammals, woodland birds, waders and seabirds I have photographed in the UK from Scotland to the South of England.*

*To capture the photographs I have included in the panel required many enjoyable hours spent watching wildlife, developing field-craft skills and understanding their habitat, behaviour, activity, feeding and migratory patterns, all critical to getting the best results.*

*I have found that getting to a location early and laying or sitting quietly in place and allowing the animals and birds to come to you works best. Observing activities of the subject to anticipate their movements and be ready for that special moment.*

*My objective for the panel was to capture images of different species or gender in their habitat revealing their natural behaviour.*

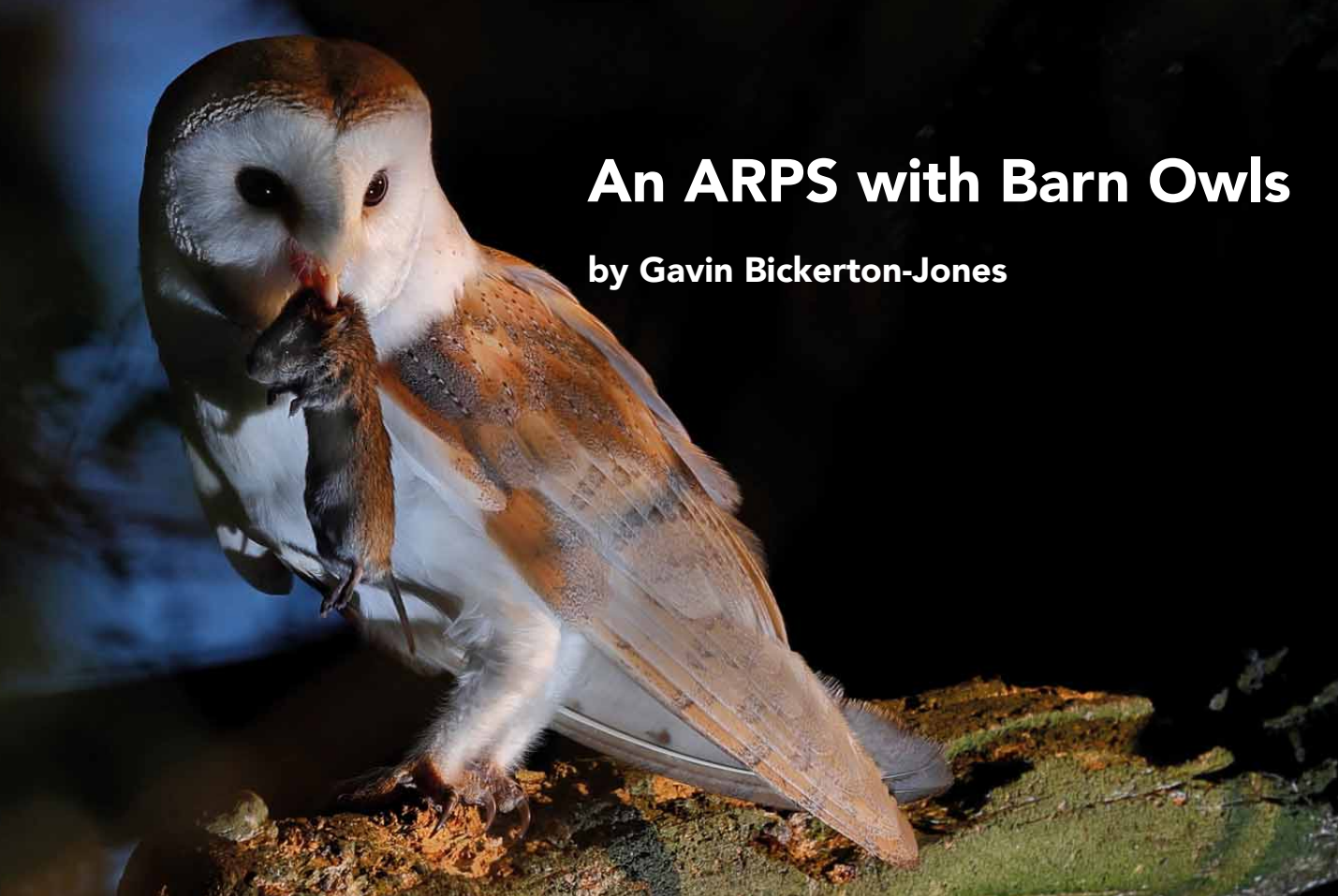


15 - Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)



# An ARPS with Barn Owls

by Gavin Bickerton-Jones



After joining my local photo club (Wymondham Photographic Society) around five years ago, I became aware of RPS Distinctions after one member gave a talk on his ARPS experience. As I felt I had a lot of decent images, I decided to get together an LRPS panel. I soon learned how hard it was to get ten complimentary shots of the required standard together and print and mount at standard as well. A steep learning curve, but after an initial failure, and a few small adjustments, I achieved my LRPS in 2019.





I drew breath for a time, but couldn't resist planning an ARPS panel in Natural History. I soon had some ideas flowing. I had a lot of images of wildlife around water, so began to plan a mixed panel with kingfishers diving, herons, otter etc., etc., but when I tried to assemble a panel I couldn't get a good balance. Around this time I was amassing a lot of barn owl images. I'd found a couple of pairs locally and was getting some nice shots. This gave me the idea of putting together a barn owl panel instead.

Learning from my LRPS experience, I didn't begin printing immediately. I used the RPS panel design pdf's and populated them with different images from my shortlist of around 60, to see what worked best. I knew doing a single species was risky, but I enjoyed the challenge of showing the life of Barn Owl's in 15 non repetitive images. I ended up with about 20 pdf's and honed in on around 25 images. Once I got to this stage I paid for some online RPS advice with Dr Kevin Elsby FRPS. This was done via zoom due to Covid. I was encouraged when I was told that I was on the right path and that with a few 'tweaks' I could have a panel. I then set about mirroring some images and finding better examples of Barn Owl habits.

I decided to print ten A4 size and 5 square to give a balance and make the layout a bit more interesting. I ordered some mount boards cut plus a few spares to make sure they were all from the same batch of board. On my first LRPS attempt, the assessors noticed that three of the mount boards had a slightly different grain to the others and suggested a change before re-submitting. So I learned the hard way to look at things with a very critical eye and not rush the mounting.



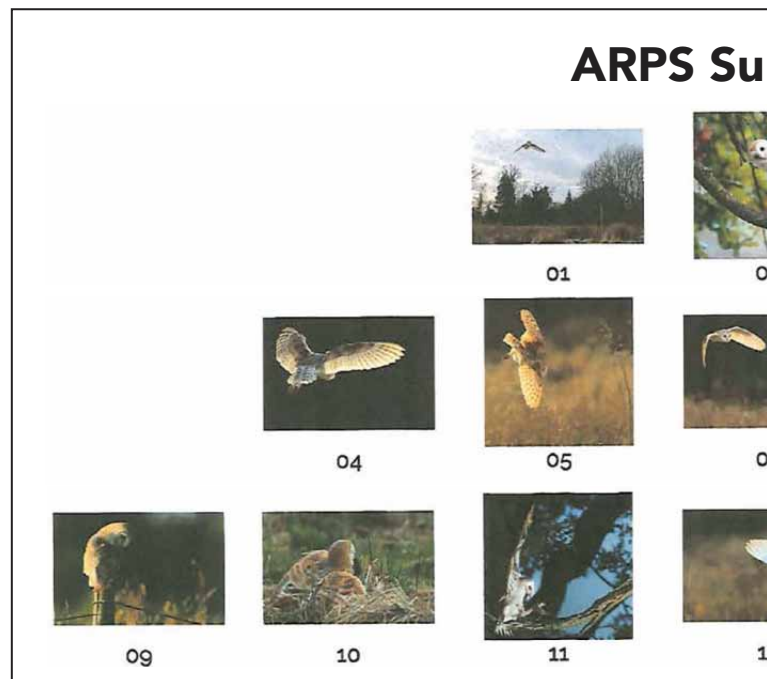
On the top row I used three images - flying or in the tree shots to set the scene, then on the middle row I used shots showing the different aspects of the owls flight, hovering, normal, swooping, pouncing etc. The bottom row consisted of shots of the owl on the ground, with prey and other aspects of the owls life. To make a cohesive panel it was also important to get the tones similar. Once I was happy with this it was time to warm up the printer. I then began the printing using my Canon 100S on Hahnemühle Fine Art Pearl paper - I had a nice panel of images but felt that it





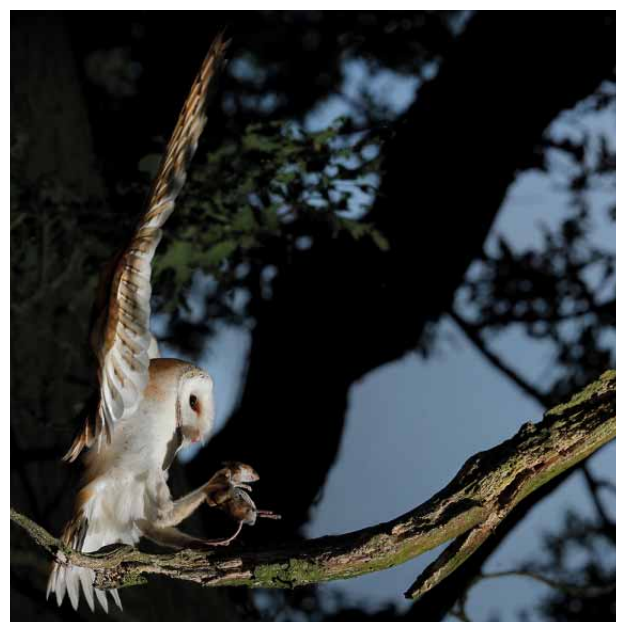
wasn't telling the whole story, so I took a risk and removed a couple of my favourites, went back to my catalogue and found a couple of more interesting shots. One was of a fight between a Short-eared Owl and Barn Owl, the other a shot of the Owl in flight with prey in its beak. They were both slightly distant shots, but with some enhancements and cropping I felt they added to the panel and was happy to make my submission at the end of 2021.

Due to covid the assessment dates were moved, but finally in June 2022, via Zoom, I watched with baited



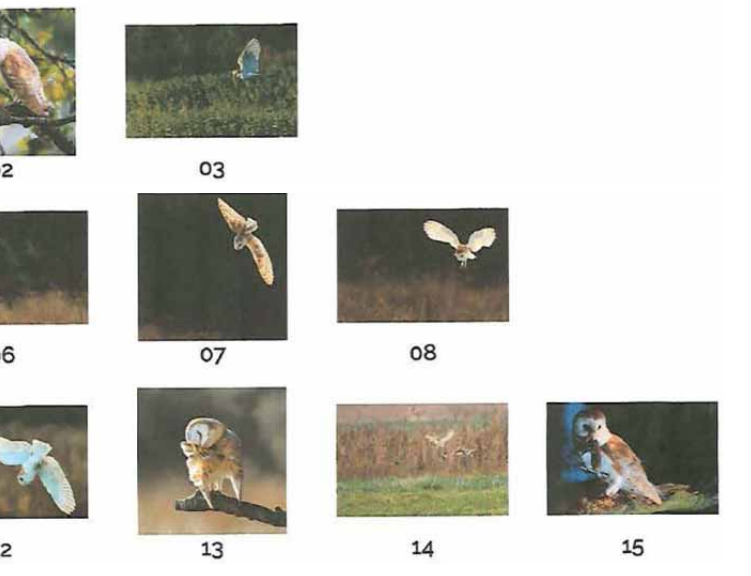
breath as the first five panels went through. Some of them successful and others not. Finally it was my turn.

After looking at my prints, the assessors spoke about what they felt were the strong & weak points of my panel. Just as the first one began to speak the sound went!! I was frantically trying to lip read to see if I could tell what she was saying - the sound finally came back just as she finished. I heard the comments from the other two assessors and thought I had a chance. I was particularly pleased when one picked out one of my 'risky' images as a favourite, but I still had in mind that I would probably fail the first time as being single species they would might find something that could be better, so I was blown away and very proud to hear the Chairman say that I had passed!





## Submission



I see it as an honour to be an Associate of the RPS and now appreciate how much hard work it takes to get a panel together. This project helped me to be more critical of my own work and produce better images.

If you're a member of a club there will be other members with years of experience willing to offer help and advice. I was certainly very grateful for the help of Wymondham Photo Society members, especially Dave Balcombe ARPS who offered a lot of help and support along the way. An Advisory Day would have been helpful and an opportunity to view other panels etc, but my timing for this was during covid lockdown and as everything was online it was not possible with prints.

What's next? I'm not sure about an FRPS, I think I'll rest on my laurels awhile before going down that road!



### **Statement of Intent**

*Living in Norfolk, we are very lucky to have Barn Owls present, and once I took up wildlife photography they became a passion and favourite subject of mine.*

*The aim of my panel is to demonstrate the Barn Owl's physical features and behaviour, from roosting, preening, hunting, bringing in prey, general flight, mantling prey and competition for food with Short-eared Owls (*Asio flammeus*).*

*I have endeavoured to show, using techniques including flash and remote cameras, the owls in context with the habitat that they thrive in, as well as more detailed studies.*

*Over years of observation, I have accustomed myself to their habitats and this helped me to be in the right place at the right time to record different aspects of their behaviour. Barn Owls are a Schedule I rated bird, so I don't photograph around the nest, just from discreet vantage points on their territory.*



1. Northern Gannet - *Morus bassanus*



2. Little Bee-eater - *Merops pusillus*



3. Galapagos Sea Lion - *Zalophus wollebaeki*



4. Greater Blue-eared Starling - *Lamprolornis*

# A Focus on Animal Behaviours

by Jeff Steady ARPS

As with everything else in life, in the pursuit of photographing wildlife not everything goes quite as you wish - you may have noticed. I suppose every wildlife photographer has his own stories, some of mine include: dropping my camera bag down the stairwell of a rural bus in Singapore, causing damage which the Singapore camera hospital could not remedy; spending night after night in a freezing Scottish hide hoping to encounter pine martens, only to experience nothing except the sudden shake and boom of a 4.2 earth-quake; being body searched five times in a blistering night in Nairobi airport while my camera bag was scanned. On one occasion, seeking out a pair of Little Owls in a nearby Worcestershire Reserve, I had to pass through a gateway frequented by cattle and deep in mud. Slipping badly and falling backwards, I instinctively grabbed the fence, only to find it electrified. So, compiling a successful panel has been for me a kind of triumph. Over my own skill shortages, most certainly, plus coming back from a first go failure (in fact, a referral), and all those inevitable vicissitudes of life.

Focussing on creature behaviours and insightful features over the last ten years or so has been my passion. At home and abroad, I was always looking for some interesting action or feature.

After passing through a good number of reserves and locations in Singapore (with a new camera), where you can find those wonderful giant white Cockatoos in the high trees in the centre of Changi, decent numbers of Nightjars in the rural sewage works and Flying Fox in the forest to boot. Crossing over to Sabah, Borneo, I decided to stay over in a 'hotel' in Sandakan where I was to meet up, early next morning, with the transport that would take me to a backpackers lodge on the River Kinabatangan. My bill for that night in Sandakan was £8 so you can guess the quality. But it worked and I was soon out and about on the river and waterways, frequently encountering Orang-utan. I spent one fruitless day with a boat and guide looking for Pygmy Elephant in the forest, only to find there was one back at the lodge. At length the elephant obligingly crossed the river under our noses. Great action shots! But they didn't make my panel.

Another day, turning a bend in the river in our small craft, we came across a Proboscis Monkey, his family



around him, crying out through the forest. A fabulous sight, an unforgettable sound. A best ever shot is in the bag and in the panel. But...with the assessors at home for my first submission and seeing my prints on line, they relied on a non-panel member in the RPS office to advise on 'print issues'. And? The creature's hand in the bottom left of the image was deemed to be un-sharp. So? Fixed! But surely too risky to re-submit...

Another favourite capture was a turning Short-eared Owl. Panning the bird passing at head height it turned its face towards the camera exactly level with the camera. Magic! Extraordinary! Unique! But sadly, committed to print there was a hint of softness and so another line in the referral comments.

Tossing aside my favourite shots was no fun, but then, surely every Distinction seeker could tell that tale. Who can deny the wonder of Gannet photo shoots at Bempton Cliffs, providing intimate shots of nest building and chick rearing (no's 1 and 5 in the panel), or the glamour of African birds with striking colours along the River Gambia to Georgetown, and the faint humour of a Bee-eater eating a bee (2 and 4 in the panel); the joy of finding a secretive Nightjar resting on the forest litter in daylight (no. 13)?

Some of the images in my panel were, unsurprisingly, a gift of being in the right place at the right time and perhaps quick reactions. The sudden appearance of Galapagos Sea Lions (no 3) while I was walking along the beach at Rabada Island, provided a good long spell of observation and photography. Uninhabited Rabada. or Red Island. has gorgeous red sand beaches and seems largely desert scrub. I found there a small startlingly red bird and managed a few images as it flew up to take an insect. My wildlife guide immediately declared me his hero! I had captured a bird he had not seen for years. It seems to have been the last Rabada Island Vermillion Flycatcher. Subsequent research tells me there are none to be found there now. The deer image (no 8), taken on an RPS Nature Group weekend, was more premeditated. I waited in the pitch black in pouring rain on a Welsh hillside for an hour, hoping for a favourable dawn shot. The rain eased and we were fortunate with wonderful dawn light and reasonably confiding deer.

A small number of my images show not so much action or behaviour but fascinating insights, and to me, they speak volumes. The Green Monkey (no 11) and female Orang-utan (no 15) I find arresting, demanding the question 'what must they be thinking now?' This is perhaps where my prime interest in the creatures is most clearly seen.



5. Northern Gannet - *Morus bassanus*



6. Brown Hare - *Lepus europaeus*



7. African Leopard - *Panthera pardus pardus*



8. Pere David's Deer - *Elaphurus davidianus*





9. Thomson's Gazelle - *Eudorcas thomsonii*



10. Brown Hare - *Lepus europaeus*



11. Green Monkey - *Chlorocebus sabaeus*



12. African Elephant - *Loxodonta*

As for us all, lockdown froze a lot of my adventuring and photography over the last 2 years. But at the first opportunity in February this year, I joined a photo safari in Masai Mara at just a few days' notice. The nightmare of frantic last minute administration, both going and returning, for both Kenya and UK, was amply rewarded with some memorable experiences and final images for my panel. A Thompson's Gazelle fleeing (from a cheetah), in fear for its life and seeming to float over the grasslands (No 9). A prowling (and heart stopping) leopard with glowing eyes (no 7), its sweeping tail seeming to reveal its intentions. The three drinking elephants in ascending order of size (no 12) took time to capture matching poses but it was highly satisfying when that moment came.

For me, the images in the panel that speak most to my ARPS story are the Hares (at 6 and 10). From dawn to dusk, I spent a day with a family of Hares, at times almost at arm's length. The dominant male was constantly torn between sweet-talking the doe and seeing off males who constantly challenged and tormented, and who sometimes seemed to be working together. I was taken aback by the speed and violence of the encounters. So much to observe and to learn of the behaviours – unsheathing the claws, closing the eyes on contact, leaping in the air, often targeting the underside with a head butt. At first the boxing was between the competing males. Towards the end of the day, the doe rejected the buck vigorously with more boxing. Those contact images – some with two or even three hares fully airborne, some showing floating chunks of fur – remind me of perhaps my most memorable day in the field.

Working for my ARPS propelled me forward in camera craft. I used a range of cameras for my images – Nikon D610 (full frame), Nikon D500 (cropped sensor) and Sony R4 (mirrorless), generally with long lenses. The images in my panel were taken handheld (sometimes with the help of available ledges and posts) though I do from time to time like to use a tripod and gimbal. I rarely use anything less than 1/1000 second shutter speed, except in a sedentary situation with failing light to reduce ISO, and then only after banking shots at or approaching my standard shutter speed. I almost always use manual mode to ensure that while raising my camera between hip and eye, I can ensure the shutter speed and depth of field I need. As part of a local birding group, I regularly have opportunity for practising that elusive skill of capturing the moment, and achieving a well exposed and sharp image. British birds can be challenging to spot and capture, and this regular 'target practice' has been a huge benefit.



ARPS also provided the motivation to master the all-important art of printing. At first I was hesitant and it took a while to master, but now I delight in selecting and printing images for display on my study wall. I use an Epson Eco tank printer, which has generally been a good servant and is surprisingly economical, allowing lots of practice. I have three slim wooden batons affixed on my study wall to display 15 mounted images and together with ceiling mounted lighting - I found this enormously helpful in putting the panel together.



13. Standard-winged Nightjar - *Caprimulgus longipennis*



As you can tell, I indulged my fondness for travel to some remote places, because that was my vision, and not least because I wanted to encounter iconic species and capture their behaviours. But at the same time I proved, to myself at least, what I had previously frankly doubted - that photo-graphing wildlife in UK can be equally fruitful and exhilarating as anywhere. There remain further species still to capture and to experience of course and I'm looking forward to that.

### Statement of Intent

*My long held passion for wildlife, and more recently wildlife photography, has increasingly leaned towards understanding and appreciating the creatures I photograph. My aim in this panel is to share a captivating glimpse into the life of my selection of animals and birds. The panel includes animal portraits that immediately evoke the question: what can they be thinking right now? But my main emphasis is to present views which exemplify key creature characteristics or give a new appreciation of them, their behaviours or their habitat.*



14. African Elephant - *Loxodonta*



15. Bornean Orangutan - *Pongo pygmaeus*



01 Stonechat (female)



04 Redshank



05 Oystercatcher



06 Grey Seals (male and female)

# My Journey to an ARPS Distinction in Natural History

by Mike Harris ARPS

The following narrative briefly describes the influences that eventually encouraged me to attempt to gain an ARPS distinction with a natural history panel.

From early childhood I can remember an attraction to birds and the natural world and this developed further at school under the influence of a teacher who possessed a wide knowledge and interests and was a superb communicator and motivator. Another early influence was an association with close friends of my parents who were keen birders and loved the North Norfolk coast. A first time trip with them made a lasting impression and Norfolk compared to our location near Cambridge seemed exotic and fascinating. Norfolk was to become a destination of choice and although I lived abroad for most of my working life a trip home was incomplete without a few days somewhere near Cley or Blakeney.

Birding remained an activity whilst living in a variety of locations throughout Australia, Asia and the Middle East. Photography became an interest much later and a chance meeting whilst based in Dubai was to be the initial catalyst. My wife and I had just completed a walk around a dairy farm located on the fringes of the desert, where the dairy herd was fed with grass grown from irrigation, when a small group of expats appeared. The farm was a magnet for birdlife in the area and as birders were a rare species in UAE anybody wandering about in the wilderness was very likely to be a member of the fraternity. The group we met issued an invitation to accompany them on a hunt for nightjars that were known to live in the area. This was to prove very successful and whilst we waited for the light to fade so that we could commence exploration we discussed, amongst many subjects, how to identify species in unfamiliar locations. Get one of these, someone said and produced a prosumer camera with a built in zoom. Shortly afterwards I purchased something similar and it proved extremely useful. For the next three years, until my retirement birding and taking record shots ran in parallel.

The first two years of retirement were spent in Malaysia and I joined the Malaysian Nature Society



(MNS). A small but very active photographic group operated within the society and regular workshops and field trips led by experienced naturalists and photographers helped me begin to understand the basic principles of photography. It soon became apparent that an update of equipment would be a benefit and purchase of a DSLR camera and appropriate lenses solved that issue.

One of MNS's annual undertakings was to monitor the northbound migration of birds from Sumatra via the Malaysian peninsula. The primary species of interest was the Oriental Honey Buzzard largely due to the fact that they travelled across the Malacca Straits by day, were large enough to be spotted and were virtually obliged to cross the narrowest stretch of water by rising on thermals on the Sumatra coast and gliding to landfall in Malaysia. This trip was not without potential hazards and changes in weather conditions could see birds return to Sumatra or in rare instances individuals might fall into the sea through exhaustion if too much active flying became necessary. I lobbied for the opportunity to join the survey group and was allocated two x three day slots during the month long survey. It is sad to report that the numbers of birds migrating each year was declining but the work was both fascinating and hard. The survey point was the base of a lighthouse that MNS had permission to access and standing in the heat all day peering into the glare off the sea was draining. The remedy, I was assured, was the juice from coconuts that were readily available from roadside stalls. It worked, two coconuts being the optimum dose! What has all this got to do with photography? Even allowing for a lack of local knowledge I became aware that I was usually trailing the others in identifying incoming birds. Rightly or wrongly I decided that my retirement ambitions might be better served taking photographs rather than purely birding. Whatever, the path forward was becoming set and I am happy that there is a lot to photography that does not require the highest visual acuity. Concentration and patience can often help to reveal a great deal.

The last part of my journey in photography occurred after returning to live in Cambridge. Following my MNS experience I was keen to find something similar and during a stroll around Cambridge I saw a poster announcing Cambridge Camera Club's (CCC) annual exhibition. Attending that and seeing the variety and quality of the members' printed images convinced me I should seek membership. After joining I soon became aware that the Club had an ethos of assisting and



02 Lapwing



03 Goldfinch on Teasel



07 Fulmar



08 Little Egret



10 Banded Demoiselle



11 Common Blue on Sorrel



09 Mayfly

teaching as well as running all the usual camera club activities. This provides an ideal environment to develop and monitor one's progress. In 2015 I gained an LRPS Distinction with a panel that did not boast a single wildlife image. Sport and urban landscape formed the majority of the panel. It was no secret that the panel was not a stand out submission but it had proved good enough and the experience helped me gain further camera and compositional skills along with an introduction to assembling a panel. The help I received from more experienced club members and through RPS Advisory Days also played a significant role in the success.

Having reached that point the next question was, what follows? Doing something as a hobby without a strong affinity to it is almost unthinkable and therefore the decision to attempt a natural history distinction was, for me, based on sound logic. The time from gaining an LRPS distinction to the ARPS success was longer than I would have wished. Lockdown and its aftermath clearly had an impact at a time when I should have been fully engaged with completing the panel. Other bothersome intermissions had already caused a hindrance but not a full stop but if I am honest my lack of sufficient and varied images also disrupted smooth progress. I had not set out with a clear vision of the finished panel, it evolved in stages. Images from Norfolk were always going to form part of the panel so that aspect was settled. When we arrived back in Cambridge the southern area of the city, where we chose to live, was undergoing expansion and part of the planning involved the creation of a wildlife reserve to be managed by the local Wildlife Trust. A large wild flower meadow was planted on former agricultural land that was bounded along one side by the River Granta and it was interesting to see this develop and witness the invertebrate life that colonised the area. It would have been foolish to ignore this facility that was so close to home and easily accessible by bicycle. My original macro lens was being worked hard.

There were many influences that propelled me from time to time but critiquing of images by CCC was a constant in the process. The club has a number of fine natural history photographers whose advice was most helpful. As the panel took shape I was strongly advised to seek a one to one advisory session. Dr Kevin Elsby from the RPS Natural History Panel undertook the review and this was a timely and very useful process. Not only did it identify images that were likely to be considered up to the required standard it also highlighted those that might not find favour for a variety of reasons. Fortunately there were more winners than





12 Grass Snake



13 Four Spot Orb Weaver Spider

losers and that enabled me to target suitable replacements and complete the panel. The panel format almost selected itself by species type and colouration and three rows with 3, 5 and 7 images respectively seemed the best configuration to display them.

What to do now? Gaining the distinction has already had an effect on my approach and willingness to try new techniques and equipment. This will be an ongoing process irrespective of the possibility of trying to trouble the assessment panel with a further body of work. Indeed to even begin considering that I fully realise my photography and post processing skills must continue to develop and the primary objective for the time being is to increase my natural history knowledge and support it with improved images that generate a challenge and hopefully bring a sense of satisfaction.



14 Long Jawed Orb Spider

**Presentation Layout**



15 Furrow Orb Spider with Common Darter prey

## Statement of Intent

The intention of this panel is to show a variety of species found in the East of England. The habitats explored were firstly coastal and the immediate hinterland beginning on the Lincolnshire side of The Wash and continuing along the Norfolk coast to Winterton. The species concentrated on were bird life and seals. Secondly, inland locations predominantly within a short distance of home in South Cambridge where invertebrate species were sought in the vegetation associated with the fringes of freshwater lakes and a stretch of the Granta River.



## South African Birds - An Associate Panel

by Sandeep Seeripat ARPS

I fell in love with photography as a young teenager when my uncle visited with his brand-new Nikon Nikkormat camera and allowed me to take a few shots. This ignited my passion for photography which grew over the years and today, I am humbled to be awarded an ARPS by the Royal Photographic Society for my Natural History panel.

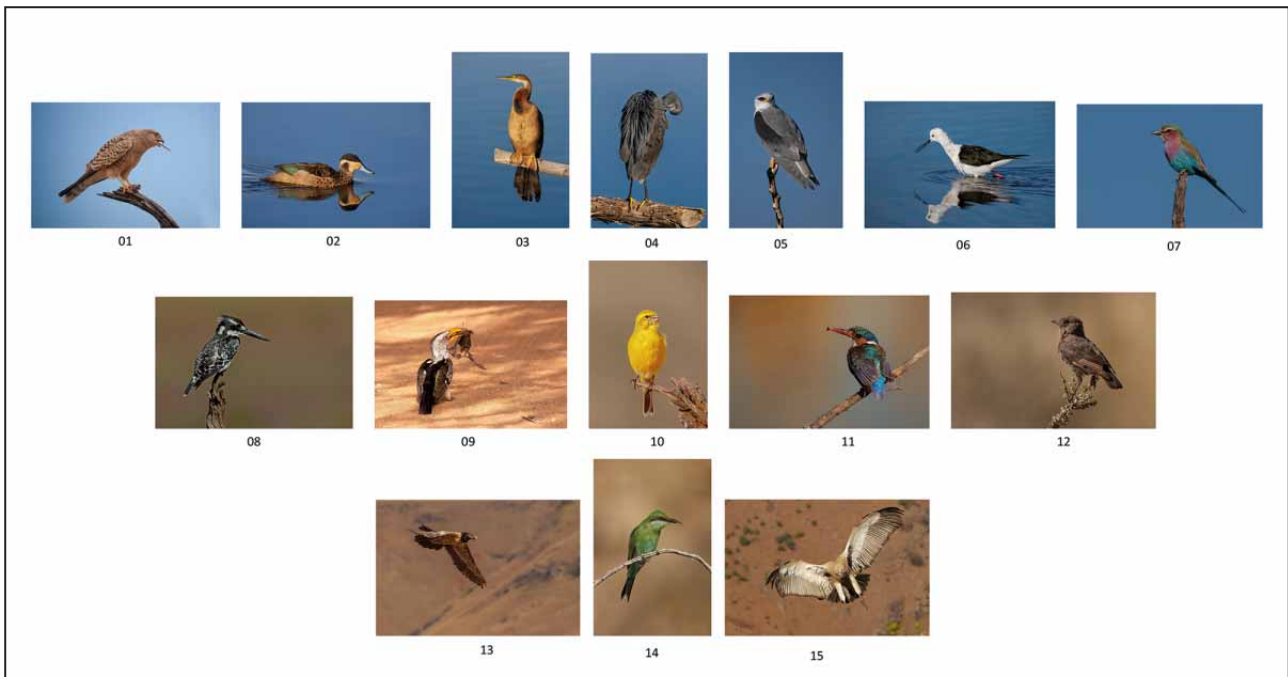
I have always loved nature, and South Africa offers the nature-lover a myriad of landscapes, from sea, to bushveld, to deserts and mountains with a large diversity of wildlife across millions of hectares of wilderness. One is spoilt for choice with the large collection of game parks from the famous Kruger

National Park, the largest and most popular one managed under the government-run SANParks, to privately owned concessions that range from eco-lodges to world-class luxury bush lodges. Some parks are easily traversable on tarred roads allowing for a self-drive safari at your leisure, others can only be accessed by a 4x4 with high clearance, others may only offer game drives with a trained ranger.

As much as there are ample photographic locations, the one lesson I learnt over the years is that the perfect picture requires patience and a bit of luck. For me, the excitement is in the hunt, not just for the bird or animal but for that one photograph that is technically perfect –







the one with the ideal background, the perfect light, the glint in the eye, the sharpness of the subject, the correct shutter speed to capture the water droplets or capturing the animal in some kind of action or interaction with another species. And when that perfect moment happens, it is in my hands to freeze that moment bringing together the technical knowledge of my camera and lenses to capture a perfect shot.

Usually when one thinks of South African Nature Reserves, the Big Five (Lion, Elephant, Rhino, Leopard and Buffalo) come to mind and for a visitor on safari the focus is usually on these animals. I wanted to highlight some of the birds of the region photographed in their natural habitats, to focus attention on these feathered creatures. With this in mind, I spent many hours reviewing my portfolio of images taken over the years. As I selected the first pass, my computer screen was a mosaic of vibrant colours, of cloudless bright blue skies that contrasted with the deeper, inky blues of the water, shades of brown and different hazes of yellows and off course, the beautiful plumage of each unique feathered subject.

I wanted to portray a selection of bird behaviour, in flight, preening, feeding and simply perched but also show an appreciation for the challenges faced photographing birds in the wild. Small birds have a tendency to prefer dense bushes, hiding from larger birds and predators with quick dashes between small trees and bushes. These shy birds require a very steady hand constantly poised and ready to shoot. Larger predators are often spotted perched higher up in trees or soaring while they search for prey on the ground. They remain stationary for a longer period of time and are usually spotted from a distance.



The vulture images (on page 37) were taken from the edge of one of the mountains in the Drakensberg. A sharp drop into the ravine below allowed me to view these birds from above as they drifted with the thermals through the ravine searching for prey. Watching them over a period of time I had the opportunity to adjust the shutter speed and ISO to get the correct depth of field.





I wanted the feathers to be as sharp as possible while keeping the background blurred. There were many missed opportunities and lots of pictures were taken to make that perfect shot.

In contrast, photographing the smaller birds, I had only a few seconds before they flitted off to another branch. We spotted a Kalahari Canary on an afternoon game drive but the noisy diesel-engine of the game vehicle scared it off each time it perched. Eventually it remained posed on a branch long enough for me to take a shot with no distractions.

Photographing birds in water is always rewarding when a reflection can be caught as the bird glides through the water or when catching them preening in the sun with damp feathers following bathing. Spending time patiently in a bird hide observing and learning these birds behaviour helped me better appreciate the nature of birds being that close.

The photograph that has always eluded me is the Lilac-breasted Roller in flight. While I have been able to take many shots of a perfectly posed one, once they took flight, they never seemed to fly off in the direction that allowed me to capture the wonderful colours that makes this one of the most beautiful birds in the sky. However, at the same time, there is the thrill that the hunt is still on!

I began my journey to achieve the ARPS about 3 years ago when I moved house and decided to move all my images on various hard drives onto the cloud. This gave me the opportunity to review the thousands of images taken across many South African Nature Reserves over several years. I believed I had a portfolio of pictures from which I could select a panel worthy of recognition by the RPS.

I submitted my first digital panel in September 2020 after receiving positive feedback at a 1:1 session. Several weeks later, I received one of those emails you look forward to, but it turns out to be the big: I regret to inform you...

Fortunately, the issues were only minor. The Chairman suggested a resubmission with some recommendations. The combination of lockdown and subsequent pressures of work resulted in a pause until early this year when I reviewed my panel again. I signed up for another 1:1 session and was grateful for a different view on my panel. Armed with this







feedback and the luxury of a large portfolio, I decided to change the images in the panel, make my submission with prints to be fully in control of the final presentation and re-write my Statement of Intent.

The 'Intent' of my original submission was not clear but now working on my ARPS resubmission crystallised my intention to continue to improve my critical eye and develop new editing skills. Natural history pictures have strict guidelines about editing that forced me to look at my photography differently paying closer attention to taking photographs that truly stood out technically with the minimum editing required.

Prior to submitting this new panel, I believed that my photography would tell its own story, but I embarked on a mission to take all learnings onboard to improve my photography.

I attended a few Advisory Days in other categories to get a perspective of what judges were looking for and how successful pictures are presented. It was clear that the Statement of Intent laid the foundation on which the panel was assessed and how the images needed to truly represent the intent. This helped me rewrite my statement of intent.

Focus on the overall storyline that was eventually presented to the judges played a big part in the success of the panel. I revised my panel and re-positioned it several times until I was confident that it told the story as I intended.

My RPS advisor was invaluable in advising on editing tools, offering constructive feedback, reviewing several revisions and providing me with guidelines to submit a successful panel.

Getting my ARPS was a massive achievement, and it has inspired me to look forward to my Fellowship panel. I have no doubt that this will stretch my abilities and offer an even bigger challenge, but I look forward to the journey. Fortunately, my passion for photography is equally matched to the pursuit of adventure a bush trip offers and I can't wait for the next one.



# Tawny Owls of Exmoor

by Harvey Grenville

## Background

While Exmoor may be one of the smaller national parks in the UK, its 267 square miles offers a rich variety of habitats and scenery within its spectacular moorland, mixed woodland, farmland and dramatic coastline. These diverse habitats provide homes for a vast array of wildlife species.

I was extremely fortunate to be granted access to a site for wildlife photography by a local farming family on Exmoor. The site - which lies on hilly grassy farmland bordered by mixed deciduous woodland on one side - is regularly frequented by fox, hare, red deer, buzzards and red kites amongst others. But my primary target for this project was our local population of Tawny Owls.

Tawny Owls have always held a particular fascination for me, although it's a challenge to build a decent portfolio of images of them since they are primarily a nocturnal hunter.

The main window for photography on this site is when the livestock are being over wintered, and while some of the Tawnys' primary food sources are hibernating. However, I have been able to keep the

feeding station on tick over during the remainder of the year and this has allowed further photographic opportunities of tawnys, for example during the breeding and rearing season.

Ethical considerations have been at the forefront of the project particularly in the use of lighting and selection of food sources for the owls.

## Setting up the project

The project started with the positioning of a pop-up hide on this hilly site during windy and stormy winter weather while giving due consideration to the hunting habits of the tawnys. Although Exmoor winters may not be as harsh as those experienced before the advent of global warming, it is not uncommon for temperatures to drop to -5°C before sunrise or to get snow and ice during late winter. Conversely, when it is not freezing winter is usually very wet and muddy. These are not ideal combinations when traversing slopes with expensive camera and lighting gear and I have ended up rather ingloriously on my backside on several occasions while trying to get set up for the night or when departing - usually in the dark!

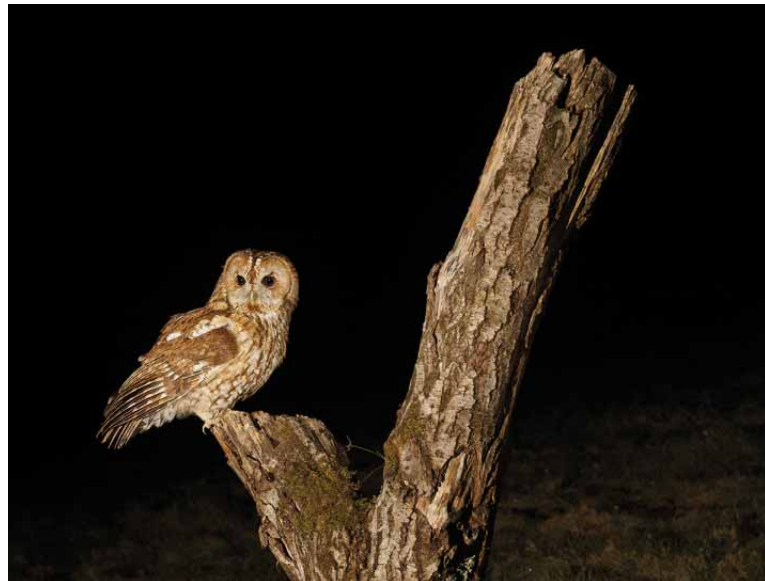




Taking account of these considerations, I decided to position my hide within 50 yards of the adjoining woodland and facing east behind a hedge in the hope that it would provide some shelter from the westerly storms coming in off the Atlantic. This seemed to work as, although my pop-up hide was severely battered and bruised during the four months it was up, it did remain broadly intact and upright despite the best efforts of Storm Eunice and numerous other storms to flatten or uproot it. (Which is more than can be said for some of my lighting equipment!) It also provided an opportunity to set up perching and feeding posts for the tawnys in easy striking distance from the nearby woodland. The east facing direction had the additional advantage that photographing other wildlife in daylight would be backlit by the rising sun and side lit from the south as the morning progressed.

Owls typically prefer to perch on posts or stumps while hunting, although they do hunt on the wing. I therefore set up two perching posts at either end of three separate feeding posts/areas. Having multiple feeding posts/areas increases the complexity but it also helps to provide some variety to the props in the photographs. I positioned the feeding posts/areas in an arc that would enable me to shoot with a 400mm full frame lens while operating from the hide.

A period of monitoring then took place through use of two trail cams and observing activity with binoculars





from the hide. I picked up Tawny activity within a few days of laying food down on the feeding posts. The monitoring period helped to inform me about the Tawny Owls' behaviours and flight patterns before I considered introducing lighting and taking photographs.



### Lighting

After a week or so of monitoring, I decided it was safe to introduce some lighting to gauge the owls' reactions. Initially I set up flash lighting adapted with infrared (IR) pass through filters and used a converted camera fitted to capture IR images. I was losing 5-6 stops of light with the IR filters and it was not possible to use the auto focus (AF) settings on my camera. As a consequence, all my IR shots were limited to static owl poses obtained by traditional pre/manual focussing techniques on the feeding posts with black and white image outputs.

About a month into the project, I moved to setting up F&V Z96 LED lights to provide secondary low-level lighting on the feeding posts/areas which enabled me to use the AF settings on my regular camera and to provide supplementary lighting to the scenes. Primary

lighting is provided either by Hahnel Modus 600RT speedlights mounted in pairs on MagMod MagRings or Rotolight AEOS Mk 1 lights. In addition, MagMod light diffusers/modifiers are used along with 1/4 CTO colour correction gels for some images when weather allowed.

Lighting set ups are relatively simple for static shots of the owls where the shutter speed can be slowed to 1/250 second or less. Significant lighting challenges are introduced for the owls when there is wing movement either on the feeding posts or when they are in flight and there is a need to increase the shutter speed to anywhere between 1/640 second up to 1/1600 second to avoid excessive movement blurring in the images.

I have found the use of the Rotolight AEOS lights helpful in some circumstances, such as dusk on a summer evening or for slower shutter speed shots on a winter's evening. However, for faster shutter speeds in darker conditions I generally prefer to use the speedlights, even though their light output levels drop off at higher shutter speeds while in High-Speed Synch mode with the camera (and there is a recycle time for the battery between flashes). I compensate for this by deploying additional speedlights and the MagMod MagRings are an effective way of pairing up speedlights to boost light outputs particularly for the higher shutter speeds required for capturing images of the owls in flight. In these situations, the lighting set up to cover three different feeding posts/areas can be quite intricate and I can deploy up to 12 speedlights split into three different control groups to provide adequate lighting control.





After some trialling with the lighting set up during the early stages of the project, I am satisfied speedlight output no faster than once a second, with the camera set to single shot mode, do not disturb owls when they visit.

### **The duration, frequency and pattern of visits**

The duration of the visits is variable – some lasting less than a minute while at other times an owl's visit can last 5 to 10 minutes. On average the feeding station was receiving between 4 and 6 visits per night from the male and female owl covering this territory during February and March 2022. However, the average doesn't quite tell the full story - there was a clear correlation over the winter period between the frequency of visits and the overnight weather. Stormy and wet weather limited owl visits to the feeding station and sometimes grounded them for 24-48 hour periods – on such occasions this would lead to an increase in visits the following night. Notably, on the night after Storm Corrie had passed through the feeding station received more than 12 owl visits. Similar patterns of behaviour followed when other winter storms had passed through. Visit frequency fell



off to an average of two visits per night during April once the breeding season had commenced and other food sources became available. However, it has increased back up to 4 or more visits a night during the summer months while the female owl has juveniles in tow.

Although there is a high probability that there may be a few visits early in the night from the owls there is otherwise no discernible pattern to their overnight visits, which could occur at any time over a 10-12 hour period.







### The introduction of camera traps

As such, it's impractical for me to be present on the site every night to photograph the owl visits so I decided to introduce camera traps and sensors from Camtraptions to increase the photographic opportunities. This involves the use of the Camtraptions wireless PIR motion sensor V3 and a wireless receiver linked to the camera to trigger it when activity is registered by the motion sensor. In turn, when the camera shutter is actuated, a separate wireless transmitter connected to the camera activates the speedlights to provide illumination for the night time scene.

In addition to the sensor and receiver, I purchased the latest version of the Camtraptions weather-sealed camera housing and aluminium lens tubes to protect the camera, lens, wireless transmitters and receivers.

There are some challenges and considerations when using this equipment for my particular project, most notably that I can't fit a lens warmer around my lenses

inside the Camtraptions aluminium tube to avoid condensation on the lens. However, overall, I have found the Camtraptions equipment to be a valuable addition. The PIR motion sensor is highly configurable and the whole arrangement is responsive enough to capture owl in flight shots in the dark while keeping the camera gear protected from the elements albeit with a low-tech workaround to incorporate a lens warmer. Arguably, the introduction of the camera traps was a game-changer for the project. They have captured images for me that I would otherwise not have got and provide me with a greater variety of shots because of the flexibility to shoot from different angles. Further information about this equipment is available from [www.camtraptions.com](http://www.camtraptions.com)

### Conclusions

This type of project is hard work and intensive, particularly in the winter months. In short it can be high effort and low yield – sometimes I walk away from a session with no useable images and I consider it a good night's work if I manage to get 3 decent images! That said, for me the reward justifies the effort which has enabled me to start building a reasonable portfolio of tawny owl images. Furthermore, at least in some small way, I am helping to support our local population of tawnys.

A sample of photographs from the project are shown with this article. Additional images are available to view on the album section of my Flickr account.





# Incidents of Wildlife Photography in sub-Saharan Africa

by John Cucksey ARPS

The new A4 format of The Iris seems to offer greater opportunities for a wider range of articles with more narrative and, as Dawn has said, enabled larger prints. Larger prints are more suitable for showing animals in their environment. The A4 format also gives greater space to cover a more extensive range of subjects relating to nature photography. Improvements in digital transmission and printing has enabled a high quality Journal to be produced with the authors doing most of the work thus easing the workload on the editor, who has for many years done a good job producing The Iris but now, provided the writers of articles do their job properly, only has to format the subject matter and a fine journal produced at a reasonable cost to the Nature Group. I find it interesting and a pleasure to write an article so I have done! And I hope readers of The Iris will enjoy reading about some of my more exciting experiences when photographing wild life in Southern and East Africa and be encouraged to tell us theirs.

## Caracal, Maasai Mara (fig. 1 & 2)

I had plenty of photographs of the other big four cats but not the most beautiful of them all – the Caracal. On safari in the Maasai Mara, we had been visiting a Maasai village and were on our way back to camp. Something interesting caught our driver's attention - he stopped

and began looking very closely at a bush. He then said *"I think there's a Caracal in there, do you want to wait and see it come out?"* without hesitation I said – yes. In the photobook I subsequently produced I wrote *"We could occasionally see patches of brown moving about in the bush. We waited for a long time and eventually, as the sun set, a Caracal appeared some distance off, called, and, not one, but two Caracal kittens emerged from the bush and sat in front of us for a few moments, always looking in opposite directions."* (fig. 2) The kittens were nearly fully grown. While waiting we were joined by three other vehicles who had to leave before the kittens emerged as they had to leave the Mara before dark whereas our camp was in the Mara. To me the photo of the pair looking in opposite directions is a behavioural photo. I entered it in a club competition







and the judge fell headlong into my trap and firmly told me that it was essential to get highlights in all four eyes!

**African Wild Cat. Ndutu, Tanzania (fig. 3)**

I originally rejected this photograph of an African Wild Cat but have come to like it since someone pointed out to me that it showed the cat in its environment, and it completes my set of all six of the cats common in Africa.



**Reed Frog, Okavango (fig. 4)**

One afternoon our group set off to photograph the Reed Frogs in the Okavango marshes. It was a lengthy walk to the Mokoros, a canoe type boat, in which I was punted around the swamps by a friendly local boatman. Gliding through the Okavango in a Mokoro is a great experience. A silent smooth ride that concentrates your attention on the essence of the delta - the cleanliness of the water, the thousands of tiny fish, the water lilies winding their way up from the bottom and hundreds of tiny reed frogs cling perilously to the reeds. I had to make do with my 100-400 lens but managed to put together an acceptable double page spread of the reed frogs in my photobook.



**Sitatunga, Okavango (fig 5)**

Drifting along we came to open water and across the other side on the edge of the reeds was a Sitatunga. On seeing our Mokoro it rapidly disappeared into the reeds but I got this one picture. It is a shy aquatic antelope of marshes and swamps and rarely seen.

**Wattled Cranes, Okavango (fig 6)**

As evening approached we put away our cameras and settled down to that essential of African safaris – a ‘sundowner’. Spotting some Wattled Cranes flying in to roost a short distance away in the marshes, we hurriedly collected our cameras and tripods. It was almost too dark but with the assistance of some enhancement from Lightroom I managed to produce photographs of them which I found acceptable under the circumstances.







**Elephants, Okavango (fig.7)**

The best way of introducing this photo is to quote our leader – Greg du Toit “Another very special sighting saw us enjoying our morning tea on the banks of a small lake. An elephant herd appeared out of the bush on the opposite side of the lake and proceeded down to the water’s edge. Gazing back to the brush line, we were surprised to see another herd making its way down to the water and then another and another and another. The elephants just kept coming until an entire clan lined the lake fringe leaving some of us spellbound and the rest of us frustrated at not being able to capture the immensity of the sighting on cameras”. This image is just one of these herds. Over 150 elephants emerged out of the bush to drink, play, mud wallow and swim. I suppose today a drone would have prevented our frustration!

**Puku and lamb, South Luanga valley (fig. 8)**

Early one morning driving to a waterhole some distance away, we came across this Puku feeding its lamb.



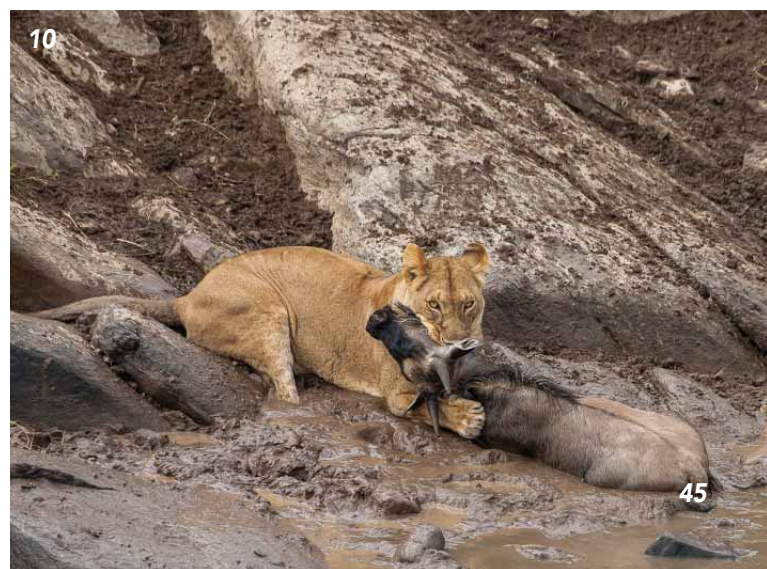
**Wildebeest crossing the Talek river (fig. 9)**

This herd of wildebeest had gathered on one side of the Talek river in the Mara. They kept on coming down to the river bank and looked as if they were going to cross but then moved back and began to graze again. We observed this several times from our vehicle on the opposite bank. We drove around photographing buffalo and birds while keeping an eye on the wildebeest movements. Eventually they looked as if they might cross, so we hurried back to the bank on our side - a wildebeest took the plunge and they all followed, one great rush and it was all over. We were the only vehicle there!



**Lion and wildebeest (fig.10)**

The crossing was quickly over and we were left with the sight of an unfortunate wildebeest captured by a lion. I think the animal may have been unwell as it is the one in the bottom left of the previous picture and slightly separated from the others.







**Spotted Hyaenas, Maasai Mara (figs. 11 and 12)**

I wrote in my photobook;

*"Our days began by rising whilst it was still dark, having coffee and as dawn broke setting off into the Mara. We usually returned to camp at about 10 o'clock for a superb 'English breakfast' or had an excellent picnic breakfast served by our Maasai guides somewhere in the massive expanse of the Mara.*

*On the morning of 7th October we were having coffee whilst still dark. Suddenly Shem (our leader) said "drink your coffee quickly we are off, something is happening out there". We could hear an eerie, wailing and howling noise. So, we downed our coffee, found our drivers and dashed off into the savannah, to find two packs of twenty plus Spotted Hyaenas having a 'battle' and attacking each other. We watched them for about 20 minutes before they went their separate ways. It was a sight neither of our very experienced photographer/naturalist guides had ever seen before.*

*Shortly after we found what were presumably some of the same hyaenas feeding on a wildebeest carcass."*

**Southern Carmine Bee-eaters (fig 13)**

These birds frequently make their tunnel nests in river banks and in large colonies. This pair were photographed on the banks of the South Luanga river. All you require is a suitably placed hide and you can spend all day taking photographs of them. You must beware of wild animals when walking from your vehicle to the hide!

**Lilac-breasted Roller (fig. 14).**

The Lilac-breasted roller is widespread over much of Southern and East Africa. It enjoys perching in open areas on bushes and trees and seems to say 'I know I'm beautiful, take my photo' before flying away and offering you a great opportunity for an in flight photograph.





**African Wild Dogs, Botswana (figs. 15 and 16)**

I can best describe the Wild Dogs by quoting Greg du Toit again:

*"It was such a privilege to follow a truly wild pack of hunting dogs as they simply went about their frantic high-paced daily routine. The dogs would turn to and fro unperturbed by the thickets of Kalahari Appleleaf trees! How our drivers managed not to get lost I really do not know? Our poor safari guests had to duck and dive to avoid random branches striking*

*them in the face or perhaps even knocking them clean off the vehicle! At one point I became concerned and glanced back only to see John merrily performing some in-camera editing while branches tore all about him. He seemed not the least concerned about his health, and in hindsight, the tangible energy and excitement of the dogs rubbed off on all of us".*



# Skomer & Margam Extended Residential Weekend 2023

James Foad LRPS is now taking bookings for the rescheduled 2020 Summer Residential Weekend, Skomer Island and Margam.

**Wednesday 14th June - Monday 19th June 2023.**

We will start in Pembrokeshire. It is your responsibility to book your own accommodation for the Wednesday and Thursday nights. On Friday 16th June we will travel to Margam via a Nature reserve

The cost for the stay at Margam is £275 single room occupancy. All rooms have en – suite facilities. The price for Margam includes Breakfast, Packed Lunch and Dinner.



There are 17 places available.

We will have two 9-seater mini buses available. There will be an extra charge for mileage and parking. Prices for the boat to Skomer, including landing fees, will be available early in February 2023.

Nature Group members who were originally booked on the weekend in 2020 will take priority and have 14 days from the advertisement going live to pay their deposits.

Please note: Deposits are non-refundable unless someone is available to take your place at Margam, or the RPS Nature Group cancel the event; in which case an alternative date may be found.



To book your place, for further information or for payment details, please phone the organiser:

James Foad LRPS  
Tel: 07834 810430  
or  
Email: [jamesfoadlrps@inbox.com](mailto:jamesfoadlrps@inbox.com)



# NG Residential Weekend, FSC Blencathra - April 2022

by **Jeremy Malley-Smith LRPS**

1

In the summer of 2019, I attended the NG residential weekend at Slapton Lay, Dorset. It was my third such trip, all in the south of England. Being a Lancastrian, I wanted to attend a residential weekend trip in the north of England or even in Scotland but the overwhelming comment from other members was that for that were to happen I'd have to run it. I've been running small wildlife workshops for 20 years to many locations across UK, Europe and Africa. It surely can't be that difficult to organise the Nature Group field trip and look after 15 photographers, can it? So I agreed to run the June 2021 residential based at the FSC Blencathra, Cumbria.

I had planned to reccy suitable sites to accommodate all 16 photographers during June 2020 but, as we all know, Covid hit the UK with no access to the Lake District, meaning no up-front research was possible. Time went on and in November 2020 The Iris was published with the advert attracting and filling all places in no time at all.

Quite a few problems occurred with the online payments but were eventually resolved by the RPS IT. More lockdowns meant more travel restrictions. A week before the trip should have originally taken place, June 2021, the majority of members opted to defer the trip to prevent catching the virus. Negotiations with the FSC for a suitable date for macro photography took place and we were offered dates in autumn and winter (not ideal for macro photography) and during Easter weekend (when the Lake District is literally like a car park due to the number of tourists). Eventually I agreed the weekend of 22nd April 2022 (albeit a little early in the season).

Four members pulled out and asked for refunds. Another advert went out and after a flurry of phone calls, all the places were filled just a few days before the new start date. At this point, the refunds were made. In the meantime I was still looking for sites capable of accommodating 16 photographers so I took the decision to look for larger wildlife.







Dubwath Silver Meadows Nature Reserve, opposite Lake Bassenthwaite was the initial meeting point Friday lunchtime. It is mainly wetland habitat but also has many meadows and hedgerows for small birds and butterflies. 12 photographers made it to the reserve and were able to enjoy watching several bird species in flight and at feeding stations. These birds were extremely active, taking nesting material, feeding and posing for the photographers present. Close to the reserve's entrance were a family of common lizards basking in the afternoon sun which brought out macro lenses. The lizards weren't phased at all by the attention received and remained motionless whilst the group captured photographs of the family.

For trips on the 2nd day, the group was split with half visiting Shap Wells Reserve while the other half visited Snaizeholme Reserve to photograph red squirrels. These reserves were some distance from the centre but thankfully, three members (plus myself) volunteered to drive on Saturday and Sunday. Splitting the group this way meant overcrowding didn't happen. Both areas had numerous garden birds feeding at different stations and an otter was even spotted by one morning group member at Shap Wells though it remained elusive to his camera's sensor.





The third day saw the group head down to the RSPB Leighton Moss reserve just north of Morecambe. Each photographer headed off in different directions but had the pleasure of witnessing many birds across the reserve at all the hides including both a bittern and a marsh harrier in flight, avocets, bar and black-tailed godwits, plus parental duties from a male mute swan keen on defending his area by driving away all other birds thus keeping the area rich in food for his young. The fleeing greylag geese had to run across the water to escape his attacks was great for the photographers present.

Macro lenses and moths kept photographers busy on the final morning with two moth traps that had been set up the night before in the grounds of the centre by Duncan Locke ARPS and myself. On the Monday morning, we had around 80-100 moths in the two locations and whilst the moths weren't readily familiar to myself, I'm fairly certain lepidopterists would easily identify the moths present.

Evenings were spent in the lecture room with talks given by Duncan Locke ARPS on Focus Bracketing / Stacking on Friday evening; Achieving the ARPS Panel by Maggie Bullock ARPS followed by a similar talk by Mark Perkins ARPS on Saturday evening. Image critique of members' nature images took place on Sunday evening.

Given the initial challenges, you might be forgiven for believing I wasn't happy with the field trip but everything went as planned. Some organisers might have cancelled the field trip when things were initially challenging but I didn't want to disappoint those who had arranged pre-trip accommodation, transport, etc. The centre had excellent facilities for all including decent size rooms, meals, bar, classrooms. The spring time weather in the Lake District is usually described as changeable: if it's not raining then the rain must be on its way. However, during the four days we were there, we had perfect weather, soft light, minimal shadows and no rain. The group fully enjoyed the company of each other and the wildlife at each location came out on cue. Absolutely perfect!







15



16

Photos:

- 1 A Lake District View From FSC Blencathra by Jeremy Malley-Smith LRPS
- 2 Black Headed Gulls by Gay Gilmour
- 3 Black-tailed Godwit Feeding by John Simpson
- 4 Chaffinch by Julia Andrew LRPS
- 5 Honey Bee by Alan Pollock
- 6 Common Lizard by Geoff Hughes
- 7 Lapwing Landing LM by Duncan Locke ARPS
- 8 Male Siskin at Dabwath by Stephen Hyam
- 9 Grey Mountain Carpet Moth by Lesley Simson ARPS
- 10 Diptera Mating by Mark Perkins ARPS
- 11 Greylag Goose Running On Water by Jeremy Malley-Smith LRPS
- 12 Red Squirrel by Maggie Finney
- 13 Robin by James Foad LRPS
- 14 Siskin at Dabwath Silver Meadow by Peter Ward
- 15 Red Squirrel by Maggie Bullock ARPS
- 16 Rook by Alan Pollock
- 17 Female Avocet Turning Eggs by Lesley Simson ARPS
- 18 Group Enjoying Lunch at Leighton Moss by Duncan Locke ARPS





## Nature Group Committee Elections 2023

The Nature Group Committee is elected to serve for two years. The next election will be at the AGM on the 1st April 2023 for the 2023 – 2025 Committee.

We are always keen to hear from Group Members who want to join the Committee and help to run the Group. The Committee meets online every six to eight weeks so Committee Members from all parts of the UK and beyond can attend meetings without travelling. To find out more, please feel free to contact any of the present Committee Members listed in The Iris and on the Group Section of the RPS website under:

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

All positions on the Committee are open to election at the AGM on the 1st April 2023. So if you would like to get involved in helping to run your Group or if you wish to nominate another Group Member then please complete the Nomination Form below and return it to the Honorary Secretary by Saturday 4th March 2023. Please be aware that if you are standing for one of the specialist roles on the Committee then you must be able to demonstrate that you have necessary skills and experience to carry out that role.

### Would YOU like to be the next Honorary Secretary?

The present Honorary Secretary will be standing for the role of Group Chair at the 2023 AGM so we are very keen to find a new Honorary Secretary. This is a key role on the Committee. The main duties are organising online links for Committee Meetings and a venue for the AGM, setting the Agendas for these Meetings in consultation with the Group Chair, producing Minutes and generally controlling and distributing all of the paperwork needed by the Committee. Could it be YOU?

If you would like to get involved in helping to run your Group, or if you wish to nominate another Group Member, then please complete the Nomination Form below and return it to the Honorary Secretary by Saturday 27th March 2021. We would like to hear from you!

## Nomination Form for RPS Nature Group Committee Elections 2023

**Nominees, Proposers and Seconders must all be Current Members of the RPS Nature Group.  
Closing Date: Saturday 4th March 2023.**

I wish to nominate: ..... RPS Membership No. ....

For the Post of: .....

Name of Proposer: .....

RPS Membership No. .... Signature: .....

Name of Secunder: .....

RPS Membership No. .... Signature: .....

If elected I agree to serving on the RPS Nature Group Committee in the above Post:

Signature: .....

Date: .....

After completion by all three persons, the form should be returned to:

Duncan Locke ARPS, RPS Nature Group Honorary Secretary

E-mail: [duncan.locke@btinternet.com](mailto:duncan.locke@btinternet.com) Tel: 07989 494232

Photocopies and scans of this form are acceptable and may be returned by post or e-mail

## 2023 Members Exhibition of Prints and Digital Images

### Exhibition Selectors:

Thomas Hanahoe FRPS, John Chamberlin FRPS, Duncan Locke ARPS

### Exhibition Calendar:

Entry system will open	24th November 2022
Closing date for entries	20th February 2023
Selection Day	1st March 2023
Report cards	by mid-March 2023
Exhibition Opening	1st April 2023
Returned <b>unaccepted</b> entries	Late April 2023

The strongly preferred method of entry is via the online entry system. All Nature Group members will be sent an invitation email that will contain a link to the entry system. Any members that cannot use the online entry system can post a completed entry form along with their images, to the address shown on the form.

The Members Exhibition page of the Nature Group section of the RPS Website will contain a link to the entry system, and a copy of the entry form can also be downloaded from there.

Gold Medals will be awarded to the best print and best digital image of the exhibition. In each category a Bronze Medal, plus Selector, and Highly Commended certificates will be awarded. The 'Tony Wharton' award will be presented to the most successful entrant in the exhibition.

The acceptance list, plus a selection of award-winning images, will be published in the Summer 2023 issue of 'The Iris'. The awarded images will also appear on the RPS Gallery website.

Once again a slide shows of all accepted images will be available to download from the Nature Group Dropbox Account, there will be no DVD automatically issued to each entrant.

### Digital Entries

The maximum dimensions for digital files are 1600 horizontally and 1200 vertically.

### Print Entries

**Please read the information on print submissions before you send your entry**  
All accepted prints will be displayed at the Exhibition Opening. They will also be displayed at Edinburgh PS and possibly other locations. The 2023 accepted prints will therefore be retained until the 2024 AGM. Unaccepted 2023 prints will be returned at or immediately after the 2023 AGM along with any accepted prints from the 2022 exhibition that have not yet been returned.

Further details of the entry conditions can be viewed in the online entry system, the Nature Group area of the RPS website, and on the manual entry form.

## RPS Nature Group Members Exhibition 2023

### CONDITIONS OF ENTRY

Entry is restricted to members of the Nature Group of the Royal Photographic Society.

### General Conditions

- All entries must be titled with the correct English name. Only use the scientific name where there is no English name. **Trivial and/or cute titles are not acceptable and will result in disqualification.**
- All **exposure adjustments and the removal of minor blemishes or distractions**. The final image must have been produced from a single negative, transparency or digital recording and must not be a combination of images. The only exception is focus stacking.
- Images of captive subjects or those captured using live bait are not permitted, but see the Exhibition page on the RPS website for a more detailed explanation of 'captive'.
- Work accepted in previous Nature Group Exhibitions is not eligible regardless of which section it was entered into, ie prints cannot have been accepted as slides/digital images, and vice versa. **This also applies to near duplicates of previous acceptances.**
- Entering this Exhibition assumes that entrants agree to their entries being used to promote the Nature Group by inclusion in for example, the Exhibition 'slide shows', the 'Iris', the RPS Journal, the Nature Group's section of the RPS website, and the Nature Group Gallery Website. Copyright of all images remains with the author.
- Acceptance of entries will be notified by a report card which will be emailed to all entrants.
- Whilst every care will be taken of all entries submitted, the Nature Group cannot accept any responsibility for loss or damage, however caused.
- Submission of work implies acceptance of the above conditions.
- Failure to comply with the Conditions of Entry will result in your entry being rejected.**

### PRINT conditions

- Mount size for prints **MUST BE 50cm x 40cm**. Please keep the thickness of the mount to a maximum of 2.8mm. Mounts having Velcro pads, peeling tape, or any sticky substance on the back will be disqualified, as they could damage other prints.
- Overseas entries can be sent unmounted but will **not be returned**. Although overseas prints will not be returned packages should be clearly marked on the outside - Photographs for Exhibition only - to be returned to sender. No commercial value.
- The back of each print must bear the title and name of the author. The title should correspond to the title entered in the online system or the manual entry form. The author's name must not appear on the front. Please include a copy of your entry confirmation or entry form with the prints.
- If NOT entering via the on-line entry system then you must send digital copies of your prints to the exhibition secretary. See the notes below relating to this.
- Unaccepted prints not being collected at the exhibition opening will only be returned if the correct return postage has been paid in advance. Prints will be returned in their original packaging – please ensure this is adequate taking into account the parcel has to be opened by the exhibition secretary. **Accepted prints will be retained for display in 2023 and will be returned after the 2024 exhibition opens in April 2024**

### Production of DIGITAL files.

- Maximum size is 1600 pixels horizontally x 1200 pixels vertically.** Files to be in **jpg** format, in the **sRGB** colour space, and **300dpi**. **Please do not add a background fill as the projection software will do this automatically.**
- For manual entries digital files can be sent by CD/DVD/Memory Stick or by electronic means using WeTransfer or Dropbox. Files should be in a folder clearly identifying the entrant and containing up to 16 image files.
- File naming protocol: - Category and number corresponding to the details on the entry form, space, and Title. (e.g. **PA1 Common Seal DB1 Oxeye Daisies**). Please use both upper and lower case, as in these examples. **If sending a CD/DVD burn as Data and close it, do not use options to write 'Session' or 'Multi Session'.**
- All CDs/DVDs will be destroyed after the close of the Exhibition and all unaccepted images deleted.



## RPS Nature Group Members Exhibition 2023

### ENTRY FORM (Manual Entry Only) 1 of 2

#### ENTRANT DETAILS (Please complete legibly in **BLOCK CAPITALS**)

Name: ..... Honours: .....

Address: .....

.....

.....

Post Code: ..... Tel No: .....

Email: .....

I accept the Conditions of Entry and confirm I am a member of the RPS Nature Group

Signed: .....

#### Entry Fee

**There is no fee required to enter the exhibition.**

**The fee for returning print entries by post remains at £8.**

**Please note, prints from overseas entrants will not be returned.**

Prints will be returned by

Royal Mail 2<sup>nd</sup> Class or MyHermes                      **Return postage £8.00     £.....**

A signature may be required on delivery.                      **Total Amount Due             £.....**

**Payment to be made via the NG Exhibition Event on the RPS website, please do not send cheques with your entry.**

**Please send your entry to:**

RPS Nature Group Exhibition

c/o Ralph Snook ARPS

8 Knole Close

Almondsbury

Bristol

BS32 4EJ

Email: rpsngexsec@btinternet.com



**RPS Nature Group Members Exhibition 2023**  
**ENTRY FORM (Manual Entry Only) 2 of 2**  
**IMAGE ENTRY DETAILS (Please complete legibly in Block Capitals)**

**Prints – Category A**

All creatures – birds, mammals, reptiles, marine life, insects, etc.

Cat Id	Image Title
PA1	
PA2	
PA3	
PA4	

**Prints – Category B**

All plant life (including flora, fungi, lichens) and all other subjects including geological and microscopy, plus patterns, (design and form found in nature).

Cat Id	Image Title
PB1	
PB2	
PB3	
PB4	

**Digital Images – Category A**

All creatures – birds, mammals, reptiles, marine life, insects, etc.

Cat Id	Image Title
DA1	
DA2	
DA3	
DA4	

**Digital Images – Category B**

All plant life (including flora, fungi, lichens) and all other subjects including geological and microscopy, plus patterns, (design and form found in nature).

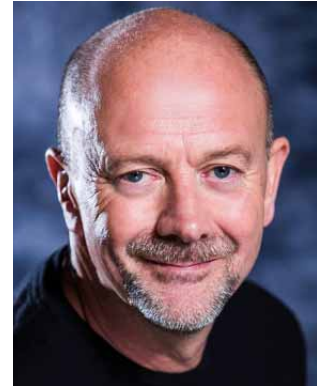
Cat Id	Image Title
DB1	
DB2	
DB3	
DB4	







4

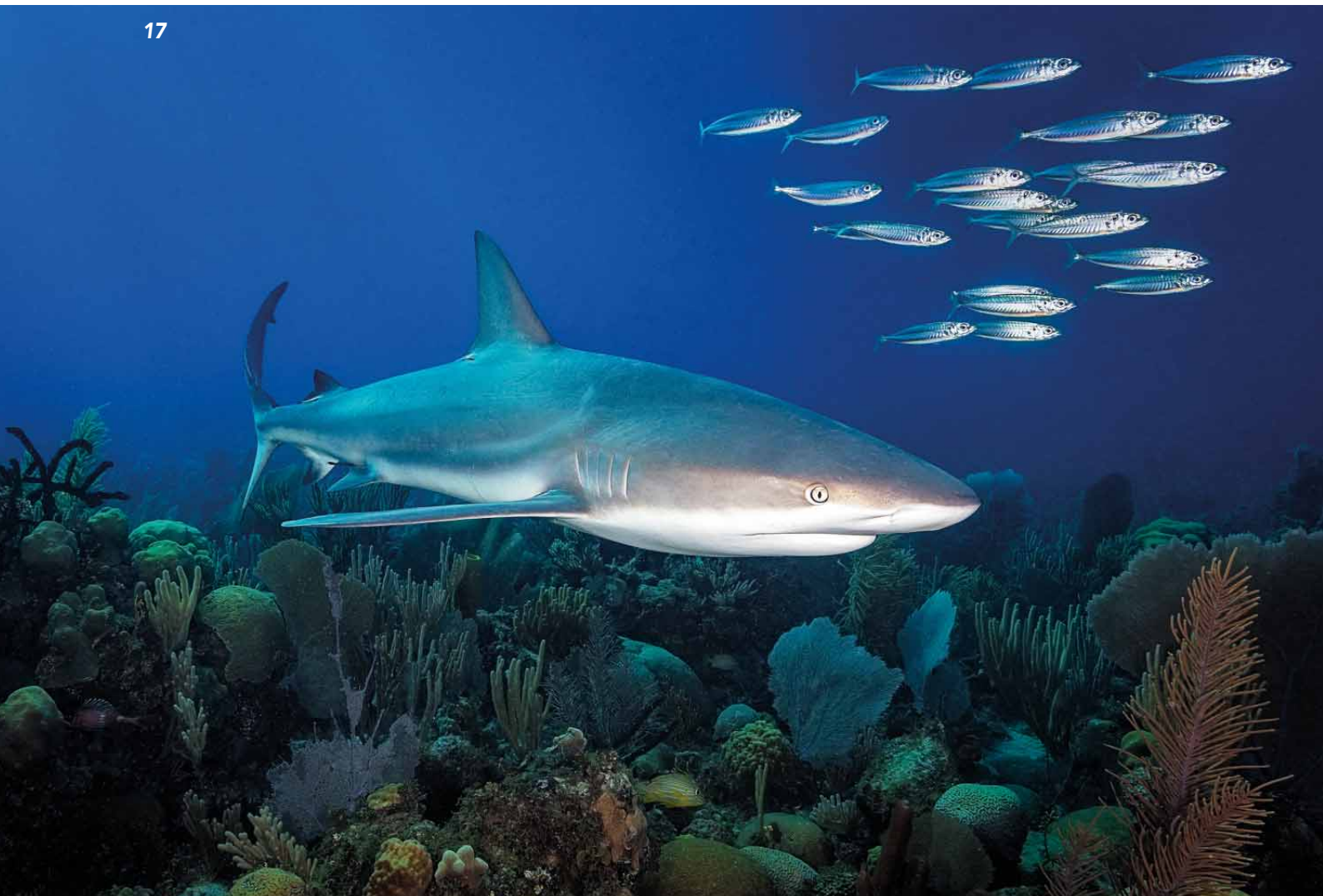


David Keep FRPS

## Species List:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 California Sea Lions ( <i>Zalaphus californius</i> ) | 12 Green Turtle ( <i>Chelonia mydas</i> )   |
| 2 Green Turtle ( <i>Chelonia mydas</i> )               | 13 Grey Seal ( <i>Halichoerus grypus</i> )  |
| 3 Caribbean Reef Shark ( <i>Carcharhinus perezii</i> ) | 14 Tomato Clownfish ( <i>Amphiprion frenatus</i> )                                      |
| 4 Horse-eye Jacks ( <i>Caranx latus</i> )              | 15 Grey Seal ( <i>Halichoerus grypus</i> )  |
| 5 Porcelain Crab ( <i>Petrolisthes galathinus</i> )    | 16 Laced Moray Eel ( <i>Gymnothorax favagineus</i> )                                    |
| 6 Cuban Crocodile ( <i>Crocodylus rhombifer</i> )      | 17 Caribbean Reef Shark ( <i>Carcharhinus perezii</i> )                                 |
| 7 California Sea Lion ( <i>Zalaphus californius</i> )  | 18 Cormorant ( <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> ) and Sardines ( <i>Sardinia pilchardus</i> ) |
| 8 Squat Shrimp ( <i>Thor amboinensis</i> )             | 19 Great Hammerhead ( <i>Sphyrna mokarran</i> )   |
| 9 North American Manatee ( <i>Trichechus manatus</i> ) | 20 Kuni's Nudibranch ( <i>Goniobranchus kuniei</i> )                                    |
| 10 Ribbon Eel ( <i>Rhinomuraena quaesita</i> )         | 21 California Sea Lion ( <i>Zalaphus californius</i> )                                  |
| 11 Northern Gannets ( <i>Morus bassanus</i> )          |   |

17







Images from the successful Nature Fellowship submission by David Keep FRPS

