



# SPS Newsletter

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April is racing by quickly but haven't we had some glorious weather with blue skies, sunshine and all the lovely colourful Spring bulbs coming into bloom. My favourites are tulips, I just love their varying colours and structure and how they open their little faces during the day and then close-up to sleep at night. April has also meant getting busy in the garden cutting lawns, preparing beds etc., the work goes on ... But I have a rest soon as I am off up to Northumberland for a week in Monty the Motorhome so I am keeping my fingers crossed for some dry weather. I have my ticket to the Farne Islands booked so am looking forward to perhaps seeing some puffins and other birds whilst there. And naturally I will have a camera with me, fingers crossed I might manage to get a few good images.

Haven't we been busy as a Club with the external competitions and some very gratifying results for us all. Many congratulations to Jolanta, Sue and Jenny for their success at MidPhot, one of Jolanta's awards being for the Best Colour Print. We can also hold our heads up with our performance in the North Warwickshire Plaque and the GB Cup.

We recently had our Creative and AV Competitions. Many congratulations to Tim Hutchin for his 'Twinkle, Twinkle' AV which took the top prize. We also have the Annual Awards Dinner on 11<sup>th</sup> April and the AGM on 24<sup>th</sup> April to look forward to.

This month's Newsletter sees some interesting articles which I hope you will enjoy, I certainly have enjoyed reading them as editor. And thank you all for coming up trumps and saying 'Yes' when being approached by Phil and Jenny. I certainly would like to see if I could get to visit the waterfalls in North Yorkshire that Michael Prince brings to our attention. It never ceases to amaze me how waterfalls always have so much water flowing even in dry, hot periods. I have to say I think the most amazing waterfall I have ever seen has to be Niagara Falls and my trip on the Maid of the Mist. It was stunning even if a little wet ....! And Jane's photographs of Pelicans I thought were absolutely stunning. How she has managed to capture them in flight in such detail is fabulous.

And finally, what else are we celebrating in April ...

- 6th April 1896 - the first Olympics of the modern era were held. They took place in Athens after a break of 1,500 years.
- 11th April 1970 - Apollo 13 launched from Cape Kennedy and 56 hours later it ran into difficulties.
- 12th April 1961 - the first human went into space. Russian Yuri Gagarin travelled 187 miles above the Earth in the spacecraft Vostok I.
- 15th April 1912 - the Titanic hit an iceberg in the Atlantic Ocean and sank. Only 700 of the 2,224 passengers were rescued.
- 23rd April 1564 - birth date of William Shakespeare.
- 26th April 1986 - the Chernobyl nuclear plant in Ukraine exploded. The radioactive cloud created forced an evacuation of a 300-mile radius.
- 30th April 1789 - George Washington was inaugurated as the First President of the United States





April is also a great month for star gazers. The Lyrids meteor shower appears from 16<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> each year. The Eta Aquariids meteor shower can be seen from 21<sup>st</sup> April.

And along with Easter, the Masters in Augusta (come on Rory it must be your year to get to wear the coveted Green Jacket) the other days we are celebrating are:

11th April - National Pet Day.

15th April - The day the Swallows traditionally return to the UK.

18th April - World Heritage Day.

22nd April - Earth Day.

23rd April - St George's Day and National Shakespeare Day.

23rd April - National Shakespeare Day.

27th April - London Marathon.



What goes up when April showers go down?

Umbrellas!

Don't forget you can send me your contributions to my email address  
[172elizabeth@gmail.com](mailto:172elizabeth@gmail.com)

With my very best wishes

Liz xx

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02

## Through the Lens ...

### Is it Real Photography?

*By Jenny Ladbrooke*

I was on an empty beach on the Isle of Skye taking photos when I spied another photographer – clearly a much more dedicated photographer than me as he was using a tripod! As you do in these situations you get chatting. He talked about his local camera club and region. He told me he had been a judge up until recently but had stopped because he didn't like the growing trend of Photoshopped, artistic type of photography which in his view was detracting from real photography. He must have seen my mouth slightly twitch in amusement as he asked in a horrified tone whether that was my type of



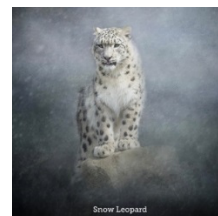


photography? I think we know the answer to that one but of course 40 years working in HR means that I have the skin of a Rhino and am utterly inured to being offended so I said yes and did my very best to reassure him that no offence had been taken - he was a nice man and we're allowed our own opinions. And I also realise the issue of creativity in photography, especially the post processing part, can be a bit of a Marmite issue.

I feel sure he would have enjoyed a recent heated exchange on a Facebook group for UK camera clubs on this topic. It's a fairly regular debating point and it's always fun to see how it plays out. So usually somebody puts up a post or makes a comment which says something along the lines of there are too many composites/artistic images winning awards in external and internal competitions and is it taking away from 'real' photography. And then of course some of the people who do those composite/artistic images jump in and say it is real photography just a different interpretation.

I love a good robust debate! I'm no stranger to contentious subjects and forthright individuals but this debate crossed a line. One very spiky individual posted images, without permission, of a very successful, multi-award winning photographer of this fine art style of photography called Lynda Haney and declared this was the type of image he disliked!!! So it all got personal, he got booted out of the group and lots of people got very irate. However, not Lynda Haney who took it very much in her stride. On a side note, for those that came along to the fine art editing demo that Phil and I did last year you may remember me saying it was Lynda's fine art image of cavorting baby giraffes that I saw as a new club member at an exhibition at Smethwick that utterly captivated me and whilst I had no idea how to re-create that style I knew I wanted to learn and so started my journey.

With Lynda's kind permission here are a couple of her images, including the baby giraffes, to enjoy.



But as you can see it generates debate which is often very circular and I think it will always be contentious.

As one commentator on that Facebook debate put it, photography has two elements, the first taking the image itself and then the second element which is processing it afterwards, using editing software like Photoshop. Different photographers, depending on the image, their preference and its purpose, pivot between those two elements and use them to a greater or lesser extent to create the final image.

For some categories of competitions, you can't use the second element so for Nature images you can only do minimal post processing. Similarly with Landscape while there's a little bit more flexibility you can't suddenly plonk a castle in if it wasn't there to start with or replace the sky, et cetera. But for other categories like Open and Mono the balance of those two elements is up to the photographer. It just has to be made up entirely of the photographer's own images.

So looking at this image of my Parliament of Owls although every element is a photograph of mine, the final image clearly shows that I put more effort into the second post processing element than the actual capturing of the images in the first place.





That's not to say I didn't enjoy the first element of taking the images. Quite the contrary it was a fabulous day on a Nottinghamshire country estate photographing beautiful owls trained by a very talented man who was clearly devoted to them. And ironically, the second element of trying to pull it all together caused me all together more effort and to go a little bit greyer...

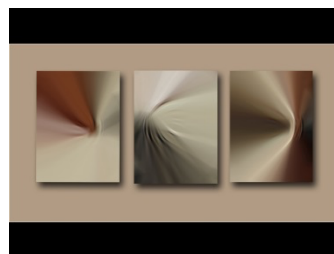
By contrast is this image which much to my very great surprise won the Straight Out of Camera Competition. I had put it in at the last minute as a make weight as I couldn't find anything better but, as it says on the tin, it is taken straight out of the camera! So everything on the first element and nothing on the second. Again I loved taking the image. It was a wonderful autumn afternoon in a stunning location. In fact, it is quite difficult not to take a good photograph at Buttermere. Personally I still think it's a bit of a boring image but what do I know – apparently very little!!



But are these two elements equally valid? Are photographs that are more focused on the first element of taking the image more authentic, more like photography should be than those that heavily rely on the second post production element? Well my pushback would be is that to create a good quality composite you need good quality images. For my owl composite if I hadn't had my tripod with me for that misty dawn shot of Padley Gorge (yes I do own one and will at a push use it if conditions demand!) it would have been impossible to get that ethereal look and if the owls had been out of focus or bodily parts missing then clearly the final image wouldn't have worked. Undoubtedly good editing can hide a multitude of sins but not if your start image is poor. Also composite images require multiple elements so more images to nail. One of the attractions for me is that I feel I can use more of my images and not less. Almost like recycling! My other pushback would be that variety is surely a good thing? Let's imagine the situation where every competition in our Club was say Landscape. Let's be honest if that were the case, it would get boring..... and that is despite it being one of our most popular and enjoyable competitions and arguably accessible to all of us. Seeing different subjects and styles and approaches keeps it all fresh and interesting.

As a perfect example let's take David Venables' recent panel entry. David is one of, if not the most, experienced photographers in our Club, a former judge and winner of many awards and photography distinctions.

His landscapes are legendary.... But that doesn't stop him from doing this type of image, experimental but effective – a mobile 'phone image of his fireplace and an absolute winner in my book cleverly put into a panel.



And another from David, a stunning image of some sail boats. Whether this was captured in-camera or through post-processing I don't know but it's made a beautiful creative image. It was shown at the Solihull PS print exhibition in 2022 hence this rather poor iPhone photo of mine.



So do more Photoshopped or that edited style of image win more awards which was one of the points in that Facebook group post I mentioned above? A quick perusal of the competition galleries on our website of our own internal competitions would suggest that the significant majority of the winners in our competition and indeed entries are images that while post-processed to some extent do not alter the reality of the original setting. They are usually not fine art or the creative style although when that type does get entered they can do very well. So in our Club the answer would be no but to be fair, relatively few of the images that our judges have to consider fall into this fine art/creative category so maybe that's not a surprise.

Looking at external competitions like the BPE salons which showcase the very best of club photography then reviewing the results of those competitions then I would say that style of image does do very well in the categories which allow a free rein of post-processing and they do win many awards. The perfect example of this is Jolanta's 'Swan Lake' which very recently won best colour print in Midphot 2025 which incidentally is the annual competition of our regional federation of camera clubs in the Midlands. Let me just let that sink in – out of all of the best of the best of colour prints across the Midlands photography region, which comprised hundreds of entries, this image came out top! Fantastic for Jolanta and fantastic for us as a Club. As we can see Jolanta has taken a beautiful scene and created something magical.



What this says to me is that this type of image appeals to good photographers who want their images to stand out even more and create a different feel. And why not? As long as there is a balance of entries and it shows the gamut of photography skills then we as the viewer see variety and inspiration and crucially something in all the range of images that appeals to our own aesthetic. But at that top level, a level way above mine, I also suspect that even those that come across as straight photography will have been very skilful post-processed to enhance the original image. So love it or hate it I suspect that the vast majority of accepted images in those top competitions, whether it's obvious or not, use photo software editing to play a great part in elevating the image. It just may not be that obvious .....

Where does that leave us as photographers? Well I would suggest if you want to get the best possible images some use of editing will help but where you take it next is up to you. For some the post-processing part is a step too far and for some it is a necessary evil but for others it's just the start and it's a chance to create and take an image to another place. Isn't it good we have the choice.

## 03

### A Wonderful Bird is the Pelican ...

*By Jane Roby*

Following the request for articles for our Newsletter I was asked if I would like to write about bird photography. My response to that was that I am not a birder, and don't consider myself to have any specialist knowledge on photographing birds. My interest is



in the natural world in general, in which I include birds, beasts, bugs, rocks, plants and just about anything that occurs in nature and isn't man-made. Put me in a studio with a load of lights and a model and I wouldn't have a clue where to start, but that's not to stay I wouldn't have a go as I consider all new skills to be of value and transferable to what you do want to photograph. I consider myself to be an opportunist photographer, but lately I have been taking some trips to give me more opportunities to photograph some particularly appealing birds and beasts.

I'm sure you will have noticed that I have a few Pelicans in my collection, in particular Dalmatian Pelicans, the largest of the 8 species on the planet. The males can stand up to 6 feet (1.8m) in height. They have a wingspan of 11.5 feet (3.5m) equalling that of the largest Albatross species. They can weigh up to 33lbs (almost 15Kg).

Females are a mere 5'3" (1.6m) with a wingspan of 8 feet (2.4m). You certainly notice when one of those decides to land next to you on a boat, at one point I had three of them next to me!

Lake Kerkini is on the border of northern Greece and Bulgaria. It is a man-made reservoir, created in 1932, then redeveloped in 1980, from an area of marshland. It provides irrigation for local farmers and a source of fish. It has become a major breeding site for the Dalmatian Pelicans with nesting platforms created within the lake to protect the nests from land predators. This globally threatened species has less than 20,000 individuals worldwide, with around half in Europe.



The brilliant red throat and crazy mop of feathers on top of the head are only present in the breeding season, for the rest of the year they resemble the Great White pelicans.

When I first saw photos of these amazing birds, probably at one of the Smethwick exhibitions, I knew I wanted to go and see them for myself. There were two companies to which I applied - Natures Images and Guy Edwardes, both always have waiting lists. Natures Images replied first and I booked with them, but then Guy also replied, and his trip had additional time in Bulgaria to photograph Vultures, Eagles and other birds, so I booked with him as well. Covid disrupted my initial plans so I eventually travelled with Natures Images in January 2023 and with Guy in January 2024.

On the subject of camera settings, I don't consider birds to be any different to any other moving image. Firstly think about how fast you need the shutter speed. For a sharp image it can be anything from 2,500-4,000, depending on light and the speed of the subject. For slow panning we were down to about 1/30th of a second, to allow some movement blur, even lower for creative effects. AF settings depend on the circumstances. If the background is far enough away then I prefer to go around 7.1, maybe 8, to ensure that everything is in focus, but when the background is closer a wider aperture will help to throw any distractions out of focus. With a bird as big as a Pelican, and close to the boat, then more depth of field is preferred. I have now switched to the Canon mirrorless system, but for my Pelican trips I was still using my much loved EF 100-400 lens with a 1.4 extender and an adapter to connect to mirrorless. I've now switched to an RF 100-500 lens for the mirrorless system, saving myself a pound in carrying weight by eliminating the converter and the adapter. The eye detect tracking system is fantastic for keeping focus, especially on moving subjects and birds in flight. I tend to set the preferred shutter speed and aperture and then adjust the ISO manually to get the image that I want. Electronic shutters show the image that is being taken in the viewfinder, allowing for more accurate exposure. Focus setting can be spot focusing, but in flight against a plain sky a larger focus area can help to keep on the subject. So there is no magic formula, it's all about the light on the day and the effect that you are trying to achieve. We did try some



high key images and low-key backlit images as well as panning.

On both trips to Kerkini we were fortunate in getting a variety of light and weather conditions. After a storm on the first trip we went out to stunning diffused light giving the best conditions possible, in my opinion. While everyone was watching another action I tracked a lone pelican coming in to land behind us resulting in one of my most successful images ever.



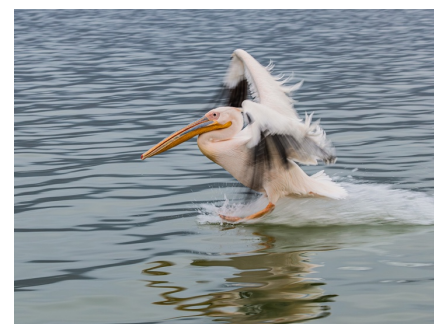
Pelicans don't naturally catch fish flying through the air, but they know what to expect when a boat full of photographers are poised for throwing fish high in the air, and travelling into the wind to give the birds lift. The only pelican that plunge dives from a height is the Brown Pelican, an American species, the Dalmatians are much too heavy.



While out with Guy we had a couple of extremely foggy mornings where it took a while to find any pelicans, save a few with another boat. Hence the photograph 'Photographers in the Mist'. On another day we had a storm with heavy rain, but not to be deterred Guy organised a boat with a cover. This was only partly successful as the rain was horizontal at times and the lake extremely choppy. It did produce some interesting blown feather effects as well as wet and blown photographers.

Another inhabitant of the lake is the Great White Pelican, but in breeding plumage these turn pink, and can be known as Rosy Pelicans. They are also huge birds, but just a little smaller than the Dalmatians.

It's fair to say that I have a bit of a passion for Pelicans. I have now seen 5 of the 8 species in the World and may or may not get the opportunity to see the remaining, three, being in India, Africa and the West Coast of South American, but who knows.



This is just a taster, but I am due to give a members' evening talk in November, which will show you more of the antics of these stunning creatures, their relatives, and our trip into Bulgaria. If time permits I may throw in a few other birds or beasts too.

I hope you will join me then.



Why did the Pelican get thrown out of the restaurant?

Because he had a big bill but no wallet!

## 04

### Behind the Scenes

This month's image and 'Backstory' is from myself and is titled '*Eryi National Park, View From the Miners' Track*'.

I am very proud of this image not just because I have taken it and it has done rather well for me this year in competitions but because of where it is and the beautiful day, scenery and company I had with me on the day I took it.



I was staying in Monty the Motorhome in November 2024 on the drive of my good friends' cottage which is near Harlech in North Wales. I am lucky to be able to visit my friends there a couple of times a year and I never tire of going. The scenery is wonderful and we all enjoy walking so go out on lovely walks in the Eryi National Park when we are there and usually the weather is very kind to us. This time was no exception and although the day started dull the weather forecast in the mountains was for good weather so we decided to head on up into them. When we got there it wasn't the best as you will see from the image of me below ...! I was well wrapped up to say the least as it had been cold, with a hooly wind blowing and snow flurries when we had arrived!



We set off up the Miners' Track and the scenery was breath-taking. It was a sharp, crisp air that made a lovely light for taking pictures. It was also one of the few occasions when the top of Eryi was visible and not shrouded in clouds as it most often is. We were also incredibly fortunate that apart from a man on a pair of skis we did not see anyone else on our walk. Normally the Miners' Track can be very busy with walkers.

The image I took was on the way walking back down and I just had to capture the view in front of me as I hadn't seen it quite like that before and with the snow lying on the ground

and peaks a bit like it had icing sugar sifted over it, which made everything show up really well. I cannot claim that I applied photographic rules to my picture, thought about F stops,



composition etc. I just literally pointed my camera and pressed the button.

It was one of those days when you think it is good to be alive and you see nature at its best and what a lovely image I have to capture the memory. And to celebrate the wonderful walk and scenery we finished up at the Youth Hostel by the car park at the end of the Miners' Track and had a lovely cup of tea and piece of homemade cake – just perfect!



How do Mountaineers greet each other?

“Hiya”!



What do you call a goat on a mountain?

A Hillbilly!

## 05

## Out and About

### Ingleton Falls Walk, North Yorkshire

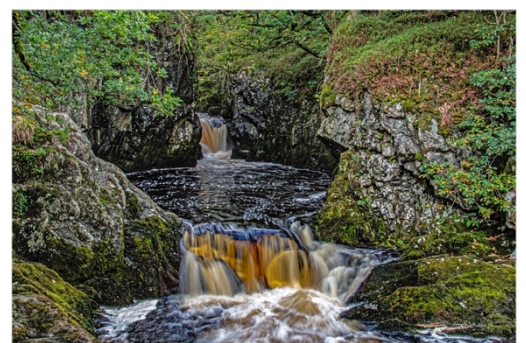
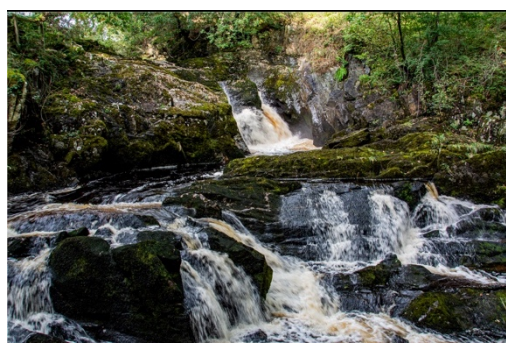
*By Michael Prince*

Found in the Carnforth Postal District (LA6 3ET), this walk is approximately 4.5 miles, so allow 3-4 hours. The Terrain is Moderate to Strenuous (in my opinion).



The walk follows the River Twiss on the first part of the walk (upwards climb) and the River Doe on the second part of the walk (downwards). I think that the best photographic views are on the upwards climb, although there are numerous viewpoints on the way down.

If the full walk is taken, you will see 8 very good waterfalls, with fast-flowing water after rain. The start is from the Broadwood car park (LA6 3ET). Payment is required for the car park because the walk is on private property.





From the car park follow the marked path with the river on your right. As you start to climb you begin to see many views of the different waterfalls and hopefully lots of water. When you reach the top waterfall (Thorton Force), the walk takes you over some Yorkshire Moor paths, not very far before you start to descend. You are now at the highest point. As you follow the path down to the River Doe, in spring and summertime you may be surprised to come across an ice cream van.



As you walk down you will pick up the River Doe on your left. You will now see more waterfalls before you cross the river via a small bridge with the river now on your right. The path now takes you down to the village of Ingleton.

If the full walk is completed you will pass the following falls:

- 1) Pecca
- 2) Hollybush Spout,
- 3) Thorton Force,
- 4) Triple Spout,
- 5) Rival,
- 6) Beezley,
- 7) Baxenghyll Gorge
- 8) Snowfalls.



To give you an idea of the location (although many of you may have visited) here are some landmarks: Skipton 25 miles, Kendal 25 miles, Lancaster 17 miles, Settle 11 miles.

I hope I have given you enough information for you to plan a visit, or plan a visit in future.

Website: <https://www.ingletonwaterfallstrail.co.uk>

You will find a large number of websites on the internet with loads of detail of the area.



The water asked the waterfall for advice on its career ...

The waterfall said "Just go with the flow"!



### And here's a couple of amazing waterfall facts:

- The UK's highest waterfall is Eas a' Chual Aluinn in Scotland at 200 metres.
- **Angel Falls** in Venezuela is the tallest natural waterfall in the world.
- The total number of waterfalls in the world is believed to be in excess of 8,000.
- Waterfalls are considered sacred places by some religions.
- It's estimated that over 30 million people visit Niagara Falls in Canada every year!

There are three main types of Waterfalls:

**Cataracts:** Large, steep waterfalls where water drops almost vertically, sometimes without touching the rock face.

**Cascades:** Smaller waterfalls that flow down a series of short rock walls.

**Ledge Waterfalls:** Waterfalls that fall over a ledge or cliff.

**Other Types:** Waterfalls can also be classified as fan, punchbowl, tiered, segmented, block, multi-step, horsetail, and plunge waterfalls, depending on their shape and how the water flows.

## 06

## Competition Corner

### March Competition

Congratulations to Jolanta who was the first response received correctly guessing the answer to March's competition.

If you lived in a one storey house made entirely of redwood, what colour would the stairs be?

Answer: *No colour as there are no stairs in the house!*

### April Competition

Here's this month's little teaser.

I am taken from a mine and shut up in a wooden case, from which I am never released, and yet I am used by almost everybody. What am I?

So get your thinking caps on and send me your answer by email to:  
[172elizabeth@gmail.com](mailto:172elizabeth@gmail.com)

Closing Date for Entries: 30<sup>th</sup> April 2025.





07

Photography Podium

Annual Prints Competition

As ever we had a super Annual Prints Competition with 62 images across the three groups being judged. Congratulations to those who made the podium.



	Group 1		Group 2		Group 3	
First	Old Warrior *	Dave Cornish	Spinning Wheel *	Hazel Lane	Swan Lake *	Jolanta Bujalska Axon
Second	Emerald Tree Boa Constrictor	Dave Cornish	Tough Going	Martin Green	Griffon Vulture & Hooded Crow	Jane Roby
Third	Mystic Peg	Dave Cornish	Southwold Beach Huts	Dave Ward	Three Sisters	Mick Schilling

Group 1



Old Warrior



Emerald Tree Boa Constrictor



Mystic Peg

Group 2



Spinning Wheel



Tough Going



Southwold Beach Huts

Group 3



Swan Lake



Griffon Vulture & Hooded Crow



Three Sisters



08

### AV Competition

7 super AV's to view and many congratulations to Tim Hutchin for his winning entry 'Twinkle, Twinkle'. Watch out for forthcoming Newsletters as Tim is kindly going to give us some insights into the art of AV's.

### Annual Interclub Competition

We recently had our Annual Interclub Competition (Shirley, Knowle and South Birmingham), competing for 'The Warwickshire Plaque'. This year Knowle CC hosted the event. Each club contributed 20 images (10 prints / 10 digitals) and the judge for the evening was Catherine Knee, who scored each image out of 20.

Congratulations to Knowle CC who hold the North Warwickshire Plaque for the forthcoming year. It was a close run competition with the final results being Knowle 361, Shirley 353 and South Birmingham 338. Shirley scored highest in the Prints section.

## External Recognition

### MidPhot 2025

I know many of you entered MidPhot 2025 so congratulations to you if your images were accepted. Our members at Shirley did rather well:

Jolanta had 15 acceptances and also received 2 awards, one being for 'Best Colour Print'.

Sue and Chris Mallett had 6 acceptances each and Sue had an award.

Jenny had 5 acceptances and received an award.

Dave Cornish had 2 acceptances.

Liz Smith, David Venables and Mark Taft each had one acceptance.

### GB Cup 2025

The top 15 scores are counted and Shirley scored 139 points in the Open Section, coming 32<sup>nd</sup> equal out of 49 clubs. We did somewhat better in the Nature Cup, finishing 23<sup>rd</sup> equal out of 49 clubs (only 1 point less than Bristol!!). Well done to everyone who had images selected for Shirley's entry.

*If any of you enter any competitions and get any external recognition then please drop me a line so that I can add it into the Newsletter. It's great to see what everyone is up to and the accolades they receive.*



**See you in May 2025!**