

SPS Newsletter

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Well here we are with the last Newsletter of this year and as I sit writing it the full force of Storm Darragh is raging outside. Suffice it to say I have not poked my nose outside my door today and really pity those who have to work outside on a day like this or who are homeless sleeping on the streets.

I never cease to wonder at the forces of nature and the fact that you always have to respect it. It is perhaps the only things we humans cannot claim to tame or control. And talking of storms don't they now give the storms some funny names. In the UK the list of storm names is announced on 1st September each year and runs in alphabetical order, starting this season with Ashley, followed by Bert, then Conall, and later on possibly reaching as far as Izzy, Rafi and Tilly. But the letters Q, U, X, Y and Z are avoided to conform with international standards. Each year the names usually alternate between male and female options. The full list for 2024/25 is: Ashley, Bert, Conall, Darragh, Eowyn, Floris, Gerben, Hugo, Izzy, James, Kayleigh, Lewis, Mavis, Naoise, Otje, Poppy, Rafi, Sayuri, Tilly, Vivienne and Wren. And what happens if we have too many storms and run out of names? Well they then move on to a supplementary list of names and in years past they have used the Greek alphabet. Everyone is welcome to suggest names for future consideration by the Met Office via email to nameourstorms@metoffice.gov.uk or by completing the Met Office's online form. So if you have an unusual name or family name why not drop them a line and see if you can get a storm named after you and yours.

I now hear you ask 'What qualifies as a storm?' Well a storm or depression is an area of low pressure that is associated with very low mean sea level pressure and high wind speeds. The average wind speed must be at least 46.9 mph (75 km/h) or level 9 on the Beaufort scale. In 1805, the English Admiral Sir Francis Beaufort developed a scale for measuring wind force. I knew all the hours I spent studying 'A Level' Geography would come in useful one day ...!

And here's one for you. Did you know that The Helm Wind is the only named wind in the UK. It is a strong north-easterly wind that hits the south-west slopes of Cross Fell in Cumbria.

For the final time this year what awareness events have caught my eye this month? Well we had International Civil Aviation Day celebrating the contribution civil aviation makes to our lives on 7th December. 9th December marks International Anti-Corruption Day raising awareness about the detrimental effects of corruption on societies and communities. 10th December is International Animal Rights Day and International Human Rights Day. And my favourite, well it has to be Christmas Jumper Day on 12th December. I just love wearing mine and often pair it with a very fetching Santa hat. And this year I am adding a jewellery necklace of Christmas trees that lights up and flashes ... so you will see me coming from a mile off.

Talking of Christmas I hope you enjoy our Society's Christmas Meal at The Woodman, Shirley, on 9th December and the Christmas Knockout competition. May the best photograph be voted for, whether it is window or door or left or right!



Why did the Scarecrow get a big Christmas bonus?

Because he was outstanding in his field!

I saw an interesting name for Christmas this year in one of the charity shops and I thought it was a really clever word and a good thing to try and do. They were calling for us to support 'Thriftmass' this year by thinking sustainably and re-gifting items and/or supporting charities. I took this on-board and have bought my niece a lovely little glass juicing dish for the princely sum of £1.25, a bargain. She makes a lemon drizzle cake to die for and I thought to myself this would be just the thing for her that she will get great use out of. I am also looking forward to tasting the fruits of her labours having used the juicing dish!

Well that's enough of my ramblings now so all that remains for me to do is to wish you all a very happy and healthy Christmas and New Year period. However, you may choose to spend it do please have an enjoyable time and look after yourselves and I send you my best wishes for 2025.

I have a New Year's Resolution for you to try in 2025. Why not send me an article or piece for the Newsletter. It doesn't have to be long or detailed, just something that interests you or where you have been. Anything goes, so don't be shy, send me something. Email me at: 172elizabeth@gmail.com.

With my very best wishes

Liz xx



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02

Through the Lens

Joe Cornish by Jane Roby

Many of you will be aware of the renowned landscape photographer, Joe Cornish. I heard about the following incident via another landscape photographer, whose work I follow through social media. This is an extract of the account based on a report by Alex Nail.

On the evening of Tuesday, 22nd of October on Cul Mor in the Northwest Highlands of Scotland there was a serious mountain incident. Alex Nail was co-leading a group of 4 on a mountain photography workshop with Joe Cornish. While descending the mountain Joe was hit by a powerful gust of wind sending him tumbling 10 metres down a scree slope. He sustained serious injuries to his neck but he is now recovering at home. On that day Assynt Mountain Rescue Team (MRT) were invaluable. They tasked HM Coastguard Rescue 151 to lift Joe off the mountain to Raigmore Hospital in Inverness. They also sent a team of 8 and readied further team members should the helicopter have been unable to reach Joe due to low cloud.

Once Joe was in the helicopter Alex, a trained expedition leader, led the remainder of the group off the mountain and part way down they met Assynt MRT, making sure the group made it safely off the mountain in the dark.

As a result of this experience Alex and Joe decided that they needed to do something to support the Mountain Rescue team, and decided to produce a number of limited edition boxed sets of high quality prints, the sale of which would be priced to cover the AMRT's financial shortfall of £15,000 for this year. They surpassed the target, selling all the sets in just 48 hours and raising over £20,000 through Just Giving and Gift Aid.

The fact that an incident such as this can occur to two highly experienced mountain photographers emphasises the danger of the mountains and the need to be properly prepared and trained to deal with an unexpected situation.

After reading this story I decided to look at Alex Nail's website and discovered that he is a very generous man in that he spent time during lockdown creating You Tube videos to help less experienced photographers. I looked at one on the subject of editing landscapes in Lightroom. His amazing images can be found on his website <https://www.alexnail.com> along with links to YouTube.

03

December Facts – Did you know ...?

2nd December 1697: St Paul's Cathedral opened

3rd December 1987: The Cold War ended after 52 years of superpower rivalry

4th December 1872: Crew from the British brigantine *Die Gratia* found a deserted ship drifting mid-Atlantic. The Captain's table was set for a meal, but the Captain, crew and passengers of the US ship *Marie Celeste* were all missing ...

11th December 1936: King Edward VIII renounced the throne in a radio broadcast to the nation

12th December 1955: British engineer Christopher Cockerell patented a new kind of vehicle. Half-ship and half-aircraft, his "hovercraft" floats on an air cushion.

26th December: Also known as St Stephen's Day, Boxing Day is so called from a time when the rich used to box up gifts to give to the poor. Boxing Day was also traditionally a day off for servants - a day when they received a special Christmas box from their masters. The servants would also go home on Boxing Day to give Christmas boxes to their families.

27th December 1831: HMS *Beagle* set sail from Devonport. On board was recent BA graduate Charles Darwin.

And 2024 marks the 40th Anniversary at Christmas of the mobile phone network Vodafone.



Why did Rudolph the Reindeer have to attend Summer School?

Because he went down in history!

And if you are stuck for something to do in December and January how about travelling further afield to some of the following:

- Enjoy an immersive dining experience at The Christmas Carol in London.
- Enjoy the spectacular Christmas Light Show and Fair at the National Trust's Waddesdon House, Buckinghamshire.
- Like donuts? Do a Festive Donut walking and tasting tour in Edinburgh.
- Ride on Mince Pie Special Trains at Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway.
- See the Llandudno 5K Santa Dash on Llandudno Promenade.
- Experience the Winter Solstice at Stonehenge on 22nd December.
- Ice-skate at Somerset House in London.
- Go to Longleat to see the Longleat Festival of Light.
- Go to Glasgow to the In Bru Carnival and Europe's largest indoor funfair.
- See Chester Zoo's Lanterns and Lights.
- Head to Blackpool for the Illuminations.
- Experience Christmas at the magical Kew Gardens.



How did Mary and Joseph weigh Baby Jesus at birth?

They had a weigh in the manger!

04

An Acquired Taste?

Well whether you love them or hate them, the humble sprout elicits many opinions and reactions in people as to whether they want them with their Christmas Dinner. I personally am a fan and always eat them. Thinking about sprouts made me wonder how they got their name so here's what my research found out about this little cruciferous vegetable.

The precursors to modern Brussels Sprouts were grown in Ancient Rome, but the sprouts we're familiar with were first cultivated back in the 13th Century in Flanders, in what is now Belgium. It is thought that the vegetable is named after the Belgian capital, where they became a popular crop in the 16th Century. Sprouts only became popular in Britain at the end of the 1800s. Today Britons eat more Brussels Sprouts than any other nation in Europe. Our sprout industry is worth £650m and the area covered by Brussels Sprout fields in the UK is the size of 3,240 football pitches.

Brussels sprouts are the same species as cabbage, cauliflower, kale, broccoli and kohlrabi (among others). They are all different parts of the wild cabbage (*Brassica oleracea*) plant, which have been selectively bred for different exaggerated traits. Brussels sprouts are the bud. Cabbage and kale are both leaves, but cabbage leaves are more densely packed than kale leaves. Broccoli is the flowering head and edible stem, while kohlrabi is the roots.

Are you a person who puts a cross in the sprout's base? Evidently this is a contentious matter some cooks believe this age-old tradition helps the vegetable cook evenly, others feel it makes no difference, and a spokesperson for the Brassica Growers Association recently claimed it ruins the vegetable! I put a cross in mine as this is how my Mum taught me to cook the vegetable when I was a small child. In fact, the tradition of cutting a cross in the base of a sprout might have less to do with culinary technique and more to do with superstition. In Medieval times, it was believed that evil spirits and demons lived between the leaves of the vegetable, and they would enter anyone who ate them, making them ill. A cross cut into the base of the sprouts was thought to drive the evil spirits away.



There are more than 110 different varieties of Brussels sprout available, as well as the Flower Sprout, a sprout/kale hybrid which contains double the vitamin B6 and C of a traditional sprout. And the vegetable is a nutrient heavyweight, an 80g serving of them contains more vitamin C than an orange, helping strengthen the immune system, repair tissue damage and promote iron absorption. They are also an excellent source of folic acid and beta-carotene.

And here's some other interesting things to know about them:

- They grow really fast. The Brussels sprout plant can grow up to 120 cm in as little as 90 days!
- The heaviest recorded Brussels sprout was 8.3 kg. This massive sprout was grown in Llanharry, Wales in 1992 by Bernard Lavery.
- The record for the most number of Brussels sprouts eaten in one minute is 31. This record is held by Linus Urbanec from Sweden.
- Brussels sprouts grown in the UK are threatened by 46 different pests, including caterpillars, aphids, and various diseases. Hence, organic sprouts are hard to find.
- Brussel sprouts can power batteries. In 2013, a battery made of 1000 sprouts generated 63 volts, which were used to light up an 8ft Christmas tree in Southbank, London.

And if you really do not like the taste of a sprout there is a scientific reason for this. Brussels sprouts taste awful to people with TAS2R38 gene. The gene encodes a receptor that allows detection of the bitter compounds called glucosinolates found in Brassica species. So there you go now you know there's a reason you don't like sprouts!



How did the Brussels Sprout get lost?

He took a wrong turn at the fork!

And what about our other favourite staple the potato. I was reading the other day about a new hybrid potato named after the children's animated film 'Finding Nemo'. The Nemo potato, which resembles a Clown Fish with its unusual pink and cream markings, is believed to be the first variant of the vegetable that cooks in a shorter time. Potato sales have fallen in recent years as people favour carbohydrate foods that cook quicker such as rice and pasta. In 1974 British households bought c.3.3 lbs of fresh potatoes a week but by 2022 this had reduced to 0.7 lbs.

The Nemo is a cross between the fast growing Peruvian potato and its harder European relatives. It is said to have reduced cooking time by 25% so not only does it cook quicker but uses less energy to do so. So here's a potato game changer to try this Christmas.



What do you call a potato that's reluctant to jump into boiling water?

A hesi-tater!



What's the biggest killer of potatoes?

Tuber-culosis!

05

Mix and Match

Staying on the food and drink theme for Christmas, how many of you will be sitting down to a breakfast of toast and marmalade or celebrating the big day with a cocktail?

We always think that Marmalade is quintessentially British, but actually it isn't. It originated in Portugal, the word 'marmalade' coming from the Portugese 'marmelo', meaning quince made into a sweetened paste and cubed. According to lore, marmalade as we know it today (a preserve made with oranges, sugar and water) was invented by a 16th Century Doctor to settle the stomach of Mary, Queen of Scots, who suffered with seasickness.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines marmalade as 'a preserve made by boiling fruits in water to release the pectin around the seeds, then re-boiling the liquid and fruit with sugar'. When storms forced a Spanish merchant ship to drop emergency anchor in Dundee, Scotland, local merchant James Keiller made an offer for its cargo of Seville oranges. His wife's 'orange jam' was such a hit that in 1797 he started to retail it, making Keiller's the first commercial marmalade to be produced.

In 2022 the UK sold over £30 million worth of marmalade, with the biggest surge in sales of 18% occurring when HM Queen Elizabeth II died as people remembered her Platinum Jubilee marmalade sandwich with Paddington. And what of other famous celebrities to like marmalade? Well 007, James Bond, in From Russia with Love liked toast and marmalade every day for breakfast. Robert Scott took it to the Antarctic in 1910 and Sir Edmund Hillary had it on his 1953 Everest ascent. Manchester jam makers F Duerr & Son made the world's most expensive jar of marmalade to mark its 125th anniversary in 2013. It contained Pol Roger Champagne, came in a crystal glass pot and cost £5,000 ... I wonder what it tasted like?



What did Santa's elf learn in school?

The elf-abet!

Moving on to cocktails, will you be having one on Christmas Day and do you have a favourite? What never ceases to amaze me is the number of different cocktails you can have and what bizarre names some of them have. Here are just a few of the world's greatest cocktails:

- **Manhattan** - A persistent myth claims the drink was created in the 1870s at New York's Manhattan Club for a banquet in honour of Sir Winston Churchill's mother. The Club was dissolved in 1979 but the drink remains one of the world's quintessential dark spirited drinks.
- **Singapore Sling** - Created c.1915 by Ngiam Tong Boon, a bartender at the Long Bar in the original Raffles Hotel in Singapore. The rosy, visually juice-like concoction was intended to fool critics at a time when it was considered unladylike to be seen consuming alcoholic beverages in public. The Long Bar has been known to sell as many as 1,200 Singapore Slings a day.
- **Daiquiri** – Of disputed origin but all agree it was named after an iron mine near Santiago de Cuba and invented at the end of the 1800s. However, it was in 1940 when rationing made whisky and vodka scarce that the cocktail and rum in general, came into its own. Havana's historic El Floritida is where the frozen Daiquiri was born.



- **Cipirinha** – It was 19th Century farmers near Sao Paulo who first combined the locally abundant sugar cane and galenguinho (a small lemon-like fruit) with cachaça, Brazil's most common distilled spirit to create what would become the country's national drink. It was once used to treat the Spanish Flu and is still a popular home remedy for the common cold.
- **Irish Coffee** – Although similar drinks were being served in Central European coffee houses through the mid-1800s, it was in 1943 when a chef at Foynes Air Base flying boat terminal (near Shannon Airport in Ireland) began adding whisky to the coffees of tired, chilly disembarking passengers and it became a hit.
- **Margarita** – The world's most famous tequila drink is suggested to have been created by Carlos "Danny" Herrera who was tasked with creating a tequila-based drink for Ziegfield Follies legend Marjorie King (who was allergic to most other spirits) at restaurant Rancho La Gloria near Tequila in 1938.
- **Negroni** – Arguably one of the most famous cocktails of all time the Italian classic was invented at Florence's Caffè Casoni in 1919 when Count Camillo Negroni asked a bartender, Fosco Scarselli, to replace the soda in his Americano with gin.
- **Mojito** – Some sources say Sir Francis Drake was the first to drink the brandy-based precursor to this drink, 'El Draque' in the 16th Century. Lime juice was known to be an effective way to keep scurvy and dysentery at bay with the generous addition of brandy helping to keep his crew happy.
- **Vesper Martini** – 007 James Bond's favourite drink, "shaken not stirred".



What's a bartender's favourite book?

Tequila Mockingbird!

06

The Words Say it All

Collins Dictionary has just announced their 'Word of the Year' as 'Brat'. And it's in large part due to the popstar Charli XCX who went viral on social media this year when her 6th album 'Brat' inspired a trend that became a 'lifestyle' rather than just an aesthetic. Brat, previously a term for an ill-mannered or unruly child was redefined by the singer as a person "characterised by a confident, independent and hedonistic attitude" that rapidly became the aesthetic movement of the Summer the Dictionary said. It was ranked at the top of the list as it had been embraced so widely and become "one of the most talked about words of 2024". The singer said the 'Brat' essentials for a girl were a packet of cigarettes, a Bic lighter and a strappy white top with no bra. Messiness was embraced along with body positivity and sultry style choices. Well with that description that's me out then as I am certainly not 'Brat'!

Other words on this year's list include 'Era', 'Yapping' (talking at length especially about an inconsequential matter) and 'Delulu' (meaning being utterly mistaken or unrealistic in one's ideas or expectations). It also includes 'rawdogging' which describes a TikTok trend whereby people post videos of themselves spending long haul flights doing nothing but staring at the seatback in front of them. And there was me thinking that activity was more about 'mindfulness' and having some peaceful time



with no interruptions just to think, relax and daydream. Really, I do wonder what the world is coming to and don't understand trends like this but maybe I am just a dinosaur living in a modern world!

07

Out and About

I am sure you will find plenty of places to go to over the Winter but in case you are stuck for some ideas how about the following:

Charlecote (National Trust)

Near Stratford upon Avon, Charlecote is a lovely property and well worth a visit. Not only is the house interesting but they have some interesting carriages on display. There is parkland to walk in, accessible paths around the property and gardens and the estate has a deer park, so if you are looking for some photographic opportunities this may be just the place to go (and it's not too far to travel to). It also has a lovely little café and yes I can recommend their warm cheese scones ,,,,

Look at the National Trust's website for their opening times over the Christmas and New Year period.

If you have any suggestions of places for people to visit do please let me know and I will put them into the Newsletter.

08

Competition Corner

November Competition

The first correct answer emailed to me was from Jane Roby. Well done Jane. She pipped Mick Schilling to the podium by submitting her winning answer 58 minutes before Mick. So the moral is you need to be the fastest finger with your answer to win.

If a band is playing music and a thunderstorm hits who is most likely to get hit by lightning?

Answer: The Conductor

December Competition

Here's this month's little teaser.

If it takes one Elf 5 minutes to make a teddy bear, how many minutes does it take 100 Elves to make 100 teddy bears?

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

Closing Date for Entries: 31st December 2024.

09

Photography Podium



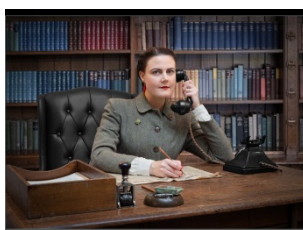
President's Assignment

Well I was really looking forward to seeing the entries for President Martin's set Assignment 'Connections'. What a good title this was but I have to confess I didn't manage to submit an entry this year as I seemed to have a mental block as to what to be creative and come up with ideas on. However, I have to say what a mixture of innovative takes members came up with. So well done all of you and it was good to see a healthy number of 71 entries. Congratulations to all those who had placings but particularly to Mick for getting two of his images on the podium.

And my personal favourites? I thought Tony's camera image was very clever as the 'connections' were the images that were taken by it and the memories, experiences and emotions the pictures would always evoke and the fact that you didn't know what they were. It was also a very well taken photograph, very sharp. But I just loved Fay's pegs as they made me smile with their colour and their simplicity but again a very clever image.

| | Group 1 | | Group 2 | | Group 3 | |
|--------|------------------------------|--------------|---------------------|----------------|---|----------------|
| First | Putting You Through | Dave Cornish | Rival Connection | Tony Dyson | Like they do on the Discovery Channel * | Mick Schilling |
| Second | Autumn Trap | Dave Cornish | 11 kV Do Not Touch! | Michael Prince | Courting Couple | Mick Schilling |
| Third | Father and Son Trike Project | Mick McShane | Pegged Out | Fay Venables | Helping Hand | Dave Venables |

Group 1



Putting You Through

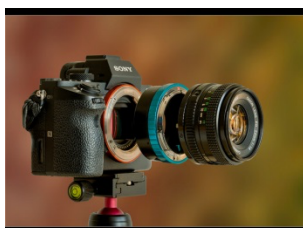


Autumn Trap



Father and Son Trike Project

Group 2



Rival Connection



11 kV Do Not Touch!

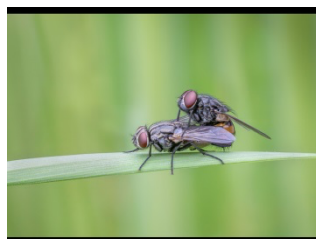


Pegged Out

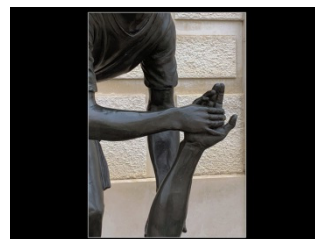
Group 3



Like they do on the
Discovery Channel



Courting Couple



Helping Hand

Natural History

Another super competition this year with some fabulous images in the 84 entries judged, showcasing just how good our members are at natural history photography.

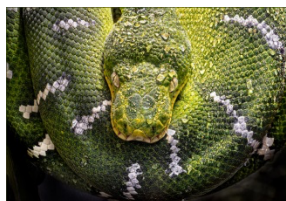
In the Prints, congratulations to Jolanta for getting two placings on the podium. I thought Dave Cornish's Emerald Tree Boa Constrictor was a very powerful image and I even liked it, even though I personally cannot stand snakes. I was wondering though how close Dave was to the reptile when he took the photograph ...? And I could almost hear the roaring sound of the Red Deer Stag in Martin's image. But my favourite was the Gosling, I just loved its cute fluffy appearance.

Some super digital images made it to the podium. Tony and Chris's monochromes were very powerful and so sharp capturing all the fine details. But my absolute favourite, just because I love puffins and am a sucker for any image with them in, was Fay's 'Puffins'. Whenever I see a puffin it takes me back to my visit to Skomer Island a couple of years ago where I had the privilege of getting up close to my beloved puffins. If you have never been there do try to go as it is an amazing experience.

Prints

| | Group 1 | | Group 2 | | Group 3 | |
|--------|-------------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------------|--------------|--|-----------------------|
| First | <i>Emerald Tree Boa Constrictor</i> | Dave Cornish | <i>Fallow Deer Running</i> | Martin Green | <i>Heron in the Rain</i> | Chris Lee |
| Second | Gosling | Dave Cornish | <i>Roaring Red Deer Stag</i> | Martin Green | <i>Great Crested Grebe Feeding its Chick</i> | Jolanta Bujalska Axon |
| Third | Fox | Mick McShane | <i>Great Crested Grebe with Chick</i> | Dave Ward | <i>Winter Teasels with Web</i> | Jolanta Bujalska Axon |

Group 1



Emerald Tree Boa Constrictor



Gosling



Fox

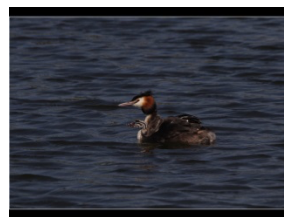
Group 2



Fallow Deer Running



Roaring Red Deer Stag



Great Crested Grebe with Chick

Group 3



Heron in the Rain



Great Crested Grebe Feeding its Chick

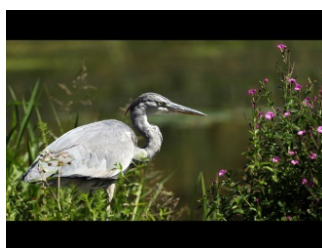


Winter Teasels with Web

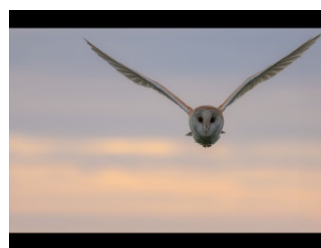
Digitals

| | Group 1 | | Group 2 | | Group 3 | |
|--------|---------------|--------------|---------|--------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| First | Heron | Ann Ashford | Heron | Tony Dyson | Spotted Nutcrackers Fighting | Jane Roby |
| Second | Owl at Dusk | Mick McShane | Moorhen | Hazel Lane | Grizzly Weather Conditions | Chris Lee |
| Third | Garden Spider | Dave Cornish | Puffins | Fay Venables | Common Cockchafer | Jolanta Bujalska Axon |

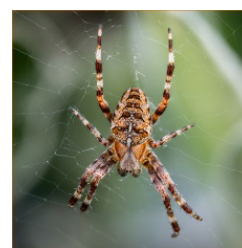
Group 1



Heron



Owl at Dusk

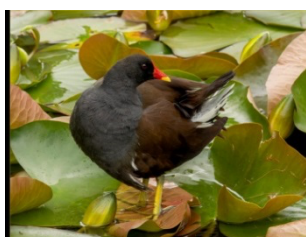


Garden Spider

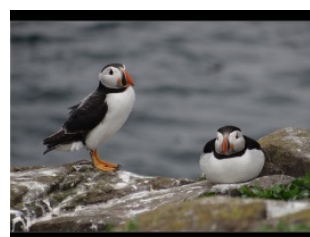
Group 2



Heron



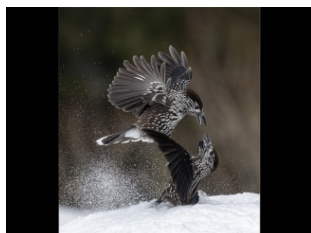
Moorhen



Puffins



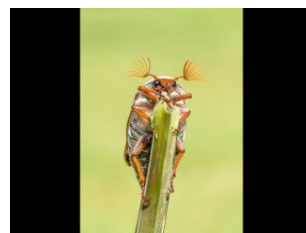
Group 3



Spotted Nutcrackers Fighting



Grizzly Weather Conditions



Common Cockchafer

10

External Recognition

If any of you enter any competitions and get any external recognitions 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 next in the New Year 2025!