



# Newsletter January 2021

[www.californiagardenersclub.co.uk](http://www.californiagardenersclub.co.uk)



## Club Night on 4<sup>th</sup> January



Tom Way 4<sup>th</sup> January 2021 British Wildlife  
Artists really do suffer for their art!

The ingredients for a really good wildlife photograph involve a large bowlful of careful planning, bucket loads of patience, a good dollop of time and a dash of luck.

These are the overriding things that we learnt from Tom's fascinating talk. This was the second time that Tom has talked to the club about his wildlife photography, this time on zoom. Last time he enthralled us with his amazing 'big game' photographs but his theme this month was British wildlife. He showed us some stunning shots of iconic British animals and proved that we have fascinating wildlife here on our doorstep.

It is our four seasons that can make capturing UK wildlife particularly interesting with the opportunities for creating the different effects that they bring. He showed us a range of stunning images of birds and animals that proved this point. For example, his shot of a stag bathed in golden mist thanks to the autumn sun rising behind it was absolutely beautiful (see top left of newsletter). The autumn provides great opportunities for snapping wildlife, thanks to the harvests and the deer rut. There are several parks in our part of the world where deer can easily be photographed. Some of his examples were taken in Windsor Great Park and he told us that deer make a great silhouette with the sun setting behind them. If you can, try to take shots from different angles, from low down looking up for example.

In spring, the new green vegetation lends a bright hue, as shown by his shot of a fox in green grass. Tom told us that the fox is his favourite British mammal and he will put dog biscuits in the grass in order to entice the cubs to come nearer.

A summer photograph of a fox showed the different effect created by the browning of the grass. Also, the mid-summer dim light of late evening in the Shetland Isles cast an orange glow behind a puffin, making a magical silhouette.



Continued:

## Things to note

1. Our next meeting is the club's AGM on the 1<sup>st</sup> February and will be held over Zoom.
2. Trading Hut – now closed for the Winter.
3. Free membership this year. See in newsletter for more details.
4. Member's articles. See in newsletter for more details.
5. February competition will be a photograph of a 'Winter scene'.
6. One of our members has been clearing the attic, and found about a dozen Chelsea Flower Show catalogues from 1998 to 2016. He was going to recycle them, but wondered if they might be of any interest to anyone? Email us back and we will pass it on.

A winter challenge was to photograph a mountain hare in its white winter camouflage in the snow. His tip was to look for the brown ear tips, unless the hare has them flat behind its head to keep them warm!

Tom will have an idea in his mind of the image and composition that he wants to create. This is where the planning comes in. For example, he wanted to photograph a badger in daylight and went all over to find one and get the 'cute' shot that he wanted. He showed us different examples of foxes, some with a cute expression and another with a fiercer predatory look on its face. As he pointed out, these show different characteristics of the creature and produce a very different emotional response in the viewer.

He told us about the importance of capturing the essence and character of the subject. This is also part of the planning process and requires patience. After having found the right venue, he waited weeks and months for a kingfisher to land nearby, going back and waiting time and time again in order to get the



right shot. He returned to a puffin nesting site, even though he already had great shots of these birds, so that he could eventually get a photo of one coming into land, with all its gawkiness and character clearly on display. He spent 7 days in a hide in winter as he wanted a shot of a buzzard coming into land. A red squirrel photo took five days to get any shots at all and then several more to get one jumping towards him.

The effective use of light is important. The golden hour (the time just after sunrise and just before sunset) gives a richer and softer light than when the sun is high in the sky. The autumn light also imparts a softer, warmer glow.

Colour in a shot can also enhance the subject and he will add colour if needed to the scene, for example placing some extra bright autumn leaves under a spot where he has placed some bird food, so he knows that the birds he wants to capture will be right there.



If you are interested in creating your own wildlife shots, Tom recommends starting with a subject that you are really interested in and then you will feel encouraged to invest the time and effort. Red deer are also a good place to start, as they are large and quite available in nearby parks. You then have the opportunity to try out different angles, light effects, zoom depths and character shots.



I have already hinted at how Tom will put up with a great deal of personal discomfort in his quest for the perfect composition. To get the gorgeous photo of the water vole, he sat in the water in waders for four days! While he is patiently waiting, he will use the time to monitor the animal's behaviour.

It is his passion for his profession that really comes across in both his work and his talks.

If you would like to find out more about Tom's work you can look at:  
his website: [www.tomway.co.uk](http://www.tomway.co.uk) his Instagram: @tom.way.photography  
on facebook: Tom Way Photography  
Julia Goodall (Publicity Secretary)

## Members' Article

### WAR OF WORMS CONTINUED by Maurice May (And other related ramblings)

*In September the worms, having followed Cliff Richards lead, returned from their Summer Holiday and resumed despoiling my Yorkshire lawn that was delivered in a refrigerated lorry on a Tuesday, which is dustbin day, with worm casts. So I resumed spiking the lawn which brings them to the surface. The lawn is not as big as I said before. It is in fact 10yds by 2.5 yds. (Lockdown + old age = mental aberration). This is an endless task since the worms breed like, well not rabbits, since worms are hermaphrodites and do things differently from rabbits. I know they are hermaphrodites because Mr Murch, my biology teacher told us. He also told us about amoebas and hydras, information that has not help in life so far. Amoebas have not cropped up in any job interviews nor have hydras figured in conversations over Sunday lunch. So being prolific breeders I need to keep on with the spiking at any opportunity. The first half hours work in September produced 70 worms. Generally I remove about 30/40 per session.*

*I sometimes feel that I have been condemned to spike for the rest of my life. It's as if it's a punishment for some misdemeanour. Rather like Sisyphus, He was the bloke in Greek mythology that upset Zeus (who was named after a Egyptian canal spelt backwards) and was sentenced to Uphill Boulder Rolling for perpetuity (a practice which is now banned by the Health and Safety Executive). Whatever I done to upset Zeus is insignificant compared to Sisyphus. He murdered travellers and other crimes which didn't do much for the tourist trade in his neck of the woods. Until I find another method - spiking it is.*

*I saw a piece on TV a little while back about an American, who most nights went to a piece of waste ground outside of his town with a steering rack from a car. For the odd member of the club who has not yet come across a steering rack, it is a heavy length of metal about 4 foot long with notches cut along one end. It replaced the old worm and peg steering boxes on earlier cars. However, said American gentleman stuck one end of his steering rack into the ground and then ran another metal bar up and down the notches. The vibrations produced brought worms to the surface which he collected. He reckoned to get between 3 and 5 thousand worms per night which he sold to a fishing tackle shop. Thus saving many USA anglers from electrocution (see Nov newsletter).*

*Now, if I can find a method of vibrating the whole of my lawn, it might be more efficient than spiking. Currently the lawn has seen more pricks than a second hand dartboard and is looking a little sparse and will need oversowing in the Spring.*

*“Still no pictures” you sigh  
“Camera’s broken” I lie  
And the verse  
Gets worse.*

*A thought flashed across my brain, which if it became public would get me a life ban from the Lawn Appreciation Society . (Gravel)*

## **Free membership next year**

Given these exceptional circumstances, the committee have agreed that membership to the club, next year, will be FREE. We, the committee, appreciate the support members have shown throughout 2020. You have continued:

1. to purchase your supplies from the Trading Hut (over 60% of members used hut) and most paying direct to the club's bank account,
2. enter and vote in the 'Virtual Shows'
3. use the Tool Sharpening service
4. and paid your subs for 2020

**If however you wish to pay, we would be more than willing to take your money.**

Your constant support has given the committee the drive to continue their work.

## **Topical Tip – January**

Now is the time to think about purchasing seed potatoes. I understand that under the new restrictions, Garden Centres will be allowed to open during the lockdown – I am sure you will correct me if I am wrong!!

For those of you who do not have an allotment or a fairly large garden, the answer is to grow a few early potatoes in a Potato Sack. These are readily available from Garden Centres. A few potatoes planted in these containers will provide you with a crop in early June – perhaps a little earlier if you have a cold greenhouse. I usually start mine off in March.

Which variety you choose to buy is very much a matter of personal taste. I have a friend who favours Pink Fir Apple, but I prefer either Charlotte or my particular favourite, Lady Christl. The latter variety is a very high yielder but is sometimes difficult to find. In previous years I have obtained mine from Henry Street's Garden Centre. An advantage with this company is that they sell some of their varieties loose, as opposed to in packets. This is ideal for those requiring just a few tubers. A warning, however, the most popular early varieties sell out very quickly.

If you wish to learn more about potato varieties, you could do worse than buy a copy of Alan Wilson's book, The People's Potato. Alan was the agronomist at Waitrose and is an old friend of mine who came and gave a talk to the club a couple of years ago.

In next month's Newsletter, I will describe the process of growing a crop in Potato Sacks.

**Ian Gillott (Deputy Chairman)**

## **Members' Articles**

Why not try your hand at an article for the newsletter.

We have had two great articles from members so far which demonstrates there are members chomping at the bit to be authors. It can be serious, funny or a combination. Share your tricks in gardening; your special way of dealing with garden problems. Just email it to us and we will do the rest.

## January Photo competition

The winners of the January are shown below. We were very excited to have received twenty one entries. I hope you enjoyed some of the comments listed below each entry.

All our members were invited to cast their vote last Wednesday. In the first hour of voting, we thought we had a winner appearing. However, the following eight hours saw the lead change several times until one particular picture surged ahead.



Ian Gillott with  
A deer in the garden  
53 points



Peter Allington  
Red Kite over Windsor Ride  
31 points



Julia Goodall  
Busy, busy, busy  
17 points

## February Photo Competition

Following a very successful January Table Competition we have, by popular demand, agreed to a February competition. The subject will be 'A Winter Scene'. More info in a couple of weeks time.

## Monthly talks

**This is a call to all members:** if you have any ideas/requests for the subjects of the monthly talks, please let us know. Either reply to this email or give Hermione a ring (number below).

Chairman: Dick Hawes 0118 979 3730	Hon. Treasurer: Peter Radband 07976 640989	Programmes: Hermione Lewis 0118 989 1671	Committee Member: Jayne Male 07967639808
Deputy Chairman: Ian Gillott 0118 9892649	Trading Hut: Stuart Slocombe 0118 9734531	Membership: Kerry Eaton 07736 022361	Co-opted Member: Marise Radband 01344 774310
Hon. Secretary: Chris Spinks 0118 978 1432	Show Secretaries: Daryl & Katie Phillips 07980 160169	Publicity: Julia Goodall 07814 747198	