

The Carl Zeiss Award



Undoubtedly one of the most enjoyable tasks in the working year of BBRC is judging the Carl Zeiss Award for the most instructive photographs of a British rarity featured in the most recent BBRC report. We receive a great many stunning photographs each year, testament to the extent of the digital revolution in birding in the past few years, but as well as being aesthetically pleasing these are also an essential source of information. In recognition of their importance, Carl Zeiss Ltd, the sponsors of BBRC, awards a pair of Carl Zeiss binoculars to the photographer judged to have taken the photograph or set of photographs that best fit these credentials.

From the records which appeared in the 2006 report (*Brit. Birds* 100: 694–754), it was a fairly simple task to establish the shortlist of photographs for the award. There were really only two leading candidates, these being the Prawle Long-billed Murrelet *Brachyramphus perdix* photos by Dave Stone and the Boddam Olive-tree Warbler *Hippolais olivetorum* photos by Hugh Harrop. We briefly considered images of the wintering Lincolnshire Black Kite *Milvus migrans*, which may yet be accepted as the first individual of one of the eastern races for Britain, and Barrie Widden's photos from 1982 of the Scilly 'Northern Harrier' *Circus cyaneus hudsonius*, which had been a key reason for acceptance of this race, but we felt that it was difficult to justify presenting the award for photographs that were more than 25 years old.

Differentiating between the two front runners was down to circumstance more than anything else. Both sets of photographs were taken after the



Rob Fray

56. Hugh Harrop (left), winner of the Carl Zeiss Award, receiving his prize of ZEISS 7x42 FL binoculars from BB editor Roger Riddington in Shetland in January 2008.

bird had been identified as one particular species and they were both instrumental in reidentifying the bird as a first for Britain. The difference was that the murrelet stayed around for thousands of birders to see and hundreds to photograph, meaning that, ultimately, identification wasn't based solely on Dave Stone's photographs. In contrast, the identification of the Olive-tree Warbler, as the preceding account sets out, was based primarily on this one set of photographs, taken in very difficult circumstances by Hugh Harrop; the bird was not seen again and this species would not have been added to the British List without them. This being the case, these photographs (plates 52–55) were ideally placed to be a worthy winner of the Carl Zeiss Award, but in any other year, Dave Stone's photographs would have been a shoo-in for the award.

Colin Bradshaw, on behalf of BBRC

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The British Birds Rarities Committee is sponsored by Carl Zeiss Ltd.

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