

The Carl Zeiss Award 2002



The British Birds Rarities Committee, established in 1959, has been supported and sponsored by Carl Zeiss Ltd, the renowned German optical company, since 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 76: 475). The Carl Zeiss Award was established in 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 589) to encourage the submission of photographs, as supporting evidence, with written descriptions of rarities. Photographs are an important, at times critical, source of information, and are in many cases an integral part of record assessment by BBRC.

Recognising the importance of photographic evidence, and the role of photographers who supply the images, Carl Zeiss Ltd presents each year a pair of Carl Zeiss binoculars to the individual judged to have submitted the most instructive photograph, or series of photographs, of a British rarity. This year, from the wealth of material submitted in support of rarity descriptions, we arrived at a short list of four entries, listed below in Voous order.

'Soft-plumaged petrel' <i>Pterodroma madeira/feae/mollis</i>	Gary Bellingham
Black-winged Pratincole <i>Glareola nordmanni</i>	Gary Bellingham
Gull-billed Tern <i>Sterna nilotica</i>	Mike Malpass
Whiskered Tern <i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>	Mike Wallen

Gary Bellingham had two sets of photographs in our short list, including a superb series of the Black-winged Pratincole on Anglesey in July 2001. We particularly liked the photograph of this elegant wader wing-stretching, clearly showing a lack of contrast between the dark wing-coverts and the secondaries, and the absence of a white trailing edge to the inner wing, features which separate it from Collared Pratincole *G. pratincola*. Out-of-season terns can often prove difficult rarities to assess, and the marvellous series of images by Mike Malpass of the first-winter Gull-billed Tern at Titchwell, Norfolk, in November 2001 (see also plates 14 & 294), not only helped our assessment, but provided valuable reference material of a plumage rarely seen in this country. In many ways, the same was true for Mike Wallen's shots of the Whiskered Tern at Willen Lake, Buckinghamshire, in October 2001 (see also plates 295 & 296), which show an individual moulting into first-winter plumage. For many of us, Whiskered Tern is unfamiliar in anything other than spring plumage, since not only is it in

spring when the majority of vagrants occur in Britain, but it is also when most of us travel to its breeding grounds on birding trips.

There was, however, one clear winner this year. Without wishing to influence the deliberations of BOURC and BBRC, we felt that the clarity of image in Gary Bellingham's photographs of the 'Soft-plumaged petrel', taken from the MV *Scillonian*, about 95 km southwest of Scilly in August 2001, may allow this individual to be identified at specific level, since even details of the bill's proportions can be seen in the photographs (see also *Brit. Birds* 94: plates 280-281). Outstanding quality alone makes this series a worthy winner of the 2001 Carl Zeiss Award, but since it also constitutes 'great photos of a stunning rarity' the outcome was a racing certainty.

Gary Bellingham becomes the eleventh winner of the Carl Zeiss Award, and for his prize was able to choose either a Carl Zeiss 7×42BGAT* or one of the models from the 'Victory' range, either 8×40BT* or 10×40BT*; he selected the 10×40BT*.

Colin Bradshaw, Chris Kehoe & Roger Riddington
c/o 9 Tynemouth Place, Tynemouth, Tyne & Wear NE30 4BJ



Gary Bellingham



Gary Bellingham

340-341. Winner of The Carl Zeiss Award 2002: 'Soft-plumaged petrel' *Pterodroma madeira/feae/mollis*, at sea, about 95 km southwest of Scilly, August 2001.



Gary Bellingham

342. Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni*, Mona, Anglesey, July 2001.

Mike Malpass



343. Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica*, Titchwell, Norfolk, November 2001.



Mike Wallen

344. Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*, Willen Lake, Buckinghamshire, October 2001.



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