



The Carl Zeiss Award 2000

Established in 1959, the British Birds Rarities Committee has been supported and sponsored by the optical company Carl Zeiss Ltd for 18 years, since 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 76: 475). To encourage photographers to submit their photographs of rare birds for the Committee's perusal, and thereby to assist in the judging process, The Carl Zeiss Award was established in 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 589). The photographs that the British Birds Rarities Committee receives are an important source of information and, frequently, they make the task of record assessment not only easier, but also more

enjoyable. In recognition of the value of the photographic evidence, and the photographers who supply prints or transparencies, Carl Zeiss Ltd presents each year a pair of Carl Zeiss binoculars to the photographer judged to have taken the most instructive photograph or set of photographs. One of the features of 1999 was the influx of rare swifts, simultaneously from the east and the west, in late October, and several photographs of these birds appear in the short list. In Voous sequence, the short list, selected from almost 1,000 submitted photographs, was:

Lesser Scaup <i>Aythya affinis</i>	Dr Iain H. Leach
American Coot <i>Fulica americana</i>	Gary Bellingham
Chimney Swift <i>Chaetura pelagica</i>	Tony Collinson
Chimney Swift	Rob Wilson
Pallid Swift <i>Apus pallidus</i>	Dave Nye
Pallid Swift	Steve Young
Paddyfield Warbler <i>Acrocephalus agricola</i>	Les Borg
Paddyfield Warbler	M. McDonnell
Paddyfield Warbler	Alan Tate
Blyth's Reed Warbler <i>A. dumetorum</i>	Brian Clasper
Booted Warbler <i>Hippolais caligata</i>	Mike Malpass

It took two nights - the first fuelled with red wine, the second more measured - to reach a final decision. Particularly difficult was reconciling the 'great photo of a stunning rarity' with the 'you can see the primary projection on that'. Our top three, however, were not only stunning photographs of superb rarities, but also ones in which feather detail and crucial identification

features could be seen.

In classic competition style, we shall announce the final three in reverse order. Dr Iain Leach was placed third, with a series of photographs of the female Lesser Scaup at Cleethorpes, Lincolnshire, including two showing the diagnostic wing pattern (plates 298 & 299). Iain was the winner of The Carl Zeiss Award last year (*Brit. Birds* 92: 534-

Steve Young/Birdwatch



Steve Young/Birdwatch



294 & 295. Winner of THE CARL ZEISS AWARD 2000: Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*, Flamborough Head, East Yorkshire, October 1999.

536), and had previously been placed third. His photographs of the rarities of 1999 will be widely displayed in next month's 'Report on rare birds in 1999'.

Whilst it was difficult to decide which of the photographs of the Lea Valley, Essex, Paddyfield Warbler were the best, the set submitted by Alan Tate showed all the relevant identification features, and deserved to achieve the runner-up spot (plates 296 & 297).

We had no doubt as to the winner: Steve Young's photographs of the Pallid Swift at Flamborough Head, East Yorkshire, show the

upperwing and underwing patterns, the throat patch and some of the feather scaling (plates 294 & 295). Swifts are by nature very difficult to photograph, and, in a year in which an invasion of rare swifts was one of the highlights, these high-quality photographs were worthy winners (although some of the detail will undoubtedly be lost in the printed versions). Steve, who is the ninth winner of The Carl Zeiss Award, was able to choose either a Carl Zeiss 7x42BGA or a 8x40BT* as his prize; he selected the 8x40 from the new 'Victory' range.



Alan Tate

296 & 297. First-winter Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*, Fisher's Green, Essex, October 1999.



Alan Tate



Iain H. Leach

298 & 299. Female Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*, Cleethorpes, Lincolnshire, April 1999.



Iain H. Leach

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