Gordon Simm
Gordon Simm was a man of paradoxes. A great photographer, he was modest to a fault. A former engineer, he described himself as semi-retired, but on top of his driving job he spent long hours bird-watching in self-built hides, photographing birds and sitting at an ancient PC developing his images from RAW captures. I doubt if he slept more than 5 hours a night. He lived modestly in Kirkbymoorside and spent nearly all his spare time hiking and birdwatching on the North York Moors.

He was an outdoorsman of great stamina. He thought nothing of an 18-20 mile day and preferred to carry his own tent and stove so as to camp on the hills. At first I was dubious about hiking with him because I feared that I'd be unable to keep up: he was long-legged, extremely fit and as agile as a cat. But he was also a gentle and considerate companion, and I learned a lot about bird behaviour and birdsong in his company. For me, the Dales Way, Hadrian's Wall Path and the Cleveland Way will never be the same without him.

I met Gordon only in 2009 when we were both early adopters of the Panasonic micro four thirds G system camera. Later we worked closely together on two books: Hadrian's Wall Path and the Cleveland Way. This route was on his home tramping ground and was published only months before he disappeared in July 2012.

He was a wonderful coauthor: always constructive and conscientious, but never afraid to tell me I might be wrong. He quickly became a good friend as well as a colleague.

Sadly, and despite extensive search efforts, we know very little about what caused his disappearance. He was on holiday in Nerja in southern Spain, and went hiking (alone as usual) in the mountainous country that he knew so well from previous visits. He set off, well-equipped and well-provisioned as always, on Saturday 21 July for an ambitious overnight hike, expecting to return the next day.

When he failed to return, his wife Wendy raised the alarm, and for two weeks enormous efforts were made to find him in a well organised hi-tech search. A further search was conducted in September, but no trace of him or his equipment has been found. We will never know what emergency prevented his return, whether rockfall or medical. None of us can imagine the extra pain that lack of closure has meant to his widow and family, nor what practical difficulties follow from the lack of official proof of his death.

Gordon's photography was recognised only recently by Panasonic's Photographer of the Year award and his prints were exhibited at the NEC last year. When I first knew him, I had to bully him to take himself seriously as a photographer. He was reluctant to take money for his images, he didn't appreciate the importance of his intellectual property and he wasn't even sure if he would be eligible for the Guild. Once I had persuaded him to apply, he was still too shy to come to any of its events. Yet his work was exactly of the kind and standard that the Guild exists to promote and celebrate. We are all diminished by the loss of such a gifted OWPG member.

Jacquetta Megarry, 17.10.12