



Hen Harrier Action: October newsletter



Dear Supporter,

Welcome to our latest newsletter. For many of you it will be the first: we're still a very new organisation and our circulation received a huge boost from the brilliant Hen Harrier Day e-action organised with the RSPB and Wild Justice. Many thanks for contributing to that and also for signing up to receive this newsletter. In it you can read about two brilliant contributions to the event: from children's author and Hen Harrier Action (HHA) trustee Gill Lewis, and from Josh Hutt who made some excellent videos and animations. We hope that these might inspire you to make your own contribution. There are many ways to do so and there's a brief introduction with links in this newsletter. Looking forward, we also seek your own views and ask what you would like from Hen Harrier Day next year. But first a brief look back at this year's great event.

Reflections on Hen Harrier Day Online

When Covid-19 lockdown came in March 2020, we were quick to organise an online event, initially as a back-stop in case local events had to be called-off. None of us had ever organised such an event before but we rapidly built a strong team and were fortunate indeed to have wildlife film-maker Ruth Peacey join that team. Courage was also boosted by staunch support from Wild Justice and the RSPB. Our brilliant network of local event organisers were supportive from the start, even as, one-by-one, they had to cancel their own events. And we are proud that we seized the moment to commission excellent community content with a wide variety of contributors from across the UK. Even so we never dreamt we'd generate a whole day of great content, engaging over 130,000 people, raising £10,000

for the Langholm Moor community buy-out, and over £5,000 via a joint art auction with Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, at the same time helping inspire 123,678 letters to elected representatives. You can view much of the content from the day [here](#).

Hundreds of people contributed to Hen Harrier Day Online, and we'd like to thank them all: our brilliant hosts, Chris Packham and Megan McCubbin, and all who appeared on the programme; Ruth Peacey, Fabian Harrison and all the production team, all our other volunteers; the street artists, choristers and makers; and everyone who entered the competitions. And of course everyone who joined in (on the day or since), wrote to their elected representative, donated to the Langholm Moor Community Buy-out, or bid for works of art. Huge thanks to all.

Young Wild Writer Competition 2020

by Gill Lewis – children's author



Hen Harrier Day has always been a family day with lots of nature inspired arts and crafts activities for young people. For Hen Harrier Day Online 2020, we decided to invite young people to submit a piece of writing of up to 500 words. It could be a poem, a story, a piece of journalism...anything, but it had to be about British wildlife. This sparked great interest amongst children, parents, teachers and librarians, and in less than three months over 500 entries flew into our inbox. As a children's author, I have visited many schools and run writing workshops, and have always been astonished by the quality of writing and imaginative ideas from young people, so I was expecting great things.

But the standard of writing for this competition blew me away. The judges had a hugely difficult task in choosing the shortlists and then the best in each age group. There were many varied topics. We had hen harriers, pipistrelle bats, hedgehogs, foxes, cinnabar moths and lacewings. We had rockpools, forests, rivers and mountains. Some wrote about noticing wildlife in lockdown, especially wanting to communicate with shielding relatives about the wildlife they had seen. Others covered big issues such as climate change whilst yet others captured precious fleeting moments.

In first place in the Young Category (5-8 yrs) was a wonderful piece of observational writing by Theo Whittingham about an encounter with a hare. In Rabbit-Dog Hare, the writing is so vivid, that I felt I was there witnessing the moment too.

Neha Narne's poem, My Patch of Green in the Urban Jungle, won the Senior Category (13-16 yrs). It is a truly stunning piece of writing about her family's allotment in London which is currently under threat from re-development. Neha celebrates the allotment as a place to nurture wildlife, grow food and grow bonds within the community. She has offered her poem to form part of the appeal to prevent the concreting of this vital greenspace.

First place in the Junior Category (8-12yrs) and declared overall best entry was a poem about hen harriers. Edith Hobson's Guardian was read aloud by Michael Morpurgo during Hen Harrier Day Online.

Books from some best-loved authors were awarded to all the shortlisted entrants, and I offered the writer of the overall best entry an author visit from me to their school. Each entrant received a downloadable certificate and some feedback on their piece of writing. You can read all the shortlisted entries [here](#).

Due to popular demand, we will be holding the competition again next year, and plan to establish the Young Wild Writer Competition as a national wildlife writing competition for years to come.

Not only did this competition allow young people to be creative during lockdown but it also gave a platform to have their voices heard, express their opinions and concerns and celebrate the wildlife and wild places they love. Theirs are voices that must be listened to in a rapidly shrinking natural world. So, if you know a young person who loves to write, tell them about this competition for Hen Harrier Day 2021, because writing is a superpower. Words have the ability to change hearts and minds. And if we can change hearts and minds, then we can change the world.

Plans for 2021

It's early days yet but we are starting to think about next year and to talk to many people about it. With our local organisers, we're keen to have another online event, probably smaller-scale and strongly linked to what we hope will be more, and more varied, local events than ever before.

We'd love for there to be events in every county and every city across the UK. Events of all kinds – from street stalls to larger events in city centres or on nature reserves. Some might be mainly music or arts based or involve a walk on the moors. It would be great to see a few village fairs or street parties taking our cause as their theme. We will encourage organisers to include a variety of activities, especially for children, to ensure fun family-friendly events.

We'd also like to see some events in the spring, to mark the start of the breeding season. We'd love to enable people to see some hen harriers skydancing, though realistically that may be very difficult. But we could have events with a skydancing theme, be it music, dance arts or crafts or perhaps kite making and flying.

Hen Harrier Day is all about community engagement and whilst much can be organised locally, we will identify projects best co-ordinated at national level. For example, as well as another Young Wild Writer Competition, we hope to have another Young Naturalist Challenge and will be aiming to encourage more street art around the country.

A volunteer's voice



Here's a cheering endorsement of volunteering for Hen Harrier Action from Josh Hutt, who did great work with videos and animations in support of our online event: "Volunteering for Hen Harrier Day has been an incredibly rewarding experience. Being able to support a cause that I'm passionate about has given me a real sense of purpose during such uncertain times. In the past I've been overwhelmed by the mass of environmental issues we face as society and have found it difficult to find a way to make a difference.

But the team at Hen Harrier Action have enabled me to be part of something bigger and given me the chance to use my skills as a videographer to support a cause that's making a valuable difference for UK wildlife. Put simply, volunteering for Hen Harrier Day was a great experience and I can't recommend it enough. The highlight of my volunteering experience so far has been creating the video that closed the Hen Harrier Day 2020 live stream. Having a video that I helped to produce be introduced by Chris Packham and Megan McCubbin has been the highlight of my year! There are a lot of ways to get involved, so if you're passionate about UK wildlife and want to bring an end to raptor persecution I really recommend that you get in touch."

Join in!

All of you reading this newsletter, have been moved by the plight of the hen harrier and inspired to take action to help it and nature in our uplands. How best to continue that? Hen Harrier Action offers five main ways. You could:

- run a local event. These are run by local organisers (not HHA) and there's no set formula, you can do whatever matches your interests and local opportunities; and there's lots of help and support available.
- support a local event. Whether you're a children's entertainer, a local charity or small business, we'll put you in touch with the right people.
- volunteer for Hen Harrier Action. There are some great opportunities if you are able to make a slightly longer-term commitment and have skills you'd like to contribute to our tiny national centre.
- create or help with one of our community engagement strands. If you an enthusiast or expert with good ideas and networks, we can help you manage a project, be it a competition, exhibition or something else. For all of the above, see [here](#).
- donate. If you don't have the time or are not sure it's quite for you right now, a donation will always help. See [here](#).

Your views

Many of you will be receiving this letter for the first time, but most of you will have been involved in August's Hen Harrier Day in one way or another. So we'd value your views. On any aspect, really, but here are a few pointers:

What did you like best, or less well, about Hen Harrier Day Online?

What new would you like to see next year (for either local events or online)?

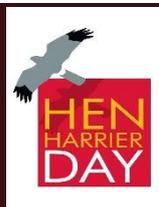
Are there themes you would especially like us to pursue?

What would you like to see in future newsletters? For example, developing plans for 2021, general news about raptors or the uplands, short pieces by well-known supporters.

Please send your views to info@henharrierday.uk. We look forward to hearing from you.

Keep up to date

To get the latest news of our plans for 2021, follow us – Hen Harrier Day – on social media. Please also share this newsletter with friends and followers – we want to get the message out as widely as possible.



Website: henharrierday.uk

Registered charity: SC049943

Registered company: SC653279