

September 2021



## Hen Harrier Action: September newsletter



Dear Subscriber,

Welcome to our September newsletter. The first hint of autumn is in the air but Hen Harrier Action's summer is not over yet, of which more later. First, a brief celebration of our brilliant Hen Harrier Day Online in August.

### Hen Harrier Day Online: 1 August 2021

Our 2021 Hen Harrier Day Online, hosted by Urban Birder David Lindo and scientist and artist Lauren Cook, was a tremendous success. Once again, our eclectic mix of great video, competitions, information, art, science and expertise reached an audience of thousands. We hope it also helped raise the profile and urgency of some of the issues affecting the uplands. Very many thanks to all who contributed to the event including competition entrants,

filmmakers and our brilliant hosts.

We've learned this year that people love to revisit the online content of our events so we've made that easy to do. From a page on our website you can access each of the individual pieces that made up the event as well as the entire livestream. That's [here](#). (You can also similarly access our Skydancer Day content [here](#) and some of the material from last August's event [here](#).) Do take a look!

Sadly there were again no 'on-the-ground' events this year, but Wild Justice also ran an online one, which you can catch up with [here](#).

## Young Filmmaker Challenge 2021



We're very proud of this challenge, which has attracted some brilliant entries over its brief two-year history. We ask for short pieces with a strong and clear message related to the uplands. It's for people aged under 30, maybe seeking to make the next career move onwards. But there is no lower age limit, and we

were delighted to declare Esther Rumsey this year's winner. Here is what she says about her entry: "I am 14 years old and have loved being outside, watching and learning about wildlife, for many years. In more recent years, this connection with nature has led to an understanding of the threats faced by the natural world. Therefore, I am striving to do my best in advocating for the natural world and the issues it faces. This is why I entered Hen Harrier Action's Young Filmmaker Challenge; I wanted to be able to contribute to the advocacy of the issues in our uplands and the strife of such a beautiful bird.

I decided to make my film creatively, portraying the hen harrier's story through paintings and poetry. The arts are another passion of mine and I believe that they are all, from art to music and photography to poetry, a great way of educating the public on environmental issues. This is because the information is delivered in an interesting and engaging way which is more memorable than just spoken facts which can sometimes be off-putting. People are more likely

to remember the information and enjoy learning about it when it is delivered in a more engaging and impassioned way like through the arts. The arts can spread the passion needed to fight for nature.”

You can see Esther's winning entry and her chat with Lauren Cook (last year's winner) from the webpage [here](#).

## Ghosts of the Landscape

For Hen Harrier Action, the hen harrier is a special bird, both for itself and as a symbol of the ills of much of our uplands, which affect more than just that one species. Many species have been lost from our uplands, and more struggle to survive. Our uplands have been drained, polluted, over grazed and, unfortunately, bird of prey persecution and wildlife crime are all too common. These lost and struggling species are the ghosts of our landscape, they are the sights we should see on a visit to the uplands but do not, the sounds we should hear but do not and the species which should be thriving but are not.

Many people have grown up with our damaged moorlands and may not realise what they are missing. These places may be seen as wild and natural when in fact they are far from that; over-managed and deprived of the richness and range of wildlife that should be there. We believe that our uplands could be managed so much better and that there is huge potential for wildlife in these areas. We have a vision of wilder uplands filled with the sights and sounds of life and hope that one day soon we will be able to bring back the ghosts of our landscape.

To help develop this vision, Hen Harrier Action has joined in a project with Derbyshire Wildlife Trust called Ghosts of the Landscape. The project has several components, including a writing competition with a closing date for entries of 15 September and the secret postcard art auction mentioned below. You can learn more [here](#).

## Secret postcard art auction



One of the important features of the Ghosts of the Landscape project is our joint anonymous art auction. Last year it was our most important fundraiser (and a lot of fun) and so we are doing it again. This year we take the 'ghosts' as our theme. The idea is to celebrate what could be seen again in an enriched natural landscape on our moors.

This newsletter hits a middle point between encouraging contributions and encouraging bids: the closing date for entries is **15 September**: on most artists' ways of working, that's still enough time.

But next, of course, we would like all readers to bid for the art on offer! The page for the auction is [here](#). At the moment it guides artists on how to contribute. In a week or so it will tell us all how to bid.

## Your call to action: 'Draw their attention'



Our call to action this year is 'Draw their attention'. The aim is to try to wake up our elected representatives to the scale and urgency of the nature emergency in a simple and vivid way. We'd like everyone to send their MP, MSP or MS a postcard with a drawing of a hen harrier on it and a simple message such as 'Save our Skydancers'. You've already shared with us some great pictures of the postcards you've sent, and we would love to see more.

Though we've seen many postcards (and some 'interesting' responses from

our elected representatives), we'd still like to encourage many more. Parliaments are returning over the coming weeks, so now is the moment to act. Details [here](#).

## Lauren Cook's draw-along



One of Hen Harrier Action's contributions to Ghosts of the Landscape was a 'draw-along' guided by the talented Lauren Cook, with writer Gill Lewis and the RSPB's Jenny Shelton. The object: draw a hen harrier. This engaging session ranges widely around that theme, with relaxed conversation about communication through art and science, conservation, and much more. Set aside an hour and discover your inner artist [here](#).

## News from Hen Harrier Action

August always focuses attention on driven grouse shooting and this year there has again been no lack of media coverage. The big gain in mainstream media we have made over recent years is that the coverage rarely now fails to refer to the sport as 'controversial'. Over the longer term, that makes a difference. Meanwhile, in the real world:

- Hen harriers had a very good breeding season in England (there are presently no figures for other countries. Natural England [reported](#) 84 chicks successfully fledged. Best to ignore all the spin, that is, of itself, unambiguously good news. Let us hope that it continues and that we see increasing numbers surviving their first year and going on to breed.
- The newly agreed arrangement (not a 'coalition') in Scotland, apart from being the first involvement of a Green party in government, seems certain to deliver licensing of grouse moors.

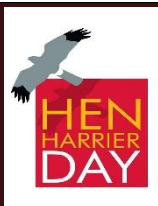
- 'National Parks' are newly controversial. Governments propose new designations, but sceptics wonder what designations are worth, whether this is mere greenwash. London as a national park? We don't reject that but the sad truth is that the designation would be justified because there is more nature in London than in many of our current National Parks. See [here](#).

- Wales. There is little driven grouse shooting in Wales, and it is heading for certain economic failure. Yet there is other shooting, and wildlife crime includes the destruction of hen harriers near to grouse moors. What to make of this? One answer is that it is the perpetuation of tradition; but whilst we should respect cultural values, we should reject embedded criminality. The research findings are [here](#).

- Is this the end? Driven grouse shooting [faces another bad season](#), after several earlier ones: how long can that be sustained? HHA has always held a view that it will be economic self-destruction that ends the 'sport'. That seems to be what is happening, alongside [other drivers of change](#), and we can only see the pace accelerating.

## Support Us

One of the really rewarding aspects of being involved in HHA is the generosity of our supporters. To date, we have made no overt fundraising ask, just a little note at the end of each newsletter like this. Yet each time we receive generous new donations and direct debit commitments. Both the donations and the support encourage us greatly in our efforts. Thank you so much to everyone who has contributed, whatever the amount. Donations are eligible for Gift Aid; to make a donation, click [here](#).



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