

November 2021



Hen Harrier Action: November newsletter



Dear Subscriber,

Welcome to our November newsletter. It's written as we pick up speed in planning our programme of online and on-the-ground events for next year. If you want to get involved, now is the time. Please let us know [here](#). We're keen to hear from people across a wide range of interests: birders for sure, but also walkers, artists and everyone who would like to do more for nature in the uplands. You can read more [here](#) but remember it is your own ideas we seek, there is no fixed model. We'd especially like to hear from those who can sometimes feel excluded from engagement with issues affecting the countryside.

Wildlife crime



Sadly, our top story of the month is that raptor persecution reached a new peak in 2020, according to the RSPB's meticulously documented [Birdcrime report](#). As we feared, lockdown presented wildlife criminals with the opportunity to persecute birds with less fear of being observed. This seems to have been especially the case in England, where confirmed cases of raptor persecution doubled. The figures were, once again, worst in North

Yorkshire, whilst a disgraceful 40% of the UK total were within our national parks and other protected areas. As ever, the report points out that the recorded crimes are only the tip of the iceberg.

On 18 October came [confirmation](#) that persecution of hen harriers continues, seemingly unabated, into 2021 despite all propaganda to the contrary. Yet another satellite-tagged hen harrier mysteriously disappeared. Reiver, a female who fledged on Langholm Moor (see below) earlier this year, was in an area dominated by driven grouse moors in Northumberland when her tag stopped working. She is the fifth satellite-tagged hen harrier to go missing, presumed killed, this year.

There is *some* good news, with [reports](#) of increased activity and co-operation between the police and other agencies, with the prospect of prosecutions to come. However (as demonstrated by some eye-opening case studies in the Birdcrime report), prosecution remains exceptionally difficult and a change in the law to address the true cause of the problem is long overdue.

Langholm Moor Second-Stage Community Buyout



Many readers will know of this inspiring but challenging community buyout aiming to take ownership of Langholm Moor, a defunct grouse moor, so as to create the Tarras Valley Nature Reserve. Hen Harrier Action was proud to support the project through Hen Harrier Day 2020. The successful first stage of the buyout raised £3.8 million, enabling the purchase of 5,200 acres within funding deadlines. A second stage now aims to raise £2.2 million

to buy the remaining 5,300 acres. At HHA we want to do our best to help this next stage and hope you do too. Please consider contributing [here](#).

Photo of curlew on Langholm Moor by Laurie Campbell via an article on the buyout in [Scottish Housing News](#).

Hen Harrier Action news



Hen Harrier Action is delighted to announce that Carol Rawlings has joined our Board. Carol served on the RSPB Council from 2007 to 2012 and is a great advocate for urban peregrines, both for themselves and for their power to inspire a love of nature in those who may not always have ready access to the countryside. Carol writes:

“Some of my favourite memories of growing up in Rutland were countryside walks where my dad would point out birds as we strolled along by hedges and woods. We watched kestrels hover on the wind and nimble sparrowhawks chasing prey, and I was hooked. This led to a love of birds of prey that grew as I got older and learned more about

them. If you walk in Rutland nowadays, you will still see kestrels and sparrowhawks, and they have been joined by peregrines, red kites and osprey. Species that, for me as a child, lived on the pages of books, rather than in the local countryside. The protection and conservation of birds of prey and their habitat, the reintroduction of red kites and ospreys, and the spread of peregrines into towns and cities are success stories.

Sadly, there are failures too and one of the greatest is the plight of the hen harrier. I have never been fortunate enough to see these beautiful birds doing their wonderful sky dances. If you have, I envy you. But I fear that fewer and fewer of us will have that opportunity if things continue as they are.

You already know the hen harrier is in trouble, mainly because of the deliberate killing of birds, often near grouse moors. In fact, illegal persecution is worse than ever, as documented in the RSPB's recent Birdcrime report for 2020 (see above).

I'm passionate about protecting the hen harrier and I know many of you are too. I look forward to seeing you at a Hen Harrier Day event next year, whether on the ground or online."

From a supporter



At Hen Harrier Action, we are often deeply touched by support for our cause, which sometimes appears unexpectedly. Earlier this month, we received a donation of £340, from Morag McCullagh, with a similar amount going to Derbyshire Wildlife Trust. Here she tells us why:

"Before moving to Scotland, I lived with my family in the northern part of the Derbyshire Peak District. My

husband, Mike, and I shared a love of upland landscapes and wildlife. When Mike died in 2012, I found a great deal of solace in wandering over the moors where we had spent so much of our time together. A year or two later I got involved in a raptor monitoring project organised by the National Trust and the Dark Peak Raptor Monitoring Group, and that gave me a perfect excuse to sit for hours in the heather up on Bleaklow or Kinder, in the company of short-eared owls, peregrines and hen harriers. I was moved and thrilled to see these beautiful birds in that remote landscape, and they became very important to me. As often happens, the natural world provided me with a path through a difficult and sad time in my life and I came out the other side feeling restored. Of course, it was impossible to love those birds without being aware of the dangers they faced, particularly from some of the neighbouring grouse-shooting estates. I grew increasingly angry and upset at the never-ending reports of raptor persecution on my doorstep and wider afield. In a couple of instances, the victims were birds I had known as fledglings. It was always my intention to set up a fund to support bird of prey protection and conservation as a private memorial to Mike, and when I was lucky enough to move to Scotland, I realised I could use a holiday let of a room in my home to raise funds. I launched this in July and it's already proving popular. I'm hoping that next season I'll be able to build on this success. By supporting Hen Harrier Action and Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, I hope to make a small contribution to their work in protecting birds of prey and inspiring public intolerance of the wildlife crimes and the environmentally destructive practices associated with Britain's driven grouse-shooting estates."

Thank you so much Morag. You can see more about her holiday let [here](#).

Secret postcard auction



Our auction of wildlife art closed on 31 October. You may remember that it was 'anonymous' in that bidders did not know whether they were bidding for the work of a talented young person or an internationally exhibited artist. As last year it was a great success with over £4,800 raised for Hen Harrier Action and Derbyshire Wildlife Trust. Many thanks to all the artists who contributed, and all who bid.

We'll publish full details of all the artists with links to their websites and social media as soon as we can. Meanwhile, with many thanks to Paul Samuels and Tim Birch, here's [a great video](#) making the links between the art and the wildlife we all wish to see back on our moors.

News roundup

The season for heather burning (muirburn in Scotland) opened on 1 October. The scientific consensus is clear that the practice is bad for nature, bad for climate and bad for people. So, with COP26 approaching, would the estates show restraint or, with legislation either on the way or likely to be strengthened, would they get their retaliation in first? Sadly, as ever, they seem to have made the wrong choice.

Monitors logged over 100 fires in the first four days of the season, a five-fold increase. The fires were mainly in northern England and within national parks. Several burns appear to have been unlawful because on deep peat. For example, the RSPB has asked Natural England to investigate the burning on the infamous Walshaw Moor. Meanwhile, north of the border, Scotland is still waiting for the government to bring forward legislation to license driven grouse shooting and muirburn. Not a great look as the UK hosts COP26!

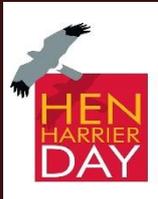
The Royals have been much in the news, with Prince William announcing the winners of the first Earthshot Prize and chiding billionaires for funding spaceflight instead of solving problems on Earth and the Queen reportedly criticising politicians for being all talk, no action on climate change. But they've not responded to the Wild Card petition asking them to rewild their lands, so one of our trustees, children's author Gill Lewis, has [written a brilliant reminder](#) to Prince William.

With COP26 now upon us, what is HHA especially looking for in terms of outcomes? Obviously, like everyone else, we fervently hope that agreement is reached on the [COP26 goals](#) but governments will surely declare success whatever the outcome. It's the underlying reality that will count and The Independent has a [good short article](#) to help you make up your own minds on

that. As the article observes, nature-based solutions have come to the fore over recent years. It's increasingly understood that neither the climate crisis nor the biodiversity crisis can be solved without addressing both. The latter may also (on a scale) be easier to achieve, and nature was high in the UK government's rhetoric in the run-up to COP26. But action and commitment in the UK, for example on burning on our peatlands, remain far behind what is needed. So it's those aspects we'll especially be watching.

Support us: support hen harriers

Many thanks to all the supporters who have once again been so generous in supporting our work. As ever, the encouragement it gives us is at least equal to the monetary value of the donation. So we always welcome donations, especially new regular contributions. To make a donation, click [here](#), (if eligible please click the Gift Aid box too). Additionally, we'll be launching our first major appeal within the next couple of weeks. Our aim is to raise funds for a satellite tag for a hen harrier chick (or two if the appeal goes well) next year. The appeal will also seek support for the purchase of a new nest camera for the site (a clumsy red deer broke our last one). Nest cameras are a great way to engage the wider public in the life of the hen harrier, and to explain the role of satellite tags in protecting them.



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