



## Hen Harrier Action: May 2023 Newsletter

Spring is well underway, and many Hen Harrier pairs in Britain will have laid clutches of between three and seven eggs, depending on local weather conditions and food supply. Females will be incubating eggs for about 30 days, and the males will carry the responsibility for hunting and providing food.

Now begins the arduous task of raising the next generation of young harriers.



## Hen Harrier Action News

### Skydancer Day is here - broadcasting live on YouTube on Sunday 7th May

Wildlife presenter Megan McCubbin and Hen Harrier Action's Indy Kiemel Greene will once again host this year's online Skydancer Day event, from the Hawk Conservancy Trust in Hampshire.

This year's theme is Survival, and the exciting line-up will include:

- Hen Harrier ID - an excellent guide from the RSPB's Jack Ashton-Booth
- Tarras Valley Nature Reserve update - with Jenny Barlow and Kat Mayer
- The RSPB's 2023 National Hen Harrier Survey with Dr Simon Wotton
- An interview with Jenny Shelton from the RSPB Investigations Team
- Spectacular footage of Hen Harrier and Starling winter roosting behaviour

Plus children's author Gill Lewis will launch this year's Young Wild Writer competition...

...Megan and Indy will announce an online auction where you can bid to own a magnificent original artwork by Ian Brown of a male Hen Harrier in flight...

... and much more!

See the full programme line-up on our [website](#), and tune in live on our [YouTube channel](#) on Sunday 7th May @12.30pm – 13.30pm BST.

## In Conversation with Ian Carter, Co-author of *The Hen Harrier's Year*

*We recently caught up with ornithologist, lifelong naturalist and author Ian Carter, whose latest book, *The Hen Harrier's Year*, a collaboration with award-winning wildlife artist Dan Powell, charts the month-by-month challenges through the seasons for Hen Harriers in Britain.*

*Published in October, the book has been widely praised by naturalists and environmental campaigners for its affectionate portrait of the species, combined with hard-hitting commentary on the illegal persecution faced by this charismatic bird.*

### **HHA: Can you tell us a bit about your background, Ian?**

I worked as an ornithologist for Natural England for 25 years. My first contract was carrying out ship-based surveys of seabirds in waters all around Britain, but later I focused more on species conservation, including birds of prey.

I spent several years working on the Red Kite reintroduction project, and then became involved with Natural England's flagship Hen Harrier recovery programme

### **HHA: Why did you decide to focus on the Hen Harrier?**

After my involvement in the Natural England project, it seemed an obvious choice. It is a bird I know well, and it has a fascinating story to tell. It's a complete contrast to our earlier book, *The Red Kite's Year*, which was about a raptor success story.

Hen Harrier recovery is still precarious, but as more people become aware of the issues, so the chances of action being taken increases.

### **HHA: Why did you decide to structure the book month-by-month?**

I wanted to follow the Hen Harrier through a typical year and describe the different seasonal challenges the bird faces. This approach will also allow readers to dip in and out of the book to find out more about

Hen Harrier behaviour at any time through the year.

**HHA: Who did you have in mind as the potential audience when you were writing?**

I hope there is enough substance to the book to appeal to the experienced and knowledgeable naturalist, but I also wanted it to be accessible – to draw in a wider audience and raise the profile of the Hen Harrier. Dan’s artwork captures the behaviour of the bird so beautifully that I think it brings the bird’s story to life for every audience.

**HHA: You wrote an entire chapter about conflict on the grouse moors - what’s your view on the possible solutions to this issue?**

When I started working on the Hen Harrier project, I felt that the solution lay in compromise and negotiation. We tried this for many years – decades, actually. But it didn’t work and now my attitude has changed.

There are vast areas of the countryside managed as intensive grouse moors to provide a few days shooting for a few people, with all the legal and illegal killing that goes along with that. Then there is heather burning, the associated pollution and release of carbon, the increased flood risk, and the overall loss of biodiversity.

These costs, including the perilous state of the Hen Harrier, are borne by the wider community, all for the benefit of a tiny number of people. Surely this can’t continue?

**HHA: How do you feel about the future of the Hen Harrier in the UK?**

I’m optimistic in the medium and longer term. I think the glare of publicity is starting to have an impact on public opinion, and I don’t think that the outdated attitudes of grouse moor managers will be tolerated for much longer.

The writing is on the wall. We encourage other countries to behave reasonably, to preserve their wildlife and maintain their forests, but we need, first, to look closer to home.

*You can read the [interview with Ian in full on our website](#). The Hen Harrier’s Year, full of fascinating month-by-month insight and richly illustrated by Dan Powell, is published by [Pelagic Publishing](#) and you can buy it direct from their website and all good bookshops.*

## **News roundup**

**Urgent: Your chance to respond to the Scottish Government’s consultation**

Revive, the coalition for grouse moor reform, have urged members of the public to take up the Scottish Government’s invitation to respond to a consultation on the Wildlife Management and Muirburn (Scotland) bill, which will be debated in the coming months.

The deadline for responding is May 5th, so you don’t have long to respond, but Revive have produced a [helpful guide](#) to make it simple

to put your own thoughts across.

## 82 Hen Harriers confirmed missing or illegally killed since 2018

This week, the Raptor Persecution UK blog has responded to the news from Natural England that five more young Hen Harriers disappeared in suspicious circumstances in the Yorkshire Dales National Park and the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This now takes the devastating tally to 82 since 2018, most occurring on or near grouse moors.

You can read the full [blog article here](#).

### 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).

### Hen Harrier Action

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