



Hen Harrier Action: August 2023 Newsletter

It's the end of the breeding season for another year, and young Hen Harriers will be honing their flying and hunting skills, although still with some dependence on their parents for food. Much less vulnerable now to predation, they will soon be leaving the nesting area and setting out on their independent journeys to find wintering locations, often in lowlands and coastal areas.



Hen Harrier Action News

2023 Young Wild Writers Competition winners announced

This year's Young Wild Writers Competition attracted over 300 entries of a very high standard, and the task for our panel of judges, led by children's author Gill Lewis, was a challenging one.

From the endearing story of a brave Christmas Robin to a powerful and moving piece about the last Kiwi in a raging forest fire, young creative writers aged from 6 years to 16 years have enthralled our panel of judges with their talent.

As Gill Lewis commented, *"It was a real privilege to have read the many diverse and brilliant pieces of writing that were sent in this year. We had non-fiction, story, prose, and poetry. We had pieces of writing about animals from ants to sloths, to snakes and whales. Each piece was very different from another. The standard this year was incredibly high, and of course the judging was very difficult to choose between so many worthy winners."*

The three category winners, **Muireann Beck**, aged 8, from Mallaig Primary School (Young Category), **Adam Breffit**, aged 10, from Cuffley School in Potters Bar (Junior Category), and **George Metcalfe**, aged 16, from Haberdashers' Boys' School in Elstree (Senior Category), all dazzled the judges with their entries.

You can read all the winning and commended entries on our website [here](#).

And you can hear Gill Lewis read the overall winner's submission,

George Metcalfe's powerful tale - **The Big Finale** - on our YouTube channel [here](#).

News of our 2023 satellite tagging activity



The Hen Harrier pictured here, a young female, has been tagged at an undisclosed site on a remote Scottish island. We do not reveal location details, for obvious reasons, until well after the birds have successfully fledged and moved away from the area.

Watch out for more details in next month's newsletter when we'll be revealing all the birds we have tagged this year, and how we will be using this invaluable data to support conservation efforts.

August walks against grouse shooting and raptor persecution

Two campaigning groups held moorland walks over the weekend of the 'Inglorious 12th' - the start of the annual grouse shooting season. The Reclaim Our Moors Walk took place on the notorious Moscar Estate near Sheffield on the 13th August.

In complete contrast, Hen Harrier Action's Walk & Talk through the Invergeldie Estate in West Perthshire - no longer a grouse moor - on the 12th August, enjoyed an aerial feast of raptors, with talks along the way from the RSPB's Duncan Orr-Ewing and Ian Thomson, and HHA's own Andrea Hudspeth.



Reclaim Our Moors Walk

More than 70 campaigners attended the Reclaim Our Moors protest walk from Redmires Reservoir near Sheffield on Sunday 13th August. The walk took a path through the notorious Moscar Estate, and the crowd heard from speakers including author Bob Berzins, whose book - Snared - chronicles the brutal reality of wildlife crime on grouse shooting estates.

This annual walk began five years ago in response to the ongoing pollution, environmental damage and wildlife persecution in the upland areas, according to one of the campaigners, Clive Swinsco. The protest walk is supported by Unite The Union, the local Labour and Green parties, and campaigning groups including Moorland Monitors and Greenpeace.

You can read more about the Reclaim Our Moors Walk [here](#).

Hen Harrier Action Walk & Talk

Despite a gloomy start with heavy rain and low cloud, Andrea Hudspeth's intrepid group enjoyed an excellent wildlife spectacle on their walk through the Invergeldie Estate, spotting Sand Martins, Red Kites, Ravens, Buzzards, Osprey, and superb views of a male Hen Harrier quartering a heather-clad hillside.

No longer a grouse moor, Invergeldie Estate has ambitious plans to improve biodiversity with more intensive deer management and reducing sheep densities.

You can read Andrea's round-up of the Walk [here](#)

News roundup

Three more Hen Harriers vanish on grouse moors

The Northern England Raptor Forum has reported the devastating news that yet more satellite tagged Hen Harriers - Hepit, Selena and Martha - have all stopped transmitting just as the grouse shooting season starts.

The last known positions of all three birds were over grouse moors – Birkdale Common, Mossdale Moor and Westburnhope Moor.

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

Killing the Skydancer: a three-part podcast from the Guardian

Guardian biodiversity reporter Phoebe Weston was so shocked by the story of Hen Harrier chicks being stamped to death on a nest that she set out to investigate the illegal killing in this 3-part podcast mini-series.

In the [first episode](#), Phoebe hears about the case of Susie, a hen harrier whose chicks were killed while being monitored on camera.

In [episode two](#), Phoebe speaks to the people trying to protect these rare birds, but as she digs deeper encounters a surprising silence around the killing of Susie's chicks.

In the [third and final episode](#), Phoebe finds out more about the pressures that drive people to commit raptor persecution, discovers how the police investigation into the case of Susie's crushed chicks unfolded, and how Susie is doing now.

Ospreys breed in Ireland for the first time in over 200 years

In more welcome news, several news outlets have reported that at least two, and possibly three, Osprey chicks have been born in Ireland, the first time for over 200 years.

You can find out more about this historic breeding success [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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