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## **Working for wild Birds of Prey and their Habitats**

### **The Hawk and Owl Trust ‘completely and utterly’ condemns the illegal killing of Hen Harriers**

The unanimous opinion of the Trustees of the Hawk and Owl Trust on the illegal killing of Hen Harrier was set out by the Chairman some time ago on social media:

‘Regarding the tragic event of the recent loss of three male Hen Harriers at Bowland; if this is, as at the moment seems likely, due to illegal killings, it is truly appalling. This event represents a sad loss of these critically endangered birds of prey, and such action is completely and utterly condemned by all in the Hawk and Owl Trust.’

It is vital that all those with responsibility for land management in regions where Hen Harrier (and other birds of prey), choose to nest, ensure that their environmental management regimes and standing orders they issue to their staff, stay strictly within the law. The killing of Hen Harrier and other birds of prey is illegal. Those that flout the law are criminals and must be pursued as such. It is only a matter of time until these outdated and abhorrent acts are confined to history.

But until it is safe for Hen Harriers to grace our skies once again, the Hawk and Owl Trust will work tirelessly to end these illegal acts and to ensure a future for these magnificent birds of prey.

In these trying times it is helpful to keep some words to hand to refer back to from time to time, ensuring that we, as a wildlife charity, stay on track in our drive to secure a positive outcome for the Hen Harrier.

Those wise words are courtesy of Professor David Macdonald, Director of the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU) of the University of Oxford:

‘The four ingredients of an ideal project: a) research to gather the evidence needed to solve the problem b) education to explain the problem and solution to all concerned c) community involvement to seek the support of all those involved and d) implementation to put the solution into effect.’



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‘Plans solidly supported on these four pillars provide a foundation for action and successive iterations of monitoring, evaluation and refinement that can doggedly nudge the conservation problem towards a solution.’

The Hawk and Owl Trust is hugely disappointed at the loss of the three Forest of Bowland birds and considers it critical that the illegal killing of Hen Harriers must be addressed immediately. If this has been caused by criminal action, the perpetrators **MUST** be brought to justice. If such action does not act as an effective deterrent further legislative powers must be sought to end this slaughter. We have watched as, decade after decade, initiative after initiative has stumbled and fallen.

Whilst the Trust will continue its wider work of education, conservation and research and do what we can to create and protect appropriate nesting, roosting and feeding habitats for all birds of prey species, we are also taking a number of practical steps to ensure that there are more positive convictions against those people guilty of wildlife crime against raptors.

One of these steps is to begin to train a large and broad reaching team of people, throughout the UK, to ‘Recognise, Record and Report’ wildlife crime. This is a fantastic initiative that owes its origins to the Wildlife Crime Conference of March 2015 held in Buxton, Derbyshire, organised by Birders Against Wildlife Crime and TheWildOutside.com.

Our discussions with Police Commissioners about the lack of successful prosecutions in respect of wildlife crime, suggest that the main problems lie in the actual discovery of the crime itself and the difficulties in securing tangible evidence to help support a conviction.

This is something that the Hawk and Owl Trust feels it can help address. We intend to roll out a series of workshops, conducted by wildlife crime training professionals, to give local people the skills to go out into the wider countryside to find these wildlife



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crimes that are being committed, collect what evidence can be obtained effectively and deliver it, intact to the police.

With an expanding number of people who are trained in this way, we hope that the number of wildlife crimes will reduce and that anyone who commits them will face swift and effective prosecution.

The Hawk & Owl Trust's mission is the conservation of wild birds of prey. We fight hard to end raptor persecution, working with many conservation colleagues to find a successful solution to enable us to reach a safe and secure future for Hen Harriers and all raptors in the UK.

Ends

### **Background information**

Please click here for downloadable PDFs of our previous statements:

[The Science \(PDF\)](#)

[The Conservation \(PDF\)](#)

For more information, quotes, images or interviews please contact: Press Officer Lin Murray **07881 657 944** or email [lin.murray@hawkandowl.org](mailto:lin.murray@hawkandowl.org)

### **Notes to editors:**

Founded in 1969 to help save the peregrine, the Hawk and Owl Trust ([www.hawkandowl.org](http://www.hawkandowl.org)) is a national charity which now works for the conservation and appreciation of all wild birds of prey and their habitats – both in its nature reserves (such as its 7500 acre grouse moor, Fylingdales on the North York Moors) and in partnership with others. Working with communities and other organisations, farmers, foresters and landowners, the Trust researches, restores and manages nesting, roosting and feeding habitats and encourages greater understanding and appreciation of these very special birds.