

Raptor Persecution UK

29 ‘missing’ Hen Harriers & nearly 40 birds of prey poi-soned, trapped or shot in Yorkshire Dales National Park since 2015

RaptorPersecutionUK

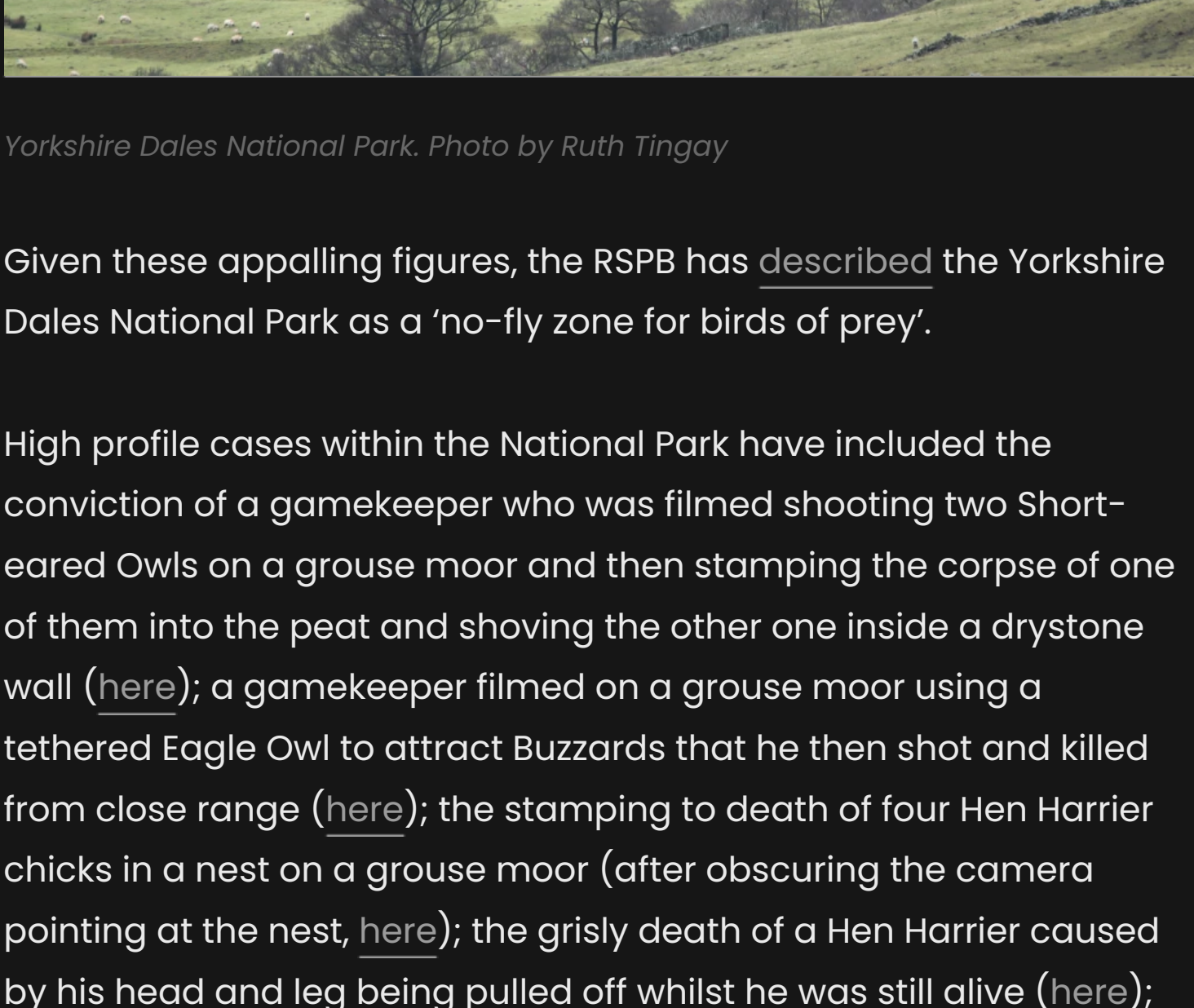
October 4, 2025

2016 persecution incidents, 2016 persecution incidents, 2018 persecution incidents, 2017 persecution incidents, 2019 persecution incidents, 2020 persecution incidents, 2021 persecution incidents, 2022 persecution incidents, 2023 persecution incidents, 2024 persecution incidents, 2025 persecution incidents, News, Persecution incidents in England

buzzard, gamekeeper, hen harrier, peregrine, poisoning, red kite, shooting, short-eared owl, trap

Media attention has been drawn to the Yorkshire Dales National Park this week, following the RSPB’s [press release](#) on the suspicious disappearance of a satellite-tagged Hen Harrier named ‘Sita’.

When it comes to the illegal killing of birds of prey, the Yorkshire Dales National Park is rarely out of the news, and that’s hardly surprising when 29 satellite-tagged Hen Harriers have gone ‘missing’ there and 39 other raptors have been found poisoned, trapped or shot there since 2015, including Peregrines, Hen Harriers, Red Kites and Buzzards.



Yorkshire Dales National Park. Photo by Ruth Tingay

Given these appalling figures, the RSPB has described the Yorkshire Dales National Park as a ‘no-fly zone for birds of prey’.

High profile cases within the National Park have included the conviction of a gamekeeper who was filmed shooting two Short-eared Owls on a grouse moor and then stamping the corpse of one of them into the peat and shoving the other one inside a drystone wall ([here](#)); a gamekeeper filmed on a grouse moor using a tethered Eagle Owl to attract Buzzards that he then shot and killed from close range ([here](#)); the stamping to death of four Hen Harrier chicks in a nest on a grouse moor (after obscuring the camera pointing at the nest, [here](#)); the grisly death of a Hen Harrier caused by his head and leg being pulled off whilst he was still alive ([here](#)); and three individuals caught on camera on a grouse moor discussing the shooting and killing of a Buzzard and a Raven before apparently shooting and killing a Hen Harrier ([here](#)) – one gamekeeper has been charged with conspiracy to kill a Hen Harrier, he has pleaded not guilty and his case will proceed to trial in January 2026 after his barrister failed in his attempt to have the case thrown out on a legal technicality.

The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority has also long recognised the extent of this criminal activity and has responded to public concern (e.g. see [here](#) and [here](#)). Earlier this year the Park Authority [terminated](#) its five-year ‘partnership’ with the grouse shooting industry to tackle these crimes, after recognising the futility of this endeavour. Two conservation organisations (the RSPB and the Northern England Raptor Forum) had already walked away from the sham in 2023 and 2024 respectively.

In an [article](#) published a couple of days ago by the *Craven Herald & Pioneer*, Mark Corner, a member of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority is quoted saying the continued illegal killing of raptors in the Park was “a crying shame”.

He added: “As the member champion for the natural environment, I’m personally embarrassed that we are the worst spot in the country in terms of the illegal killing of birds.”

In the same article, there’s an hilarious quote from the Yorkshire Dales Moorland Group, which is one of a number of regional groups set up in 2015 to represent local grouse moor owners and their gamekeepers in an attempt to counter the bad publicity about ongoing illegal raptor persecution. I think that members of most of these regional moorland groups have been, or still are, the subject of police investigations into illegal raptor persecution.

A spokesperson for the Yorkshire Dales Moorland Group reportedly told the reporter that ‘hen harrier numbers were at a 200-year high across the uplands’.

That’s simply not true – Hen Harrier breeding attempts on grouse moors across the north of England have been in sharp decline over the last two years – the only areas where they remain stable is on land managed for conservation rather than for Red Grouse shooting.

According to its FaceBook page, the Yorkshire Dales Moorland Group claims to have “around 100,000 acres of managed uplands here in the Dales where the estates are members of this group (virtually all of the moors)”.

Why is it then, there were only two Hen Harrier breeding attempts in 2025 across the whole of the Yorkshire Dales and neighbouring Nidderdale? I’d like the Moorland Group to provide a plausible explanation for these absences.

The Yorkshire Dales Moorland Group also told the *Craven Herald* reporter:

“Our keepers have and will always assist the police in searches for missing persons, lost dogs or missing birds. Tag failure is rare but not unheard of.

“The default accusation that persecution is responsible is regrettable. The conservation work undertaken by moor keepers is commendable as can be seen by the abundance of raptors and other rare species in the Dales”.

What “abundance of raptors” are those then? All the dead ones? Or just the ones that are allowed to breed because they don’t pose any threat to Red Grouse stocks?

And if these grouse shooting estates are so keen to help the police, how many of them signed the letter last year agreeing to allow the police to enter the land and use equipment for the purposes of crime prevention and detection? Did any of them sign it?

And if these gamekeepers are so keen to help police investigations, how many of them have given ‘no comment’ responses when interviewed about suspected raptor persecution crimes on these moors? Maybe it’d be quicker to count how many gamekeeper didn’t give a ‘no comment’ interview.

The article also quotes Alex Farrell, Head of Uplands at BASC:

“As a committed conservation organisation, we are taking progressive steps with our partners to oversee the continued recovery of hen harriers.

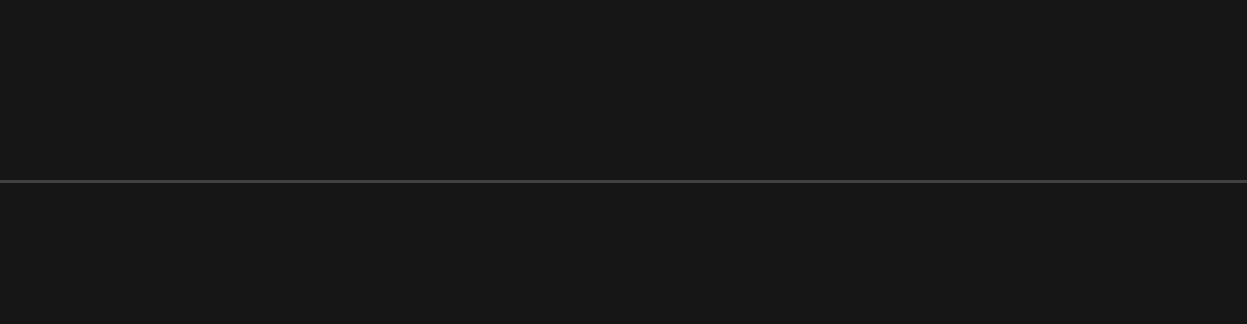
“Figures released by Natural England today show that collaborative effort resulted in 106 fledged hen harrier chicks in England this year – up from 80 last year”.

What “progressive steps” is BASC taking?

Oh, and those figures released by Natural England show that the small increase in Hen Harrier fledging rates are in spite of, not because of, any so-called ‘collaborative effort’ from the grouse shooting industry.

The data couldn’t be any clearer (see [here](#)).

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8 thoughts on “29 ‘missing’ Hen Harriers & nearly 40 birds of prey poisoned, trapped or shot in Yorkshire Dales National Park since 2015”

SusanH

October 4, 2025 at 6:23 pm

<https://chnng.it/GGwKfHtp6w>

If interested please sign a new petition to ban grouse shooting

Reply

Country born and bred

October 5, 2025 at 7:29 am

Ban it and now. Put them all out of work. Nothing less will suffice.

Reply

NatureTIm

October 4, 2025 at 9:54 pm

The local MP was also brought in this week to back the work done on the Bolton Abbey estate in a Facebook post – the moorland owners really are trying their best to put off any efforts to control what they do. Let’s hope they don’t succeed

Reply

spaghnum morose

October 4, 2025 at 11:01 pm

Scrolling through the pages on the Yorkshire Dales Moorland Group Facebook page I can see that photos of keepers from estates such as Reeth, Grinton, Castle Bolton, Barningham and Gunnerside are evident above others.

Is it safe therefore to assume that these estates are members of the Yorkshire Dales Moorland Group? Surely yes, is my thinking.

So, is it also safe to assume that as community minded, fire-fighting, child educating, bird-ringing, lost dog-finding, bird box-making, fungi photographed all-action heroes are fully supportive of the reinvogated North Yorkshire police initiative/proposal to use covert surveillance to catch the mysterious naughty so-and-so’s that are going around “biffing” raptors and causing suspicion to fall on gamekeepers?

No, I don’t feel safe in that assumption.

It would be really nice to know which of these estates mentioned above (and others) had received a “Land Permission” letter from the police, and which have signed it and which have declined to sign it.

To those that have signed it I would genuinely say “well done”, please publicise that fact on your YDMG Facebook page.

To those that received the letter but have not signed it, I would say please provide your justification for not helping the police and publicise that on your YDMG Facebook page.

In other words, say what your position is regards supporting this police initiative or obstructing it – don’t become publicly shy on a key question and try to drift out of sight and blend in to the background. You can’t anyway anymore, because too many people are watching.

Reply

2bluetails

October 5, 2025 at 1:56 pm

As I understand it nobody has signed it.

Reply

spaghnum morose

October 5, 2025 at 2:51 pm

I think you’re right, but I want to give them a chance to clarify it either way. Id been hoping somebody one day would ask them directly about it in a comment to one of their usually safe & fluffy posts, so I keep having a glance at their page. It is yet another elephant in that very small room of theirs. And it’s an elephant shaped room at the best of times.

Reply

cunionkaren6dbf55e67d

October 5, 2025 at 7:43 am

Its cringeworthy just ban grouse me want to vomit. Same old lip service but no real commitment same old bollocks really don’t ban grouse shooting and hunting and create and give jobs to people who really care. The police need to have more clout.

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