Raptor Persecution UK

‘Ghost sky dance’ – powerful new artwork documents the illegal killing of Hen Harriers on UK grouse moors

RaptorPersecutionUK

May 9, 2026

News

gamekeeper, hen harrier, poisoning, shooting, trap

This is really special.

Yorkshire-based sculptor Mark Butler and writer Gregory Norminton have collaborated to create a powerful piece of art to highlight the illegal killing of Hen Harriers on UK grouse moors, paying particular attention to those killed in Yorkshire.

‘Ghost sky dance’ by Mark Butler

Gregory chose to write about eight ‘sightings’ of Hen Harriers and pays tribute to 57 named and satellite-tagged Hen Harriers of the 147 known to have ‘disappeared’ or to have been illegally killed, on or close to grouse moors, since 2018.

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Mark then chose eight of those Hen Harriers (ones that had vanished / been killed close to his home in the Yorkshire Dales) and created a 'ghost sky dance' sequence, routing a silhouette and painting it gold on burnt pallet wood, each with its own memorial plaque detailing the fate of the named harrier.

Mark with his memorial plaque for Hen Harrier Asta, whose wings were ripped off by 'someone' in the North Pennines (photo by Ruth Tingay)

I'm not sure if I can persuade you with words alone of just how evocative this work is. I was really taken by both the idea and the photographs alone, but actually seeing and touching the wood, as well as smelling the acridity, made the piece come to life (ironically).

I'm also secretly pleased that Gregory and Mark both say they used this blog as inspiration for their creativity. There's no better compliment.

The work sits within a wider project focusing on local species that are under threat, all chosen from the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority's Nature Recovery Plan. It's still a work in progress but the entire exhibition will be going on tour around Yorkshire from February 2027. If you get a chance to visit it, it'll be time well spent.

For more information about the creation of the ghost sky dance, visit Mark's website here and Gregory's website here.

- 1998 persecution incidents (4)
- 1999 persecution incidents (1)
- 2000 persecution incidents (3)
- 2001 persecution incidents (7)
- 2002 persecution incidents (3)
- 2003 persecution incidents (13)
- 2004 persecution incidents (6)
- 2005 persecution incidents (8)
- 2006 persecution incidents (18)
- 2007 persecution incidents (14)
- 2008 persecution incidents (13)
- 2009 persecution incidents (50)
- 2010 persecution incidents (71)
- 2011 persecution incidents (51)
- 2012 persecution incidents (124)
- 2013 persecution incidents (147)
- 2014 persecution incidents (182)
- 2015 persecution incidents (106)
- 2016 persecution incidents (149)
- 2017 persecution incidents (146)
- 2018 persecution incidents (217)
- 2019 persecution incidents (219)
- 2020 persecution incidents (276)
- 2021 persecution incidents (233)
- 2022 persecution incidents (162)
- 2023 persecution incidents (143)
- 2024 persecution incidents (105)
- 2025 persecution incidents (68)
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- March 2026 (17)
- February 2026 (13)
- January 2026 (30)
- December 2025 (16)
- November 2025 (26)

- October 2025 (22)
- September 2025 (18)
- August 2025 (23)
- July 2025 (19)
- June 2025 (13)
- May 2025 (19)
- April 2025 (22)
- March 2025 (22)
- February 2025 (19)
- January 2025 (20)
- December 2024 (18)
- November 2024 (26)
- October 2024 (19)
- September 2024 (17)
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- July 2024 (13)
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- May 2024 (17)
- April 2024 (20)
- March 2024 (28)
- February 2024 (23)
- January 2024 (27)
- December 2023 (22)
- November 2023 (29)
- October 2023 (21)
- September 2023 (17)
- August 2023 (50)
- July 2023 (20)
- June 2023 (36)
- May 2023 (37)
- April 2023 (31)
- March 2023 (27)
- February 2023 (24)
- January 2023 (30)
- December 2022 (16)
- November 2022 (15)
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- December 2021 (22)
- November 2021 (27)
- October 2021 (29)
- September 2021 (24)
- August 2021 (26)
- July 2021 (21)
- June 2021 (15)
- May 2021 (35)
- April 2021 (41)
- March 2021 (38)
- February 2021 (42)
- January 2021 (38)
- December 2020 (33)
- November 2020 (48)
- October 2020 (29)
- September 2020 (41)
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- July 2020 (40)
- June 2020 (38)
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- February 2012 (28)
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- August 2011 (18)
- July 2011 (19)
- June 2011 (15)
- May 2011 (23)
- April 2011 (14)
- March 2011 (13)
- February 2011 (6)
- January 2011 (7)
- December 2010 (10)
- November 2010 (7)
- October 2010 (6)
- September 2010 (10)
- August 2010 (11)
- July 2010 (3)
- June 2010 (10)
- May 2010 (13)
- April 2010 (3)
- March 2010 (96)

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