

Raptor Persecution UK

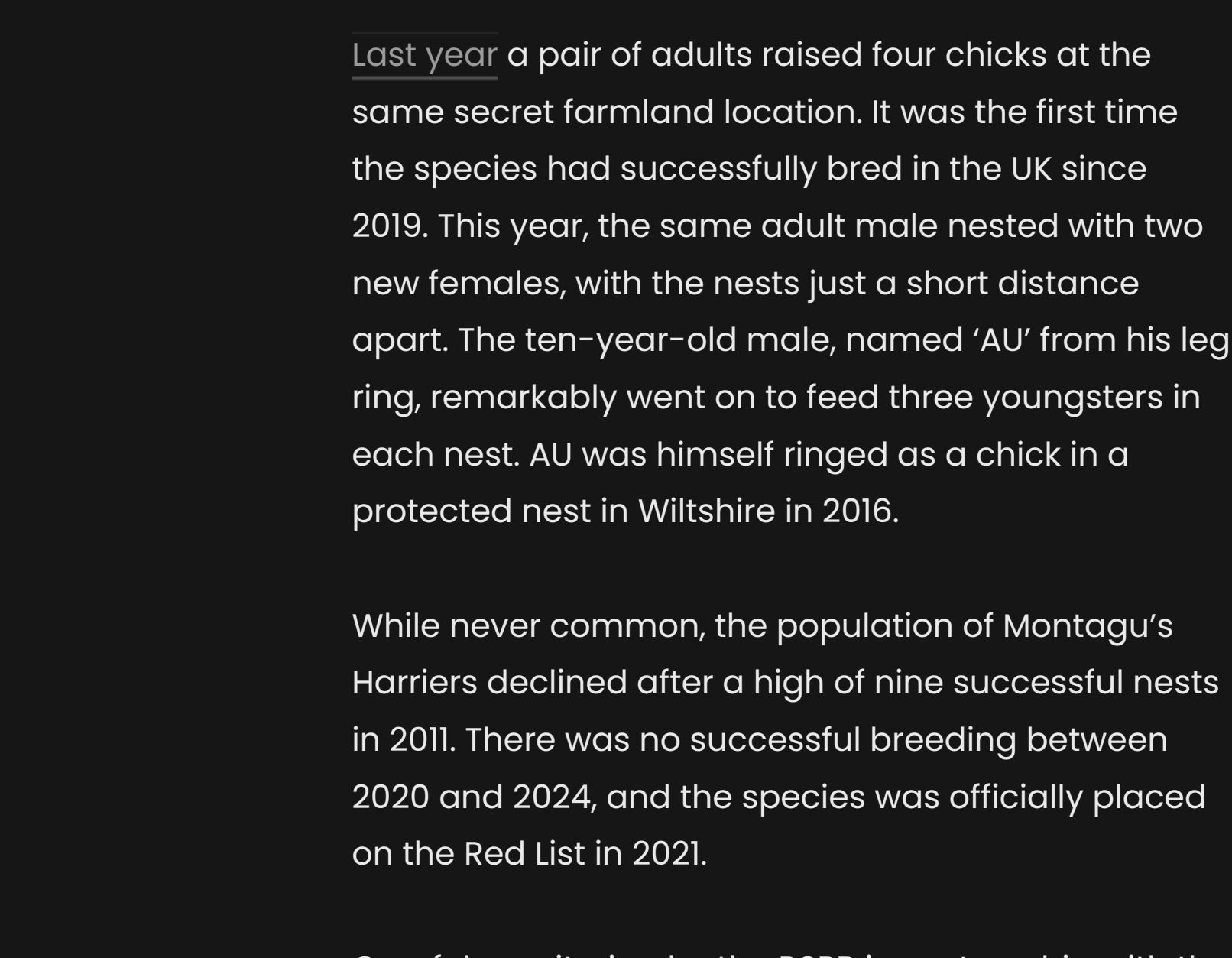
Montagu’s Harrier, UK’s rarest breeding raptor, nests successfully in England for second year in a row

RaptorPersecutionUK
August 24, 2026
News

Press release from RSPB (24 August 2026)

THE UK’S RAREST BREEDING BIRD RAISES CHICKS AT SECRET LOCATION FOR THE SECOND YEAR RUNNING

The UK’s rarest breeding bird of prey, the Montagu’s Harrier, has nested for the second year running this summer at a secret location in England, successfully raising six youngsters from two nests.



Male Montagu’s Harrier (photo by RSPB)

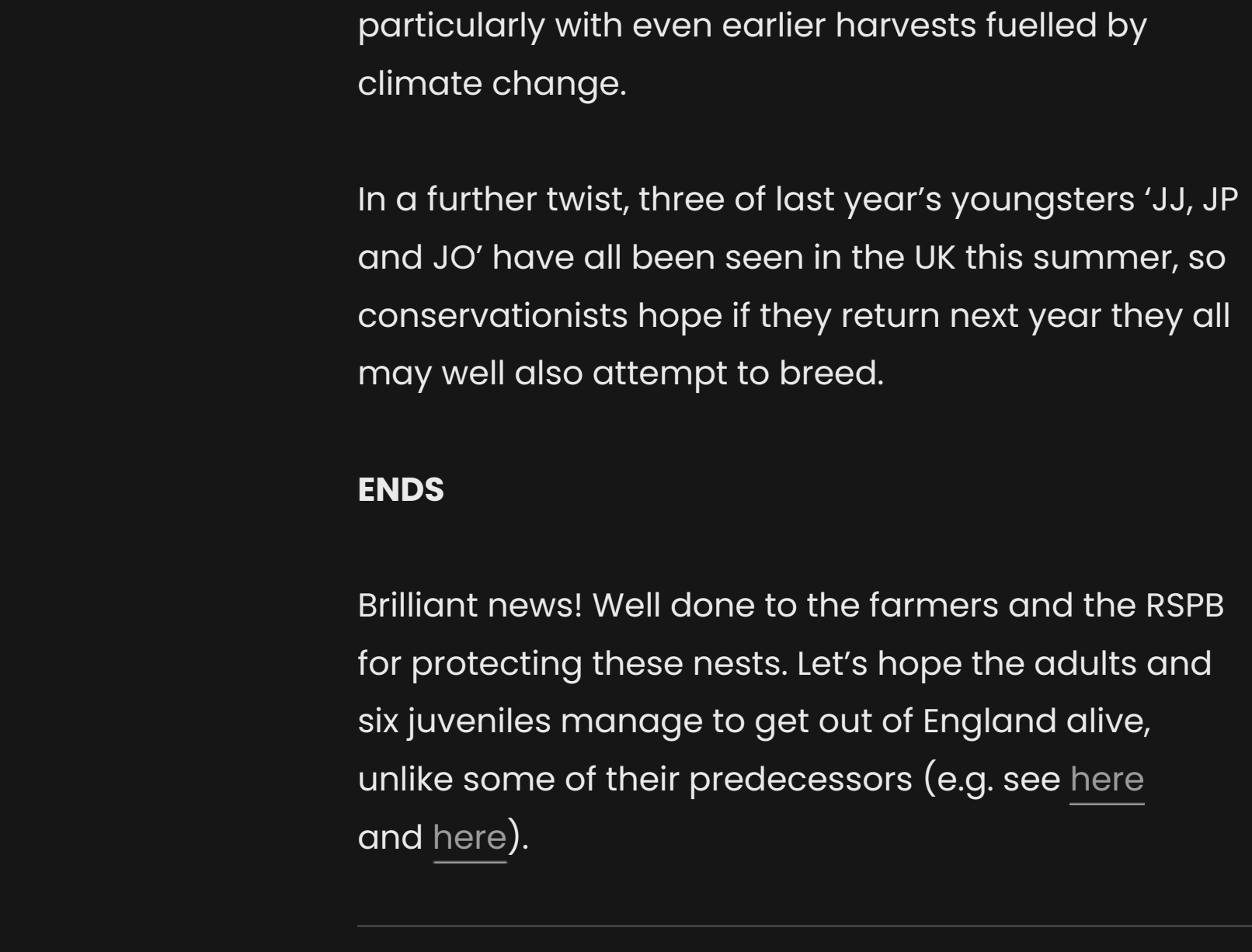
Last year a pair of adults raised four chicks at the same secret farmland location. It was the first time the species had successfully bred in the UK since 2019. This year, the same adult male nested with two new females, with the nests just a short distance apart. The ten-year-old male, named ‘AU’ from his leg ring, remarkably went on to feed three youngsters in each nest. AU was himself ringed as a chick in a protected nest in Wiltshire in 2016.

While never common, the population of Montagu’s Harriers declined after a high of nine successful nests in 2011. There was no successful breeding between 2020 and 2024, and the species was officially placed on the Red List in 2021.

Careful monitoring by the RSPB in partnership with the farmers meant this year’s nests were protected by fences to exclude ground predators and the chicks were all uniquely ringed in mid-July.

In what is a UK first, two of the juvenile females have been fitted with satellite tags. These £3,000 state-of-the-art lightweight tags will allow the RSPB to follow the birds daily on their 7,000-mile return journey to West Africa.

The RSPB is urging birders to look out for the other youngsters as they leave the country and to report any sightings by emailing the Montagu’s hotline: montys@rspb.org.uk



Three of this year’s six Montagu’s Harrier chicks being ringed (Photo by RSPB)

Mark Thomas, Montagu’s Harrier species lead at RSPB, said: “*We are doing our absolute utmost to save this iconic species in the UK and are delighted with six flying juveniles this year. The satellite-tagging of juveniles for the first ever time should give us a direct insight into their migration, survival and when and where they return to the UK. This has been a true team effort and we would like to thank the farmers, conservationists and our sponsors Mark and Mo Constantine.*

Paying tribute to the male bird AU, Mark added: “*AU is truly awesome, he is single handedly propping up this species in the UK with his amazing display flights in May being rewarded by attracting two new breeding females, seemingly out of thin air.*”

Montagu’s Harriers winter in Africa before returning to Europe to breed. They nest on the ground in agricultural fields, with their youngsters often still too young to fly at harvest time. As a result, nests are prone to unintentional destruction across their European range. Interventions by conservationists and partnerships with farmers are essential, particularly with even earlier harvests fuelled by climate change.

In a further twist, three of last year’s youngsters ‘JJ, JP and JO’ have all been seen in the UK this summer, so conservationists hope if they return next year they all may well also attempt to breed.

ENDS

Brilliant news! Well done to the farmers and the RSPB for protecting these nests. Let’s hope the adults and six juveniles manage to get out of England alive, unlike some of their predecessors (e.g. see [here](#) and [here](#)).

Share this:

- Facebook
- X
- Reddit
- LinkedIn
- Bluesky

7 thoughts on “Montagu’s Harrier, UK’s rarest breeding raptor, nests successfully in England for second year in a row”

Coop

August 24, 2026 at 7:02 am

Just watched the BBC news report this morning. The inclusion of a Red Kite in the accompanying image was particularly intriguing.

Reply

lesleymarian

August 24, 2026 at 7:33 am

Radio 4 reported the site was being kept totally secret because maybe hundreds of birdwatchers would turn up and disturb the birds.

I think we can imagine other dangers as well – as you implied, Ruth.

Reply

Country born and bred

August 24, 2026 at 7:07 am

Nice to have positive good news and protection for them and so it proves it can be done if the will and determination is there. Well done though RSPB and farmers.

Reply

2bluetails

August 24, 2026 at 10:02 am

Brilliant news, well done to all those involved and of course the harriers themselves. Seventy years ago therew were 40–50 pairs in the UK, here’s to getting there again.

Reply

Keith Dancey

August 24, 2026 at 12:48 pm

Well done to the farmers, the RSPB and Mark and Mo Constantine – whoever you are! A species being squeezed out by our ever-increasing human population and its incumbent intensification of agriculture.

I know which I prefer:-)

Reply

Andrew John Middleton

August 24, 2026 at 3:30 pm

Mark Constantine is the owner of LUSH, the cosmetics company and the Sound Approach publishing company.

A thoroughly good egg.

Reply

Mark Garner

August 24, 2026 at 4:42 pm

superb news used to enjoy visiting sites on the wash in lincs in july to see families on Montys in early 2000s best raptor in the world for me/just need to be careful of prince harry and his mates !!

Reply

Leave a comment

PREVIOUS
The ecological impacts of game shooting – Professor Dave Goulson

NEXT
Pressure building on Defra to consider gamebird shoot licensing in England

Search ...

FOLLOW BLOG

Enter your email address to follow this blog and receive notifications of new posts by email.

Email Address

Sign me up!

BLOG STATS

- 13,328,537 hits

CATEGORIES

- 1989 persecution incidents (1)
- 1990 persecution incidents (1)
- 1991 persecution incidents (2)
- 1992 persecution incidents (2)
- 1993 persecution incidents (2)
- 1996 persecution incidents (1)
- 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 (16)
- 2007 persecution incidents (14)
- 2008 persecution incidents (13)
- 2009 persecution incidents (50)
- 2010 persecution incidents (71)
- 2011 persecution incidents (61)
- 2012 persecution incidents (124)
- 2013 persecution incidents (147)
- 2014 persecution incidents (162)
- 2015 persecution incidents (106)
- 2016 persecution incidents (149)
- 2017 persecution incidents (146)
- 2018 persecution incidents (219)
- 2019 persecution incidents (221)
- 2020 persecution incidents (278)
- 2021 persecution incidents (235)
- 2022 persecution incidents (164)
- 2023 persecution incidents (148)
- 2024 persecution incidents (109)
- 2025 persecution incidents (77)
- 2026 persecution incidents (16)
- Henry the Hen Harrier (82)
- News (4,623)
- Opinion (328)
- Our satellite tagged golden eagles (18)
- Persecution Incidents in England (661)
- Persecution Incidents in Irish Republic (83)
- Persecution Incidents in Northern Ireland (63)
- Persecution Incidents in Wales (81)
- The Real Price of Grouse (8)

RECENT COMMENTS

- Keith Dancey on Pressure building on Defra to consider gamebird shoot licensing in England
- Pressure building on Defra to consider gamebird shoot licensing in England – Raptor Persecution UK on Government to consider licensing for all gamebird shooting & releases in England
- Mark Garner on Montagu’s Harrier, UK’s rarest breeding raptor, nests successfully in England for second year in a row
- Andrew John Middleton on Montagu’s Harrier, UK’s rarest breeding raptor, nests successfully in England for second year in a row
- Keith Dancey on Montagu’s Harrier, UK’s rarest breeding raptor, nests successfully in England for second year in a row

ARCHIVES

- August 2026 (16)
- July 2026 (11)
- June 2026 (17)
- May 2026 (16)
- April 2026 (16)
- 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)
- August 2024 (20)
- July 2024 (13)
- June 2024 (18)
- 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 (57)
- August 2023 (10)
- 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)
- October 2022 (22)
- September 2022 (14)
- August 2022 (33)
- July 2022 (21)
- June 2022 (26)
- May 2022 (32)
- April 2022 (26)
- March 2022 (34)
- February 2022 (28)
- January 2022 (31)
- December 2021 (22)
- November 2021 (27)
- October 2021 (29)
- September 2021 (24)
- August 2021 (26)
- July 2021 (21)
- June 2021 (16)
- May 2021 (35)
- April 2021 (41)
- March 2021 (38)
- February 2021 (42)
- January 2021 (36)
- December 2020 (33)
- November 2020 (48)
- October 2020 (28)
- September 2020 (41)
- August 2020 (50)
- July 2020 (40)
- June 2020 (38)
- May 2020 (35)
- April 2020 (27)
- March 2020 (30)
- February 2020 (21)
- January 2020 (22)
- December 2019 (34)
- November 2019 (21)
- October 2019 (30)
- September 2019 (23)
- August 2019 (31)
- July 2019 (30)
- June 2019 (30)
- May 2019 (30)
- April 2019 (30)
- March 2019 (42)
- February 2019 (23)
- January 2019 (25)
- December 2018 (23)
- November 2018 (25)
- October 2018 (22)
- September 2018 (13)
- August 2018 (35)
- July 2018 (26)
- June 2018 (13)
- May 2018 (31)
- April 2018 (37)
- March 2018 (31)
- February 2018 (26)
- January 2018 (28)
- December 2017 (31)
- November 2017 (38)
- October 2017 (28)
- September 2017 (26)
- August 2017 (28)
- July 2017 (29)
- June 2017 (30)
- May 2017 (37)
- April 2017 (27)
- March 2017 (31)
- February 2017 (30)
- January 2017 (37)
- December 2016 (25)
- November 2016 (28)
- October 2016 (23)
- September 2016 (30)
- August 2016 (29)
- July 2016 (27)
- June 2016 (31)
- May 2016 (30)
- April 2016 (26)
- March 2016 (23)
- February 2016 (15)
- January 2016 (10)
- December 2015 (12)
- November 2015 (23)
- October 2015 (17)
- September 2015 (16)
- August 2015 (22)
- July 2015 (37)
- June 2015 (37)
- May 2015 (33)
- April 2015 (27)
- March 2015 (26)
- February 2015 (19)
- January 2015 (23)
- December 2014 (22)
- November 2014 (23)
- October 2014 (40)
- September 2014 (15)
- August 2014 (19)
- July 2014 (10)
- June 2014 (14)
- May 2014 (23)
- April 2014 (33)
- March 2014 (25)
- February 2014 (18)
- January 2014 (21)
- December 2013 (20)
- November 2013 (15)
- October 2013 (16)
- September 2013 (19)
- August 2013 (22)
- July 2013 (32)
- June 2013 (12)
- May 2013 (18)
- April 2013 (18)
- March 2013 (23)
- February 2013 (22)
- January 2013 (24)
- December 2012 (21)
- November 2012 (20)
- October 2012 (32)
- September 2012 (18)
- August 2012 (27)
- July 2012 (23)
- June 2012 (20)
- May 2012 (26)
- April 2012 (17)
- March 2012 (27)
- February 2012 (28)
- January 2012 (13)
- December 2011 (20)
- November 2011 (26)
- October 2011 (11)
- September 2011 (20)
- August 2011 (18)
- July 2011 (19)
- June 2011 (16)
- 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)

OUR RECENT BLOG VISITORS

