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Hen Harriers in the UK: a tale of contrasting fortunes

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The Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* is a highly controversial species in the UK. The species was nearly extirpated in the UK in the early 20th century due to systematic persecution by gamekeepers, but managed to cling on as a breeding species on remote Scottish islands (such as the Orkney Islands) and successfully recolonized mainland Britain following World War II. Recently, however, the population has again started to decline in mainland Britain, and especially on managed grouse moors and has completely disappeared as a breeding species in England. In contrast, the population on the Orkney Islands showed a very large decline during the 1980s and early 1990s, but has subsequently bounced back to pre-decline levels. In this talk we will consider the mixed fortunes of the Hen Harrier in different parts of the country, look at the factors that have been driving changes in abundance and consider the lessons for raptor conservation.