Moorlands bird project flying high with national



Wildlife broadcaster Chris Packham (centre) joins volunteers and staff from the RSPB to celebrate National Lottery Award win

Wildlife TV star Chris Packham joined children in Bowland taking part in the RSPB's Skydancer project today – and surprised them with the news it had won a National Lottery Award.

Skydancer works with schools and local communities across the north of England to help save the hen harrier, England's most threatened breeding bird of prey.

The project has won the Education category in this year's National Lottery Awards, the annual search to find the UK's favourite Lottery-funded projects, after amassing 7,587 public votes.

Springwatch and former The Really Wild Show presenter Chris joined children on the United Utilities Bowland Estate for a moorland discovery tour, which aims to raise awareness of hen harriers and ways they can be preserved.

He said: "Saving hen harriers is a cause very close to my own heart and I'm delighted that Skydancer has won a National Lottery Award. Hen harriers are beautiful birds but not enough people have had the chance to see one.

“Today I had chance to visit one of only three hen harrier nests in the country and join in with the children as they learned all about the bird. It’s great to see young people enjoying learning about this important part of wildlife in their area and playing their part in safeguarding their environment.”

Blánaid Denman, who has run Skydancer since it began in 2011, said winning the award and being recognised nationally is an amazing achievement: “We are over the moon that so many people have voted for us. We are highlighting the plight of hen harriers in England and providing opportunities for young people to learn about the environment and wildlife in their local upland area at the same time. National Lottery players should be proud of the difference their money is making.”

The achievements of Skydancer will be celebrated at a special star-studded ceremony broadcast on BBC One on 19 September. The charity will also receive a £2,000 cash prize to spend on its project as well as a coveted National Lottery Awards trophy.

More about the Skydancer
Run by the RSPB, Skydancer is the first grassroots initiative to protect hen harriers in England. It was awarded £317,000 of National Lottery funding through the Heritage Lottery Fund. It is also funded by water company United Utilities and supported by the Forestry Commission. Focusing its work in three areas – the Forest of Bowland, Geltsdale in Cumbria, and North Tynedale in Northumberland, the project aims to inspire and teach people about hen harriers and preserve an important part of our wildlife. Skydancer has also engaged a network of volunteers, who not only help with the conservation effort, through nest protection, but feel the benefits of joining with others in a good cause.

More about the National Lottery Awards
National Lottery players raise over £33million a week and that money goes to support people and projects across the UK. The awards are a great way to show National Lottery players where their funding has gone and the life-changing difference playing the Lottery every week is making to communities across the UK. There are seven categories in the awards, reflecting the main areas of Lottery funding: arts, education, environment, health, heritage, sport, and voluntary/charity.

Further information

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