

Ian Miller and Peter McHugh – joint winners in 2015

Both men monitor raptors in the Lowther Hills of Dumfriesshire and Lanarkshire, especially around Sanquhar, Wanlockhead, Leadhills and Dursdeer villages – Ian for the past thirty years, and Peter over the last 15-20 years. Both men are local to the area and are well respected in their local communities.

They have continued to monitor in spite of extremely poor breeding success and appalling incidents of persecution, including numerous illegal poisonings, nest destruction, shot hen harriers, shot short-eared owl and even a shot golden eagle in 2012.

Ian and Peter followed their passion for birds of prey in the face of significant intimidation at times, including being followed home by gamekeepers, shadowed on the moor and being physically threatened. The information they have provided has helped to raise awareness of the problems faced by raptors in these areas and has resulted in various press and web reports that have drawn significant local community and wider public condemnation of raptor persecution.

The issues faced by raptors in such areas is recognised by the Scottish Government, who have recently strengthened legislation and who are determined to reduce this outdated and illegal practice. The information gathered by Ian and Peter is vital in helping to reduce raptor persecution in this way and they deserve great credit for their efforts and persistence over the years.