

HENHARRIER

circuscyaneus

FactFile

Length: 44cm –52cm

Wingspan: 100cm –120cm

Weight: 0.30kg –0.70kg

Habitat: Open lowlands including bogs, moors heaths & marshes but has also adapted to young conifer plantations. Mating follows spectacular display flights by the male and results in a clutch of up to 6 eggs. These take 5 weeks to incubate during which time the male passes food to his mate in mid -air. The young are independent at about 10 weeks.

During the breeding season Hen Harriers are concentrated in upland Scotland, Ireland and Wales but during the winter the population disperses to coastal regions including East Anglia and south -east England.

The difference in appearance between mature male and female birds is striking. The males being a soft dove -grey with white rumps and females having dark brown upper parts and yellow -brown underparts.



Along with many other British raptors, the Hen Harrier population has declined drastically, partly due to loss of its heath, moor and marshland habitat, but also as a result of persecution by gamekeepers. Although it responded well to protection and habitat changes, it is still under pressure from sporting interests who charge it with disturbing game birds (mainly grouse) and killing their young.

With a wingspan of over 1 metre and weighing up to 0.7kg the Hen Harrier hunts its prey (mainly small mammals and ground nesting birds) by low level systematic searching using its superb hearing, aided by an owl -like facial disk and uses all available cover to gain the advantage of surprise.



Persecuted sky -dancer.