

Marsh harrier chicks on camera in 2008

Intimate views of rare bird of prey and young in the nest



The marsh harrier was the star on the closed-circuit TV cameras at the Hawk and Owl Trust's Sculthorpe Moor Community Nature Reserve, north Norfolk. It has also been featured on BBC TV's Springwatch. [Click here](#) to see their first weeks from recorded webcam images.

Visitors to the reserve, just west of Fakenham, could view the private life of these rare birds of prey on the large plasma screen in the Visitor and Education Centre between 10am and 4pm, Tuesday to Sunday.

A specially sited 'nestcam', hidden in a log beside one of the harrier nests, relayed film to the centre and one of the hides. Visitors could watch the harrier chicks being fed by their attentive mother and view the intimate family life of these rare birds.

A competition was run to ask visitors to name the chicks and win a picture of the bird they named.

"This is a dream come true for the Hawk and Owl Trust," said reserve warden Nigel Middleton. "Marsh harriers are extremely wary birds and we were uncertain if the female would accept the small camera so close to her nest.

"We are delighted that she has and believe that this is a first for this particular species. We can now offer our visitors unique views of these spectacular birds."

Visitors could also watch the harriers for real from the raised hide that overlooks the restored reed bed where they nest. The two males regularly brought in food and nesting material for their partners. Male harriers can be bigamous, and one on the reserve has two females.

The marsh harrier has returned from the brink of extinction in Britain, and Norfolk is now its stronghold. It is protected by law, and so wildlife cameraman Martin Hayward Smith needed a special licence to place the camera close to the nest.

The camera system is part of the Trust's project to enhance the habitat and visitor facilities at Sculthorpe Moor Community Nature Reserve. Funding has come from a £494,500 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund with match funding from the European Union Objective 2 Programme and other supporters.

Photo © Martin Hayward Smith

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of the marsh harrier chicks in 2008

- [Latest webcam views](#)

of the reserve updated every minute

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