Mountain hares in the Cairngorms capture judges' imagination in wildlife photography awards

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The winners of the 2020 Julian Gardner Awards for nature and wildlife photography have been selected. Jenny Hibbert, who photographed two mountain hares in the Cairngorms, was the winner of the adult category. Sixteen-year-old Katy Read scooped the prize in the junior section with a close-up of a robin with its feathers fluffed up against the cold.

The Julian Gardner Awards are run by the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) and are open to amateur photographers. Entries should relate to the GWCT's research and advisory work, taking in all aspects of the UK countryside, including the people who live and work there, game, wildlife, habitats and landscape.

Jenny Hibbert said: "I am absolutely thrilled to win the competition." Talking about her winning photograph Jenny, from Port Talbot, said, "It was taken in the Cairngorms in February at around 10 am. It was a very cold day and extremely windy. It was hard going walking up the mountain: we would spot a hare but of course, it spotted us too and ran even higher. I started to think I wish I was photographing red squirrels instead of climbing the cold windy mountain. We eventually stopped and to our astonishment, the hare had run-up to another mountain hare, who certainly wasn't very happy to see it. The two hares boxed and our hare was chased off."

Responding to the news of her win in the junior section, Katy Read from Newcastle, said, "I'm delighted to have won! I took the picture on a crisp day at a local reserve. Robins are popular birds to photograph, but I hadn't seen one so fluffed-up against the cold before. I was very happy to get the focus and the framing just right."

Remarkably Katy also won the 2019 Julian Gardner Awards junior category, capturing a dunnock bathing in the rain.

"The standard of entries was extremely high and we struggled to pick a winner from such an outstanding pool of talent," commented James Swyer, GWCT press and publications manager and competition judge. "Jenny's hares captured the imagination of all the judges and won against some very stiff competition.

"As the winner of our junior competition for the second year running, Katy clearly has a bright future ahead of her. All the entries are anonymised for judging, so we had no idea until after we had picked the winner, that it was another entry from Katy," notes James.

The competition was launched seven years ago in memory of Julian Gardner, a Sussex farmer and lifelong supporter of the GWCT, who was tragically killed while defending his property in October 2010. A very kind donation from Julian's family and friends enabled the GWCT to buy the two trophies, which are presented to the winners to display for the next year. The adult winner's trophy is a sculpture of a hare, while the junior winner's trophy is of a leveret, both designed by Claire Abbatt. The winners also receive large prints of their winning photographs, as well as seeing them published in the GWCT's membership magazine, Gamewise.

The GWCT is now inviting entries for the 2021 Julian Gardner Awards. The competition closes on 30 June 2021 and you can enter at www.gwct.org.uk/photocompetition.

The competition is open to all amateur photographers to submit their photographs of all aspects of the UK countryside. There are an adult section and a junior section for those aged 16 and under. Full details and competition entry rules are available at https://www.gwct.org.uk/wildlife/julian-gardner-awards/

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