

Natural surprises and our National Parks

Description



Yesterday, running off Ill Bell on the Kentmere horseshoe my daughter glimpsed a raptor landing just to her left and stopped. I was 10m behind and would have missed it. A chance in a life time.

We watched the peregrine while it occasionally preened. It was unconcerned by our presence and I wondered at first if it was an escape but when we got closer we could see the downy feathers around its neck and concluded it was a juvenile. Unafraid of humans. When it did eventually move, one thrust and it was scything through the wind.

I had only once seen a peregrine as close but then only for an instant. Climbing a new route on Binnein Shuas with Doug Lang, we had passed an old nest and I was sitting on a ledge, feet dangling into the void, when a peregrine dived down the crag to take a closer look. For a fraction of a second it was within 5 foot of me, eyeball to eyeball. Yesterday's peregrine by comparison appeared completely disinterested, gifting us time to observe and marvel.

I would never have anticipated having such an encounter on a popular route in the sheep wrecked Lake District National Park but then nature is like that, it surprises. If our uplands weren't so overgrazed and burnt there would be more birds, more food and experiences like this with raptors would be more common. At present there is no more likelihood of having an encounter such as this in a National Park as opposed to elsewhere – indeed probably less in some due to persecution – but it shouldn't be like that. National Parks, whether in Scotland or England, should be wilder, better places for nature and for enabling people to have those once in a life-time experiences.

Category

1. National Parks

Tags

1. conservation
2. vision for National Parks

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Author

nickkempe