

## NIRSG Conference 2025 – Meet the Speakers

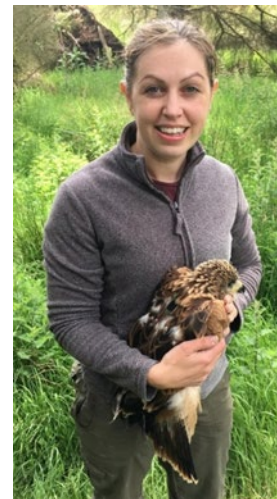
### Dr Marc Ruddock

Marc is a raptor biologist who was born in Zimbabwe and grew up in South Africa. A childhood spent on the African continent ignited his passion for wildlife and especially birds of prey. He returned to Northern Ireland where his parents originated from for his secondary education and tertiary education. Marc holds an honours degree in Zoology and a PhD from Queen's University Belfast. His PhD involved research into peregrine falcons in Northern Ireland and the conflicts with sporting interests. Marc has since his PhD worked as a consultant and ecologist in the private sector and for the Golden Eagle Trust in Ireland where he has worked on the reintroduction of red kites and the restoration and conservation of protected species and habitats. Marc has worked on numerous national surveys, including hen harrier, peregrine, red kite and merlin, and has been responsible for developing bird disturbance and windfarm ornithology guidance for a range of raptors, waders, owls and waterfowl for NIEA, SNH and NPWS. Marc is a volunteer Trustee for the NIRSG and is the Raptor Monitoring Officer for the group and helps with project management, governance, funding and research within the NIRSG.



### Dr Eimear Rooney

Eimear is an ornithologist and has been Raptor Officer with the Northern Ireland Raptor Study Group for 12 years. She completed her PhD research in Raptor Ecology, focussed on the ecology of the Buzzard in Northern Ireland, and has an MSc in Ecological management and Conservation Biology. Through her work Eimear aims to raise awareness about the threats faced by raptors and inspire public involvement in safeguarding their future. Eimear has been heavily involved in Red Kite research and carries out wing-tagging, satellite tagging and monitoring of the species in Northern Ireland. Eimear also represents the NIRSG in the Partnership for Action against Wildlife Crime (PAW NI), helping raise awareness of, detecting, understanding and preventing, raptor persecution. She is involved in advocating for stronger conservation measures to protect raptors.



### Dr Ruth Tingay

Ruth is a conservationist, researcher and campaigner based in the UK. She has over 30 years fieldwork experience studying raptors in the US, Mexico, Israel, Madagascar, Cambodia, Mongolia and Scotland and was awarded her PhD at Nottingham University for research on the critically endangered Madagascar Fish Eagle. She is a former Director and Past President of the Raptor Research Foundation and is a member of the IUCN Species Survival Commission Expert Network. She serves on the Management Committee of the Scottish Raptor Study Group and is involved in research on satellite-tagged Golden and White-tailed Eagles in Scotland. Since 2010 Ruth has authored the influential Raptor Persecution UK blog and in 2018 with colleagues Chris Packham and Mark Avery she co-founded Wild Justice, a non-profit conservation campaign group that specialises in taking legal action against UK Governments and public agencies to get a better deal for wildlife.



## Gavin Ross

Gavin is a Police Constable with 26 years' service presently seconded from Police Scotland to the National Wildlife Crime Unit. He has worked mostly in uniform in various stations in Edinburgh and East Lothian.

Thanks to his interest and knowledge of the natural world he was appointed to the part time role of wildlife crime officer whilst still in his probation and held the role as an extra to his day job was until four years ago when he became the Scottish Investigative Support Officer in the NWCU.

Gavin retains a foothold in "normal" policing regularly doing on-call work as a hostage and crisis negotiator. Out with work he spends as much time as possible outdoors walking dogs, birdwatching, chopping firewood, sea kayaking, and cooking on his BBQ or pizza oven.



## Jim Wells

Jim Wells is a founder member of the Northern Ireland Raptor Study Group has been studying the status and breeding success of the Peregrine Falcon for 48 years. He has concentrated his fieldwork in Fermanagh, Antrim, the Mournes and East and North Londonderry and has worked closely with Cliff Dawson who covers the Sperrins and all of County Armagh.

Incredibly Jim has amassed many thousands of breeding records of the peregrine falcon in Northern Ireland and has documented the population dynamics of this species nationally for nearly half a century.



## Dr Shane McPherson

Since 2012, Shane McPherson has been on a quest to understand the remarkable lives of one of the world's most powerful eagles, the Crowned Eagle. His study has revealed the surprising success of eagles in the sprawling metropolis of Durban, despite being endangered and in decline elsewhere. Here, these eagles' greatest threat is public relations, especially when pets become prey. The Crowned Eagles' newest research focus is to combine tracking data with nest camera photos of prey to reveal their hunting behaviour and to better understand wildlife conflict. Through this scientific study, and storytelling to the public, the Crowned Eagles are becoming ever more appreciated and set up to thrive in the Durban suburbs.

Shane is an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and the other half of the year, a Research Technician at the Konrad Lorenz Research Centre in Austria. His enthusiasm for high-tech solutions and combining technologies includes, for instance, piloting drones for raptor nest surveys, radio-tracking, and predator exposure experiments.



## David Anderson

David Anderson is a seasoned researcher and field worker specializing in raptors including Goshawk, Osprey, Tawny Owl, Buzzard and particularly the Golden Eagle. His passion for birds of prey ignited during his youth, with a memorable encounter at Edinburgh Zoo, where he marvelled at two captive eagles. This fascination deepened during a field trip to Benmore Field Centre in Cowal, Argyll, at the age of 14. There, he witnessed a wild Golden Eagle in pursuit of ptarmigan, an experience that left an indelible mark on him. In the mid-1980s, David relocated to Cowal as a researcher with the Forestry Commission. His dedication led him to discover and monitor the nest of the same eagle pair he had observed years earlier, a commitment he has maintained annually.



For over 40 years David has worked at the forefront of bird of prey conservation in Scotland, pioneering new methods to study raptors and contributing significantly to their research and protection. His outstanding field skills, determination and unwavering dedication have led to David becoming a cornerstone in the field of raptor research and conservation in Scotland. David is an active member of the Scottish Raptor Study Group (SRSG) and plays a pivotal role in many raptor conservation projects both in Scotland and internationally. His contribution to numerous television productions including Landward, Springwatch and Winterwatch has brought raptor conservation to millions and his demonstration of satellite tracking and use of trail cameras has given the public a unique insight into the lives of raptors.

## Dr Petra Sumasgutner

Assoc.-Prof. Dr. Petra Sumasgutner of the Konrad Lorenz Research Center, University of Vienna, has been applying biologging methods for 15 years, in several avian systems ranging from raptors and owls to passerines. In her research she combines GPS with other sensors to quantify behaviours and energy expenditures across landscapes and life stages, integrating cutting-edge methods to answer ecological questions.

Hailing from a remote village in the Austrian Alps, Petra's passion for wildlife and biodiversity led her to explore the rainforests of Costa Rica, the remote islands of Indonesia, and SCUBA-based projects in the Red Sea. Her academic journey began with the Viennese Kestrel Project, which she initiated and developed into her PhD project, funded by the Austrian Academy of Science. Following her doctorate at the University of Vienna in 2014, Petra pursued diverse postdoctoral projects, including research in Northern Finland on the impacts of agricultural intensification on Eurasian Kestrels and in Southern Africa, where she co-founded the Urban Raptor Research Group at the FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology with Arjun Amar. Petra's research often stems from her fieldwork observations, blending practical insights with innovative methodologies to address pressing conservation challenges.



## Dr Allan Mee

Allan has a broad range of interests in ecology, from endangered species conservation to the current biodiversity and climate crisis facing the planet. He has worked as a professional ornithologist for the last 40 years and has travelled widely including zoological expeditions to Seychelles, Guyana, Bolivia and Peru.

Allan studied zoology at Glasgow University in the 1990s and completed his PhD at the Univ. of Sheffield before going on to take up a fellowship at the Zoological Society of San Diego focussed on the conservation of the critically endangered California Condor, the largest flying bird in North America.


After 5 years in California Allan returned to Ireland in 2007 to manage the reintroduction of White-tailed Eagles to Ireland. In recent years he has also carried out contracts for National Parks & Wildlife Service surveying threatened bird species such as Ring Ouzel and Hen Harrier.



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