

# H IS FOR HAWK BY HELEN MACDONALD NAMED 2014 COSTA BOOK OF THE YEAR

**London, 20.30pm 27th January 2015:** *H is for Hawk* by writer, poet and historian Helen Macdonald has beaten bookies' favourite, *How to be both* by Ali Smith, to win the title of 2014 Costa Book of the Year. *H is for Hawk*, part memoir and part nature book, is the author's personal account of training a goshawk as a way of dealing with grief following her father's death.

The announcement was made this evening (Tuesday 27th January) at an awards ceremony held at Quaglino's in central London.

The 2014 Costa Short Story Award, judged separately from the main prize, was won by writer Zoe Gilbert.

Macdonald beat novelist and bookmakers' favourite, Ali Smith, for *How to be both*, debut writer Emma Healey for *Elizabeth is Missing*, poet Jonathan Edwards for *My Family and Other Superheroes* and author and journalist, Kate Saunders, for *Five Children on the Western Front*, to win the overall prize and a cheque for £30,000 at the awards ceremony.

Following the judging, Robert Harris, chair of the final judges, said: "All of the judges felt passionately about this book and its wonderful, muscular, chiselled prose."

He continued, "This is a clever, accomplished piece of writing that everyone will enjoy. It melds a memoir about grief, a biography of TH White and is a wonderful evocation of nature and training a hawk. It's unique, unforgettable, haunting and a natural book to win this prize."

Harris chaired a final judging panel that included actresses Dame Diana Rigg and Samantha Bond, BBC Economics Editor Robert Peston, authors Maggie O'Farrell, Bernardine Evaristo and Jonathan Stroud, writer and poet Owen Sheers and author and journalist Wendy Moore.

*H is for Hawk*, published by Jonathan Cape, is the sixth biography to take the overall prize and the first in ten years. Hilary Spurling was the last author to win the Book of the Year with a biography in 2005 for *Matisse: the Master*.

*H is for Hawk* most recently won the Samuel Johnson Prize for Non-Fiction in November 2014.

The Costa Book Awards is the only major UK book prize that is open solely to authors resident in the UK and Ireland and also, uniquely, recognises the most enjoyable books across five categories – First Novel, Novel, Biography, Poetry and Children’s Book - published in the last year.

Originally established in 1971 by Whitbread Plc, Costa announced its takeover of the sponsorship of the UK’s most prestigious book prize in 2006. 2014 marks the 43rd year of the Book Awards.

Since the introduction of the Book of the Year award in 1985, it has been won eleven times by a novel, six times by a first novel, six times by a biography, five times by a collection of poetry and once by a children’s book.

*The Shock of the Fall* by debut novelist and mental health nurse Nathan Filer was named Costa Book of the Year in 2013.

#### **Zoe Gilbert wins 2014 Costa Short Story Award**

The Costa Book Awards ceremony also saw the announcement of the winner of the Costa Short Story Award. Writer Zoe Gilbert from Sydenham Hill, south-east London won the public vote to win £3,500 for her story, *Fishskin, Hareskin*. Two runners-up, part-time dentist and writer Paula Cunningham and writer Joanne Meek, received £1,500 and £500 respectively.

Established in 2012, the new Award - run in association with the Costa Book Awards but judged independently of the main five-category system – is unique in that it was judged anonymously (ie without the name of the author being known throughout the process). It is for a single, previously unpublished short story of up to 4,000 words written in English by an author aged 18 years or over, and is open to both published and unpublished writers.

A shortlist of six stories was selected by a panel of judges - Victoria Hislop, Patrick Gale, Richard Beard, Fanny Blake and Simon Trewin - and then made available on the Costa Book Awards website for the public to download and vote for their favourite. Costa Managing Director, Christopher Rogers, announced the winner and runners-up and presented them with their cheques.

For more information please visit [www.costabookawards.com](http://www.costabookawards.com).

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**For further press information or to arrange an interview with Helen Macdonald, please contact:**

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**Notes for Editors:**

**About the Costa Book Awards:**

- The Costa Book Awards, formerly the Whitbread Book Awards, were established in 1971 to encourage, promote and celebrate the best contemporary British writing.
- The total prize fund for the Costa Book Awards – including the Costa Short Story Award - stands at £60,000.
- The award winners from the five categories - Novel, First Novel, Biography, Poetry and Children's Book - each receive £5,000.
- The overall Costa Book of the Year is selected from the five category Award winners with the winner receiving a further £30,000.
- The winner will be announced at an awards ceremony in central London on 27th January, 2015.
- To be eligible for the 2014 awards, books must have been first published in the UK or Ireland between 1 November 2013 and 31 October 2014.
- The 2013 Costa Book of the Year was *The Shock of the Fall* by Nathan Filer (Borough Press).

**About the Costa Short Story Award:**

- The Costa Short Story Award was launched in 2012.
- The Costa Short Story Award is for a single, previously unpublished short story of up to 4,000 words by an author aged 18 years or over and written in English.
- The author's primary residence must have been the UK or Ireland for the past three years.
- The Award runs in association with the Costa Book Awards but is judged independently of the main five-category system.
- Entrants need not have been previously published but publishers and agents may submit entries on behalf of authors.
- The winner of the 2013 Costa Short Story Award was *The Keeper of the Jackalopes* by Angela Readman.

**About Costa:**

Costa is the UK's favourite coffee shop, having been awarded "Best Branded Coffee Shop Chain in the UK and Ireland" by Allegra Strategies for five years running (2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 & November 2014).

Winner of "Best Branded Coffee Chain in Europe" Allegra Strategies 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014.

With over 1,800 coffee shops in the UK and more than 1,100 overseas, Costa is the fastest growing coffee shop business in the UK and the second largest coffee shop operator in the world. Founded in London by Italian brothers Sergio and Bruno Costa in 1971, Costa has become the UK's favourite coffee shop chain and diversified into both the at-home and gourmet self-serve markets.

Costa employs over 12,000 people and is creating around 1,500 jobs this year and over 4,500 jobs in the next three years in the UK

Costa is committed to looking after coffee-growers. That's why we've established The Costa Foundation, a registered charity. The Costa Foundation's aims are to relieve poverty, advance education and the health and environment of coffee-growing communities around the world. So far, The Costa Foundation has funded the building of 42 schools and improved the social and economic welfare of coffee-growing communities.

## Further Background

### **H is for Hawk by Helen Macdonald**

*Jonathan Cape*

#### **About the book:**

From the age of seven, Helen Macdonald was determined to become a falconer. She learned the arcane terminology and read all the classic books, including TH White's tortured masterpiece, *The Goshawk*, which describes White's struggle to train a hawk as a spiritual contest. When her father dies and she is knocked sideways by grief, she becomes obsessed with the idea of training her own goshawk. She buys Mabel for £800 on a Scottish quayside and takes her home to Cambridge. Then she fills the freezer with hawk food and unplugs the phone, ready to embark on the long, strange business of trying to train this wildest of animals.

#### **About the author:**

Helen Macdonald is a writer, poet, illustrator, historian and affiliate at the Department of History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Cambridge. Her books include *Falcon* (2006) and *Shaler's Fish* (2001). *H is for Hawk* won the 2014 Samuel Johnson Prize for Non-Fiction.

#### **What the judges said:**

"A unique and beautiful book with a searing emotional honesty, and descriptive language that is unparalleled in modern literature."

#### **Judges:**

Paul Laity	<i>Non-Fiction Books Editor, The Guardian</i>
Wendy Moore	<i>Author and Freelance Journalist</i>
Sheila O'Reilly	<i>Owner, Dulwich Books</i>

#### **Shortlist, selected from a total of 111 entries:**

John Campbell	<i>Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life</i>	Jonathan Cape
Marion Coutts	<i>The Iceberg: A Memoir</i>	Atlantic Books
Henry Marsh	<i>Do No Harm: Stories of Life, Death and Brain Surgery</i>	Weidenfeld and Nicolson

#### **Previous Biography Award winners include:**

Lucy Hughes-Hallett	<i>The Pike</i>	2013
Mary and Bryan Talbot	<i>The Dotter of Her Father's Eyes</i>	2012

Matthew Hollis	<i>Now All Roads Lead to France: The Last Year's of Edward Thomas</i>	2011
Edmund de Waal	<i>The Hare with Amber Eyes</i>	2010
Graham Farmelo	<i>The Strangest Man</i>	2009
Diana Athill	<i>Somewhere Towards the End</i>	2008
Simon Sebag Montefiore	<i>Young Stalin</i>	2007
Brian Thompson	<i>Keeping Mum</i>	2006
Hilary Spurling	<i>Matisse: the Master</i>	2005
John Guy	<i>My Heart is My Own: The Life of Mary Queen of Scots</i>	2004
DJ Taylor	<i>Orwell: The Life</i>	2003

## Previous Books of the Year

2013	<i>The Shock of the Fall</i>	Nathan Filer	First Novel
2012	<i>Bring Up the Bodies</i>	Hilary Mantel	Novel
2011	<i>Pure</i>	Andrew Miller	Novel
2010	<i>Of Mutability</i>	Jo Shapcott	Poetry
2009	<i>A Scattering</i>	Christopher Reid	Poetry
2008	<i>The Secret Scripture</i>	Sebastian Barry	Novel
2007	<i>Day</i>	A.L. Kennedy	Novel
2006	<i>The Tenderness of Wolves</i>	Stef Penney	First Novel
2005	<i>Matisse: the Master</i>	Hilary Spurling	Biography
2004	<i>Small Island</i>	Andrea Levy	Novel
2003	<i>The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time</i>	Mark Haddon	Novel
2002	<i>Samuel Pepys: The Unequalled Self</i>	Claire Tomalin	Biography
2001	<i>The Amber Spyglass</i>	Philip Pullman	Children's Book
2000	<i>English Passengers</i>	Matthew Kneale	Novel
1999	<i>Beowulf</i>	Seamus Heaney	Poetry
1998	<i>Birthday Letters</i>	Ted Hughes	Poetry
1997	<i>Tales from Ovid</i>	Ted Hughes	Poetry
1996	<i>The Spirit Level</i>	Seamus Heaney	Poetry
1995	<i>Behind the Scenes at the Museum</i>	Kate Atkinson	First Novel
1994	<i>Felicia's Journey</i>	William Trevor	Novel
1993	<i>Theory of War</i>	Joan Brady	Novel
1992	<i>Swing Hammer Swing!</i>	Jeff Torrington	First Novel
1991	<i>A Life of Picasso</i>	John Richardson	Biography
1990	<i>Hopeful Monsters</i>	Nicholas Mosley	Novel
1989	<i>Coleridge: Early Visions</i>	Richard Holmes	Biography
1988	<i>The Comforts of Madness</i>	Paul Sayer	First Novel
1987	<i>Under the Eye of the Clock</i>	Christopher Nolan	Biography
1986	<i>An Artist of the Floating World</i>	Kazuo Ishiguro	Novel
1985	<i>Elegies</i>	Douglas Dunn	Poetry

**Zoe Gilbert – Winner of the Costa Short Story Award 2014  
for *Fishskin, Hareskin***

**About the story:**

Ervet tries to escape her new life as a fishwife by returning to her past and its lost comforts.

**About the author:**

Zoe Gilbert's short stories have appeared in anthologies and journals in the UK and internationally. Her work has won prizes from Cinnamon Press, Lightship and the British Fantasy Society amongst others, and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. She is currently working on her first folklore-inspired collection of stories, which will form part of her PhD on the short story at the University of Chichester. She lives in London, where she runs a writers' critique group and co-hosts the Word Factory short story club.

[www.costabookawards.com](http://www.costabookawards.com)