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## ***H Is for Hawk: A New Chapter*** ***Panelist Biographies***

### **Mike Birkhead** Producer & Director

Mike Birkhead is a natural history filmmaker with his own production company, Mike Birkhead Associates, based in the County of Berkshire, west of London. He went independent in the late 1980s and has made many award-winning films and series, including those for *Nature* such as: *Eagles of Mull*, *Echo: An Elephant to Remember*, *Siberian Tiger Quest*, and *Big Birds Can't Fly*. His film *The Egg (w.t.)* is scheduled to air in *Nature*'s 2018-19 season.

A self-described “failed professional footballer,” Birkhead credits his academic brother’s discipline and passion for natural history with the discovery of his own love for the natural world. After gaining a doctorate and spending two years at post-doctoral work in the department of zoology at the University of Oxford, he joined London Weekend Television (LWT) in 1984. Looking back at that time, Birkhead calls his career move “pure good fortune as LWT encouraged entrepreneurship and independence.” He worked in the current affairs and features department for five years on a variety of programs, including live entertainment programs, commercials for the community unit, and game shows.

He then left to set up his own company while at the same time making wildlife films for the highly regarded Partridge Films, which was led by the “brilliant and esoteric” Michael Rosenberg. Thirty years later, Birkhead says he does not regret failing to play for Leeds United and realizes how much serendipity is involved in a career in independent filmmaking.

## **Helen Macdonald**

### Author & Presenter

Poet, illustrator, historian, and naturalist, Helen Macdonald is the author of three books, including the 2014 memoir *H Is for Hawk* – a collage of autobiography, natural history, literary biography, and philosophical reflection. The book was an international best-seller, a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award and won two of Britain's most prestigious awards for nonfiction: the Samuel Johnson Prize and the Costa Book Award. Macdonald describes the year spent training a notoriously difficult-to-tame species of raptor, a Northern Goshawk, as she mourned the unexpected death of her photographer father. *H Is for Hawk* has been translated into 24 languages and published in 27 territories. Her earlier books were a collection of poems, *Shaler's Fish*, and a cultural history, *Falcon*.

An affiliated research scholar in Cambridge University's history and philosophy of science department, Macdonald writes and narrates radio programs and appeared in the 2010 BBC documentary series *Birds Britannia*. She wrote the script for filmmaker Sarah Wood's MURMURATION X 10, which premiered at the Brighton Festival in 2015. Macdonald has also worked as a professional falconer and assisted with the management of raptor research and conservation projects across Eurasia.

## **Fred Kaufman**

### Executive Producer, *Nature*

For more than 25 years, Fred Kaufman has been a leading executive in the natural history genre. As the executive producer of the acclaimed PBS *Nature* series, Kaufman has won seven Emmys and two Peabody Awards. He has been with *Nature* since its beginning in 1982 and has overseen it since 1991. During his tenure, *Nature* has been honored with hundreds of industry awards. In 2012, Kaufman was named the recipient of the International Wildlife Film Festival's Lifetime Achievement Award for Media. In 2010, he accepted the Outstanding Achievement Award from the prestigious Wildscreen Film Festival in Bristol, England. It was the first time in the 20-year history of the festival that the award was presented to an American wildlife series. In 2009, Kaufman executive produced *The Legend of Pale Male*, an award-winning feature documentary that chronicled the legendary hawk that nested on a Fifth Avenue building in New York City and the life-changing events that followed.

Many of *Nature*'s most memorable presentations have been produced under Kaufman's stewardship, including *Bears of the Last Frontier*; *Christmas in Yellowstone*; *Deep Jungle*; *AFRICA*; *Hummingbirds: Magic in the Air*; *Dogs That Changed the World*; *My Life as a Turkey*; *Inside the Animal Mind*; *Echo: An Elephant to Remember*; *An Original DUCKumentary*; and *Cloud: Wild Stallion of the Rockies*.

In 2006, Kaufman won a George Foster Peabody Award for *The Queen of Trees*, a high-definition portrait of the relationship between the tiny fig wasp and the giant fig tree. In 2008, Kaufman won a second Peabody Award for *Silence of the Bees*, which looked at the global crisis of the disappearing honeybees.

In 2007, he wrote and co-produced *The Best of Nature: 25 Years*, a successful fundraising show for PBS that looked back at the highlights of the series' first 25 years. In 2002, he created and executive produced an urban wildlife series for kids called *Wild TV*. Then in 1994, he executive produced *In the Wild*, a series of wildlife specials featuring celebrities. Memorable shows from that series included *Dolphins With Robin Williams*, *In the Lion's Den With Anthony Hopkins*, *Elephants With Goldie Hawn* and *Orangutans With Julia Roberts*, which won a Genesis Award for best PBS documentary.

Kaufman is a member of the Director's Guild of America and the Writer's Guild of America. He is the vice chairman of the Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival. He appears regularly on public television pledge drives as a spokesman for quality natural history television.