



# HIGHLAND BOOK PRIZE DUAIS LEABHAIR NA Gàidhealtachd

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## ANNOUNCING THE LONGLIST FOR THE 2020 HIGHLAND BOOK PRIZE

13 diverse titles make up the longlist for the Highlands' only annual book prize -

PRIZE ORGANISERS are delighted to announce that the 13 books that have been selected for the 2020 Highland Book Prize Longlist are:

*The Nature of Summer* by Jim Crumley, published by Saraband (nature and environment).

*Cottongrass Summer* by Roy Dennis, published by Saraband (nature and conservation).

*The Good Hawk* by Joseph Elliott, published by Walker Books (young adult fiction).

*The Lost Lights of St Kilda* by Elisabeth Gifford, published by Atlantic Books (fiction).

*Plague Clothes* by Robert Alan Jamieson, published by Taproot Press (poetry).

*To The Lake* by Kapka Kassabova, published by Granta (memoir, reportage, travel).

*Nàdar De | Some Kind Of* by Pàdraig MacAoidh | Peter Mackay, published by Acair Books (poetry, Gaelic and English).

*In Search of Angels* by Alistair Moffat, published by Birlinn (travel and spirituality).

*An Archive of Happiness* by Elizabeth K Reeder, published by Pinned in the Margins (fiction).

*The Changing Outer Hebrides: Galson and the Meaning of Place* by Frank Rennie, published by Acair Books (history and nature).

*Grimoire* by Robin Robertson, published by Picador, Pan Macmillan (poetry).

*Summer* by Ali Smith, published by Hamish Hamilton (fiction).

*Pine* by Francine Toon, published by Transworld Publishers (fiction).

The Highland Book Prize was established in 2017 to help celebrate the finest work that recognises the rich culture, heritage and landscape of the Highlands. The Prize aims to showcase the literary talent of the region and to raise the profile of work created in or about the Highlands. Presented by the Highland Society of London, The Highland Book Prize is facilitated by Moniack Mhor Writers' Centre in partnership with the Ullapool Book Festival. The William Grant Foundation provides funding to encourage public engagement with the Highland Book Prize.



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The first round of judging was completed in October by a panel of 145 volunteer readers. The panel of industry professionals and avid readers from the Highlands and further afield was tasked with reading and reviewing 52 entries from over 30 publishers. Readers spent the summer immersed in fiction, poetry, memoir, history, nature, crime, young adult and Gaelic titles. With such an abundance of high-quality entries, the panel and prize organisers have had a tough job in refining the list down to 13 books representing the best books with a Highland connection published in 2020. Thanks to everyone who contributed to finalising the 2020 longlist.

Rachel Humphries, Director of Moniak Mhor Writers' Centre, commented:

“It has been a pleasure to host this prize since 2017, watching it gain support year on year. Our centre has been closed for six months, fracturing our relationship with writers and the ability to support the Scottish writing community. More than ever, this prize is important. It allows us to celebrate literature and place, something that unites many of us. When movement is becoming more and more restricted, we travel through these books to the Highlands, glimpsing a snapshot through the writers' eyes. Seven of the longlist titles are by authors born or living in the Highlands, demonstrating the stellar literary talent in or from the region. I am delighted that we have Peter Mackay's collection *Nàdar de*, the first Gaelic title to be longlisted, and that previous winners, Kapka Kassabova and Ali Smith are represented. The latter book 'Summer' by Inverness born, Ali Smith is joined by 'Plague Clothes' by Shetlander, Robert Alan Jamieson, in exploration of the collective impact of covid-19, amongst other current pertinent themes. We recruited the help of a young adult reading panel this year and I'm delighted to see that their work has promoted the *Good Hawk* by Joseph Elliot into the longlist.

We are also delighted to announce that from late November onwards, the Highland Book Prize and Moniak Mhor will be delivering a programme of digital events including talks and workshops with longlisted writers to connect people with their work. I am excited to see the shortlist in February and to find out which book will win the accolade of the 2020 Highland Book Prize later in the year”.



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The second round of judging to determine the shortlist will be undertaken by a panel of expert judges including novelist and poet Kevin MacNeil; poet Jen Hadfield; Mark Wringe, senior lecturer in Gaelic Language and Culture at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, and panel chair Alex Ogilvie of the Highland Society of London.

Judge Mark Wringe commented: “Scotland has long looked to the Highlands for essential images of itself to project to the world, and yet at the same time it tends to think diversity lives elsewhere. Those who think that should take a look at this long list, and see they are right on the first point, and completely wrong on the second. From internationally acclaimed writers to new names, from major publishers to smaller feisty ones, with fiction, non-fiction and poetry - in more than one language - Highland readers have chosen a hugely varied long list of new writing, by writers who come from, choose to live in, or write about the Highlands and Islands. Even getting that down to a short list is going to be a fascinating task for the judges, but an inspiring one”.

The judges will announce the shortlist in March of 2021, with the winner being revealed on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 2021 at an event hosted by the Ullapool Book Festival, the Highland Society of London and Moniack Mhor Writers’ Centre. The winning entry for the best work published in 2020 will receive a cash prize of £1000 and a place on a writing retreat at Moniack Mhor.

**For further information please contact Mirren Rosie, Coordinator of the Highland Book Prize.**

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**High Resolution images and a summary of each book are available on request.**

**ENDS**

### NOTES TO EDITORS

Moniack Mhor is Scotland’s National Writing Centre. Based in the Scottish Highlands, it offers a wide writer development programme including residential courses in a range of genres, tutored by some of the finest authors in the UK and beyond. Other support offered by Moniack Mhor includes retreats, professional residencies, workshops and bursaries, enhancing access by assisting with course fees. The centre also runs a programme for young writers. It is a charitable organisation and supported by Creative Scotland as a Regular Funded Organisation.

[www.moniackmhor.org.uk](http://www.moniackmhor.org.uk)



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The Highland Society of London is a charity which exists to promote and support the traditions and culture of the Highlands of Scotland. [www.highlandsocietyoflondon.org](http://www.highlandsocietyoflondon.org)

The first Ullapool Book Festival was held in May 2005. It was founded by a group of literary enthusiasts in Ullapool Entertainments, the local voluntary arts organisation founded in 1982.

[www.ullapoolbookfestival.co.uk](http://www.ullapoolbookfestival.co.uk)

The family shareholders of William Grant & Sons established the William Grant Foundation in 2014 as a non-profit association to oversee and direct their charitable donations. The William Grant Foundation is committed to a future where everyone in Scotland has the opportunity to thrive, a belief that is deeply rooted in the core values shared by the family and the company. [www.williamgrantfoundation.org.uk](http://www.williamgrantfoundation.org.uk)