

The Stone Age wins the 2021 Highland Book Prize

Jen Hadfield's beautiful poetry collection, *The Stone Age*, is named as the 2021 Highland Book Prize.



Presented by the Highland Society of London, the winning title was announced at a celebration of Highland talent and culture, live streamed from the heart and hearth of Moniack Mhor, Scotland's Creative Writing Centre, high in the hills above Loch Ness.

Along with a small live audience of special guests, the digital audience enjoyed readings and discussion with all four of the shortlisted authors: David Alston, for *Slaves and Highlanders: Silenced Histories of Scotland and the Caribbean* (Edinburgh University Press); Cal Flynn, for *Islands of Abandonment: Life in the Post-Human Landscape* (William Collins); and Donald S Murray, for *In a Veil of Mist* (Saraband).

Lochaber based instrumentalists, Ingrid Henderson and Megan Henderson wove music from harp, fiddle, and Gaelic song throughout the evening, all set against the stunning backdrop of the mountains of Glen Strathfarrar.

The Stone Age, published by Picador, was described by a member of the volunteer reading panel as “a remarkable collection; highly polished, skillfully arranged, and elegantly composed.” Another reader added, “This exploration of neurodiversity in poetry is authentic and original. The individual poems each have a jewel-like quality that grab the reader with a host of fresh images and aperçus.”

Alex Ogilvie, Trustee of the Highland Society of London and Chair of the Judging panel, said, “The judges undoubtedly had a difficult job selecting one winner from such a high

calibre longlist and shortlist, but were ultimately unanimous in their decision. *The Stone Age* does a rare thing in that every poem in the collection brings a fresh perspective to the reader; Hadfield makes the ordinary quite extraordinary. This is a special collection that we are delighted to honour with the Highland Book Prize.”

Jen Hadfield said, “I was so glad to be part of this moving and important shortlist. I am deeply appreciative of this prize and so happy to celebrate it at Moniack Mhor.”

Rachel Humphries, Centre Director at Moniack Mhor, said “This was a magical evening and such a fitting way to celebrate some of the finest literature of the year created in or about the Scottish Highlands.”

For further information about the Highland Book Prize and the winning title, please contact highlandbookprize@moniackmhor.org.uk