OSPREY WATCH DIARY 2004



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The entrance sign to the Whinlatter visitor Centre

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Thousands of people have seen the ospreys on the Internet

[Windfall for osprey project]

APRIL

Ospreywatch

Birdwatchers across the UK will be watching the skies over the next few weeks hoping for the first sighting of a very special bird. They will be on the lookout for the return of the osprey chick raised in the Lake District nest in 2001, which could be on its way back to the UK for the first time. It will be a historic new chapter in the story of the return of ospreys to the Lakes if this locally born chick returns this spring.

Ospreywatch

One of Cumbria's pair of nesting ospreys has arrived at its usual site near Bassenthwaite. The birds have come back to the Lake District every year for the last four years to breed chicks. The male bird flew over from West Africa, where after spending the winter there. Lake District Osprey Project staff say the female is likely to arrive in around a week's time.

Ospreywatch

A male Osprey arrived back at the nest at 10.14am yesterday, after checking the nest out he went down to the lake for a wash and then sat on the fence post. Later he was back up in a favourite tree by the nest. This morning he has been on the nest twice.

[Delight as osprey returns to nest]

Ospreywatch

Mon 12th April 2004 The male osprey spent the day resting and fishing and seemed to have gained back some energy as he was seen harassing buzzards in the late afternoon.

Ospreywatch

A male Osprey arrived back at the nest at 10.14am yesterday, after checking the nest out he went down to the lake for a wash and then sat on the fence post. Later he was back up in a favourite tree by the nest. This morning he has been on the nest twice.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 13th April 2004 Male osprey has had an active morning exploring his old haunts on the Lake. He has harassed the buzzards and landed a number of times on the nest.

Ospreywatch

April 14th Wednesday 2004 The Male osprey is taking control of his territory and has mobbed a buzzard and a peregrine over the nest. In return he has been mobbed by a black backed gull whilst sitting on his post on the Lake. Another osprey flew high overhead and was seen off - and so was not our female.

Ospreywatch

Friday 16/04/04 A second Osprey, a female, has spent the day in and around Bassenthwaite Lake and has been seen on the nest. She may not be the mate of the male Osprey that arrived back on the 10th. With the recent poor weather it has been difficult to confirm her identity using her leg markings.

Ospreywatch

Saturday April 17th Although we have still not been able to identify the female positively, she and the male have spent a lot of time on the nest. The male has brought in 5 fish over the day and the female has been persuading him to give them to her. As the male is still instinctively guarding the fish with his wings this sometimes involves quite a tussle!

Ospreywatch

April 18th 2004 Sunday A large early morning (9.30) fish breakfast was provided by the male - although he still has difficulty in passing hard earned prey to the female. Honeymoon behaviour continued with the male bringing sticks and lumps of moss to the nest and occasional attempts at copulation. The afternoon was quieter with the female sitting in the 'Hide-y-hole' tree and the male doing some private fishing at the N. end of the Lake.

Ospreywatch

April 19th 2004 From all the behavioural signs and the obvious rapport between the two birds we can suppose that the female is positively 'our' Bassenthwaite lady. We look forward to a clutch of eggs in May!

Birds reunited after winter apart

Ospreywatch

April 20th Tuesday 2004 Before 10.00 both birds were very busy in the nest, bringing in moss and attempting mating.One headless fish brought in by male around 7.30. Another stranger osprey disrupted this pattern at around 10.00 and both birds spent the rest of the morning 'encouraging' it to move North. We wondered if it was our 2001 chick - but it was not seen again in the afternoon, so probably a Scottish bird.

Ospreywatch

April 21st Wednesday 2004. Male held on to a fish overnight and presented it to the female for breakfast. She only picked at this so later he retrieved the remains from her and finished it off. (Since he arrived he has caught 27 fish including 6 perch 4 trout and one small pike)

Ospreywatch

April 22nd Thursday 2004. An interesting day on the nest with both the male and a female visiting for longer periods. The 14.40 webcam shows a typical domestic scene.The male is still showing some reluctance in sharing his fish, which may indicate that he still needs to feed himself into tip-top condition. Another osprey flew over in the morning but passed on North. Chasing both rival ospreys and the resident buzzards uses up a lot of energy!

Ospreywatch

April 24th Saturday 2004 A much warmer day here on Bassenthwaite. The nest cup is being made deeper by both birds scratching like terriers, getting rid of last year's compressed dirt.The male expended a lot of energy seeing off yet another intruder osprey during the morning. In the afternoon the female bathed by the lakeside in the sunshine. This inspired the male to attempt 'love on the beach'- but not entirely successfully.

Ospreywatch

April 25th Sunday 2004 Another beautiful day with Bassenthwaite Lake glowing blue as sapphire below the osprey nest. With the sun on his back our male seems to be gaining in vigour and has passed over two fish to the female today without mantling. Towards five o' clock both birds spent a busy half hour rearranging the nest and then stood side by side with wings touching looking across the water. Spring is in the air!

Ospreywatch

April 26th Monday 2004 To get down to the nitty-gritty of springtime, it is quite true that 'Big Brother' is watching every intimate move. This season there have been 88 attempts at mating of which 22 have been successful. The happy result of this has, we think, been the laying of the first EGG - produced at 16.40.

Ospreywatch

April 27th Tuesday 2004 We turned the screen on at Whinlatter at 10.00 to a view of the male sitting incubating the eggs, whilst his lady was off having breakfast. She returned at 10.46 and the day proceeded with both birds taking turns at keeping the egg warm. We are all anticipating the arrival of a second egg some time tomorrow. Eggs are laid at two day intervals and will hatch at two day intervals giving the first chick the greatest chance of survival.

Ospreywatch

April 28th Wednesday 2004 At dawn our female displayed all the behavioural discomfort that precedes laying and at 05.18 we believe she produced her second EGG. The male presented her with a large roach, which although he ate it in front of her on the nest, she was not very interested in.(as with grapes consumed by hospital visitors) She felt better after taking a bath, and incidentally moulting a large white feather, and accepted a fish at lunch and at teatime.

Ospreywatch

April 29th Thursday 2004 The male brought in a perch at 7.30. However, he was not around at 9.28 when the female exploded furiously off the nest to harass one of the buzzards. We don't like to see her doing this because of the damage she could inadvertently do to the eggs. At around midday the male brought a fish onto the nest and appeared to be picking pieces off it and dropping them in front of the female, tempting her to eat.However, she took no notice of this gentle gesture, preferring to wait until he brought in a roach at 16.40.

Ospreywatch

April 30th Friday 2004 Although we have been watching avidly for signs of a third egg we are not sure if our female has laid. Could she possibly have sneaked it in either at dusk or dawn? Whatever the case she must now be sitting on her full clutch and we will just have to wait patiently until hatching to know for certain!

MAY

Ospreywatch

May 1st Saturday 2004 'Sumer is a-cumin in,' and the cuckoo is loudly calling this weekend over the woods and Lake. With the sunny weather the female is allowing the male to incubate regularly on the two (maybe three) eggs. He is also treating us and our visitors to some magnificent dives for fish - one straight down from about 200 feet! Furthermore, he has started bringing back sizable branches to the nest for the first time this season.

Ospreywatch

May 2nd Sunday 2004 Today the behaviour of the birds progressed into the true incubation mode. They have made no attempts to mate and the nest has only been left without either parent for the space of a very few minutes. This indicates that we now have a full clutch and that for the next 35 to 40 days one parent or the other will be sitting tightly. On how many eggs? - well let's not count our ospreys before they are hatched!

Ospreywatch

May 3rd Monday 2004 A colder day today and in the morning the female sat tightly on the nest. The male spent time at the North end of the lake and caught an enormous fish. He spent some time eating the head end but there was plenty of the tail end left for the female's lunch. Other than a few upsets with the next door buzzards it has been a quiet day.

Ospreywatch

May 4th Tuesday 2004 Attempted matings dropped suddenly to zero from May 1st. as the clutch was completed. Overall, 107 matings were noted of which 36 were considered successful, peaking at mid-lay on April 27th with 7 out of 7 successes! Together with his fish kill tally our male surely rates 007 status.

Ospreywatch

May 5th Wednesday 2004 A very cold clear night with the red moon of a total eclipse reflected in the chilly waters of Bassenthwaite. Both watchers and birds felt the effects of the cold and as a result the male was very busy this morning bringing in piles of extra moss. None too soon, as this afternoon a violent hail storm lashed the forest. Sitting tightly, the birds ensured the safety of the eggs.

Ospreywatch

May 6th Thursday 2004 Another cold night with a sprinkling of snow on Grisedale Pike.In the lower woods drifts of bluebells lie like lapis-lazuli between uncurling emerald ferns as the daytime temperature rises. At 11.07 our male brought back a fish that we thought was a pike. The female demonstrated her habit of 'tasting' the proffered fish before flying off with it. Does raw pike really taste that different to raw roach?

Ospreywatch

May 7th Friday 2004 Breakfast fit for our Queen of Ospreys - a 2lb (1kg) perch, fresh from the Lake. Not surprisingly this is the most common fish. The old Cumbrian word for perch is 'bass.' 'Thwaite' is the Norse word for clearing, so Bassenthwaite loosely means 'a clearing by the perch lake. Ideal for Ospreys!

Ospreywatch

May 8th Saturday 2004 Although the Ospreys with their 1.5m (5 ft) wingspan are the largest bird of prey on the Lake they do not always get things all their own way - other birds also patrol the water's edge. For example, a resident heron took grave exception to the male osprey eating a fish on one of the posts this afternoon. The heron first waded out to the post, causing the male to jump off clutching his fish. Later, the heron flew after our bird and attempted to mob him until he gave up the idea of a quiet mealtime and decided to fly back to the nest.

Ospreywatch

May 9th Sunday 2004 After a fairly uneventful morning our pair had an interesting afternoon. At about 14.45 the female became very agitated upon the nest. She flew off twice calling for the male, but he was nowhere to be seen. (Gone fishing) At 15.00 the cause of her alarm became apparent. Our male returning from his successful foray was surprised by another osprey as he sat quietly eating on the post in the Lake. The intruder spent some time mobbing him before flying away South. Another disturbed teatime!

Ospreywatch

May 10th Monday 2004 After the excitement of yesterday our ospreys enjoyed a normal day at the nest, eating fish and incubating.

Ospreywatch

May 11th Tuesday 2004 There is a mystery today as the birds seem to have put themselves on a crash diet. No fish were seen taken to the nest from dawn to 5pm. The male did catch a small something for himself mid-afternoon, but the female seemed quite content with his moss and stick deliveries. These are no easy flat-packs to arrange! There was one tricky moment when the male found himself jammed over the eggs with a stick entangled round his legs. It was a relief to all concerned when the female took over the arrangements.

Ospreywatch

May 12th Wednesday 2004 The mystery about the 'diet' is solved - although it points to some unusual behaviour. Today the male brought fish to the female at 09.00. However, the next two fish he ate himself. At

15.25, when he returned to the nest, empty-clawed AGAIN, the female treated him to a torrent of angry hunger screams and flew down to the Lake. Within 10 mins she had caught her own fish (as she obviously had to do yesterday) Meanwhile, he is presumably exploring the feminine side to his nature, snuggling down to incubate.

Ospreywatch

May 13th Thursday 2004 A more regular day as far as fishing goes with the male bringing in prey at 10.22 and 16.35. This is much better behaviour as the female cannot afford to be off the nest catching her own food if the weather turns cold or wet - something that all Lake lovers know can happen in the space of minutes!

Ospreywatch

May 14th Friday 2004 It has been difficult to keep track this morning as the birds seem to be fluttering on and off the nest like butterflies, taking turns at incubation. 7 changeovers were noted before 10.00. Of course, the female incubates all night but our male is still very much enamoured with the role during daylight hours.

Ospreywatch

May 15th Saturday 2004 We believe that the male may well be feeding the female in the wee small hours of very early morning as by 17.00, there were no fish brought to the nest. However, the female, although very vocal, has not attempted fishing for herself. Both birds have spent quite a lot of time together on the nest alternating incubating with preening. Both are moulting and like the dandelion clocks along all the verges are releasing puffs of down to the wind. The weather continues to be perfect.

Ospreywatch

May 16th Sunday 2004 After her long wait the female's patience was rewarded yesterday when the male brought her a very large perch to munch at 18.25. We hope this pattern will be repeated today. Up at the Dodd Viewpoint it is shorts, shirt and suntan (burn?) time. The Ospreywatch telescopes scan an Arcadian scene where Mountains and May trees, bending with blossoms, are reflected in long ripples across the Lake. To see our Osprey cutting the waters in its wild plunge for fish, turns the picture into a privilege beyond price.

Ospreywatch

May 17th Monday 2004. Our birds seem to have reverted to a more normal pattern of behaviour with the male seen bringing fish up to the nest at 06.40, 11.16 and 13.50. This makes a running/ flying/swimming total of 111 fish so far.

Ospreywatch

May 18th Tuesday 2004 Despite the male's obvious attempts to convince the female he would like to sit (which at one point nearly resulted in simultaneous incubation!) she determinedly resisted for much of the day. It is now just over half way through the incubation period and we wonder if she is feeling the first stirrings of new life within the eggs.

Ospreywatch

May 19th Wednesday 2004 Although Bassenthwaite has more than enough prey, our fisherman, like his human counterparts, enjoys working different waters. Following the Derwent towards Keswick he fishes the hidden river pools for brown trout. At midday, he returned from a foray there with a fish which he ate quietly on the post in the Lake. As he has also been feeding her at regular intervals the female has been incubating contentedly for most of the day.

Attack fear at osprey nest site

Ospreywatch

May 20th Thursday 2004 The strength of the pair-bond was demonstrated over the breakfast period. A fish, caught by the male, was passed between the pair a number of times - each taking a nibble from it until it eventually was no more! Later on in the morning another male osprey, sitting on a tree in the bog, was spotted through the telescopes. As we have still not given up hope of our 'Red 15' chick returning it was subject to intense scrutiny. Unfortunately, it was disturbed by a helicopter and flew off South without giving us a sight of its ring.

Ospreywatch

May 21st Friday 2004 Dwellers in the Lake District often find that their home becomes an attractive 'drop-in' for visitors during the summer season. Similarly, the ospreys were surprised today at 14.30 when the third osprey landed on the nest. It was, however, a fleeting call as our female saw it off very promptly!

Ospreywatch

May 22nd Saturday 2004 Another curious visitor today, in the shape of a red squirrel. Although probably no threat to the eggs the adult ospreys took no chances and saw it off promptly.

Ospreywatch

May 23rd Sunday 2004 Another osprey was seen again today flying quite near to the nest before being shown off by the female.At this time in the season it must be a young bird on its first flight back from the Gambia, looking for a mate and nest-site. But have the sightings over the past week been of the same bird or different ones? Could one be Red 15?

Ospreywatch

May 24th Monday 2004 With a count-down of two weeks or less to hatching our anticipation is growing. Conjectures as to exactly how many eggs have been laid and how many chicks may survive is the main topic of conversation amongst both visitors and staff at the Dodd Viewpoint, Whinlatter Visitor Centre and Protection Sites. The commonly agreed theme, is of course, that no-one will know for certain until the first week in June.

Ospreywatch

May 25th Tuesday 2004 Over the past two days the birds have been making a concerted effort to bring in nest material. The nest sides are being built up in good time to form the avian equivalent of a 'play-pen'- anticipating the flutter of tiny wings!

Ospreywatch

May 26th Wednesday 2004 The wonderful weather that has made the incubation period relatively easy for the birds has had its effect on the water levels. Large sandy areas have been uncovered at the South end of the Lake leaving some of the ospreys' favourite perching posts high and dry. However, it does not seem to have adversely affected fishing as the male brought in a top-of-the-range perch this afternoon.

Ospreywatch

May 27th Thursday 2004 Congratulations to Loch Garten on their new arrival earlier this week. As the chick born into the original UK nest on this 50th anniversary year we wish it all good health over the coming months! Here at Bassenthwaite our birds are into their 31st day of incubation, so from tomorrow it is possible for ours to hatch at any time.

Ospreywatch

May 28th Friday 2004 Both birds are bringing in yet more sticks and moss so that the microphone to the left of the nest is nearly covered over. We hope that this will not stop us from hearing the tiny cheeps from inside the eggs just before the chicks hatch. Also the green 'lawn', that was such a pleasant feature of the nest edge, is now laced with branches - like garden fencing designed to keep wandering chicks away from the 40 foot drop.

Ospreywatch

May 29th Saturday 2004 A rainy start to the day gave a very different view of the idyllic nest site. Wind whipped the tree tops causing the huge mass of sticks to heave and creak whilst rain soaked the moss into the semblance of a cold, wet heavy duvet. However, this is where our

female comes into her own, as only her specially developed brood patch on her breast can keep those eggs at a steady 98F.

Ospreywatch

May 30th Sunday 2004 Some 'Fishy Facts'-: Perch 65. Trout 14. Roach 7. Pike 2. Bream 1. Unidentified 54. A total of 143 fish have been caught by the male since he arrived in April. No wonder that male ospreys are said to have slightly thicker legs than the females,- whose more shapely ankles are due to having only themselves to fish for, for half the year.

Ospreywatch

May 31st Monday 2004 (Day 35 of incubation.)Possibly because today has been so warm and humid the female has left the majority of sitting to the male. Both seem rather restless, frequently standing over the eggs and looking at them instead of tightly brooding all the time. Do they know something we don't?

JUNE

Ospreywatch

June 1st Tuesday 2004.(Day 36 of incubation) We really do not want rain at this juncture! Even the milder mist and mizzle of June will have a chilling effect on eggs that could be piping. Huge pillows of moss have been gathered and left on the nest edge. A Jay inadvertently landed on one of them but a glare from the sitting male gave it second thoughts about staying.

Ospreywatch

June 2nd Wednesday 2004 (Day 37 of incubation) After a busy start bringing four loads of sticks and moss up to the nest the birds have had a very quiet day incubating. Our male brought up a good fish at 13.30 but his spouse took so little notice of it that, when she eventually got to her feet, he flew off with it again. (Had he really just been fishing for compliments?) Needless to say, when next he offered it she sensibly grabbed without hesitation.

Ospreywatch

June 3rd Thursday 2004 The camera image showing the nest surrounded by pine tree tops and shrouded by clouds seemed very reminiscent of an ancient Japanese print today. The adult birds, reacting instinctively to the wet, covered the eggs so tightly that we gained no hints of any developments under them.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 4th June: After an anxious five-week wait, at least one osprey chick has hatched out at a nest in Cumbria, the Lake District Osprey

Project announced today (Saturday 5 June 2004). Project staff at Bassenthwaite Lake, near Keswick, got their first glimpse of a chick at 5 pm on Friday 4 June after being alerted by a change in behaviour by the adult birds. Ospreys usually lay three eggs, but it is not yet known if there is more than one chick in the nest. The project team are hoping that more chicks will hatch in the next few days.

[Lake's ospreys hatch first chick]

Ospreywatch

June 6th Sunday 2004 The day being fine our proud parents sat preening on the rim of the nest for much of the day watching over the tiny wobbly piece of fluff they have been waiting so long for. By lunch time the chick was starting to make a positive impact on the family scene, demanding a magnificent 35 mouthfuls of fish!Good going for something not much bigger than a duckling.

Ospreywatch

June 7th Monday 2004 No signs of another chick today but our Friday one has all the bounce of a gourmet tennis ball when it thinks that food is being served! 11 mouthfuls of trout at dawn, 28 mouthfuls of dace at breakfast and 45 mouthfuls of perch at lunch.

Ospreywatch

June 8th Tuesday 2004 A warm muggy day with thick summer haze lying over the Lake. The upper fells are tinted green now with the sudden uncurling of bracken fronds and overnight our chick has developed two fine black eyestripes. 'June is busting out all over.'

Ospreywatch

June 9th Wednesday 2004 Our female is quite right in doubting that the male is skilled enough to look after the chick yet. This is not through neglect on his part, but over-enthusiasm. His attempt to feed his offspring, whilst she was away today, nearly ended in tears as he eagerly jammed the tiny maw with completely inappropriate chunks. Following the chick's point blank refusal to swallow anything at all he flew off clutching the remains of the fish to eat alone.... leaving the female to tidy up on her return.

Ospreywatch

June 10th Thursday 2004 As most mothers of toddlers will agree, meals consist of eating soggy leftovers. This is no different in the osprey nest where the female acts as a 'hoover' after every meal, picking up dropped chewed and squashed fish pieces. As a result the nest is kept very clean and free from flies and infection.

Ospreywatch

June 11th Friday 2004 Potty- training happens at a week old with ospreys. Today our chick managed to get up on its little legs, back up to the nest edge and 'squirt'. Another way of keeping the nest clean.

Ospreywatch

June 12th Saturday 2004 Our female was obviously very uneasy this afternoon, flying off and on the nest, and calling. As Schedule 1 birds they are of course, protected 24 hours a day. Any human intruder could be liable to prosecution for being in breach of the Wildlife and Countryside Act in event of the birds being disturbed.

Ospreywatch

June 13th Sunday 2004 We are still seeing unattached ospreys over the Lake. Today, a particularly persistent female was chased away from the nest area and escorted up the Derwent River by the male - only to appear again from behind the fellside, over the nest an hour later. Our female let her feelings be known very vocally

Ospreywatch

June 14th Monday 2004 Where previous to hatching the male was bringing in 2 to 3 fish, he is now catching 5 to 7 fish a day. As a result the chick is visibly elongating like a telescope, especially in the neck region. When he really stretches he can just see over the brim of the nest, looking very like a tiny E.T. in his wobbly and earnest excitement.

Ospreywatch

June 15th Tuesday 2004 The buzzards next door have produced a sky full of fledglings who have not yet realised where out-of-bounds air space begins. So, our female has spent a busy day teaching them.

Ospreywatch

June 16th Tuesday 2004 We have always suspected that our male has been catching a greater variety of fish than we have been able to identify. With some expert fishermen on the team now we have ascertained that bream, dace and chub are also part of the diet.

Ospreywatch

June 17th Thursday 2004 A total of 233 seen fish caught to date and our chick celebrates its 2 week old birthday today. In its fluffy brown down and 'ostrich' neck it looks a completely different creature to the pink and white scrap of hatching.

Ospreywatch

June 18th Friday 2004 The May blossom is over now but the hedges are still starred with flowers. This week the dog roses have bloomed along the lanes, the flowers strewn in confetti shades of vivid pink to palest cream. Flocks of newly fledged siskin’s, chaffinches and tits dart about

the forest picking out the abundant caterpillar food that coincides so neatly with their rearing.

Ospreywatch

June 19th Saturday 2004 Our chick, having grown to the size of a small bantam, is now too big to be really incubated. During today's rain the female had to stand to umbrella it over with her wings.

Ospreywatch

June 20th Sunday 2004 During yesterday's rain our male found hunting more difficult than usual as silt was washed down the Derwent - five unsuccessful strikes in one of his attempts. Today, he seems to be making up for it having brought in at least 3 enormous fish. In between feeds the chick lay in bloated slumber and by 16.00 the female was refused to accept any more!

Ospreywatch

June 21st Monday 2004 Although the temperature fell to freezing last night, today the Midges have hatched out. They have been clouding the air with vengeance, biting both humans and ospreys alike. This was probably a factor in the chick being very active, giving watchers some worries when it appeared to become trapped between sticks at the edge of the nest. Mum to the rescue and all was resolved!

Ospreywatch

June 22nd Tuesday 2004 'Plates of meat' that's our chick's feet! Today he displayed these new and wonderful appendages, which make him look as if he is balanced on two large white starfish. Growing into shoes is often a necessary part of growing up, but growing into feet is something else again!

Ospreywatch

June 23rd Wednesday 2004 Visitors to the Dodd Wood Viewpoint have been enchanted by the sight of a baby red squirrel visiting the feeding station. In an attempt to give red squirrels the best breeding chances and to build up their resistance to the parapox virus (carried by grey squirrels) many local people feed them all year - but even so, the population is beleaguered.

Ospreywatch

July 24th Thursday 2004 Heavy drizzle all day - this is more like the Lake District we know and love! Chick spent the time between feeds huddled in the bottom of the nest.

Ospreywatch

June 25th Friday 2004 Three weeks old today, and with the better weather our chick is venturing out EXTREMELY close to the edge of the nest. This gives Dodd some good views; and Whinlatter heart-attacks!

Ospreywatch

June 26th Saturday 2004 A tempestuous day with high winds lashing up white horses on the Lake. Forty feet up in the canopy the huge nest rocks ponderously amongst waves of whipping green branches. Do birds suffer from sea-sickness?

Ospreywatch

June 27th Sunday 2004 Although our female dislikes rain she is an ardent bather. This morning she spent a happy half hour in the shallows energetically throwing water all over the place. Watchers were therefore surprised when there was an action replay this afternoon. Further investigation discovered that it was another bird, proving that though ospreys will defend their nest territory ferociously, they are prepared to share the fishing area.

Ospreywatch

June 28th Monday 2004 At 24 days old our chick has grown to nearly half the size of its parent. It has unfortunately passed through the 'cute' phase of its development. Feathers are now starting to struggle through the brown down giving it a grubby and rather disreputable look. Only a mother could love it!

Ospreywatch

June 29 Tuesday Many fish have been on and off the nest today. The same one disappeared and reappeared three times! First brought in 11.10, the same one made an appearance as late as 14.28. Regardless, the chick eats it all!

Ospreywatch

June 30th Wednesday There was heavy rain all day and we were rather worried when we saw a wet chick in the nest all alone. Dodd told us that the female was sitting perched above the nest. It was not until 12.34 that she finally took the chick under her wing (literally) to rapturous applause from the watching audience at Whinlatter.

JULY

Ospreywatch

July 01st Thursday With no electricity this morning due to essential maintenance we had to rely on Dodd Wood staff for updates. When power was restored in mid morning we saw a vocal chick doing much wing stretching and stick moving. Two large fish were brought onto the

nest in the afternoon and the chick ravenously took them from the female and was last seen sleeping off his meal.

Ospreywatch

July 3rd Saturday The weather today has been changeable, and the same can be said for the nest activity. Much coming and going between both adults in the morning finally resulted in the chick being fed a tasty perch. This had to suffice until 16.00 when another fish was brought on and when we closed at 5pm all the family were busy tucking in.

Ospreywatch

July 04 Sunday The female osprey was the first adult to make an appearance this morning as she came onto the nest with a stick, then started moving it here, there and everywhere as the chick took little notice and set about preening itself. Mid morning heralded the arrival of the male with a small fish which he gently began to feed to the chick. This was short lived, as he ate the remainder himself! In the afternoon, the chick took a leaf from the female's book, and began moving sticks around the nest (it must be a female were the cries from the watching audience). Pictures were lost on the large screens at Whinlatter from 14.15 onwards.

Ospreywatch

JULY 5th Monday &
July 6th Tuesday Both days were devoid of any live pictures at Whinlatter. Hopefully the engineer will call tomorrow...

Ospreywatch

Thursday 08 July An early start for some members of the osprey team this morning as we prepared to ring the chick. We soon found that it was not alone as there were two unhatched eggs which we had sent for analysis to see why they did not hatch. Our chick we believe is a female, given the weight and wing length, and it has been fitted with a green coloured ring marked 5S on its right leg. One to watch out for in the future. After finally meeting the chick and fitting its rings it was returned back to the nest. It waited patiently until 13.14 when a fish was brought in by the female. She brought moss and sticks onto the nest throughout the remainder of the afternoon. The closing picture prior to the nest camera going off was of all three birds on the nest. Friday 09/July Relatively little activity today after yesterday's excitement. Only two fish all day have been seen, but notably moss and sticks have continued to be brought into the nest by the female.

The health-check and 'ringing' of the Lake District osprey chick has

taken place this morning (Thursday 8 July), with wildlife experts scaling the nest tree in Wythop Forest near Keswick for their first visit to see the chick hatched in this year's nest.
The chick is believed to be a female.
The chick was carefully lowered from its tree-top nest, so that representatives of the Lake District Osprey Project could check on the progress of the bird, which is now five weeks old.
Two eggs were also found in the nest and these will be sent away for scientific analysis to try to identify the reasons why they did not hatch.
As part of a national monitoring programme to learn more about ospreys, the chick was 'ringed' and this will help identify the bird if it returns to the Lake District in the future. The young osprey was fitted with a green 'colour ring' on its right leg and this will identify the bird if it is seen on migration between Cumbria and its wintering quarters in Africa.
This is the fourth year that ospreys have nested near Bassenthwaite Lake and they have already successfully raised four chicks - one chick in 2001, two in 2002 and one last year.
Lakes osprey gets 'health check'
Ospreywatch
Friday 09 July Last year our male was very keen to feed his chick and took every opportunity to do so - very different to this year when the female 'insisted' early on that she should do that job. However, having his offspring ringed must have brought out all our male's fatherly instincts as he started to feed the chick himself, the female looking on from a perch nearby. This behaviour has continued today but as long as the grub keeps coming Chick seems oblivious to the changes in role.

Ospreywatch

Sunday 11th July 2004 Cold weather for midsummer but the show of hedgerow flowers is still prolific with fiery banks of rosebay willow herb and sprawling purple vetches. Up on the fellside the sheep are looking chilly and angular, shorn of their fleeces, whilst against the yellow mown fields the black silage bales stand out like monoliths storing the bounty of summer for the coming winter. Chick has had another growth spurt in the wing area and is doing her 'keep-fit' flapping exercises magnificently.

Ospreywatch

Monday 12th July 2004 Over the past few days the female has been holding back from feeding the chick, despite its voracious screams, often leaving her spouse to do the job. Today we saw that the 'hard-hearted' mother had cleverly pre-empted the next developmental

stage. Today our chick fed herself for the first time, endeavouring successfully to take the fish from the male's claw and gulp it down.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 13th July 2004 Watching close-ups of Chick on a DVD of the ringing process has been a privilege for both staff and visitors here at Whinlatter. The soft browns and creams of her immature plumage and her glowing orange eyes (they change to a harder yellow later on) make her the most beautiful creature; but as a feisty female, she manages to get in a good few nips at the ringer's fingers! You can see part of this video by using the video links at the top of this page.

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 14th July 2004 The female only put in one quick appearance to the nest today. However, this communication that Chick should be able to feed herself by now landed on deaf ears with the male anxiously forcing tit-bits down his couch-potato daughter.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 15th July 2004 The nest bowl is now rapidly building up with all the moss that the parent birds have been bringing in. As the chick tramples this down she is creating a firm platform for herself, enabling her to flap more efficiently and eventually take off safely. This we feel, will happen towards the end of the month, at about 57 days old. (She is 42 days old today)

Ospreywatch

Friday 16th July 2004 Bits everywhere and very little reaching the hungry mouth - this was the scene of frustration as Chick tried her hand (claw) at feeding herself again today. She has the co-ordination to hold on to the fish and to peck at it but has no idea which end to start at. It was a relief to everybody when her father brought in a second course and fed her, quelling those awful pangs of hunger again.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 17th July 2004 'Tip-toe through the nest twigs'.Flapping madly Chick is only just able to hold on to the sticks by the skin of her talons. It's a very different level of activity displayed by this sporty lass compared to her sibling of last year, who practised only minimal movement until the week before lift off.

Ospreywatch

Sunday 18th July Great excitement today when the male brought in a very live pike. His daughter reacted not at all - until the male relinquished his hold and the agonised fish leaped into her nest space. The change was instantaneous as all her latent ferocity was triggered.

With a flurry of feathers she struck out at the unfortunate prey. Screaming and scolding she subdued it and then spent the next hour happily dismembering it. Another big milestone passed on the road to independence!

Ospreywatch

Monday 19th July 2004 A glorious Lakeland Day with landscapes to rival the pictures on the chocolate boxes! In the sunlight the mane of feathers on the nape of the chick's neck glow an iridescent orange-brown as she stands proudly on the side of the nest. When she is resting, of course they blend in with the fading moss as part of her juvenile camouflage.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 20th July 2004 The last of the bilberries are ripening to cloudy blue in the sultry heat. Chick's wing pinions have lengthened into dark fingers as she stretches and preens. Not quite enough length of tail feather to steer by yet though.

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 21st July 2004 Evening views across the Lake were spectacular for the fortnightly Ranger's Guided Walk to the Viewpoint. Visitors watched the male catch a fish in a straight plunge from 70 metres above the Lake, proving his vitality is undiminished as he continues to hunt for his family.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 22nd July 2004 Pop pin-ups, eat your hearts out - there's a new chick in town. 500 fans have downloaded the website portrait of our 'Little Princess'. Predatory females obviously have universal appeal.

Ospreywatch

Friday 23rd July 2004 A quiet day on the nest as Chick spent a lot of time sleeping, interspersed with some short flapping sessions. She displayed little interest in the fish her father diligently brought in, occasionally begging to be fed but preferring to snack on pieces she had hidden about in various parts of the nest. Our female meanwhile kept a fairly low profile, only visiting the nest twice today, once with a claw full of moss and once to collect her supper.

Ospreywatch

Sunday 24th July 2004 A wet chick stood glowering at 10.00, looking out at a Lake so mist enshrouded that the Dodd Wood Viewpoint remained closed for much of the morning. It was not until afternoon that chick continued with her flying practice, but when she did she managed to

raise herself at least 20 cm (9in) off the nest. Airborne any day now - (and it's still anybody's guess who'll win the Team's Sweepstake!)

Ospreywatch

Monday 25th July 2004 53 days old. Sightings of 3 Ospreys in the sky prompted many watchers to think that Chick had taken the Big Step - but no, it was the extra female osprey again. Unfortunately, her misplaced persistence at this site has lost her a season's courting because there have been no signs of any returning males. Aaa! Perhaps romance will fly her way next year?

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 27th July 2004 A quiet start to the day building up into one of great tension - 'will she or won't she fly?' Jumping and flapping Chick rose to about 2 feet (60cm) above the nest at times. If there had been any sort of wind she would have been off! On top of this there was constant interference with the CCTV picture breaking up, making us think that we might be faced with a blank screen at the critical moment. At 17.00 the whole family settled down to feed but will we switch on to find an empty nest in the morning?

Ospreywatch

The osprey chick hatched this year took its first flight early this morning. Perhaps concerned about taking its first flight the young osprey made its move at first light. Wednesday 28 July 2004

Ospreywatch

Thursday 29th July 2004 Contrary to our expectations, based on previous years' observations, our Chick seemed perfectly at home in her new environment of wood and fellside. She has not revisited the nest at all today, but has been practising flying and landing very successfully. Her admiring parents have spent the time close by and have fed her 'on the branch'. Very different from the wobbly start of our previous chicks.

Ospreywatch

Friday 30th July 2004 Although we think that Chick probably roosted on the nest she was up and away early this morning. She really is amazing - this afternoon she made a creditable attempt at a flying roll (a la mum). Both adult birds are taking great interest in her exploits, following her flight and landings over the wood.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 31st July 2004 This is one cool chick - already a mistress of air-surfing! Today she has taken a fish from her Dad, flown around with it and landed safely any number of times. Even her mother seems impressed. As expected Mum started catching her own fish for the first

time today- building up for the long trip back to Africa. However, instead of eating it herself she perched on the branch next to her offspring and fed her. The male meanwhile sat nearby clutching yet another fish.This is such a different scenario from last year, proving that ospreys work to their own agenda and definitely not to ours.

AUGUST

Ospreywatch

Sunday 1st August 2004 An Olde England full summer day with the far distances turning smoke-blue in the shimmering heat haze. The hot, acrid scents of bracken fronds mixed with the sweeter first flowerings of heather drift across the valley to tickle the nostrils of those watching the wildlife at Dodd. Viewing before the heat of midday is the ideal time and this morning our family, plus the spinster female, have all been seen flying. Our female spent a long time bathing in the warm shallows - no doubt reminding herself of the tropical lagoons of the Gambia but there are no signs of her leaving yet.

Ospreywatch

Monday 2nd August 2004 Visitors around the Lake have been enjoying good views of all three birds flying, despite the haze. With the young buzzards, kestrels and a couple of peregrine also in the air, the sky has looked like an aerial spaghetti junction at times.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 3rd August 2004 As might have been expected after such fine weather, today has seen the hillsides sweating out a damp mist, steaming and swirling at all levels over the whole valley. Let's hope it clears overnight to give us a sight of the birds. Proper midge weather!

Ospreywatch

Wednesday and Thursday 4/5 August Visibility has been shocking, ranging from thick haze to thick fog. Between tendrils of clouds we have occasionally seen glimpses of up to four birds flying. The feeding stations do provide interest though, with yet more juvenile tits, finches and siskins swarming onto the nuts and niger seed. Last night the weather erupted into a tremendous sheet lighting and thunderstorm - it would seem that all small birds would be swept from the earth, but miraculously they always appear again, hopping round just as cheerily next morning.

Ospreywatch

Friday 6th August 2004 Visibility better today. We can see that the female has not yet left for Africa and that both male and the chick are fine.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 7th August 2004 A surprise this morning when the female landed fleetingly on the nest. This obviously caused a mental aberration in the male as he flew in a few minutes later with a clump of yellow moss. All the birds have been flying confidently although the chick spends much of her perching time sitting coyly behind a tree trunk - and out of telescope view.

Ospreywatch

Sunday 8th August 2004 Our female is certainly keeping us on our toes and busy rewriting the books! By this time she should have completely divorced herself from the family situation, shunning her erstwhile child and husband. Today, after catching a fish she settled cosily on a post in the Lake near the male, who was also eating. Chick meanwhile sat patiently waiting for grub in a tree on shore. (She has not yet ventured over the water.) Her meal finished, the female immediately shot up into the air again, caught another fish, flew to her 'baby' and fed her, leaving the male to consume the rest of his fish - redundant. Mix and match roles in the childcare field are the order of the day.

Ospreywatch

Monday 9th August 2004 Over the water! Yesterday evening our chick made her first foray over the Lake following her father. Not only this but she landed (precariously) on one of the posts and was passed a fish. Then swaying gyroscopically she tore it apart and ate it. A very important milestone achieved in learning how to fish for herself.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 10th August 2004 Torrential rain poured down all day in buckets, sheets, waterfalls, cats and dogs. Nice weather for ducks but no sightings of ospreys. On the positive side all the small becks were curdling with white foam in the fellside gullies, roaring down to fill the Lake full again.

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 11th August 2004 The heather is out in full bloom now, colouring the fellsides in rich purples. It is the sign that summer is approaching its end; rowan berries are turning bright orange and the blackberries are swelling on the briars. It also means that our chick has only 3-4 more weeks to train for independence before the cooler airs of autumn prompt her leave taking.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 12th August 2004. As an early and hungry riser Chick has been making her presence felt very vocally both with her parents and in some local Lakeside homes. There can be few other people in Britain that rely on a screaming osprey rather than a clock or cockerel for their wake up call!

Ospreywatch

Friday 13th August 2004 Despite the rain and the run-off of the last few days the water in Lake is still very warm. Fishermen have been taking home good catches as the fish continue to rise, which possibly explains why our female is in no hurry to leave. Fishing and boating on Bassenthwaite is by permit at the North end only, leaving the shallow South end exclusively for ospreys, otters and all the other wildlife.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 14th/Sunday 15th August All three birds have been seen over the weekend flying over the fell and water. Chick has yet to take her first plunge but she is still a little wobbly at landing on posts without the extra weight of being waterlogged.

Ospreywatch

Monday 16th August 2004 Today there has been no sign of the female bird. She left on August 17th last year so her timekeeping (without the benefit of digital waterproof watch) is pretty spectacular

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 17th August 2004 Apologies for the black screen on the webcam - we are not sure what the problem is but in any case it would be extremely unlikely that any bird would land on the nest at this stage in the game. Our female still hasn't been seen, so it's probable she has left for good on the long journey

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 18th August 2004 Total confusion this morning over at Dodd Viewpoint as three birds were once again seen cleaving the skies! Is this bird our female returned, the extra female from over the fell, or a completely new passage migrant? It's all part of Life's rich birdwatching tapestry. Also observed is Chick making her first dives towards the water, instinctively hovering and plunging rather nervously from a short height. A very welcome development in her path to maturity.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 19th August 2004 Very wet again over the Lake today with spasmodic views of the male and Chick. The arrival of a third bird definitely confirmed that our female has gone (retrospectively last seen

for certain on July 15th) as the male took off and shooed the migrant bird out of his air space.

Ospreywatch

Friday 20th August 2004 By first light the heavy rain had filled the Derwent until, swollen with silt and debris, it had spilled out in a dark brown stain over the South end of the Lake. The water being too murky for fishing has prompted the male osprey to sit in a tree all day but like a debutant at her first ball our Chick has been dancing over the clearer Lagoon area in a series of dipping flights, folding her wings back and touching the water with her long legs. Her actions seem to embody the perfection of the wild, matching absolute beauty with absolute pragmatism in her struggle to become a survivor.

Ospreywatch

The Webcam images have been closed down for this year as none of the birds will be returning to the nest until next Spring. Thank You to George, our field engineer and to Adam at BBC Cumbria for providing us with living pictures of the Ospreys' home life. Meanwhile the Diary will continue to give updates on the Ospreys' progress from the Visitor Centre at Whinlatter and Dodd Wood Viewpoint.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 21st August 2004 Well! Having sent out the press release that the female had truly departed for Africa on the 15th August, low and behold this morning our 'scopes focussed on a female sitting cosily in family grouping with Chick and male. Dodd watchers feel that she is our female who has probably been on a preliminary mini-tour of the area before the Big Push. This is not uncommon behaviour but we wish she would make up her mind!

Ospreywatch

Sunday 22nd August 2004 The Lake waters are still up, with the Nature Reserve marsh area saturated, to the joy of the many mallard, cormorant and heron, scuffling around in the soggy sedges. A quiet day for our male osprey and chick, with no signs again of any sort of female!

Ospreywatch

Monday 23rd Tuesday 24th August 2004 Showery weather with variable visibility of both chick and male. They are often perched in the 'star tree' at the moment. This conifer is so named because its upper branches give the illusion of being woven into the shape of a Christmas tree star. Through the telescopes the bright chests of the two birds gleam out as decoratively as wax candles with the new pine cones hanging below them like green glass baubles. Very photogenic but very far away

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 25th August 2004 Ennerdale Show, held high up in the fells, was the venue for our first trial run 'Osprey Tent' outing. A Competition, Video Presentation, and stalwart Volunteers enjoyed the fine weather, the stock exhibits and answered the many questions of both Visitors and Local people. Completely oblivious, the birds concerned continued their daily routine on the Lake.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 26th Friday 27th August 2004 No sign of the female now since last Saturday. Our male is still catching fish for Chick but is obviously trying to take a back row seat, hiding out of view in the forest. This may be more in the line of shading his eyes in filial despair as his daughter's attempts to fish consist of a series of rather painful looking belly flops. (compared with the graceful dips of last week) So far we have not yet seen her catch a fish of her own.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 28th August 2004 Chick is really putting her back into it now and gave two marathon performances of about 45 mins each, plunging time and again up to her neck in the water. Unfortunately, she was unsuccessful (though, as with Olympic counterparts, not for want of trying) It was just as well that her coach (Dad) sailed in effortlessly into the breach at the end of the session to provide the necessary restorative protein.

Ospreywatch

Sunday 29th August 2004 ! GOING FOR THE GOLD! At 12.30 Chick caught her first fish! For watchers at Dodd Viewpoint it was the high spot of the season. Again and again Chick threw herself into the water, at one point submerging completely, at another floating exhausted in the Lagoon. We'd like to feel that our cheers and heartfelt shouts of encouragement had some part in her success when eventually she rose into the air and with one last plunge, gained her fishy trophy. She treated the ecstatic crowds to a lap or two of honour, brandishing the victim's body and then flew off to a perch for her celebratory feast.

Ospreywatch

Monday 30th August 2004 Sadly, today is the last of the season for all the staff and volunteers at the Ospreywatch sites. It has been a superb summer for us (for you too, we hope) with the birds continually giving us surprises and extending our understanding of them as individuals and as a species. Although we won't be at our posts both Chick and our male will be around on the Lake for a week or two yet so there's still time to

get your own binoculars out for a last sighting! We will post up the dates of their departures here. Whinlatter Visitor Centre, Dodd Wood Walks and the Cafes remain open; watch out for Red Squirrels! To all those who have followed the Bassenthwaite Osprey fortunes on this website - your feedback has been so much appreciated. Thank you. 'Birds are (definitely) Brilliant!'

Identification: Head: White with speckled crown and black eye-stripe Upperparts: Dark brown Body: White with band of buff streaks on upper breast Number of eggs: usually three Migration: Ospreys spend the winter in Africa, returning north each spring to breed. Other facts: Ospreys can catch and carry fish weighing up to one kilogram. They will fly up to eight miles to feed. In Autumn, ospreys leave Britain for West Africa. The females leave first, while males stay with the young birds to show them where and how to fish. The males leave in late August, with juveniles following several weeks later.	FACTS Ospreys were once thought to have a mystical power that drew fishes to the surface of the water where they could be caught. King James I kept ospreys on the Thames, along with cormorants and otters. All were used to catch fish. Ospreys have been measured flying at speeds of 44 km/h. The female osprey does most of the incubation with the male giving her breaks in the morning and evening of roughly half an hour. Statistics from 2001 Over the 98 days of the watch, observers saw the birds bring back 128 fish. Before the chick flew (42 days) 73 fish were caught i.e. 1.73 fish per day average. After the chick flew until the end of watch (25 days) 55 fish were caught i.e. 2.2 fish per day average. An increase of 27%.	BBC News Online stories from 2004: Lakes osprey gets 'health check' Lake's ospreys hatch first chick Attack fear at osprey nest site Birds reunited after winter apart Delight as osprey returns to nest Windfall for osprey project BBC News Online stories from 2003: Osprey chick feared dead Mrs Osprey returns at last Twin chicks for osprey pair Anxious wait for Mrs Osprey BBC News Online stories from 2002: Osprey chicks take flight Twin chicks for osprey pair Bird-watching Big Brother style

2003 data:

GENERAL INFO; 2003 & 2004 SUMMARY DATA

Male returned to the nest site on the 8th April 2003 at 11.00hrs
Female returned on the 16th April 2003 at 18.50hrs-she was discovered to have a colour ring, light green on right leg XS and BTO ring left leg.

Incubation began on the 30th April.
Number of eggs we believe was 3 as we know 2 chicks hatched, (one subsequently died), and 1 egg became visible in the nest.

1st chick hatched;

The protection staff reported view of a chick at 18.14 on 6th June (38 days)
However 1st noises heard at 11.44on the 8th June (40 days) and was 1st seen on the 9th June 2nd chick heard and seen on the 10th June but not seen again after the 11th June.

Incubation times The male undertook 31% of the incubation. The female undertook 67% of the incubation Leaving 2% when they are both off (this was mainly dealing with other bird intruders)

Nest Changeovers. The average number of male/female changeovers at the nest site is 13.

Fish. Up to the first chick hatching approx. 100 fish were brought to the nest site/female by the male. He probably caught the same number of fish for himself.
28% of these fish were between the hours of 4am and 12 Midday
72% were between Midday and 10pm

The most productive fishing times were from 4pm to 10pm with approx. 50% of the fish brought into the nest site. The average number of fish brought to the nest per day is 2.6 during incubation. This doubled during the fledging period. The fish species recorded were Perch; Pike ; Roach 1;Trout

Fledging. The surviving chick flew on the morning of the 31st July (54 days) Leaving for Africa. The adult female left the site on Sunday 17th August.

The male and chick were last seen on the 9th and10h September Summary. This is the 4th successful chick to have fledged from the Bassenthwaite site and the 8th for Cumbria.

2004 Data:

Male returned to the nest site on Saturday 10th April 2004 at 10.14hrs

Female returned on Wednesday 14th April 2004 at 19.19hrs 1st egg laid 1638 Monday 26th April

Incubation began on Monday 26th April. Number of. eggs was 3.

1st chick hatched and was seen on the 2nd June 1927 (38 days).
Next sighting of a chick was on Friday 4th June (40 days)
Only 1 chick was successful during the hatch period.
Incubation times The male undertook 32% of the incubation. The female undertook 63% of the incubation Leaving 5% when they are both off (this was mainly dealing with other bird intruders)

Nest Changeovers. The average number of male/female changeovers at the nest site is 14.

Fish. Up to the first chick hatching approx. 160 fish were brought to the nest site/female by the male. He was recorded catching 34 other fish which he ate himself.
38% of these fish were between the hours of 4am and 12 Midday
62% were between Midday and 10pm

The most productive fishing times were from 4pm to 10pm with approx. 43% of the fish brought into the nest site. The average number of fish brought to the nest per day is 3.0 during incubation. This increased during fledging period to 5.25
The fish species recorded were Perch; Pike; Roach;Trout; Dace; Bream & Rudd.

38% went unidentified.
Fledging. The chick flew on the morning of the 28 July (57 days from 2/6 or 55 from 4/6)

Leaving for Africa. The adult female left the site on 15 August. The male and chick were last seen on the 13 September

Summary. This is the 5th successful chick to have fledged from the Bassenthwaite site and the 9th for Cumbria. .

THE LAKE DISTRICT OSPREY PROJECT



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Lake District Osprey Project is a partnership between the Forestry Commission, Lake District National Park Authority and the RSPB.

The partnership aims to ensure the continued success of breeding ospreys at Bassenthwaite, to assist with natural colonisation elsewhere in the Lakes and to provide the public with the opportunity to see and find out more about ospreys.

THE OSPREY: A large fish-eating bird of prey, with a wingspan of up to 1.7m (5½ft). They are one of the world's most spectacular and popular birds.

RETURN TO THE LAKE DISTRICT – A WILDLIFE SUCCESS STORY: The return

of the osprey to the Lakes in 2001 was the culmination of several years' hard work behind the scenes to encourage them to breed. As sightings of birds on migration increased over the last few years, so did the thought that one day these birds may once again breed. It was with this aim in mind that four years ago the Forestry Commission and Lake District National Park Authority built a nest platform in Wythop Woods overlooking Bassenthwaite Lake. In 2001 all the hard work paid off and amid great excitement a pair of ospreys took to the platform and nested, successfully rearing one chick. For the first time in over 150 years, and as a result of natural re-colonisation, ospreys had been recorded nesting successfully in the Lake District!

In a double success story for England, a pair of ospreys also successfully nested at Rutland Water – the result of a re-introduction programme run by Anglia Water/Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust involving the release of osprey chicks taken from Scottish nests.

WHERE TO SEE THE OSPREYS

We hope the Lake District ospreys will return this spring to nest.

If they do, an Osprey Viewpoint will be set up from mid-April at the Forestry Commission's Dodd Wood, near Keswick. The viewpoint offers magnificent views over Bassenthwaite Lake, owned and managed by the

Lake District National Park Authority and a favoured fishing area for the ospreys. From here there is a direct view of the nest through high powered telescopes from a safe distance. This is an open air facility (no hide!).

The Osprey Viewpoint is situated 3 miles north of Keswick off the

A591 – follow signs to the Mirehouse from the A66. The Viewpoint is 10 minutes walk uphill from the Mirehouse car park. The Dodd Wood Viewpoint and car park are open all daylight hours. Staff from the Osprey Project partnership will be on hand with telescopes from 10.00 to 17.00 every day.

In an exciting new development this year, we also plan to have a video link providing pictures of the nest to the Forestry Commission's Whinlatter Visitor Centre, which is situated north west of Keswick.

For more information contact a representative of the Lake District Osprey Project:

David Hirst (media enquiries) 834889/david.hirst@rspb.org.uk

Graeme Prest (FC) Nathan Fox (FC)

Pete Davies (LDNPA)

Peter Barron (LDNPA)

Bill Kenmir (RSPB)

Visit the Lake District Osprey Project on the web at www.ospreywatch.co.uk

OSPREY FACT FILE

THE OSPREY: A large fish-eating bird of prey, with a wingspan of up to 1.7m (5½ft). They are one of the world's most spectacular and popular raptors. The osprey is famed for its dramatic fishing technique of plunging into water with wings swept back, talons thrust forwards at the last minute to snatch a fish below the surface.

HISTORY IN BRITAIN: Ospreys were once common in Scotland, and probably England - there are references to ospreys in Shakespeare's plays (1564-1616) and poems by John Skelton (c1460-1529) and Michael

Drayton (1563-1631). Numbers declined in the 18th and 19th centuries due to human persecution in various forms. It is unlikely that any ospreys nested in England after the 1830s and probably for much longer. The last breeding pair was destroyed in Scotland in 1916. A few migrant birds were seen in Scotland during the 1930s and 1940s but ospreys were extinct as a breeding species in the UK until a pair started to nest in Strathspey from 1954. Breeding success was low until 1959 when intensive wardening increased the security given to the birds. The population in Scotland has grown slowly to 136 pairs in 1999. The first recorded pair to recolonise England nested in the Lake District in 2001 – the start of a new chapter in the story of the osprey.

POPULAR APPEAL: Last year the public viewpoint at Dodd Wood, overlooking the Lake District nest site, attracted more than 25,000 visitors between late June and early September.

HABITAT: The osprey is a summer visitor to Europe, spending the winter in Africa. The UK's birds winter mostly in Senegal, The Gambia or Mauritania, returning in late March to early April and departing mid-August to mid-September. Adults migrate several weeks before the young who have to find their own way south. The core population area in the UK is in the Scottish Highlands where ospreys favour areas with Scots Pine forests, fresh water lochs and rivers. These provide nesting and feeding sites similar to those found in Scandinavia.

DIET: During the breeding season, ospreys hunt up to 20 km from their nest site. They catch live fish weighing up to 1 kg, including pike, perch, trout and eels. During incubation, the male does the fishing, taking prey to his mate on the nest. Daily food consumption

is about 300g (10 oz), with between one and four fish caught, increasing when young are in the nest.

Ospreys dive feet first but can only penetrate about one metre below the water surface and so only catch fish that frequent shallow water. The osprey's feet are specially adapted to catch fish: short sharp spines covering the base of the foot pad and toes aid the long sharp talons in catching prey.

BREEDING: Osprey nests tend to be a large platform of sticks in the crown of a Scots Pine or similar conifer tree and birds return to the same site each year. Nesting sites are normally within 3-5 km of water and are often reused each year, some for decades. The eggs are extremely variable, having a white to fawn background colour, which is blotched with brown or deep red. The clutch of 2-3 eggs is laid from mid-April to mid-May. Both sexes incubate the eggs, with the female taking the greater share and incubating at night. There is only one brood and the young fledge after 53 days. Young birds mature slowly and are able to breed when between three and six years old.

POPULATION: The osprey is a cosmopolitan raptor and is found in every continent except the Antarctic, although it does not breed in South America or in most of Africa. The estimated world population is 25,000-30,000 breeding pairs, although the European population, which is mainly in Scandinavia, is only around 8,000 pairs (1994). The Scottish population is 150-160 pairs.

For regular up-dates visit the Lake District Osprey Project at www.ospreywatch.co.uk

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