OSPREY WATCH DIARY 2005



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The osprey diary

April

Ospreywatch

Ospreys have been seen in the area, and briefly on the nest. As yet the identity is being checked to see if they are returning birds. The Ospreywatch project is due to start on Monday 11th April where you can see the birds at the dedicated viewpoints and learn more about the Cumbrian Osprey from members of the project.
The ospreys have toughed it out through thick and thin. Together they have faced the unpredictable Cumbrian weather, the unwelcome attention of the neighbourhood buzzards, even a near miss by a passing helicopter. In this week's

episode However, the cosy world of GreenXS and NoRing has been rocked by new developments this year. This spring, there is a new osprey on the block and things may never be the same again down Wythop Wood. On Monday 5th April, GreenXS arrived back at Bassenthwaite only to find that a different male bird had moved in. The newcomer - Red02 - is a Scottish boy by birth. However, in July 2001 he was released as a youngster at Rutland Water in the Midlands as part of a project to translocate ospreys back to England. Now it seems that this Scots/Leicestershire lad has decided to try his luck in the Lakes. He's already been showing off his fish catching tricks and tempting GreenXS with gifts of tasty trout. Is Red02 here to stay or just passing through? Will GreenXS be wooed by the new boys' fishy gifts? Where is NoRing? It's too early to tell if GreenXS will fall for her new suitor. NoRing could return any day - and he won't be pleased to find a stranger at the nest. Red02 might decide he prefers the climate down south and could move on. Anything could happen in the next few days.

Ospreywatch

The Osprey saga looks set to rival the soaps. In 2001, a pair of ospreys set up home in Wythop Wood, near Bassenthwaite Lake in Cumbria. They were the first ospreys to nest in the Lake District for at least 150 years. She was a Scottish lass, known as GreenXS from the ring on her leg. He was an unmarked mystery bird - NoRing. In a tree-top eyrie overlooking the lake, the pair courted, built their nest, laid eggs and raised a youngster. Since then, the same pair of ospreys has returned each year to this quiet part of the world. Undertaking a 6,000-mile round trip every year, the pair has returned in spring to the same nest and fished together in the tranquil waters of Bassenthwaite Lake. The contented couple has successfully brought up four more chick

Ospreywatch

High drama could be played out in Cumbria, following the return of the male of the pair of osprey that has nested at Bassenthwaite Lake for the last five years. He arrived back in the Lake District yesterday (Thursday 7 April) after a winter in Africa, only to find his partner of the past five years being wooed by a new suitor. Earlier this week the five-year relationship between the pair of ospreys, which have nested at Bassenthwaite Lake since 2001, looked to be over. The female bird (known as GreenXS from the ring on her leg) arrived back at Bassenthwaite on Monday 4 April, but with a different male partner - Red02. The new boy has been trying to impress GreenXS during the past few days by wooing her with gifts of tasty trout. For a while it looked as if Red02 might even have won her over and was all set to take the place of her absent mate in the tree-top nest in Wythop Wood. With the return of the resident male (NoRing) on Thursday, however, it looks as if it's going to be no pushover for Red02 to win Green XS’s affections. NoRing is unlikely to tolerate an intruding osprey in his territory and is expected to attempt to drive the newcomer away from the area. But as a new kid on the block, Red02 may well be equally determined to hold his ground. However, hostilities have not broken out so far and on Thursday all three ospreys even perched together on the double-bed sized nest, which is situated in woodland close to Bassenthwaite Lake. But even for

ospreys, two's company but three's a crowd! One thing is for sure the next week or so promise to be full of excitement for the ospreys of Wythop Wood. STOP PRESS, STOP PRESS, STOP PRESS. As of 10am on Friday 8th April, there have been no sightings of Red02 in the nest area. Things seem to be back to normal for GreenXS and NoRing. But will this harmony last..?

Ospreywatch

After a turbulent week for the Lake Districts regular pair of breeding ospreys, harmony has returned to Wythop Wood. It seems that Red02 has decided that discretion is the better part of valour, and he appears to have moved on to try his luck elsewhere. With Red02 off the scene, GreenXS and NoRing have rebuilt their relationship and now look set to settle down to the serious business of nesting. This week, they have been catching fish in Bassenthwaite Lake, carrying out some spring-cleaning of the nest, bringing in fresh furnishings in the form of moss, and scraping out a hollow in the centre of the nest ready for egg-laying.

Ospreywatch

Monday April 11th 2005 After an osprey-less winter the Bassenthwaite Team is now springing back into action, ready and raring to pick up the exciting saga of Red02, GreenXS and No-ring. What an encouraging start to the new season after the worries and trials caused by the January storms concerning the future of the nest site! (More of this later) Osprey Viewing is today commencing at the Whinlatter Visitor Centre with live link CCTV cameras on the nest. This year there is a zoom facility giving us ever closer images of our beloved birds. At Dodd Viewpoint the Lakeland spring unfolds with the telescopes ready to scan the osprey fishing grounds and verdant marshland delta of Bassenthwaite.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 12th April 2005 No-ring is certainly working hard to retain his spouse's affections -possibly the threat of a rival has shaken him out of any feeling of complacency he may have had. Amorous attempts have been multiple but not always successful and 'just because the lady likes...fish' fresh brown trout were brought to her at 8.30 and 10.35 today. However, we were dumbfounded when at 16.00 he staggered home with the ENORMOUS head of a Grandaddy pike. How could he have caught or carried a fish that size? Amazed phone-calls to Dodd Viewpoint cleared up the mystery. Ever opportunist, our man had spotted a dead fish carcass on the delta shingle and (most unusually for an osprey)had requisitioned it! Did she accept these out of sell by date goods? Yes, she did.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 13th, Friday 14th April Absolutely horrible rainy weather.It has not stopped for two days.The nest is saturated and unsurprisingly both birds are spending as little time as possible paddling about in their wet-moss duvet. Nest building has thus been intermittent - and it certainly needs a fair bit of DIY to bring it up to size and standard. As well as over a million trees uprooted and smashed in the January storm the nest did not go unscathed. The morning after, saw the whole of the huge edifice dangling in space in a welter of sticks and branches.5 year's work blown over the edge! After mammoth efforts clearing the surrounding

fallen trees our gallant foresters eventually swarmed up the Scots Pine and rebuilt from scratch. It was with a feeling of great relief that we saw that the birds have approved of their 'new' streamlined home.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 16th April 2005 Could the weather get worse? It just has - a blanket of snow covers Dodd and Whinlatter and has settled in a smooth white eiderdown over the nest. The night time Protection Staff are experiencing the same below freezing temperatures as the birds, huddled in their remote hut. Viewpoint staff stamp their frozen feet and flap their arms in a vain attempt to combat the biting wind. Despite nil visibility a few hardy souls climb the path. Who says the pioneer spirit is dead? The birds? - well they must be wishing they'd never left the Gambia but like their human counterparts are carrying on regardless.

Ospreywatch

Monday 18th April 2005 If the clouds were grey dishcloths there could be no more water wrung out of them. However, the birds' biological clocks are ticking and today there were amorous interludes at breakfast and lunch. Green XS has scraped out her chosen site for laying, (bottom right of nest) which is slightly more sheltered from the prevailing wind.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 19th April 2005 A new and sparkling world this morning with every blade of grass and leaf carrying a rainbow dewdrop. Will this be THE DAY for laying a first egg? In previous years 13 days from time of arrival has been the magic number for starting the process. However, this afternoon showed no signs of imminent production and No-ring disappeared over towards Loweswater after 2 unsuccessful fishing attempts on Bassenthwaite. Fatherhood nerves maybe?

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 20 April An egg has been laid in the osprey nest at Bassenthwaite Lake in Cumbria Last weekend the only thing in the nest was a blanket of snow, but just before midday today, the female osprey laid her first egg in the moss-lined nest. The moment was witnessed by the team of nest protection wardens, who watched anxiously as a CCTV camera on the edge of the nest relayed pictures of the dramatic moment. Bill Kenmir of the Lake District Osprey Project, said: "We are absolutely cock-a-hoop at the news that the first egg has been laid today. With the destruction of the nest and the unexpected arrival of the intruding male, it has certainly been a dramatic start to this year's nesting season for the ospreys, and an anxious time for the Project team." It is hoped that further eggs will be laid in the coming days - ospreys normally lay a clutch of three eggs. Incubation is carried out mainly by the female and takes between 34-40 days.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 21st April 2005 A quiet day for the birds after the magnificent effort of yesterday. The human onlookers have been enraptured by the close up film recording first pictures of the egg, just minutes after it was laid. We have been able to see that after a short rest the female stands up and there is the mottled oval of the egg lying half buried in the soft green moss of the nest cup. Alongside it, but

less attractively, lies the headless corpse of a large silver fish, brought in during 'labour' by the anxious male. No doubt it's the closest equivalent to 'a nice cup of tea, luv.'

Ospreywatch

Friday 22nd April 2005 Another superb spring day with the Wythop larches all blushing green and the fragile windflowers blowing at their roots. We are anticipating a second egg sometime today and so is our male it seems, with his gift of a huge perch presented to the female at 06.30 this morning. Well she is still eating for two , we hope! However, as the day wore on and then chilly night closed down there were no imminent signs. Perhaps tomorrow?

Ospreywatch

EGG-CITEMENT MOUNTS AS SECOND OSPREY EGG IS LAID, AND HOPE THAT A THIRD IS ON THE WAY! Monday 25 April GreenXS, the female osprey nesting near Bassenthwaite Lake in Cumbria, has laid a second egg in the tree top nest in Wythop Wood. The egg was laid at 5.45am on Saturday morning. Only the early birds from the Osprey Project team, who were on overnight protection duty guarding the ospreys' nest, were lucky enough to witness the laying of the second egg. The female bird is now sitting tight on her second egg, incubating it alongside the one she laid last week. Her first egg was laid just before midday last Wednesday and the Project team hopes that a third egg will be laid either later today or tomorrow. A round-the-clock protection scheme is now in place to safeguard the nest from eggs thieves or other disturbance. A team of more than 60 volunteers are helping to guard the nest. If all goes well, the eggs should hatch in around six weeks time. Graeme Prest of the Lake District Osprey Project, said: This is great news and we are delighted that after an extraordinary start to the season we now have two eggs safely in the nest. We hope that a third egg will be laid and we are all keeping our fingers crossed that this year there will be three chicks in the nest for the first time. However, for both the ospreys and the project team, the hard work is just beginning. The next few weeks will be an anxious time for us all, as the ospreys have to cope with not only the changeable Cumbrian weather but could also be at risk from accidental disturbance or the attentions of malicious egg thieves. The female osprey is now sitting tight on the eggs, while the male bird is delivering a regular supply of fresh fish to the nest. He is also preparing the nursery by adding new sticks and fresh moss to the nest. Graeme added, We had to completely rebuild the nest in March after it was destroyed by winter storms. Although we thought we had faithfully recreated the nest, complete with sticks and moss, the ospreys clearly know best and obviously they were not quite satisfied with our efforts. Since returning to the Lakes from Africa, they have been carrying out their own home improvements ready for the arrival of the chicks.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 26th April 2005 No sign yet of a third egg, and it is likely that if she has laid, it was during the night. Unfortunately, the birds have foiled our cunning plans to look at the eggs by digging an ever deeper nest cup, so we cannot check. Indeed this bid for secrecy became so strong at 16.00 that our female started covering herself with moss and twigs! Perhaps they are more aware of 'Big Brother' than we thought.

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 27th April 2005 The ancient hedgerows are ribbons of colour along the Whinlatter Pass ranging through the acid greens of hawthorn, the lemon yellows of willow, reds of sycamore and rich copper of last year's beech leaves Spring sunshine is warming the buds and and the osprey's nest cup. Snuggled down on her eggs our female has even been suffering from a slight excess of heat and can be seen panting with her bill open.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 28th April 2005 'Oak before ash summer will be a splash. Ash before oak summer will be a soak.' Oak is definitely in the lead at the moment but the weather obviously hasn't read that piece of folk lore. It's cold and wet, so our female sat tight all day pumping heat into her 2(or is it 3?) eggs. Alarms in the afternoon as an intruder osprey swooped low over the nest - to the screeching fury of the male. Watchers at Dodd had a close up view of its undercarriage as it flew over them and then turned North with the proverbial flea in its ear!

Ospreywatch

Friday 29th April 2005 Really into the swing of incubating now with our female sitting for a morning marathon of 6 solid hours. The fish brought in at 12.15 gave her a welcome lunch break after which she bathed twice. So far 53+ fish have been caught by our hard working male.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 30th April 2005 After the choppy weather of the last few days the Lake lay as still as polished steel under an overcast sky. As the day brightened perfect mirror images of the fells splashed the surface with spring colours. Screaming black dots broke the still air and heralded the arrival of the first Swifts, following hard on the heels of Sandmartins and occasional Swallows. Even higher a Peregrine jetted and swooped, no doubt eyeing up the tender spring migrants with equally joyful feelings!

May

Ospreywatch

Sunday 1st May 2005 May Day! May Day! 10.00, the nest awash and our poor female cowering flat down with rivulets of rain draining across her outstretched wings and fanned tail. Although shaking and startled by the gigantic crashes of thunder she spread herself ever tighter over her eggs, a valiant feathered umbrella. Surely, she must be wet through to the bone - but as the rain ended at 11.30 and she eased herself up we could see all her undies were as fluffy, dry and white as ever. (M&S -no competition!)The remainder of May Day proved fair - a relief to the birds and the 900+ visitors who came to watch!

Ospreywatch

Monday 2nd May 2005 Two ravenous birds at lunchtime today, XS chuntering hungrily to herself on the nest and No-ring staring soulfully into the water from a favourite post. No fish caught since 20.30 last night. Why? Watchers on Dodd could see the thick gouts of silt still being spewed into the Lake after the rain, clouding

the water and making it impossible for our bird to see. It was 14.00 before it cleared enough for him to succeed. Over-silting is one of the problems that the Bassenthwaite Lake Restoration Project is committed to tackling over the next few years.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 3rd May 2005 All quiet on the Western front today. The bandito buzzards were shot down well clear of the homestead by Pa whilst Ma busied herself with the chores. Glimpse of a Lone Ranger osprey but he made off into the Northern woods. Ho Silver! Only about 26 more long days to sit before hatching. Wednesday 4th May 2005 News of our young swain Red 02. After rejection he assuages his sorrows in the waters of Dumfries. Perhaps dim memories of his Scottish Birthplace called him. No luck for him there though so, like the Prodigal Son, he has now wended his way back home at Rutland. Does he have a better chance there of successfully attracting a mate and taking over a territory? Well, with Canada geese in residence at one of the prime sites it seems unlikely. Come back to Bassenthwaite 02 and see if you can lure a Scots lassie on to a Lake District treetop!

Ospreywatch

5th May 2005 Transmission of live pictures to the Whinlatter Visitor Centre and then to the website poses its own special problems. Microwaves, a transmission mast, junction boxes and some miles of cable all have to be working precisely. This is no easy task for our radio branch technician who has to monitor and adjust come rain come shine and sometimes risks both life and limb. Today for example, we held our breath as he spent an hour clinging precariously to the top of the mast making necessary adjustments. Just his job? Or is it rather, an example of the work of the dedicated behind-the-scenes technical team that enables us to see into the wonderful world of the Bassenthwaite ospreys? (And the pictures today show that Mother and eggs are doing fine!)

Ospreywatch

Friday 6th May 2005 What strange behaviour from No-ring! Although he has caught fish for himself today at 14.00 and 16.00 he has taken none up to XS on the nest. Perhaps he will be more obliging this evening?

Ospreywatch

Saturday 7th May 2005 Our first question at 10.00 was has he fed her? The answer was 'no'. In that case, had she been fishing for herself? The answer came at around 11.00 when she was spied eating on a post in the Lake whilst Sir was sitting incubating. We do not like to see this behaviour as we know male ospreys are not so efficient at keeping the eggs at the required 37C. If the weather becomes cold or wet it is imperative that the female sits and is not drawn away from the nest due to hunger. Happily, this must have been a blip in the system as at 16.00 No-ring caught a huge perch and after demolishing the head brought the juicy red-tailed remains back to XS for tea.

Ospreywatch

Sunday 8th May 2005 A rude awakening as a third osprey flew low over the nest site this morning. No-ring erupted in fury and very aggressively saw the intruder

off, dive bombing and chasing it out of the airspace. This so upset our female that she brought back the fish she had been eating off the nest and laid it down beside her whilst incubating. When No-ring returned, although victorious, they both felt very edgy. Unusually, they ate the fish between them on the side of the nest, standing guard over the eggs. What we cannot tell is whether these intruders are separate ospreys on migration or a single bird that is roosting nearby. Only a ring sighting would tell us which.

Ospreywatch

Monday 9th May 2005 The nest is continually being added to with the male bringing in some very large sticks. In true DIY style the ratio of the mess is directly proportional to the amount of time the female has to spend in directing operations and clearing up. A large springy hoop of larch was today's creative offering, standing proud over the nest cup in a sort of triumphal archway - but sadly totally impractical in terms of landing and takeoff!

Ospreywatch

Tuesday May 10th 2005 Heart stopping moments today for the whole Project! A frantic report from the A66 described a big white breasted bird lying dead on the roadside. The tarmac burned as our Project Manager sped down the hill, his heart in his mouth, fearing the worst. Travelling on the Northbound carriageway, a glimpse of the body on the Southbound carriageway seemed to validate the sickening truth - white breast, dark wings, dead.... A screeching turn back along the dual carriageway, hazard lights flashing; the body turned over. Quote: I've never been so pleased to see a dead goose in all my life!'

Ospreywatch

Wednesday May 11th 2005 Further sightings of an osprey intruder have just about convinced us that we are seeing a single bird that is probably roosting out behind Dodd somewhere. We still have not seen it close up, but could it be one of our own chicks? We have had no news of Red15, our 2001 chick, expected back last year, but this year we are looking out for our 2002 Black ringed twins. However, we are not choosy and as there are two timeshare nests 'to let' any osprey couple that wants to set up house is more than welcome.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 12th May 2005 Conifer woodlands in Spring have their own special charm. The Larches, being deciduous, have been sprouting their soft sprays of bottle-brush needles for the past few weeks. Now it is the turn of the rest of the trees to put on their new growth. In the surrounding plantations the baby 'Christmas trees' are producing brown bud baubles at the ends of every branch, daily splitting to reveal tufted lime green pincushions inside. Flat yellow fingernails of new growth are appearing at the scaly handed tips of the cypress whilst the nest tree, a Scots Pine, holds up a host of orange candles. In only a short space of time these will add extra inches to the long dark green spiny branches surrounding and sheltering the site. And all the time of course there is the indescribable scent of sun-warmed growing pines...Yum!

Ospreywatch

Confirmation of a third egg in the nest was made this week. RSPB North of England information officer David Hirst confirmed the latest arrival. He said the female bird had been building up the nest in recent days, making it difficult for the Osprey Project team to see the new egg, which was eventually spotted earlier this week.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 14th May 2005 Views of the nest since April have shown the tremendous amount of work the birds have done collecting sticks and moss. To date there has been a total number of 90 sticks collected (some of them massive!) Of these No-ring collected 67 and XS 23, creating a barricade effect around the nest cup. Very necessary as there are only about 11 more days to hatching. Cross your fingers. Ospreywatch

Ospreywatch

15th May 2005 A calm day on both Lake and nest- a good start for The Hatching Countdown. 10 (+) more days to go!

Ospreywatch

Monday 16th May The best laid plans of mice and men..... There has been further osprey sabotage to our close up nest camera. Although generally very toilet conscious any bird can get cut short in the night. As we tested camera 3 this morning we realised it had suffered a direct hit right into the lens. No mean feat for such a small target area and aiming backwards! They really do NOT want us peering into that nest cup.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 17th May 2005 As the webcam pictures show both birds have been moulting over the past week leaving odd bits of down scattered about the site. This is in great demand with the smaller birds for their own nests. Chaffinches, Great Tits and Coal Tits hop happily amongst the sticks, quite unafraid of the enormous bird sitting beside them. And the ospreys' reaction seems to be benign - who wants a mouthful of feathers when sushi is on the menu?

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 18th May 2005 The bigger is not always the better when it comes to fish. They weigh heavy and a disproportionate amount of energy is expended in carrying, which anybody who has lugged home heavy shopping knows. In this sort of circumstance the solution is to take a leaf out of No-ring's book and eat the cream cakes (or the fish - take your pick) en route. After a near disaster, catching too large a prey this afternoon, our male decided that internal transport was more efficient than external. Was it really the effort of bringing the rest up to XS or rather a full tum and warm toes that led him to take a surreptitious 40 winks whilst incubating a little while later?

Ospreywatch

Thursday 19th May 2005 Sitting in a hut on the hillside in 12 hour shifts watching incubation for 40 days may appear a boring task for those of us caught up in the rat race of our 20th century western world. But our Volunteers on Nest Protection see it as an opportunity to view not only the ospreys but also much of the other

wildlife wandering about the Woods in Spring. Last night two shy roe deer tiptoed their way through the steep clearings. Small rustlings in the grass indicated that voles and wood mice were busy, though maybe not for long as a pair of tawny owls flitted to and fro hunting between the trees. (There can be more than one sort of rat race) Night-time in the forest is cold, sometimes bloodthirsty but always magic!

Ospreywatch

Friday 20th May 2005 A quietly humid wet day today. Both parents took turns at incubating and turning over the eggs. By now the chicks inside should be well formed and perhaps giving the occasional kick or twitch. Conversation with our colleagues in Wales has given us the good news that the Porthmadog ospreys on their three eggs are also doing fine. We wish their birds every success in their hatching, scheduled for June.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 21st of May At last, a more definite sighting of the current 3rd osprey as it perched on a riverbank tree below the Viewpoint. We know it is male because it has been displaying, it has a ring on its right leg so it is English (Scots birds are now ringed on their left legs) and the ring is red, so it was born in 2001. This narrows it down although we have still not been able to see the number. So, is it Red 02 again from Rutland, trying for another bite of the cherry or is it a first glimpse of our own Red 15 chick? (Or indeed it could be any one of the other 15 birds, red ringed in 2001?)Whichever he is, his next move showed him to be a wily mover as he noted No-ring with a fish-catch perched on a post. He liked the look of that, flew in low and chased our bird up the Lake! This new kid on the block is finding his feet fast.

Ospreywatch

Sunday 22nd May 2005 Getting closer to count down with the first bets on hatching for May 25th.... Butterflies and violent mood swings amongst the watchers as we think of all the possible disasters that could occur between now and 'D-day'- mixed up with boundless optimism and complete faith in the prowess of our birds. 'Don't count your ospreys before they hatch,' is the only sensible maxim.

Ospreywatch

Monday May 23rd 2005 Possibly inspired by the audacity of the third osprey on Saturday a Bandit Buzzard attempted the same trick of surprising No-ring off his post and making him drop his fish. It nearly worked! Luckily our hero escaped, being able to flee (and fly) much faster.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday May 24th 2005 A Terrible Night with high winds and lashing rain, but XS did not budge and incubation is going on as normal. It is Day 34 now so we can expect hatching anytime from tomorrow. Not all birds have fared as well though and with two days of rain the water is rising down on the Marsh, changing the contours and putting ground nests at risk. From the Viewpoint one lonely Oystercatcher can be clearly seen bravely brooding over her eggs, the current lapping at her breast, on a sandbank that is rapidly submerging. Knowing how much effort birds put into raising young, it is very hard to watch the forces of nature at work.

Ospreywatch

Wednesday May 25th 2005 Another horrible night of heavy rain for most of the day, but everything seemed as normal on the nest until late afternoon when No-ring flew in with a fish. This XS ignored but, instead of flying off with it again, No-ring proceeded to eat the majority of it in front of her. At last she got up and took the tail-end away (as normal). However, when she returned after a short interval instead of pushing him off she pottered about on the edge of the nest rearranging sticks. Ladies, does this seem significant to you? How many have tried to spring clean just before childbirth? No other signs though we wait for tomorrow and pray for a dry day!

Ospreywatch

Friday 27 May Today, incubation day 37, is the average hatching date for our osprey. Both parents seemed edgy and constantly checking the eggs. Maybe they can hear the faint sounds of hatching young. Let's hope we can have a few days of settled, dry weather.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 28 May At least one chick has hatched out in the osprey nest at Bassenthwaite Lake in Cumbria, the Lake District Osprey Project announced today (28 May 2005). Osprey wardens on round-the-clock guard duty saw the chick on their CCTV camera at 05.15 this morning.

Ospreywatch

Sunday May 29th 2005 What a feeling of relief! One chick hatched and despite the rain, wind and chill, looking strong and healthy. In fact, 'cute and adorable' are the words that spring straight to mind. Our first views of it were during its first meal at 10.30 yesterday, a tiny wobbly head covered in baby-white down peeking up from between the sticks. Just like a finger sized Sooty puppet, complete with black eye patches. High above its head loomed the enormous bodies of its Mum and Dad, Mum feeding it just the right sized pieces of fish and Dad gazing at it from all angles. Science says this is all instinct but it looks like Love to me.

Ospreywatch

Monday 30th May 2005 More wonderful family scenes with our chick. Its wobbly neck is already far stronger, stretching up in noisy and enthusiastic efforts to reach Mum's beak and food. There were a number of times when it tipped head over heels but this was from over-eagerness. XS is still sitting tight between feeds but keeps restlessly looking down into the nest and turning the remaining 2 eggs so we are crossing all our fingers and toes that we will be seeing a little brother or sister in the near future.

Ospreywatch

A second chick arrived last night, Monday, at 8.15pm ish. It has been fed this morning and all appear well.

Ospreywatch

Ospreywatch are all eagerly waiting for the possible hatching of the third chick (due sometime today/tomorrow), the male is bringing in a continuous supply of fresh fish. The mother is stripping the fish to feed the growing two chicks. The weather is cloudy with breaks of rain and the chicks are sheltered by their mother.

June

Ospreywatch

Thursday 2nd June The chicks must be looking forward to a trip to Africa! Another wet day over the nest. Our female has been sitting low over the chicks and 3rd egg taking the brunt of the weather. Chicks are eating well and are starting to take on an Ospreys fine looks! The Male has been keeping himself to himself (in other words, keeping dry somewhere!)

Ospreywatch

Friday 3rd June Overcome with the thrill of having two chicks instead of our usual one we have been greedily hoping all three eggs might hatch. This is probably not an option now as the hatch date should have been yesterday at the latest. However, the age gap would have been 6 growing days and the current inclement weather would have been against a small chick surviving - so all for the best. Both chicks have been feeding well today; so well that at 16.00 they both fell over under the weight!

Ospreywatch

Saturday/Sunday 4-5th 2005 Keeping a nest hygienic is very important to all birds, to stop the build up of harmful bacteria. For example, in a nearby woodpecker hole Great Tit parents have been kept busy carrying in food for their offspring and carrying out neat faecal sacs. Their chick's waste is enclosed in a gelatinous white package, like a natural pooper/scooper bag, which is then dropped well away from the nest. Our Osprey chicks are also well Pampered at this young age using the 'moss nappy' system to absorb their more liquid offerings. But judging by the bucketfuls of rain that fell Saturday, it would seem the entire nest was rinsed thoroughly.

Ospreywatch

Monday 6th June MUMS DO IT BY DAY AND NIGHT The appallingly bad weather has highlighted the vital role XS has had to play in the survival of the chicks. Watching her over the weekend has been an education as she has had to make decision after decision on how much to ensure their survival. As with most young creatures it is not so much wind and cold that kill but wet - and we have had it wet in all its forms these past few days from humid fogs to cold unrelenting torrents. Sitting hunched over and half crouched over the babies she has sheltered them and pumped the nest cup with warmth. Only when bursting has she left for a few scant minutes to attend to her personal needs. All this from a lady who is generally fastidious at preening and bathing. She has had to balance the provision of warmth with the danger of chilling whilst feeding them and then of course she sits non-stop throughout the unrelenting night. It may be a true adage that Mum knows best, but it is certainly no sinecure

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 7th June 2005 The darker side of sibling rivalry; Little One gets fed up with Big One always being first in the food line. Little One pecks Big One on the beak. Big One bashes Little One over the head. Little One falls over backwards. Big One gets even more food. It happens.

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 8th June 2005 DADS DO IT WITH THEIR FEET! No-ring has definitely gone into overdrive at what he does best - fishing. On the first day of hatch his catch went up from the previous 2.2 per day to 4. Since then he has provided stunning performances, smacking into the water and catching a series of huge fish and slapping them down wholesale and headless in front of his family.His totals per day have risen through 5,6,7 and 8 since the birth of his second chick. This is tremendous, considering the rain, gusty winds, choppy lake surface and silt that he has had to contend with over the week. His grand total of fish to the nest so far is 187!

Ospreywatch

Thursday 9th June After a manic start by our male first thing this morning activity has settled down! Before 10am he had brought 4 fish to the nest. He kindly delivered a large stick in the afternoon which segregated the two chicks on the nest. This allowed the larger chick to get fed by the female and the poor second chick to struggle against this new barrier so that it could get some food. The chick's efforts were in vain but she is a good mother and didn't neglect her Young's perseverance, rewarding it with a good feed of fish, that is, once the other chick was stuffed!!

Ospreywatch

Friday 10th June 2005 Childhood can be divided into 3 stages; the Cute, the Bad and the Ugly. For ospreys this is speeded up to fit into about 5 weeks. The cute fluffy stage is now over. The Bad stage is a 'Terrible two's' equivalent. Note the parents' attempts to barricade them firmly into place! The Ugly (spots, scales and sprouting) is yet to come. Growth is amazing but it is not necessarily a pretty process.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 11th June 2005 Except for Little One being stood upon by Mum, (inadvertently we hope) the day was a normal one of bouncing, eating and sleeping.

Ospreywatch

Sunday 12th June 2005 At last, warm sunny days have prompted a burst for growth. The grasses are tall and flowering on the verge sides and there is the smell of mown grass in the air. Silage making is in full swing. Now the size of goslings, our chicks are rapidly changing colour from white to drab brown, their first wing pinion feathers sprouting. Evidence that they are aware of their bodily changes came as Big One started preening for the first time. Little One had a go too, but only being a young shaver had little to work with.

Ospreywatch

Monday 13th June 2005 Moving the furniture seems to be inbred in ospreys. We watched Big One struggle over the moss with a small twig in its beak for the first time today, presumably to place it in a more aesthetically pleasing position.It depends upon your point of view (and probably age) whether being a compulsive tidier at two weeks old is just sad or deserves a round of applause.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 14th June 2005. Let's hope that high up in the Osprey nest the attacks of the Cumbrian Midge were not bothering the birds. They were to the dedicated Osprey watchers in the rain! A day of rain meant that fishing was a problem for the male as well as his efforts in seeing off another female Osprey lingering around the lake. The girls do like our male! The chicks are unaware of all this, because mother, with her

wings open like an Osprey umbrella, is sheltering the chicks, from the rain and the attack of the killer Midge!

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 15th June 2005 The eyes have it! The chicks' irises have developed their first colour. 'Beautiful beautiful brown eyes?' Well actually, beautiful marmalade marigold eyes have been blinking at us from between the sticks(and the midges). I'll never love blue eyes again.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 16th June 2005 When the rain washes over the Lake District enclosing the grey peaks in shawls of white cloud and the dark conifers are wrapped around in curling mists, what keeps visitors enthralled and still squelching up to the Viewpoint? The answer is one of Britain's daintiest (and most rapidly declining) small animals, the red squirrel. Due to our 'squirrel lady's' dedication in feeding them throughout the year - this to try and combat the killer parapox virus - we are now seeing upwards of 6 baby nutkins and their parents racing and playing in the nearby trees. Watching them feeding on the nuts with the great spotted woodpecker family makes the walk more than worthwhile - even when ospreys have disappeared into a bank of fog!

Ospreywatch

Friday 17th June 2005 The chicks' growth is still phenomenal. Dark feather pins are sprouting along their backs and both chicks are using their wings to propel them energetically around the nest - when it isn't raining!

Ospreywatch

Saturday 18th June 2005 Potty training, the bane of so many parents' lives presents no problems in the osprey family. From early days the chicks have been practising, and now have perfected the art of projectile pooping. Any parent would recognise the preliminary body language, a stance of deep concentration coupled with uncomfortable foot-shuffling. Next, backs to the nest edge and bottoms presented skywards. Then, with considerable force the semi-liquid waste is ejected; out, up and over. A perfect parabola and a load off everybody's mind.

Ospreywatch

Sunday 19th of June 2005 Nature being ever fertile means that the chicks waste products play a more up front part in the history of osprey life than one might suppose. Indeed it played a vital part in our cunning plan back in the 1990s when we first tried to provide a suitable nest site to attract young migrant birds on their way to Scotland. Ospreys, it seemed, preferred old used nests, homes of character and charm - as do many who wish to move to the Lake District. An osprey will examine its future house in terms of evidence of previous successful breeding. eg how much chick whitewash lingers on the superstructure. As innovative estate agents, not having stocks of the genuine article, we liberally splattered white paint over the whole site. Result a successful sale and no shortage of the genuine article now!

Ospreywatch

Monday 20th June 2005 To round off musings on manure; a medical fact, that should allay any fears that Little One is not receiving its fair share of food. Waste products can give the earliest indication of trouble in the young. For example, small babies suffering from lack of sustenance often present a greenish stool of little bulk. This is similar to osprey chicks; greenish with little trajectory spells trouble. We are proud to report that

our chicks produce a full pure white bulky offering every time, a sure indication that both Big and Little chicks are receiving as much fish as they need.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 21st June 2005 The summer solstice - the shortest night of the year. The hours of daylight enable No-ring to fish from 04.00 until after 23.00 and our two chicks to grow so successfully.

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 22nd June 2005 As the chicks grow bigger XS is finding that she does not need to stay with them on the nest full time. Many of the webcam pictures are showing the 'twins' lying prone and rotund on the right hand side of the nest by themselves. They are so well camouflaged now that they can be difficult to spot, even when you know they are there.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 23rd June 2005 3rd Osprey news! Yes, the 'spare' male osprey is still around, regularly whistling at speed over the heads of those watching on Dodd. He is recognisable as he has a tail feather missing, although we still haven't read his ring. We think he must be utilising Derwent Water and the River rather than Bassenthwaite Lake for fishing - hopefully mapping out a comfort zone around a nest territory for next year. A Young female still needed.....

Ospreywatch

Friday 24th June 2005 A new water-speed record on Bassenthwaite as our avian Donald Campbell catches 3 fish in under an hour during one afternoon - hitting the water at a probable 45 miles per hour! Champagne? Naturally! In a bucket place; 1 gallon of pure Lakeland water, 1 packet of white sugar, two squeezed lemons and peel, and two sprays of elderflowers (now frothing fragrantly into bloom) Stir and leave for 24 hrs. Strain and bottle in strong screw top bottles. Plan to drink 3-4 weeks later, preferably on any Lake-land peak..

Ospreywatch

Saturday 25th June 2005 Muscle is growing along with bulk and our chicks waddle around the nest on enormous white feet like two mini Sumo wrestlers. Between bouts of eating and distended sleep they ponderously flex wings and legs - not too long before they will be big enough to ring.

Ospreywatch

Sunday 26th June 2005 Another bright and warm day on the nest. This is the life the chicks must think, food and sunshine! The combination of the two has made the youngsters keen to dart around the nest under the watchful eye of mother (Good job the nest still has its high sides to act as a safety barrier!) The watchful eye of mother hasn't just been kept on the nest, her eyes have been scanning the heavens above her too. Our friends the Buzzards have been in the area and have quickly been seen off by mother.

Ospreywatch

Monday 27th June 2005 "Two Can Play That Game!" An afternoon of fishing is much

more fun with someone else as our male found out. While fishing over the marsh he was joined by another Osprey who promptly caught a fish! How embarrassing for him as this was all seen by the watches at Dodd. So not to seem inferior, our male saw off the Osprey into the distance. He made the point by bringing plenty of fish to the nest for the rest of the day!

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 28th June 2005 Still acting as a temperature gauge XS has had to react to the run of warm sunny days by acting as a parasol. She stands with her wings half open on the edge of the nest shading the chicks - a very hot and uncomfortable looking position to hold! Dehydration and sunburn of the tender skinned chicks is a real problem in such an exposed site.

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 29th June 2005 The days of hot weather have brought forth the meadow flowers around Bassenthwaite in a profusion and beauty that even Shakespeare would have had difficulty in describing. Clovers, yellow rattle, and eyebright nestle in the waving grasses and reaching higher, swathes of ox-eye daisies mirror the sun with their golden hearts and silver rays. The scent of high summer and the splash and shine of water creates indelible pictures in the heart and mind.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 30th June 2005 Playing with your food is generally discouraged in most households but for ospreys it is part of the learning curve. Today No-ring caught an extremely long and fierce looking pike. Both chicks fell upon the fish with gusto, scrabbling to get a grip with beak or talons. Their unco-ordinated efforts whilst tugging the corpse around the nest were only partially successful though. Eventually, their frustrated squeaks drove XS down to feed them both - not quite ready for weaning yet!
JULY

July

Ospreywatch

Friday 1st July 2005 With the cooler weather XS has been taking a well earned break, leaving a lot of the feeding to her enthusiastic spouse. Stimulated by this he has brought in yet bigger and weightier fish, carrying them up from the Lake in long zig-zag flight to slowly gain height. As last year, he is obviously puzzled by the inability of his offspring to eat everything he brings, to the extent that he tries to wake up his satiated offspring by prodding their sleepy heads with yet more tempting morsels; not something they are appreciating after XS's intuitive touch!
Ospreywatch
Saturday 2nd July 2005 What could be more pleasant than drinking a cup of coffee in the summer sunshine and watching the woodland birds using the giant peanut feeders outside Whinlatter? As bright as jewels an assortment of them flit to and fro in front of me, pink-breasted Chaffinches(keep an eye on your carrot cake), blue tits quarrelling with great tits, coal tits pecking daintily and of course, the tiny canary yellow Siskins themselves. Difficult to think that such minute bundles of feathers could possibly be so closely related to the 5 foot wingspan ospreys on the CCTV inside!

Ospreywatch

Sunday 3rd July 2005 Here's the million dollar question, pink booties or blue booties? We may be finding out the gender of our chicks very soon! At just 5 weeks old the window of opportunity for ringing our chicks will be opening sometime in the next few days. Following 50 years of Scottish expertise and experience our licensed ringers choose this period as being the least stressful for handling the birds. Firstly, the chicks' legs will be fully grown - so the ring will not constrict; secondly the chicks' defence mechanism is to 'freeze', relying on their camouflage for protection, thus not struggling and hurting themselves; and thirdly the bond between the chicks and their parents is so strong that the adults return very shortly after the disturbance. Of course, the well-being of the birds is paramount and watchers can be assured that if there is any doubt, ringing (and gender investigation) is not carried out. Cross your fingers for good weather!

Ospreywatch

Monday 4th July 2005 Overcast and rainy, so no ringing yet. For the first time XS has felt that the chicks can manage by themselves in wet weather and is not brooding them. They do not appear to be appreciating this step towards independence and are huddling together like a couple of damp feather dusters.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 5th July 2005 Congratulations XS and No-ring! Big Chick is a girl weighing in at a magnificent 1.65kg! And Little Chick, at 1.35kg? could be a boy? Or a girl? The only way we can determine gender is by weight, females being generally bigger for their age. Unfortunately, Little Chick is borderline for his/her age. Pink bootees and violet bootees this time! So, as you can guess our chicks were ringed this morning. With the sun just coming up and the midges just coming down Alex Dave and Ben, our intrepid tree climbers, bravely clambered into their harnesses and up the sheer 40 foot tree trunk to the nest. Relying on their camouflage for protection the chicks allowed themselves to be picked up gently, popped into soft bags and lowered to the bottom. What an amazing privilege to be able to see, up close to, the creatures that we have so passionately been protecting, studying and enjoying over the past weeks. Their soft brown and cream feathers, their white scaled legs and razor sharp ebony talons and their wild orange eyes looking out for the first time at their most dangerous predators. Without fuss the licensed ringers get to work, the birds lying absolutely docile in their gentle hands. The metal British Trust for Ornithology ring goes on the left leg with a unique serial number. On the right leg (right for England and Wales, left for Scotland) is the numbered colour ring. Yellow for 2005 -Big Chick is Yellow 35 and Little Chick is Yellow 34. These are what we hope to spot in 3 years time when they return as adults from W. Africa. After weighing, wings and tail are measured and nearly before we have had time to really take in the wonder of them, they are on their way back up the tree to home. We slip away through the moist green woodland to the forest track, and surely any surreptitious tears of joy can easily be blamed on the dazzle of the rising sun.

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 6th July 2005 A question that many people ask is 'Aren't the parent birds distressed whilst their chicks are being ringed?' The answer is of course, they are - as far as they are concerned we are predators invading their territory and stealing their babies. This year the female was on guard when we approached and immediately flew up crying. No-ring, coming back later with a fish swooped over the tree climbers' heads in amazement, then dropped the fish. Our response to this is to make sure that the

whole procedure is as quick and safe as we can make it. From entering the wood to walking out took about an hour in total. We feel that monitoring progress through ringing is vital to the understanding and management of our birds and to the expansion of the osprey population as a whole. As we expected and going by long experience, our ospreys recovered very quickly after we left. Within 2 hours No-ring caught another fish and XS had fed both chicks. The benefit we have now is in being potentially able to trace our birds over the next few years. We are still ever hopeful of someone spotting Red15, 2001 and our black ringed chicks, 2002.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 7 July 2005. The webcam pictures of the chicks have been just wonderful over the last few days. This is because our trusty tree climbers did not hesitate to sacrifice their handkerchiefs, and with a bit of elbow grease and spit and polish realised and cleaned the bird sabotaged nest camera. How long this might last is anybody's guess; the chicks, like their errant parents, seem to be going for wipe out, with an overpowering urge to aim for the lens -- very disconcerting when watching on the big screen!

Ospreywatch

Friday 8th July 2005 Q. How do you get down from an elephant? A. You don't. You get down from an osprey. (You see, you can't keep an old joke down) The nest is covered with dandelion-white fluff as the chicks shed the last remnants of their babyhood.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 9th July 2005. It's mine, all mine! That's what the young female was thinking when a fish was brought onto the nest. Without a thought for anyone else she flung herself onto the fish, rapping her body around it making sure it was hers and only hers! Even the large family of flies on the nest didn't get a look in. Bossy of what?!

Ospreywatch

Sunday 10th July 2005 Now that their eyesight is developing the chicks are easily able to see to the reed beds at South end of the Lake. In this part of the Bassenthwaite SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest)a family of otters have bred over the past few years. This season however, started badly when a big dog otter was run over on the A66. Watchers have been pleased to see a couple of black heads bobbing in the water over the past few weeks - another indication that Bassenthwaite can support multiple fish eating populations.

Ospreywatch

Monday 11th July 2005 'Hot July brings cooling showers Apricots and Sweet-pea flowers.' Hot, but no cooling showers at the moment and XS is still labouring to keep the heat off her distressed offspring. Standing just out of camera view she is spreading her wings between them and the sun, which watchers at Dodd say is 'melting!' (Do not offer ice cream as overwhelming acceptance may easily offend.)

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 12th July 2005 In the heat of the moment the camera has been 'sabotaged' again with another direct hit - hence the subtle misty effect on the webcam. Nothing we can do about this except hope it flakes off eventually.

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 13th July 2005 Privates 34 and 35. 'attention! Present wings! Quick flap. UP DOWN, UP DOWN, UP DOWN. You're no better than 6 week old babies so put some beef into it you 'orrible little ospreys you. Tiring? Painful? Hot? You'll be wishing you

were back in Training when you're slogging it over the Sahara for real in two months time.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 14th July 2005 How do you like yours? Well done? Medium rare? Rare? For the young Ospreys they like theirs "Well Alive!" The next stage of their education has started with the male bringing in live fish for them to deal with. A little strange for our young birds. They soon came to terms with the fact that they either got stuck in or go hungry (it wasn't hard to choose!)

Ospreywatch

Friday 15th July 2005 "Hello Houston, we are clear for launch." "Hello Osprey this is Houston, launch aborted, do you copy over?" After many attempts to get airborne both ospreys have come to the conclusion that today was not the day for take off. Next week will be the week (probably!)

Ospreywatch

Saturday July 16th 2005 Keep the enthusiasm going and breathless days in the gym and the pain of circuit training always pays off. Wobbly bottoms tighten up, thighs stop applauding and rippling cellulite becomes rippling muscle. Believe it, because it works with osprey chicks. Chick 35s performance today had her dancing over the nest in a roar of wing beats compared with the fubsy flaps of a week ago. So, boost the enthusiasm, join in the wild-life and keep fit in a forest near you!

Ospreywatch

Sunday July 17th 2005 Continuing the keep fit theme; Whinlatter is rocking with the pounding feet of an Orienteering Event today. Using a range of navigation skills and equipment fellside routes lead through knee high heather, across mountain streams, up rocky gullies and down steep trackways. Stamina, concentration and a degree of luck are needed to complete courses in the shortest possible time. It's an enjoyable organised morning recreation for us but try it on a 3000 mile route, with no compass, no map, no idea of where the control points might be and death rather than a hot shower if you make a mistake. That's the reality of osprey orienteering, the Gambia route.

Ospreywatch

Monday July 18th 2005 Spectator sports can be just as stressful as the real thing! We had heart attacks this morning as chick 35 flapped, let go with her feet and nearly tipped over the nest edge. She only righted herself by the skin of her talons. Much too wet a morning to make a first flight.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday July 19th 2005 We have changed the camera view again so we can have better and more stomach churning views of the chicks trampolining at the top of their sixty foot tree.

Ospreywatch

Wednesday July 20th 2005 Meadowsweet , fireweed and clambering vetch are the verge-side flowers, dominant in mid July. As evening falls they glow in a rich tapestry of colour, rose-madder, cream and purple framed by the pale drying grass heads. Blackberry blossoms flutter down from this year's sprawling runners, already thick with rusty thorns and promising severe scratching come fruit picking time. At dusk, and at

intervals during the day our weary young ospreys still flop down in the base of the nest, rather than attempting a roosting position - evidence that their muscles are still not fully developed. Fledging would be better held off until next week or they might find themselves ending up in the briar patch!

Ospreywatch

Thursday July 21st 2005 We started the day watching the whole osprey family on the nest - No-ring bringing in the breakfast, hungry XS grabbing it and a crescendo of frustrated squeals from the chicks as they jealously watched Mum eat.
Unknowingly, they were also Stars of Val Armstrong's morning show, BBC Radio Cumbria, presented from the balcony at Whinlatter.
It's been a wonderful chance for our steering committee, staff, volunteers and visitors to talk about the subject they love best. In a nutshell -'Long live the Bassenthwaite ospreys!!'
Highlights of this programme are now available via the BBC Cumbria webcam section.

Ospreywatch

Friday July 2005 "We need to whistle for wind" A bit of wind today would have surely seen our female chick reach for the sky. It's not going to be long before the poor staff and volunteers at Dodd Wood are going to struggle identifying, not 2 but 4 birds!

Ospreywatch

Friday 22 July One of the two osprey chicks hatched this year in the famous nest in the Lake District took its first flight from its pine tree eyrie this afternoon. The youngster's maiden flight took place at 3.20pm and was watched by delighted visitors at the Osprey Viewpoint at Dodd Wood, near Keswick.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 23rd July 2005 They say taking the first step is the worst but this was not the case for Yellow 35 yesterday. After a largely unexpected lift off, watchers saw her flapping madly in wider and wider circles until she dropped with fright and exhaustion into the heather high up on the fellside. This was bad news as she was then vulnerable to attack from foxes and other birds. By dusk 2 ravens had homed in on her, diving at her and forcing her to move. At this critical moment we lost sight of her. Was she going to survive the night? We had to wait until morning to find out and after a number of false alarms, the Viewpoint had her back in their scopes - thank goodness, up in a tree. Since then she has been perched in various wobbly positions, alternating with flight dodgems, culminating in her knocking her mother off a branch! Chick 34 is still on the nest but flapping hard and obviously close to joining its big sister.

Ospreywatch

Sunday 24th July 2005 A tired and hungry Yellow 35 returned back to the nest late last night or early this morning after her long and scary first flight into independence. In these cases a girl's best friend often turns out to be good old Dad cause when you're feeling down he knows that chocolate and sympathy wins over diamonds any time! Presumably working on this principle, No-ring kept a constant stream of small tasty fish coming in throughout the day until no one could eat any more. However, despite this encouragement and perfect flying weather she showed no desire to leave home ever again! (ditto her sibling)

Ospreywatch

Monday 25th July 2005 A new day and renewed optimism on the part of Yellow 35. She

spent much of the day flying round the forest, albeit a mite clumsily at landing and takeoff. As she came into land on the dusty nest at high noon our beleaguered spy camera bit the dust at last, squashed flat in an overshoot. The last thing its telescopic eye saw was a flurry of brown feathers before being buried in sticks. Encouraged by this victory Yellow 35 went on to challenge a buzzard! Yellow 34, perhaps not impressed by its sisters antics, still has not flown.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 26th July 2005 Flight Score: Yellow 35 = Multiple Yellow 34 = Nil

Ospreywatch

The second of the two osprey chicks hatched this year in the Lake District took its first flight this morning. The chick, thought to be a male, flew off this morning just after 11am

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 27th July Its 11.09 Yellow 34 stands on the launch pad. Long wings stretch out into the air. A quick look towards the East, not sure? Hops to the South, another quick look, not sure? Hops to North another look, still not sure. Back to East, looks at the heavens, looks at the vast expanse of Bassenthwaite Lake. Revs engines (o.k. wings)stops, revs again. The final leap from the nest takes place at 11.11 and the second chick is airborne. Like a trip to the Moon contact is then lost for a time.But then Yellow 34 appears as if by magic in a tree not so far away, all is well. Mum agrees as she is seen fishing for herself for the first time since April later in the afternoon. Job done, she will soon be off to Africa.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 28th July 2005 Silence sits heavily over the nest this morning. Where once zygodactyl feet perched now there is emptiness. The hustle and bustle, flapping and calling has moved on to another part of the forest. The nest has changed greatly since April, from meeting and mating place to secure egg bowl, through playpen and helipad to now its final stage of occasional feeding platform. The older chick is already set into a pattern of meeting Dad on the nest to be fed. The younger is still at the clinging to the tree stage, looking forward to the time when the wind and rain abate. As do, of course, the visitors at Dodd Wood and Whinlatter who for a short time have the opportunity of seeing four Ospreys over Bassenthwaite.

Ospreywatch

Friday 29th July 2005. Sometimes Lakeland weather makes you just want to curl up under the duvet and let the day happen without you. The cold and rainy hillside seems to have had this effect on the whole osprey family, sitting with their feathers fluffed up on various branches out of the wind. No-ring hasn't brought any fish to the nest, XS has been huddled in the 'black hole', Chick 35 has only done some minor takeoffs and Chick 34 is nowhere to be seen.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 30th July 2005 The pale green pine fronds around the empty nest have a slightly surreal effect reminiscent of some of the more recent Japanese folk films, beautiful but deadly; soft needles concealing the hidden dragon-dagger branches. Like expert martial arts warriors our adult birds can weave and twist their way amongst them making it look so easy, until you watch the struggle of a novice fledgling to make sense of the swaying tree top environment. Yellow belt 35 is becoming more dexterous, although she still risks a broken wing or neck when she crashes through foliage

instead of avoiding it but our concerns at the moment are more with Yellow belt 34 has he fallen into the mist?

Ospreywatch

Sunday 31st July 2005 Persecuted on his own Lake! Looking forward to a quiet paddle by the islands after lunch No-ring found himself in the uncomfortable situation of being dived at, swooped over and reviled by a mocking rabble of gulls and oystercatchers. Foot cleanliness being not only next to Godliness, but necessary to hunting success (the foot spicules need to be free of dirt to function properly) our bird put an alternative procedure into practise. Gliding low over the Lake he trailed his talons in a long cutting wake through the still water, demonstrating the original foot feat of near mythical status used by Dragons and Hippogriffs.

August

Ospreywatch

Monday 1st August 2005 At last, a view of Yellow 34! He has a broken wing feather which we can only conjecture was caused by buffeting in the severe weather on Thursday, the day after he fledged. Since then he must have been lying low until he felt more confident. What a relief!

Ospreywatch

Tuesday August 2nd 2005 Whin, worts, bilberries, blueberries, - flying or walking over the fells they are now ripe for the picking, lying like tangy dew-drops hidden low to the ground strung on springy stalks. If you can resist eating them straight from the bushes here's what to do. Take 1 kg. of bilberries with the blue-pearl bloom still on them and place them in a preserving pan with 1/4 litre water from the nearest beck. Crush slightly, letting the purple juices run, then boil over an open fire for about 15 mins. Add 3/4 kg of sugar and boil for another 20 mins. Put in jam-jars, covering whilst hot. A taste of smoky summer moorlands and a memory of migrant birds wintering in warmer climes preserved for chill November!

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 3rd August 2005 The exciting thing about watching Live is that anything can happen and mostly does! To avoid confusion and speculation (difficult) this is a factual account of what happened in the forest yesterday. At 11.00 a juvenile osprey with a yellow ring returned to the nest but No-ring was very aggressive towards it. The bird appeared initially weak and lethargic and moved very little, but called constantly. Just after 14.00 No-ring brought in a fish, which it ate ravenously. After this No-ring brought in 3 fish within 20 mins, two of which the chick ate. It remained on the nest all afternoon but didn't attempt to fly, sitting with drooping wings and sleeping. At 16.55 there were 3 birds briefly on the nest, the juvenile, No-ring and an unidentified bird. At 17.15 an unidentified bird landed on the edge of the nest and was chased off by the resident chick. (Chick 35 we know is doing fine but we now think the bird with the broken wing feather is not Chick 34 but a totally different bird!)

Ospreywatch

Thursday August 4th 2005 Chick 34 spent the Wednesday recovering, eating and sleeping whilst his sister 35 made some first short flights over the Lake. Today, at mid morning, 34 obviously felt better and after a few trial flaps fledged himself for the second time. There are many crossed fingers and toes for his success this time round in

the valley. No-ring is fishing magnificently. XS is still in the vicinity but playing no part in the juveniles upbringing. With all the family in the telescope sights (plus other mysterious strangers) this is the best week of the year to watch the birds from Dodd Viewpoint.

Ospreywatch

Friday 6th August 2005 Oh! The see-saw emotions of teenage years; days when indecision, lack of confidence and elder sisters turn the world black. Chick 34 is suffering and obviously feels that only massive doses of TLC from the whole family will help. This morning sitting on the nest he screamed and screamed and screamed, demanding to be fed yet refusing the fish offered by Dad until even Mum came back to see what the fuss was all about. The strategy didn't pay off because neither adult offered to feed him and big sister, impatient with all this attention seeking, took matters into her own claws, whipped the fish out from under his beak and ate it all.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 7th August 2005 Squirrel Nutkin is a prime nursery book example of what happens to the cheeky and foolhardy; the silly little animal ends up with his tail being twisted off by an irate owl. Today we watched a real life display of pert squirrel behaviour as bright eyes peered over the nest edge and a bushy tail waved tauntingly. With a hop and a skip it exacerbated over the sticks behind chick 34 and disappeared down the trunk again. Exclusive fish eaters they may appear to be but I wouldn't trust my luck against those osprey talons!

Ospreywatch

Sunday 8th August 2005 Plunging, diving and playing in the water under Dodd Viewpoint this morning our beautiful Chick 35 practised the skills necessary for her survival as a Fisher Queen. But oh dear, displaying no signs of following her example Chick 34 appeared to be at least a week behind in his development. Then, at about 16.00, there he was, magically perched on a branch on the Dodd side having flown across water for the first time. His future suddenly seems a whole lot brighter!

Ospreywatch

Monday August 9th 2005 A successful year’s breeding again for other piscine hunters in the catchment area. Up to 27 Goosanders at a time have been seen today, carving a living out of the Bassenthwaite waters but using a very different fishing technique to the ospreys. They arrange themselves communally into strange runic shapes on the surface of the lake- semi-circles and lines and then with much splashing and paddling literally drive their slippery prey along in front of them. Fascinating to view from the near aerial vista at Dodd!

Ospreywatch

Tuesday August 10th 2005 The focus of our watch over the ospreys is on the Lake rather than on the nest now but the chicks, of course, are still very vulnerable to disturbance as they wobble over the water. For their protection and for the other wonderful wildlife living on the marsh, the South end of the Lake is designated as a National Nature reserve. The majority of boat users respect this, applying for their permits and enjoying themselves on the huge North section of the Lake. It is unfortunate that a few people choose to ignore the rules and disregard the fact that they personally are jeopardising the future of many young creatures, already struggling for survival to adulthood. Small boats are just as disruptive as large ones!

Ospreywatch

Wednesday August 10th 2005 The chick that never was! A sad little memento has landed at the Visitor Centre - ring Yellow 36. This is the ring that would have been put on our third chick. This egg of course never hatched and this year we did not retrieve it from the nest at ringing. Maybe it had been smashed by the active chicks, or perhaps buried deep in the moss. Like last year's unhatched eggs it probably was never fertilised - a sad but natural fact of biology.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 11th August 2005 All mothers and daughters indulge in sessions of girl talk at times, especially at the threshold of adulthood. With ospreys this seems to be sadly lacking as the maternal instincts of the adult female are generally to switch off and fly off as soon as her children, (whether male or female) are fledged. After no sightings for the last day and a half we were thinking that XS had finally left us. However, she turned up again today and was seen sitting on a branch beside her daughter. Unfortunately, this cosy interlude was more likely to have been prompted by an interest in 35s fish rather than last minute woman to woman advice.

Ospreywatch

Friday 12th August 2005 Come on Yellow 34! It's time you put a bit of backbone into your efforts to become independent. Are you limp or just plain lazy? Yes, I know you had a traumatic first flight but that was over a week ago. I'm getting a bit tired of you screaming on and on in the nest whenever you want feeding fish don't grow on trees, you know! Of course flying about the forest makes you very hungry but it's time you were regularly flying and diving over the water, looking for your own food. Why? Listen my son, if you don't buck your ideas up your sisters are going to be up and away to Africa before you've even tickled a fish and I won't be here forever you know. (No-ring crashed heavily into Chick 34 this afternoon holding out a piece of fish as bait, in what appeared to be an attempt to force him into flying off the nest)

Ospreywatch

Saturday 13th August 2005. She's done it! All those practice jumps, flops, dips and dives have paid off. Yellow 35, watched by an admiring crowd of human fans, caught her first fish yesterday evening.

Ospreywatch

Sunday 14th August 2005 Heather and harebells the mountains are covered now with huge rivers of purple moorland, split by shoals of grey scree, dotted with the dainty Blue Bells of Scotland dancing in the breeze. Tormentil scrambles around grassy tussocks in showers of tiny yellow flowers and in the boggy places butterwort and sundew open their sticky leaves wide to catch unwary insects. With a blue sky above and warm air blowing the scent and sight of the August fells must rival Paradise.

Ospreywatch

Monday 15th August 2005 As well as ospreys displaying their skills over the Lakes the Lakeland farmers are displaying the agricultural riches of the area at Trials and Shows and Markets all over Cumbria at the moment. Herdwicks, the hardy native sheep breed of the Lakeland uplands are examined in their several classes. Sheepdogs exhibit their hard learnt skills of rounding up the flocks. Produce, Rural crafts and Animal husbandry skills are put through their paces to prove their quality and that Made in Cumbria means the best in the world!

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 16th August. The lengths we go to for these ospreys. The famous post down on the lake shore where the Osprey sat to be admired by their public had been knocked over. Total dedication by two members of the project braved the rain (really a storm!), to venture over the marsh to put a brand new post in. Soaked to the bone, these two adventurers pursued their goal to replace the post. After this they returned to the dry comfort of the Land Rover to ring out their clothes. "Never in the field of Osprey watching was so much owed by so many, to so few!" "Stop Press" In the last few days the birds have taken to their new post. Great joy was shown by the birds, as well as the staff that gave so much!

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 16th August 2005 Today all 4 birds were spotted together again so XS has not yet left the Lake. Hardy souls on the early morning guided walk to the Viewpoint had some wonderful sightings of osprey fishing technique and as a special breakfast treat watched a peregrine pluck and disembowel a moorhen on the marsh. Chick 35 is becoming more independent every day, but still relies on No-ring for supplementary feeding. Chick 34? Still a bit wishy-washy.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 17th August 2005 On the seventeenth day of August No-ring sent to me; Four fish a swimming, three sticks a laying, 2 chicks a eating and a female in a pine tree.

Ospreywatch

Friday August 19th 2005 Every day the ospreys surf the air currents along the side of the fell called Barf, looking down a large white rock which lies halfway up on a steep scree slope. This rock commemorates a rather macabre tale of the area when two centuries ago a Bishop, after overindulging in the local hostelry, took on a wager to ride his horse up the mountain. The inevitable happened and he fell, breaking his neck. (I don't know what happened to the poor horse) The rock has been whitewashed ever since as a landmark and a warning to those who play fast and loose with the Lakeland environment!

Ospreywatch

Saturday August 20th 2005 All 4 birds are on the Lake again today. XS is certainly taking her time at leaving but is obviously enjoying bathing frequently in the sunshine. Still lots of views of the chicks eating on the nest.

Ospreywatch

Sunday August 21st 2005 A prima donna has every right to rewrite the script we suppose. XS, who according to the book is not supposed to catch fish for anyone but herself, has turned up twice in the last 24 hours on the nest and shoved her catch into the hungry claw of her squeaking son. Doesn't that just take the fish-paste biscuit!

Ospreywatch

Monday 22nd August 2005 A scream and the scuffle of retreating feet on the wooden verandah at Whinlatter alerted staff of something untoward. Not wolves or bears or even badgers but a very large dangerous looking insect decked out in Yellow and Black with an enormous 4cm. sting! Further investigation identified it as a wood wasp, an

entirely harmless creature, in this case a female, the sting being an amazing adaptation of her ovipositor for drilling her eggs deep into rotten wood.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 23rd August 2005 Weather in the fells is notoriously changeable; Sunny this morning but deteriorating into rain and wind by this afternoon. There were no signs of XS again today. Both chicks were seen bathing on the edge of the marsh, although 34 is still spending a lot of time calling for food on the nest. No-ring seems to be ignoring this to a greater extent this week.

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 24th August 2005 The first autumnal gales struck last night with a storm of driving winds and torrential rain, filling the becks with swirling turgid water. Mud and grit from the River Derwent's banks is dragged into the maelstrom and deposited in Bassenthwaite in a huge yellow stain. The fragility of the banks over the whole water catchment area and the acceleration of deposits in the already shallow Lake are one of the major concerns to the Bassenthwaite Restoration Project. Action to stabilise the banks such as, fencing stock, allowing regeneration of wetlands to soak up sediment and planting more native woodland will be a long and complicated job for all concerned. However, the end result will be a richer and stable habitat that will be the basis of supporting our ospreys and other wildlife for the foreseeable future.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 25th August 2005 Sun and showers over the Lake, but one less bird, we think. XS has not been seen for the last four days and has probably whisked off to Africa quickly as a feather duster with yesterday's gale behind her. No-ring and the two juveniles are still to be seen clearly from Dodd Viewpoint. Yellow 35 is nearly independent now but 34 still being a bit of a Daddy's boy and keeps asking to be fed.....

Ospreywatch

Friday 26th August 2005 The cycle of the seasons brings berries and seeds swelling from under the fallen flowers of summer. The rowan glows with drooping clusters of bitter-orange fruit and on sheltered walls blackberries gleam darkly. Another crop is that of the thistle heads, bursting open and releasing their wind borne bounty, like dancing bubbles across the fields. Painted like clowns, flocks of fluttering goldfinches celebrate this release of stored energy with a constant twitter of tinsel notes, clinging to the spiny stems and teasing out the crunchy seed before it becomes air-born; an insurance against the cooler weather to come!

Ospreywatch

Saturday August 27th 2005 No-rings no fish, no feed tactics seem to be paying off with Yellow 34. Today hunger pangs forced him down to the Lake and he has been seen down on Adams Post belly flopping into the water. Using this tactic he MAY have squashed a very small fish to death - we really can't be sure.

Ospreywatch

Sunday 28th August 2005 Time and Tide waits for no man. Our remaining ospreys (No-ring, Yellow 34 and Yellow 35) are not quite due to leave yet but sadly, for the human team, there are only 3 more days to go before standing down for another season. However, if we go by the dates of previous years there should be good sightings of the juveniles and No-ring for a couple of weeks yet from the Dodd Viewpoint. Of course, anyone is welcome to come and look, using their own binoculars and telescopes. At Whinlatter, the Big Screen will continue playing nostalgic highlights

of the osprey season, good for relaxing, after exploring, walking or biking in the Forest. Both Sawmill and Siskins Cafes will be opening for home-made food and reviving coffee as normal. And the team? Back to an osprey-less existence. (Few of us overwinter in the Gambia!) Still, autumn in the Lake District is a pretty attractive alternative autumn migrants pushing through, the colours, the smell of leaves, the views. And most of us won't be able to resist a last few peeks out onto Bassenthwaite to follow-up the fortunes of our beautiful birds before they leave for good. (So, for the last bulletins, keep watching this space.)

Ospreywatch

Monday 29th August Afternoon at Dodd - Hot sun, blue fells, the Lake shining like molten silver and the silhouette of an osprey wheeling and diving. People and Wildlife - we of all the creatures of earth have the ability to annihilate a species. That we can see breeding ospreys today shows the other side of the coin. Hundreds and thousands of people all working together for a vision to save rather than destroy. Visitors, teachers, children, volunteers and staff and all play their unique roles. Without this ground swell The Lake District Osprey Project wouldn't exist. Thank you to all!

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 31st August Another season, another host of spectacular fishing, romantic courtship, fierce guarding and diligent and tender parenthood. What a year for our birds, two chicks on a rebuilt nest, other birds in the territory, and throughout the season wonderful support from you the public. 90,000 of you have again visited either Dodd Wood or Whinlatter Visitor Centre to watch, learn and encourage the work we do with these birds. The forgotten (but no less important) army of followers on the website have swelled the numbers to record breaking highs, and given some marvellous suggestion and feedback via email. We all think of the birds, some people thank us, the staff, but this is our opportunity to thank YOU, the supporters of the project. May you all winter as well as the ospreys and rejoin us in the spring!

Ospreywatch

The pair of adult ospreys have nested near Bassenthwaite Lake every year since 2001 and this year successfully raised two chicks. All four birds have now left Cumbria for their wintering grounds in Africa. The adult female osprey was the first to migrate and left Cumbria on 21 August. The young female osprey born in the Lakes nest this year, followed soon after. The adult male and the second chick, believed to be a male, stayed a little longer and were last seen on September 11th.