OSPREY WATCH DIARY 2006



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A proud parent

Ospreywatch

First ospreys land at Lakes nest. The first ospreys of the season have been spotted at a Cumbrian lake almost one year to the day since they arrived at the site last year. More details from BBC News

Ospreywatch

Monday April 10th 2006 I dream of an eagle. I dream I could spread my wings, flying high, high..... on the great springtime migration, 2000 miles from Africa to England. Tropical waters and flat horizons bordered by mangrove swamps give way to arid desert and the barren heights of the Atlas Mountains. In the wake of Odysseus, crossing the Mediterranean; fishing in the Gironde Estuary; buffeted by the stormy winds of the Bay of Biscay until finding safe haven in the harbours of the South coast. A further flight on weary wings North, to a slate grey Lake and a cold sleeting rain. The dream becomes reality. They are back! Spring is here! Female XS arrived on the nest at 13.20 on Monday April 3rd and Male No-ring arrived on Tuesday April 4th. The round the clock Protection team was ready and waiting for them and we at Dodd Viewpoint and Whinlatter visitor centre start our watch today. Welcome back, to your watch, with the ospreywatch website!

Ospreywatch

Tuesday April 11th 2006 The sun broke onto a glittering world of winter this morning with the fells dusted with an icing sugar of snow. In the valleys pale celandines and daffodils were weighted in crystal after a night of snow and hard frost. Not the sort of waking to whet the ardour of any male but as they say, love can unfreeze more than cold hearts and cold toes. With XS as inspiration No-ring was obviously on top of the world, performing admirably 4 times before breakfast! A good sign that there may be more than just chocolate eggs in the nest at Easter. (We are not getting visual updates yet on the Ospreywatch website so try for our live webcam pictures through www.bbc.co.uk/cumbria.)

Ospreywatch

Wednesday April 12th 2006 A change in the weather and the Lakeland rain has been running true to form and downhill contour overnight - and for much of the morning. Anoraks, wellingtons, umbrellas, waterproof

trousers and gaiters have dripped merrily over the heated floors at Whinlatter whilst some hardy souls have paddled their way up to Dodd. Going out in torrential rain can be quite exhilarating - if there is warmth and shelter to return to. But in the sodden fields new-born lambs shiver close to their mothers, cows stand steaming, hock deep in mud and there are no prizes for guessing the Wettest Nest in the West! It begs the question, not only how do ospreys find their way here from the Gambia, but why do they bother?

Ospreywatch

Thursday April 13th 2006 No-ring has been catching fewer but larger fish over the past days, presumably because these are the easiest to see below the muddy waters swirling into Bassenthwaite. His biggest so far has been a Salmon Kelt. No, not one that has swum in from over the Border but a Salmon that, against many odds, survived the spawning process from last year. A rare fish smoked out by an even rarer bird!

Ospreywatch

Friday April 14th 2006 The urge to jump through the CCTV screen into a billowing green double duvet of moss has been nearly overwhelming. Both birds have been swooping down over the fellside and catching up mattresses of the stuff in their claws. XS has been wallowing and wading around inside the overflowing nest, breasting into the tickly waves, burying herself headfirst and rearranging the pillows with the joie de vivre of bolstering up the bed for her eggs.

Ospreywatch

Sunday 16th April 2006 No eggs, but visitors at Dodd were rewarded with the sight of a mystery male osprey displaying up over their heads this morning, swooping with folded wings and a fish clasped proudly in his claws. Was it No-ring, although he rarely flies over this area, or our elusive third bird or someone different altogether? A joyful Easter to you all.

Ospreywatch

Monday 17th April 2007 With a wing span of 1.5 metres the osprey ranks third in size for birds of prey in the UK. First come Sea Eagles, nicknamed 'barn doors' with a magnificent spread of 2.3 metres followed by the Golden Eagle at 2.0. Looking at the tiny coal tits on the feeders with a

total length of only 11 cm, it seems amazing that they can belong to the same genus.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 18th April 2006 Monday night-time, deep in the woods. All is still and dark. Only a faint glimmer of torchlight shows around the door frame of the wooden hut that houses our Protection Team. The rest of the world may be asleep but they are listening intently to the faintest of scrabbling sounds coming from the nest- XS is perched there, restless. Midnight draws closer, the sounds become more distinct as she sits and stands uncomfortably. Then silence. At 5.30 grey dawn the watchers can see her more clearly. Yes! She is incubating, sitting tight over her first egg. New Life, New Hope – (and no chocolate involved)

Ospreywatch

Wed 19 April UPDATE Just two weeks after arriving back in the Lake District, the female osprey has laid an egg in the nest at Bassenthwaite Lake, the Lake District Osprey Project team confirmed today. Following their arrival back in the Lake District earlier this month, the pair of ospreys has wasted no time in settling back into the nest that they have used since 2001. The first egg is thought to have been laid late on Monday night and the female bird was clearly seen incubating her precious 'Easter' egg yesterday morning. 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. The Lake District Osprey Project team, a partnership of The Forestry Commission and the RSPB supported by the Lake District National Park Authority – is providing opportunities for everyone to follow the osprey story throughout the summer. The Easter weekend was a record-breaker for visitors to the osprey viewpoints near Keswick and was the busiest that any of the project team can remember. More than 3,500 visitors headed to the Bassenthwaite area to get a glimpse of Cumbria's famous ospreys over the Easter weekend.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 20th April 2006 Up and down, in and out; both birds have been restless, although this is normal behaviour for the mid lay period. Another egg is in the pipeline and XS was showing the strain of this today by tearing voraciously at a fat perch whilst perched on the nest edge, very unusual for our fastidious lady! However, there was no sign of

a second happy event when visitors went home at 5pm. Perhaps tonight?

Ospreywatch

Friday 21st April Our magnificent pair were busy again last evening. First of all by producing egg number two at 6.40pm and then by celebrating with a fish supper at 8.30pm. No champagne yet but maybe that's on ice until egg number three. Could it be a Saturday egg? This morning's activity has centered around incubation(both birds),sticks and moss. A late breakfast was taken at 10.50am. Good pictures now to be seen at Whinlatter and good views from Dodd.

Ospreywatch

Sunday April 23rd 2006 Unless XS has practised sleight-of-wing there is no evidence of an egg being laid in the night. Although she still has time to produce another we may have to be satisfied with just two. This seems a far cry from the large clutches that the tiny bluetits are producing at the moment, but they do share one characteristic in common; neither species lay a second clutch. A bit of a risky strategy when reproduction success for the year rests on having all your eggs in one basket!

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 26th April - Wet morning and sunny afternoon. Well what a day. Lots of changeovers and comings and goings but did he bring a fish in? Not until 16.55. Our poor female waited hopefully all day. He did bring a very big stick in at one stage and promptly carried it over her back and head to place it on the other side of the nest. Not too popular by the end of the day! Good job he brought that fish in!

Ospreywatch

Thursday April 27th The famous pair have been working well this morning with ten change overs on the eggs between dawn and mid-day, a real working partnership. Breakfast was taken late this morning at around ten a.m. The male was seen eating a fish on a post below the viewpoint at Dodd Wood giving early visitors a special moment. He then took the remains of the fish to the nest where the female took it from him and then went to eat it in a nearby tree. Our male remained on the eggs. This time visitors to Whinlatter had the treat. Visitors to Dodd and Whinlatter always find a warm welcome, the nest, however, had a few visitors this morning not so welcome. A pair of Buzzards were seen off smartly, as was what is thought to have been

another straying Osprey. Visitor of the day must,however, go to a Red Squirrel. At about nine a.m our protection guardians saw a Squirrel going up the nest tree, the male Osprey on nesting duty jumped, the Squirrel came down the tree. Who had the biggest fright: the Squirrel or the Osprey? Discuss!

Ospreywatch

Friday 28th April 2006 Although ospreys don' t eat to excess, Our XS can put away plenty. It may sound a bit coarse But with Dace for first course In 20 mins her claw was quite empty!

Ospreywatch

Saturday 29th April 2006 Today the Georgian street market in Cockermouth slipped us back in time to the mid 18th century, with red coated militiamen, tricorn hats and panniered skirts. An idyllic olde worlde scene, but how were birds of prey viewed then? Red kites might have been seen picking at the rubbish heaps, golden eagles would still have been breeding in the fells, and goshawks, merlins and peregrines would be more commonplace, although considered useful only as falconers' birds. The osprey though might already have been a rare sight. Trees large enough to hold its huge nest were being felled for our sailing-ship navy and it was seen as a rival to fishermen. Raw Nature was a force to be subdued; all too effectively as we now know to our cost. Sunday April 30th 2006 Lazy Sunday mornings, dozing in the sun or curling up your toes under the duvet after breakfast. What could be worse than a wide awake visitor landing on your doorstep, under the assumption that you will be delighted to show them round the house and garden? XS and No-ring were not amused by this at 09.30 this morning and sent the bouncing young female away with an outraged scream in the ear. By the afternoon though No-ring had mellowed out a little and was seen circling over the Lake with the fair intruder. An osprey's home is his castle but he will generally behave like a gentleman in the street.

MAY

Ospreywatch

Monday May 1st 2005 Today started wet and misty after a week of beautiful Spring weather. XS brooded over her eggs for most of the day, driving out the chill from the surrounding wet moss as efficiently as an eco-friendly radiator in a damp room. The plus side of rain is of course

that all the budding plants, held back by the previous lack of moisture and the cold wind, thrive visibly. Primroses lie like fallen stars in their firmament of moss and the woods are blushing green.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 2nd May 2006. Had a few blips with the cameras first thing, so don't know if he caught a fish or not. However, after bringing in bits of bark and other nesting material, he caught a huge fish just after 1pm and struggled across the lake with it in very high winds and sat in the Star tree for a long time before going to the nest, taking a bite out of the fish and leaving with it to return to the Star tree. He eventually brought it to the female at 3.30pm. I should think he was quite relieved to sit on the eggs (we are pretty sure there are 3 by the way)out of the wind. Lots of activity on the feeders at Whinlatter with the usual deluge of Chaffinch and Siskins entertaining the crowds.

Ospreywatch

Wednesday May 3rd 2006 Last year George, our technician, put up a tiny camera on the nest edge. It gave us wonderful close up pictures but over the season it was sat upon, hit by sticks and 'graffitied' twice. This year George was determined to halt any bird-brained vandalism. He camouflaged the installation, immobilised the swivel joints and enclosed the whole device in a metal cage. To no avail- today again we have only a twisted view of sticks. Ospreys Rule OK!

ospreywatch

Thursday May 4th 2006 Close up pictures of the annoying visitor were gained this morning when she landed on the nest edge with a scatter of sticks. XS flattened herself over the eggs screeching but No-ring's response was slightly hampered as his claws were full of a fish he had just caught. The visitor has very white under wings, a very brown chest and no colour ring on her right leg; this would indicate that she's probably a cool Scottish bird as all hot English chicks have right side ankle bracelets.

Ospreywatch

Friday May 5th 2006 Thursday night and the sky turns to iron. The hot breeze whips up to gale force rocking the nest as the first flickers of lightning smoulder on the horizon. Then the storm breaks with tropical intensity. Forked lightning forges the clouds in blue molten streaks and the earth trembles with the reverberation of thunderbolts. A huge fireball lights up the scene to show XS flattened down in her wildly

pitching home, clutching her three eggs safe from the elements. A canopy home has its disadvantages.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 6th May 2006 Our valiant pair continue their vigil covering the three eggs, a quiet morning for those who watch but just what's needed if you want the eggs to turn into chicks. Others with less generous thoughts still take an interest. Three Crows were interested in eggs for breakfast early on, but were not given any opportunity to dash in and achieve their goal. Buzzards likewise took an interest but were chased off. Meanwhile over at Dodd Wood there has been plenty to see this week, not only Ospreys but also Red Squirrels, Otters, Orange Tip Butterflies, Common Lizards and a variety of other birds. If you use your ears as well as eyes you will soon pick up the song of the Mistle Thrush and maybe a warbler or two. This Spring may have been slow but it's certainly moving on.

Ospreywatch

Sunday 7th May On a damp and dismal day, the birds were being pretty dull as well. It was not a day of exceptional activity. The day started with the female on the nest waiting patiently for food.. The male bird came and went several times, but with no fish. Finally he brought her a good size fish which she bounced off the nest with. It had previously been reported that he HAD had a fish about half an hour before this, but had eaten the lot himself! This was the main event of an otherwise pretty quiet day. They chopped and changed during the afternoon, but not with any really meaningful purpose!

Ospreywatch

Monday 8th May 2006 Thanks to Adam's heartening work over the weekend the webcam's internal clock is now ticking in rhythm with everybody else's. Upbeats from the nest at 10 min. intervals.

Ospreywatch

The Lake Districts famous ospreys are now incubating three eggs.The ospreys have kept the project team guessing as to whether there is a third egg in their nest, but it has finally been caught on camera.The first egg was laid on 17th April and a second on 20th April, but there has been speculation about the arrival of a third egg. But now hawk-eyed watchers have caught a glimpse of three eggs thanks to the surveillance cameras that follow the ospreys' every move. It is thought that the third egg was laid on either 22 or 23rd April.

Ospreywatch

Wednesday May 11th 2006 Never cast your clout, till May is out! But with the hot spring sunshine thick jumpers and trousers are being shed for shorts and T-shirts, revealing potato sprout legs and pale arms. XS seems to have been feeling the effects of the heat also and has been shedding her thermals, covering the nest with a froth of downy under-feathers.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 11th May 2006 Mid-way through the incubation period is probably the quietest time of the osprey' s year- sitting, sitting, sitting and then some more sitting. However, both birds appear to be enjoying the process of snuggling down over the eggs, although they can get very hot in the sun. Just like dogs they pant to cool themselves down. See if you can catch a glimpse of their rose pink tongues on the webcam!

Ospreywatch

Friday 12th April 2006 Beech Leaf Noyau:- Take a large jar and fill it to the brim with fluorescent green beech leaves just bursting from the bud. Add enough gin to cover and sugar to taste. Leave for two weeks and then drain off the liquor into a screw-top bottle. Hide bottle away for 2 years and use to christen osprey chicks in 2008.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 13th and Sunday 14th May 2006 - Lots of fishing going on on both days, and as he seems to have to be coaxed off the eggs by the female when he incubates, I have a theory that it is a very good ploy to bring regular fish in so he can get to sit down a lot!!! Making the most of it before the first chick hatches obviously.

Ospreywatch

Monday May 15th 2006 Spring rain - settling on leaves, beading down window panes, chuckling through gutters and soaking into warm earth. The smell and surge of sap and soil permeates the forest, a huge organic powerhouse, breathing, hatching, blooming, growing. On the nest XS broods over her eggs, more embryo than yolk by now. Her umbrella back and head are covered with ivory pearl drops and despite sitting so tightly, occasionally one dribbles down into her nose. It takes us all by surprise. Atishoo!

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 16th May 2006 In the air No-ring could have made it big in show

business; his glides, dives, swoops and scoops put him on a par with the man on the flying trapeze. In the nest he's more of a clown- today inadvertently landing on a loose log, balancing wildly and then falling headfirst into the nest cup. Luckily no eggs were thrown in the act.

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 17th May 2006 Badgers are welcome dwellers in our woods, snuffling about at dusk and through the night- last month one regularly explored the ground under the giant bird feeders at Whinlatter in hopes of dropped peanuts – in vain, because the chaffinches do the job before the sun goes down. Unfortunately, cars and wildlife don't mix. This morning a beautiful cream coloured female badger was lying at the side of the Pass road, her nose still black and damp and fresh mud caught under her claws from recent digging. Caught in the headlights, she had been too slow – or the car had been too fast….

Ospreywatch

Thursday May 18th 2006 Yesterday a 'spare' osprey was seen again sitting near the Lagoon on Marshland. Exercising patience the watchers eventually spotted a red ring on its RIGHT leg. So, this then is one of the fifteen English birds ringed in 2001. Could it be our own chick Red 15 or could it be a return visit from Rutland's Red 02? Reading the number is desperately difficult at such distances, with or without spectacles, but until we do we can only speculate. Later, the bird was seen fishing and flying in the air with No-ring, a nice example showing the way that ospreys will share fishing territory, we thought. Today: not so friendly, with No-ring attempting to Pirate a fish from the newcomer – with spectacular unsuccess.

Ospreywatch

Friday 19th May 2006 Poor No-ring has had a terribly difficult job finding food with Bassenthwaite awash with waves and silt. XS was ravenous this morning when he arrived with a very large fish. So much so that when crows flew low over the nest and he chased them she did not return immediately to the eggs, leaving them uncovered for half an hour. Hopefully the embryos are mature enough to stand a little cold, but it is this sort of weather that poses the most threat to our family.

Webmaster. We are aware of a problem with the webcam at the moment. We hope to have the problem fixed on Sunday.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 20th May A very wet and dismal morning was brightened up at 10.48. The female osprey was incubating, the resident male returned, closely followed by another male who landed on the opposite side of the nest. The female was very agitated, but our resident male flew off after a minute having given the newcomer a good look and was quickly followed by him. The two males were reported fishing together over the lake, not catching anything, until the second male flew towards Keswick and out of sight. They have been spotted fishing together several times in the last few days, but this was his first visit to the nest. We then sank back to a 'watching paint dry' mode, until later in the afternoon when the original male came back with a fish for the female which she took off as usual.

Ospreywatch

Sunday 21st May 2006 Overheard by the Big Screen. 1. "Look! Look Mum! She's showing US her eggs!" 2. "My cousin's friend's boyfriend saw him catch a fish!" 3. "I wish we had an osprey nest in our garden!" Catching hearts for nature is what it's all about.

Ospreywatch

Monday 22nd May 2006 Day 33 of incubation. Ever opportunists, the crows have been crowding the nest. Today the stage seemed set for just another wet day of sitting when, totally unexpectedly, from behind the nest edge, up popped the head of a Bad Black Baron. "Ah-ha lovely Lady, I have you in my power, depart, or out your eggs go!!" Made of sterner stuff than your average heroine XS screeched in its corvid face, feathers all akimbo, and like a dark shadow it slid off.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday May 23rd 2006 Day 35 of incubation Summary of sitting: Eggs were laid on April 17/18th, 20th and 23rd. Since then both XS and No-ring have been sitting tightly - XS for about 70%, which includes night time and No-ring for about 30%. Since the birds arrived a magnificent 112 sticks have been flown up, fencing the nest around and 105 pieces of moss have lined the cup. No-ring has caught 141 fish, handing over many of them to XS. They have enjoyed eating pike, dace, salmon kelt, trout and lots of perch. The weather, which looked so balmy earlier on, changed radically last week to torrential rain, high winds and a chill in the air. Snow is forecast on the tops again today! We congratulate

Glaslyn Osprey Project on the successful hatch of three chicks, but hope ours are born into better weather!

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 24th May 2006 Day 36 incubation. Last year hatching was on day 38. As expected the weather was appalling yesterday night with torrential rain and sleet. In the overcast gloom of the early evening the puddles that formed along the edges of the conifer plantations were the strangest colour- bright custard yellow. On looking closer they were covered by a thick layer of conifer pollen that must have been free floating in huge amounts before the storm. Today is fine but bitterly cold gloves and woolly hats at the Viewpoint. The Lake is very choppy making it difficult for No-ring to see his prey.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 25th May 2006 Day 37 Incubation. Lots of egg turning today. Can they hear those chicks pecking their way out??? Any time now - watch this space. He brought a very large pike in this afternoon for her and she took it off to eat on her favourite perch (sorry about the pun). Lots of little visitors to the centre today, so hi to them if they are reading this. A lovely sunny, warm day. Let's hope it's good tomorrow for that first chick. Fingers crossed.

SATURDAY UPDATE At dusk last night(the female osprey was peacefully incubating her eggs in the nest overlooking Bassenthwaite Lake, but in an unprecedented overnight development, this morning there are two osprey chicks in the nest, the Lake District Osprey Project announced today (Saturday 27 May 2006)

The osprey project team are amazed that the two osprey chicks hatched out within only a few hours of each other, as the eggs were expected to hatch at least 24-hours apart.

The first chick hatched out during the night, probably at around 11pm, and was first seen at dawn by protection wardens monitoring the security cameras that watch over the nest. The second chick was seen hatching from its egg at 7.50am on Saturday morning.

Peter Davies of the Lake District Osprey Project watched the second chick hatch out. He said: "We were already delighted at seeing one chick in the nest at first light, and I couldn't believe it when a second egg started to hatch. My heart was in my mouth as we watched the tiny chick struggling to break out of the egg. This is quite extraordinary

because there is usually a full day between hatching - I' ve never heard of anything like this happening before."

The attentive male osprey has already brought breakfast to his offspring. He caught a fish this morning, which was delivered to the nest just after 9am.

The news that there are two chicks has delighted the project team, who have maintained a round-the-clock guard over the rare birds since they started nesting in April. The Lake District Osprey Project is a partnership of the Forestry Commission and the RSPB, with the support of the Lake District National Park Authority.

Three eggs have been laid in the nest this spring and wardens are hopeful that the third egg may also hatch out over the weekend. The ospreys have hatched out twins in 2002 and 2005, but they have never had triplets!

The osprey pair returned to the Lake District in the first week of April and quickly settled down to breed. The first egg was laid on 17th April, the second on 20th April, and the third on either 22 or 23rd April.

Nathan Fox of the Lake District Osprey Project said: "We are delighted by this excellent news and that for a sixth year in a row the ospreys have hatched young in the Lake District nest. With the arrival of two chicks there will now be even more action at the nest with lots of feeding, tending and growing to be done. This is an ideal time to come and see the ospreys from one of the viewpoints run by the Lake District Osprey Project."

With the arrival of chicks, the male osprey will now have to really work for his living by catching fish for all the family. During the incubation period, he has caught an average of three fish per day to feed himself and the female, but now the daily total will need to increase as the family grows.

Ospreywatch

Friday 26th May 2006 Day 38 of incubation. We have been on tenterhooks all day and so it seems, have No-ring and XS. At 12.42 3 whole eggs were clearly seen. At 14.55 No-ring arrived with a fish but XS flew off without it so No-ring started to eat it. Then XS returned and finished off the fish, still perched on the nest....significant! At 15.21 XS attempted to oust No-ring off the eggs. He wouldn't budge! In the end

she had to slide herself down into the nest hollow with him. Eventually he was pushed out and XS settled but spent the rest of the afternoon shuffling and moving the eggs around. At 17.00 she lifted to give us a glimpse of them.

Was that a crack in one of the eggs? Yes! No! Maybe! Then the picture switched off. Not sure how we can stand the suspense until tomorrow!

Ospreywatch

Saturday 27th May 2006 As the Big Screen switched on at 10.00 Visitors and the whole Whinlatter staff from forest, shop, café and project waited in bubbling anticipation for their first sight of the chicks. We were not disappointed. There on the nest was XS busy tearing apart a large perch. Pieces of mottled eggshell lay on the moss and in the nest cup we could see the first stirrings of the chicks. Two tiny heads emerged, frantically wobbling like miniature marionettes on elastic strings. Their stubby beaks gaped as XS bent over and oh so gently, offered a sliver of fish meat in her enormous beak. Completely uncoordinated, Chick 1 lunged for its first mouthful, missed and fell forward, compounding the mishap by knocking chick 2 onto its back where it lay pathetically waving its little legs. But, by the end of the day both 1 and 2 had full tummies, good old Dad catching a total of 6 fish at perfectly spaced intervals.

Ospreywatch

Sunday May 28th 2006 Overnight the chicks appear to have gained in strength and their ability to take food. Having been hatched so close together it is impossible now to tell one from the other - unlike in previous years. We have been interested to see how the birds deal with empty eggshells. Reports that the adults eat them, like owls or fly them out of the nest as do many smaller birds seem to be unfounded. The shells are just being ignored and squashed (except by one chick, who obviously practising for the 'Fantasia' Mushroom dance, got its head temporarily stuck inside one.) And what about the third egg? The least pigmented of the lot, it is still lying in the nest cup and XS at least hasn't given up on it yet. She makes sure that it is well tucked up under her breast feathers when she is brooding the chicks. There is still a chance of triplets.

Ospreywatch

Monday May 29th 2006 Bank Holiday Monday and the osprey family (as in other celebrity homes) played to its admiring audience. Two little heads poked up regularly, squeaking voraciously for food and attention.

Already they are filling out. No-ring brought in regular meals of brown trout, often from the North end of the Lake where the water is clearer at the moment. During the afternoon XS, still incubating the chicks and the last egg appeared to be particularly restless, wriggling round as if brooding hot cakes. Was her last little bun going to burst out of the oven? Five o' clock switch off- no signs. Another sleepless night of anticipation lies ahead.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday May 30th 2006 Yes! Yes! Yes! Just after the screens had switched off yesterday our third chick hatched (17.30). After 5 years of trying, XS and No-ring have pulled off a full clutch. Glued to the screen today we have been anxiously watching to see if the young one can compete with its larger siblings for a share of the food. Breakfast-not a clue. Lunch - hooray it got stuck in. Tea- oh dear, nothing. However, if the dry weather and regular fish paste butties continue it stands a good chance of survival.

Ospreywatch

Wednesday May 31st 2006 It has been a privilege today to see the miracle of new life captured on a very special DVD. Although the Big screen was switched off at 17.30 on Monday the dedicated Protection staff managed to get video of chick 3's hatching from their screen. XS is feeding chicks 1 and 2 with the 3rd egg lying in front. First, just a hairline crack shows and then the tip of the beak emerges, pushing up tiny flakes of shell in a circle around one end of the egg. Later, we could watch the little one struggling spasmodically out of the larger end of the shell. As XS begins her brooding again it lifts its head for the first time, still wet from the birth. A unique sight that is quite overwhelming. (36 hours later Little One IS being fed but our collective maternal bosoms heave with indignation and anxiety when XS passes it over in favour of the strapping siblings. Knowing that this is natural behaviour supporting the 'survival of the fittest' doesn't always help.)

JUNE

Ospreywatch

Thursday 1st June 2006 What a wonderful sight. Three little heads bobbing around with wide open mouths. No-ring brought in several fish

and they were all fed equally. The 3rd chick is catching up in size beautifully. Hilarious moment at one point when 'mum' lifted off to have a fly around and he came back and looked very furtive as he sidled up to the remains of one of the fish, and flew off with it. Much laughter could be heard at the Visitor Centre!! A very worrying half hour from about 4pm when the 3rd chick seemed to have disappeared. Absolutely nowhere in sight. Then 'dad' brought in the remains of the 'stolen' fish and three little heads appeared. Phew, what a relief.

Ospreywatch

Friday 2nd June 2006 A wonderful sunny day. Lots of warmth for the three chicks. Dad is still providing splendid fish for them, and enjoying himself feeding them. The third chick is really holding its own - pushing forward for food, and growing fast. Mum has been shading them whilst they sleep off all that food!! The Siskin and other small birds are out in their droves today - hopefully this weather is going to hold, and summer has arrived at last.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 3rd June 2006 Another perfect June day with clear blue skies and the green woods laughing. Just the day for a family outing but not such fun for XS stuck at home on the nest with the sun blazing down. With such thin down her chicks could easily become dehydrated or sunburned. So, like her human counterparts, Total Sun Block is a factor XS considers carefully, not from the tube but by patiently circling the edge of the nest, her partly spread wings parasoling the little ones from UV rays and heat of the day.

Ospreywatch

Sunday 4th June 2006 Lush June and the hedges are a wave of May blossom breaking between seas of cream cow parsley and green silage fields. Lambs are filling out and gambolling in the sunshine. The chicks are growing fast as well and are also changing colour, their first cappuccino white down being overtaken by thicker café latte brown - sweet and warm in the nest cup

Ospreywatch

Monday June 5th 2006 Like puffballs the chicks grow as we watch them. This afternoon the next stage in their development began with Chick 1 scrambling out of the inner nest hole to get to the fish first, closely followed by Chick 2. Little one gamely scrambled after, made it to the brink but then teetering madly fell back into the nursery. From now on

the chicks will use their little wings like extra legs to crawl around the inside area of the nest. Meanwhile, their parents build up the perimeter with more and more sticks. About 150 have been brought up already this year.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday June 6th 2006 Brain wins over brawn. Little one lies down low when its two bigger siblings engage in sparring matches, pecking and bumping heads. Then, when the fish arrives, it worms its way forward between their feet and pops up in the middle in prime position for the next mouthful. No-ring certainly seems to admire its pluck and has fed it preferentially today, something that Mum would never do. 'No favouritism in this family,' is more her motto.

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 7th June 2006 The Osprey family continues to thrive in the sunshine. Mum is doing a lot of shading, allowing the chicks to remain cool. Dad is keeping busy by bringing the odd fish to the nest. Eleven yesterday, five by two p.m today. He looks like he's going for a new record. Excellent pictures to be seen on the large screen at Whinlatter. Chance of seeing an Osprey fishing good at Dodd. The wise go to both places and really learn about Ospreys.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 8th June 2006 Again, fishing was good today. 4 by 4 o'clock. The youngest chick is really pushing itself forward and getting very bold in securing its share of the fish. Lots of keeping in the shade of mum's wings and body and it has been much too hot for the sparring matches. Dad brought the 4 o'clock fish in (a large Perch) and ate the head on the nest before handing it over to mum to feed the chicks. There was a very cute moment when the youngest shuffled over to the other chicks who were already sheltering and spread its little wings over the backs of the other two. It looked like a group hug (or a rugby scrum??) Again, a superb day on Ospreywatch.

Ospreywatch

Friday 9th June 2006 At any time over Barf buzzards, peregrines, kestrels and ospreys dot the skyline, each highly adapted within their ecological niches to kill for survival. Below their soaring flight the upland bog, a habitat whose poor peat soils only support the most specialised of plants, is coming into its own, blooming in the sunshine. Look out for the elusive glistening red sundew plants, and the pale shining leaf rosettes

of the butterwort - killers too in their own saturated field. Unfortunate insects land on their sticky leaves, never to escape! The rotting bodies provide just enough nutrients to enable the plants to flower - the dainty purple bloom of the butterwort and in a few weeks, the creamy spire of the sundew. Birds of Prey, Flowers of Prey - specialised, deadly and utterly beautiful.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 10th June 2006 High hot winds blew under a blood red moon last night and today has been a bit of a battle for our osprey family. Every time XS has tried to shade the chicks with her back to the sun she has been tipped over by the gale under her tail. All she could do was face into the wind, which diminished her shadow considerably. There were some very hot looking chicks at times. No-ring has had difficulty both in catching fish - the water has been so choppy - and also in landing back on the nest. In the forest a number of trees have been blown down blocking access to the Protection hut but did this deter our gallant Protection Team? Of course not.

Ospreywatch

Sunday 11th June 2006 2 weeks old. Unfortunately, the cute stage is over. Biggest chick is showing the unmistakable signs of adolescence, breaking out in spotty sproutings along its feather lines and gazing out at the great school of life through newly developed orange rimmed eyes. Scuttling around the nest using both wings and legs the reptilian ancestry of birds is very apparent - is it possible these Gollum creatures will ever have the grace to fly? Luckily, Mum and Dad still think they're beautiful.

Ospreywatch

Monday 12th June 2006 XS and No-ring spent quite some time today clearing the floor space of unwanted branches. Why? Because the crawlers have now become toddlers, flexing those knee joints and standing momentarily on their own six flat feet. As well as providing extra space it is the osprey equivalent of moving all the potted plants, TV controls and ornaments to a higher shelf.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 13th June 2006 XS has taken advantage of the cooler weather today to leave the nest quite a few times. She only goes to a branch above the nest, but it's a break from the toddlers. A 'sticky' moment today when No-ring brought a stick in and placed it over the top of the

chicks. XS to the rescue - she soon sorted it out when she returned from one of her breaks. Lots of fish again, but one was very small, alive and was leaping around the nest. XS promptly rejected it and No-ring took it away and replaced it a little while later with a more substantial headless version.

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 14th June 2006 Back to very hot weather today, and XS is back to shading those chicks. It's getting harder as they are getting really big, and lots of wings and legs seem to be sticking out all over the place. No-ring is doing his usual stirling job of catching fish and helping to feed the three hungry mouths. Lots of fledged bluetits flitting around - lovely to watch.

Ospreywatch

Thursday June 15th 2006 Now that there are many young and inexperienced birds flying about there are the inevitable casualties. Despite hanging up mobiles and stickers one such careered into a window at the Visitor Centre yesterday. Upon examination it proved to be a juvenile crossbill. These birds are generally seen as a flash of bright red (male) or green (female) in the topmost branches of the tree canopy. To have one in the hand, albeit dead, was very interesting as they have such unusual beaks. The upper and lower mandibles cross over – hence cross-bill. At first sight the bill looks almost deformed but it is used to tweak out the pine seeds from between the cone bracts. The fact that this was a juvenile shows that they are breeding, something that we were not sure of before.

Ospreywatch

Friday 16th June 2006 People may be celebrating with bottoms up for the England victories but for our three foodballs the phrase has entirely different connotations. Shooting to win is the name of the game and our rotund chicks take a penalty after every meal – doing what comes naturally. Weave into position, bottoms up, aim and let go! A line of white tracer curves fluidly over the edge of the nest to land in the forest below. It's a clean game, the home pitch is kept tidy and they score every time.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 17th June 2006 3 weeks old. A dandy white feather ruff adorns the tailbone of the eldest chick and its two siblings are eating steadily to

catch up. No-ring continues to catch fish at short intervals and took over two of the feeds today giving XS a rest.

Ospreywatch

Sunday 18th June 2006 Now feathers are beginning to sprout through XS will spend less and less time on the nest between feeds, relying on the chick's' camouflage and size to keep them safe from aerial predators. She did indeed try to shelter them today when it rained but reminiscent of ostriches, it was a question of convincing themselves that if their buried heads were dry, then their protruding bodies must be also!

Ospreywatch

Monday 19th June 2006 Elderflower Pancakes - a mouthful of summer. Put a mound of flour in the bottom of a large mixing bowl. Beat in two free range eggs. Add enough milk to make a fairly sloppy pancake batter. Then pick a few whole heads of elderflowers, just as they are coming into full bloom. Dip the flowerheads in the batter and place them face down in a hot oiled frying pan. When they are golden brown turn them with a spatula. Eat crispy and hot with a spot of lime juice and sugar, curled up with your favourite wildlife magazine.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 20th June 2006 Like watching sunflowers grow the chicks expand and change between every sunrise and sunset. Yesterday their feathers were still largely enclosed by waxy sheaths, like porcupine quills. Today the tips have fanned out to show the light coloured feather edges of the juvenile plumage. Distinguishing the chicks from the bottom of the nest is going to be even more difficult now.

Ospreywatch

Wed 21th June 2006 Like watching sunflowers grow the chicks expand and change between every sunrise and sunset. Yesterday their feathers were still largely enclosed by waxy sheaths, like porcupine quills. Today the tips have fanned out to show the light coloured feather edges of the juvenile plumage. Distinguishing the chicks from the bottom of the nest is going to be even more difficult now.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 22nd June 2006 Growing feathers, moulting feathers - this happens throughout the life of all birds. For many waterfowl such as the greylag geese, this happens all in one fell swoop. They can be seen in large rafts on Bassenthwaite paddling around with their growing

goslings at the moment. Staying near or in the water ensures safety in this vulnerable period when they cannot fly. It is not an option for a bird of prey to lose its ability to fly as this means it cannot catch prey. Ospreys are no exception and lose their feathers one or two at a time throughout the year. Generally the wing pinion feathers fall out in matched pairs to avoid lopsided flying. The speckled juvenile plumage of our chicks will change slowly over the next three years whilst in the Gambia, developing into full adult feathering by the time they return to the UK again to breed.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 24th June 2006 The three chicks are keeping their parents very busy; the male catching and transporting fish and the female feeding their fast growing family. Each chick takes its turn to be fed, and when it is full to capacity, it sinks down and the next one takes its place until all three will not take another morsel. A great attraction from the Dodd Wood viewpoint over the last couple of days, has been the antics of otters, playing and fishing in the lake. There have been up to three at a time - two smaller ones playing about most of the time, and a big male probably, fishing in the middle of the water. They are a joy to watch..

Ospreywatch

Sunday 25th June 2006 Hey ho! To the Greenwood now let us go. And there shall we find both buck and doe; the hart and hind and the little pretty roe. Sing heave and ho! Mediaeval lyrics but still true today at Dodd when a 'little pretty roe' galloped in full view along the wood edge just under the telescopes! Roe are by far the most common deer in the Lakes, distinguished by the white flashing on their bottoms contrasting nicely with their caramel summer coats. If you are not lucky enough to see the deer themselves, hug a tree and look for evidence of bark fraying. Buck roe deer rub their antlers against tree trunks to mark their territory visually and also spread scent from a gland between their horns.

Ospreywatch

Monday June 26th 2006 Eating sleeping stretching preening flapping pooping eating sleeping ..., All well on the nest.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday June 27th 2006 Despite the problems of silting, phosphates and occasional incursions of blue green algae Bassenthwaite still grows the fish and lures in fishermen. The majority of these are hardy midge bitten

men who unobtrusively blend in with the watery landscape, patiently sitting in hopes of a catch for hours at a time. So it was a surprise this morning to see one dressed in pure flamboyant whites stalking in full view along the marsh edge. Telescopes twirled – who was this rogue intruder? A closer look revealed it was no man or angel but a rare and exotic Great White Egret. Set against the viridian reeds and floating majestically over the sunny lagoons it was a sight that might have come straight out of Africa!

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 28th June 2006 Preening has become a major part of the chick's' waking moments. The feathers are still emerging out of their straw-like waxy cuticles and these need to be stripped away. The last remains of the old down covering is also being pulled out. The three birds stretching and bending over backwards to reach all those awkward places is like watching a series of complicated Tai chi, It chi and Scra chi moves.

Ospreywatch

Friday 30th June 2006. If you are a visitor at the Dodd wood Osprey viewpoint you may slowly become aware of a strange language being spoken by the people there. This is not a secret language or even a hidden one, but it's a language that will enlighten and engage those with the power of imagination. It is the language of 'Dodd'. Lesson 1; Go to the viewpoint at Dodd, having first partaken of the magic brown liquid from the Sawmill Cafe, and look down over the lake slightly to the left and behold you will see the outline of Britain in the form of a large island. In the language of Dodd the westerly shoreline of the River Derwent is known as the 'South Coast', with 'Kent' appearing on the right-hand side. Above is the 'Thames Estuary', usually full of Pond Lillies. Come out of the estuary and follow the shoreline, around 'East Anglia' and into 'The Wash' and here you will find two posts in the water. The right is 'Pete's Post', the left is 'Adams Post'. Apart from being famous for the legend of Adams post (another story) this post is most popular with the male Osprey, both for resting and for de-heading fish. This week it was the scene of another memorable event. Male Osprey sat on a post, Great White Egret walking around the post. Certainly one to remember on a cold winter's night. Above Adams post is the mysterious territory of the northern lands and towards Keswick 'Adrians' fence. Here endeth the first lesson. Osprey chicks still growing and all doing fine.

JULY

Ospreywatch

Saturday, 1st July Today has been a VERY quiet day for our osprey family. The slightly larger chick has learned how to eat a fish itself so grabbed the only fish brought in before 14.00, apart from any in the very early morning. It filled itself to capacity with the other two chicks watching intently. It then left the fish and sat on it until the female returned when it was fed AGAIN by her. The other two were still waiting when the female left again, having disposed of the whole fish! They will no doubt catch up when it gets a bit cooler and the male gets more active, which he usually does in the evenings. The Great White Egret was a very welcome diversion to the osprey family.

Ospreywatch

Sunday, 2nd July 2006. The Great White Egret has gone!! Anyway, back at the Osprey nest - today has been very hot again, with the chicks shading under Mum's wing. Again the largest chick has been eating the majority of the fish, but the other two have been fed as much as they needed. At one point this afternoon the female and the largest chick were over on one side of the nest and the other two the other side. The largest chick was mimicking the adult female and there they were 'mantling' together. A lot of flapping going on again today with those very large wings which are getting larger every day.

Ospreywatch

Monday July 3rd 2006 Now five weeks old, our chicks are being put forward for their GCSEs, (General Certificate of Sushi Education) set by Professor No-ring and invigilated by Madam XS. For the test today No-ring delivered a large live perch to the nest. Number 1 candidate stepped smartly forward and grabbed the fish out of his claws. Number 2 candidate, not to be outdone, grabbed it from Number 1 - Pass. Unfortunately, this flying start did not continue as neither 1 or 2 managed to tear anything from the fish, 1 wrongly starting at the tail and 2 losing its grip on both patience and prey. Number 3 candidate flunked the whole thing. Luckily, Madam XS took pity on them and helped them through the rest of the Practical. Resits during the next few days, no doubt!

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 4th July 2006 A torrential thunderstorm fell out of the hazy sky last night and washed away the humid heat. Today has been perfect with sunshine, clear visibility and the lake like glass. A raft of over 50 greylag geese could be seen from Dodd and No-ring was catching some big fish from the mouth of the Derwent River. On the nest the chicks practised standing straight and tall, showing off their long white legs and black toenails. The biggest one is nearly the size of XS – could this be a female? We should have a better idea of the sexes any day now when the chicks are ringed.

Ospreywatch

A health check-up of the three Lake District osprey chicks has taken place successfully this morning (Wednesday 5 July), with wildlife experts scaling the nest tree in Wythop Forest near Keswick for their first visit to see the chicks. The Project team are delighted that two of the chicks are probably males. Male ospreys are most likely to return to their place of birth, giving hope that the youngsters may return to nest in Cumbria in the future. The young ospreys are expected to take their first flight towards the end of this month.

Ospreywatch

Thursday July 6th 2006 Visitors to Whinlatter, and soon to the websites, will soon see in detail the beautiful close up images of our three chicks being ringed The triple effect of their glistening orange eyes backed by the soft sepia and creams of their plumage make pictures to be remembered. They are now called by their ring numbers, the female Green XU and the two males Green 5Y and 5Z. As is usual with osprey chicks when they are faced by a predator they 'play dead'. This strategy, as well as complementing their camouflage colouring in the nest is of great advantage to the ringing team. No one wants a 2cm talon stuck through a finger or even a 'friendly' peck from those hooked beaks.

Ospreywatch

Friday 7th July 2006. A lot of flapping and preening going on today. In a few weeks they will be taking off from their 'helipad' and the fun and games of recognising each individual osprey chick will start! What a wonderful sight to look forward to - 5 Ospreys flying around the Lake. How lucky we are.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 8th July 2006 An eclectic week for our Osprey family this week. Some days hot and sunny, some nights wet and stormy. Our chicks continue to grow up strong and healthy. It's been a bit like that for our viewers and watchers, now you see them now you don't, now the mist, now the heat haze,now the perfect view. The highlight of the week for visitors must be the magnificent new ringing DVD on show at Whinlatter. We now look forward to the fledging part of the year. Just as the local schools break up for the summer so the Osprey chicks will be preparing to leave their place of learning. Just as the former learn to keep their feet on the ground so the Osprey chicks will be learning to keep their feet in the air. Not always an easy process but a necessary one. Good luck to all. Five Ospreys over Bassenthwaite ? What a thought!

Ospreywatch

Sunday July 9th 2006 After the last match of the world cup we can have a look at some of the individuals in 'The Ospreys' International team line up! Fisch Adler (Germany) Gavilon Pescador (Spain) Balbuzard Pecheur (France) Pandion Haleatus (Rome) OsPrey (Australia) and Fiske Orn (Norway). With team mates from the Caribbean, Canada and the USA let's hope they continue to have a good season!

Ospreywatch

Monday July 10th 2006 There was a spot of teenage defiance exhibited by one of the chicks today. Dad came in with a fish at 14.20 which was taken by one hungry chick and rapidly torn apart, until left with just a nub of tail. This just would not go down so the chick lay on it, effectively stopping its siblings from taking it. A while later XS flew in, and nosed around looking for leftovers she didn't find. However, on a later return chick was still playing with it and Mum felt that it was about time it was disposed of, in her tum! However, chick was having none of this and reared up mantling the chewed stub and despite Mum's screams and renewed efforts to acquire this delectable morsel did not let go! Interesting behaviour that we have not seen on the nest before.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday July 11th 2006 A green-fingered osprey volunteer recommends this non-cook recipe. She grows the bulk of the raspberries in her garden but looks in the damper places of the forest for the pale gleam of Wild Raspberry canes amongst the briars. The fruit is smaller and

sharper than its cultivated cousins but still refreshing to find during a sultry July walk. So, crush one and a quarter pounds of blood red raspberries in a large bowl. Pour in two pounds of snowy castor sugar, half a bottle of pectin and two tablespoons of fresh lemon juice. Stir the mixture for five minutes. Cover the bowl and leave for forty-eight hours. Transfer into containers and deep freeze. It comes out just as fresh as it goes in - just in time for a Lakeside afternoon cream tea!

Ospreywatch

Wednesday July 12th Although there has been much flapping, none of the chicks has ventured to look over the rim of the nest to the dizzying drop below. There will be no second step when they finally do go over the edge.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 13th July 2006. They've all been getting in a flap again today. The female chick is very large now and can be easily mistaken as an adult when she stands up and struts about the nest. She still takes the fish from the adult male when he brings one in, but the others are getting their share we are pleased to report.

Ospreywatch

Friday 14th July 2006 There has been an international flavour around Whinlatter Forest Park and Dodd Wood this week with visitors coming from all over the World. Only this morning were our valiant staff and volunteers digging deep into their knowledge of French, while others still struggle with their English. It's appropriate that our visitors come from all over the World as Ospreys are a truly international bird. Only the Polar Regions lack Ospreys. Britain was a member of this dubious club thanks to Osprey persecution in the 19th Century until the return of Ospreys to Loch Garten in the 50s. Thankfully 19th Century attitudes are disappearing as is proven by the ninety-thousand visitors that come and see the Lake District Ospreys every year and the number of readers of this very website. So keep visiting and keep reading, you too support the Ospreys. A special note for one of our Australian visitors a week or so ago. The name 'Dodd' as in Dodd Wood comes from mediaeval Lakeland English meaning 'A round hill, usually grassy or bare' so it doesn't help with Great Uncle Dodds family tree I'm afraid. Chicks still flapping!

Ospreywatch

Saturday 15th July 2006 Our Osprey family continue their quiet life of fishing, feeding and flapping and will hopefully do so for the next week

or two. An ideal opportunity for lesson 2 in 'The Language of Dodd'. Look down from the viewpoint in Dodd Wood and to the left of the island of Britain (See Lesson 1). Here between the River Derwent and Newlands Beck you have a very special land. In this land we meet another strange tongue, far stranger than the language of Dodd.It's the language of SSIs, SSSIs, AONBs and NNRs. The last one is translated into, National Nature Reserve. Not only is this a special place in The Lake District and in Cumbria but it's also a special place internationally. This is the land where few humans are permitted, this is the land of special plants, birds and animals. It is a fragile land of lagoons, reedbeds and marsh. It is a place where the Otter, Snipe, Oystercatcher and warbler live. It is a place respected by the people at Dodd who appreciate it from afar. Above the marsh we return to the land of Humans. The A66, the villages of Thornthwaite and Powter How can be seen. If you wish to use Bassenthwaite Lake first of all log-on to www.lake-district.gov.uk to find out about no go zones and permits. This will not only help you Humans but also the smaller creatures, including our Osprey family.

Ospreywatch

Sunday 16th July 2006. Just after 3pm today one of the chicks frightened itself to death by actually lifting off and flying from one side of the nest to the other!!! I don't know who was more surprised - us or the Osprey. They've all been flapping like mad and lifting a few inches, so I don't think it'll be long now folks. Such a beautiful day again here at Whinlatter Forest - idyllic in fact. Wonderful views from Dodd Wood viewpoint this morning of the adults flying and the male fishing. He brought fish in a couple of times and was ignored by the chicks, so took them off again to feed himself. They were a little more interested in perfecting the flapping techniques!

Ospreywatch

Monday 17th July 2006. Another sweltering day in the Lake District - which meant lots of panting going on to keep temperatures down (the osprey chicks I mean) and of course the daily leaping and flapping. One of the males actually did what could only be described as a triple jump today, and at one point the other two were in fact getting a good wing 'beating' for several seconds as he galloped across the nest. All that exercise made them hungry, so the fish wasn't ignored today.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 18th July. A quiet day - birds and humans were suffering from

the heat and the female spent ALL DAY with her wings out trying in vain to get three almost fully grown youngsters underneath to keep cool. a lost cause really, and the chicks were not really interested in food when the male brought a fish to the nest very occasionally during the day. As a human osprey watcher I know exactly how they were feeling; a burst of energy every now and again into the sun and then ducking for cover from the sun! A quiet and very hot day all round.

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 19th July Will someone up there PLEASE turn the oven down. No one really wants to do anything - especially try to fly for the first time, which is what everyone is waiting for now. The heat was sweltering, and although there was fractionally more breeze than yesterday - and I do mean fractionally, the birds again were doing very little except panting furiously. In the morning two of them did make a bit of an effort and flew across the nest before collapsing in a heap when it warmed up again. We are due for the odd shower tonight which will be a blessing!

Ospreywatch

Thursday 20th July. 1700 hrs. The flapping is near an end. One male 'Chick' left the nest this afternoon at 14.35. It left on a very strong flap so it looked like it was doing well. Unfortunately the view from Dodd was hampered by haze. So has the chick made a safe landing? We don't know! The other chicks are very close to nest departure. Will they too be gone by the morning? For the next exciting instalment watch this space!

Ospreywatch

Friday 21st July We have waited all day for one or other of the chicks to depart, but at 17.00hrs neither had taken the final plunge. Bet you anything the flight will occur when we're not watching! Chick 5Z (male) who flew yesterday has been spotted. He's doing well but has not returned to the nest yet.

Ospreywatch

Monday 24 July The three osprey chicks hatched this year in the famous nest near Bassenthwaite Lake in Cumbria have successfully taken their first flights. The chicks, believed to be a female and two males, decided to take the plunge over the weekend. It's the first time that three chicks have fledged from the nest. The first youngster to leave home was one of the young males, who made his maiden flight on Thursday afternoon. His brother and sister who took flight early on Saturday and Sunday

mornings followed him into the air. All three have since been seen in flight and are being fed by their parents.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 25th July 2006 And then there were none! On Sunday, like the parents of school leavers, we gazed bereft at the empty nest. Our chicks had flown. Living vicariously we had to make do with reports from the Dodd viewpoint, where out in the Big Wide World these new students were learning all the skills of independent living. However, to our joy at lunchtime one of the wanderers returned and since then the whole bunch have followed suit, obviously following the student train of thought that food (and laundry) will be dealt with best at home. Of course Dad has obliged (as you do) and today brought home a feast of seven fish for his ravenous offspring.

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 26th July 2006. Although most of the time the nest is empty now that the chicks are out showing off their new found flying skills, there are the occasional visits by the odd hungry mouth. At one point today though, Viewpoint staff reported three chicks on a branch close to the nest munching on a large fish that 'dad' had caught for them. They've even ventured over to Dodd Wood 'airspace' where they were seen high above the Viewpoint. Great excitement for those visitors who happened to be there at the right time!

Ospreywatch

Thursday 27th July 2006 The weather has continued in its Mediterranean vein, giving perfect conditions for the young birds' flying practice. Already they are making forays out across the Lake, on one occasion crossing over the mile width completely to fly over the heads of the Dodd watchers.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 27th July 2006 Close to the nest the aptly named 'star tree' is a favourite perching spot for the adult ospreys. Today, its branches were shared by the three chicks, their long white fronts shining like a scattering of Christmas tree candles though the afternoon heat haze. What a festive sight!

Ospreywatch

Friday July 28th 2006 XS has been distancing herself from the nest and family over the past 2 days, spending hours of time alone further up the

lake. However, the maternal instinct is not quite dead, especially where golden eyed boys are concerned. This afternoon she arrived unexpectedly on the nest with a fish of her own and after 5Z had demolished his own high tea, fed him the rest of hers. A tender moment to treasure as the family splits up.

Ospreywatch

Saturday July 29th 2006 "3 little dickie birds sitting on a nest; XU and 5Y and little 5Z. Fly away XU fly away Z. Fly away 5Y and give Daddy some rest!" No - ring has been flying a fishing treadmill today as chick after chick has swooped down onto the nest demanding food.

Ospreywatch

Sunday July 30th 2006. The upper fells sides are flushing purple as the masses of bell heather come into bloom. This gives the signal that it is Bilberry time again. Unfortunately, lack of water has caused many of the fruits to shrivel up like wizened currants. Yesterday afternoon's rain was very welcome and hopefully, there will soon be lots of plump dusky blue berries lying waiting to be found amidst their low lying foliage.

Ospreywatch

Monday July 31st 2006 Hooray! Our big female chick XU has been seen catching and consuming a fish, sitting on a post in front of the Viewpoint. What a clever girl!

AUGUST

Ospreywatch

Tuesday August 1st 2006 Through the heavy showers all 5 birds have been seen so Mama XS is still in the neighbourhood.

Ospreywatch

Wednesday August 2rd 2006 Early on in the morning good views were had of one of the chicks practising rather wobbly hovers and plunges into the water. But, at around midday 2 jealous brothers obviously got tired of being outshone by Little Miss Perfect. As she flew in with yet another piece of fish they joined forces and chased her furiously around the forest. They are making a big mistake if they think by using this tactic she will share.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 3rd August 2006 A breeze from the North and wind under the

wings. A flash of white breast feathers and then flight, pinions outstretched, hang-gliding over the treetops. The land drops away and 300 feet above the lake the long sweep of wings beat and glide zigzags across the fellside. Brown back, white front alternately as the sunlight catches the planes of plumage. At the cut of the skyline the silhouette turns black and sharp against pale clouds, and turns again, floating high up towards the place where we stand following every move. Closer and closer until the colours come into focus again and then the highlight of flight, the sheer joie de vivre of a 360 roll, once and again and again. A winged coin spinning and rolling in the shining air. And for a moment we are also there, turning with no thought of age or gravity.

Ospreywatch

Friday 4th August 2006 Despite the rain the verge-side grass heads still look dry and dead but at intervals the banks around Bassenthwaite and over the Whinlatter Pass are covered with tall thickets of Rosebay Willow Herb. Set next to the ubiquitous bright yellow ragwort, its deep pink spires of flowers give the impression of travelling through an undulating wall of waving flames. Its other common name Fireweed mirrors this effect and is also a reminder of its warlike history after first being noticed in large quantities on regenerating bomb sites. Later on it will be just as beautiful when its white seeds drift away like clouds of ashes to regenerate elsewhere.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 5th August 2006 70% of Bassenthwaite is relatively shallow; under 5m. This is ideal for perch, pike, and trout and ideal for hunting ospreys. But in the centre there is a wide crack and here deep down in the murky depths of the Lake lurk a very rare fish, the Vendace. (Not hunted by ospreys) Unfortunately, there are not many of these silvery inhabitants left, due to the gradual decline in the quality of the water over the past years. Silt is a particular problem. This year some of our Vendace have been removed and re-housed in cleaner lakes elsewhere whilst work is started on the Lake' s enormous catchment area in an effort to prevent erosion. Planting trees and preventing stock trampling down river banks is helping this process but something we can all do to help whilst walking in the Lake District is to keep to designated footpaths. This means that our many feet won't loosen more soil to be washed away into the rivers. Getting back home to Bass quickly must be high on the Vendaces' fish list!

Ospreywatch

Sunday 6th August 2006 All three chicks are coming on well with their fishing and flying lessons but where XU can hover her brothers are only on circuits and bumps, the bumps usually being belly flops. 9 times in a row for one of them today. Owch!

Ospreywatch

Monday 7th August 2006. A lot of nest visits today with lots of fish. XU brings her own in, and quite sizeable fish they are too. However, dad is still dropping off fish for the boys!! Mum has been missing for two days, so could be on her way South - watch this space!!

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 8th August 2006 A family of Great Spotted Woodpeckers have taken a passionate liking to the Whinlatter peanuts. At the beginning of the season we only saw the shy adults fleetingly after visitors had gone home. Fresh grubs were obviously their preferred food. Now with two junior palates to pamper its Macdonalds every day.

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 9th August 2006 Another magnificent bird of prey has been seen over the Lake today – a male marsh harrier, attracted no doubt by the areas of reed below the Viewpoint. More slender than a buzzard and with its distinctively marked wings of grey and brown it soared over Dodd. The Viewpoint could definitely be named as a site for sore eyes.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 10th August 2006 After an absence of 3 days Mother XS has turned up again on the Marsh. Can't quite shake the dust of old England off her feet yet. Another vignette seen today was when two of the chicks were paddling at the Lagoon area and were totally surprised by one of our playful otters gambolling through between them. Two ospreys and an otter all in one field of view is something that can't happen that often!

Ospreywatch

Friday 11th August 2006 Despite the flips, rolls and dives our young pilots still have problems with flight control. This afternoon one chick completely lost it, attempting a landing on the nest and then pitching headfirst into the spiny Scots Pine branches beyond. With much flailing of wing and scrabbling of feet it eventually got airborne again and dishevelled but undaunted succeeded in landing the second time round.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 12th August 2006 Getting live pictures to Whinlatter from the nest 4 miles away has always been a tricky recipe involving solar panels, rechargeable batteries, a transmission mast, a mile or two of electrical cable and two microwave bounces. In past years they have sometimes plunged us into hot water but this year all has worked well, until today - our apologies for the rainbow screen. We are grilling our technicians to try and find out what's cooking.

Ospreywatch

Sunday 13th August 2006 No pictures of birds today again but all the chicks are flying and attempting to fish regularly on the Lake. This doesn't mean that No-ring can put his feet up because osprey teenagers are always hungry, quite literally having hollow legs! Birds' bones are specially adapted internally with a honeycomb of bone rather than the solid bone marrow humans possess. This adaptation cuts down weight enabling them to fly with greater ease. So, even an adult female osprey such as XS will not weigh more than a couple of bags of sugar. No hold or hand luggage on her flight South!

Ospreywatch

Monday 14th August 2006 Our cameras are back on so we have live pictures once again at Whinlatter. Our adult female also appears to be with us still, having been seen this morning. So if you want to see five Ospreys over Bassenthwaite the opportunity is still there. To help you with your visit to the Dodd Wood viewpoint it's time for lesson 3 on the 'Language of Dodd'. Start this lesson by asking one of the many helpful volunteers to point out the nest sight, now sadly underused. The trees around the nest sight and close in are named after their position on the clock face. One O'clock tree, seven O'clock tree, nine O'clock tree, so nothing too difficult there. Below the nest area there is a forest ride, sometimes called the horizontal gap or the lower ride. The tree trunks show very well along this ride. Above the nest there is the top ride, less obvious than the lower one, but it cuts across the top of the whole forest. At the far right end of this ride is a small crag, the young Ospreys use the trees around this crag quite a lot at the moment. Above the nest, along the top ride (about One O'clock) is 'the black hole' . The adults have used the trees here for many years. The other well known tree is about four O'clock from the nest, but further out than most, and is called 'the star tree'. You've got it, because it looks like a star on top (Yes I know all pine trees look like stars on top - discuss with volunteers when you

visit!) If you really want to get into the world of imagination (or madness) ask about 'the duck and egg' now there's a story. Still plenty to see at both Dodd and Whinlatter so get along soon and give yourself some nice memories for the cold dark winter evenings.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 15th August 2006 One of the nicest things about bird watching is comparing notes with others - you find out something new with every conversation and you meet such nice people! So it was lovely to have members of the Glaslyn Osprey Project here with us yesterday and to compare 'birdie' notes. Two wonderful Welsh chicks are now flying around the Porthmaddock waterways but as with our's and all the young ospreys of this season, time is of the essence. In under four weeks they will need to be independent and on their long way South.

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 16th August 2006 Live pictures have died again so do not adjust your set. We will try again tomorrow. In the meantime XS has popped back after yet another mini-break, maybe a fish foot massage or a forest chalet break away this time.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 16th August 2006 Buzzards are inclined to be overshadowed by the prestige of ospreys in this area but to see a specimen at close range is a magnificent sight. Driving home last week one volunteer saw a heaving brown mass emerging out of a ditch. Stopping the car she was fascinated to see a big buzzard struggling and heaving with an enormous rat. Eventually it got hold of it and managed to launch itself - straight over her car bonnet. There was one lady who was glad it didn't have butter-feet!

Ospreywatch

Friday 17th August 2006 Wet wet wet. Air from the Atlantic hits the facing slopes of these Western hills, rises, cools, and as you watch congeals into clouds and then drops a watery load straight into Bassenthwaite. A shawl of mist enshrouds Grisedale Pike and walkers return from the fells with hair in dripping rat tails and their aqua-system anoraks working overtime. Sometimes the rain squalls tear apart and birds can be seen. Sometimes not.

Ospreywatch

Monday 21st August It was a dull and very wet start to the week on the

Osprey nest this morning. The kind of week when you start thinking of a holiday in a warmer climate. Our Adult Ospreys certainly have Africa in mind but the journey itself always makes you think twice! Five birds seen on Thursday. Has our female started her journey? Only time will tell. Meanwhile we had another visitor looking for winter accommodation this morning. A Carrion Crow spent five minutes inspecting the nest, picking up odd morsels of fish. He decided not to take up the tenancy when three juvenile Ospreys decided to have a lunch time meeting there. The Crow shot off smartly. Four fish have been seen on the nest between 10.00 am and 1.00 pm today so plenty of activity is still going on over the waters of Bassenthwaite Lake. Come and look while there's still time!

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 22nd August 2006 The fells look like something out of a fairy story with the heather now in full bloom. In the old tales Rumpelstiltskin may have had the magic to spin straw into gold, but here's a more scientific method for turning the vibrant purple flowers into something just as beautiful. Fill a large saucepan with water and flowering heather fronds. Then boil for 2 hours and strain. To this liquid add some hanks of raw wool that have been previously washed and boiled for ¾ hour in an alum solution. Boil again for another hour until the wool has undergone an amazing transformation from cream to the colour of pure gold. A recipe to dye for!

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 23rd August 2006 Shorter and shorter are the times spent on the nest. Longer and longer are the times spent fishing and hanging out amongst the trees. XS has not been seen since last Thursday and so we must assume that she has definitely gone and is winging her way South somewhere over France.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 24th August 2006 Oh dear, the seasons move on so fast. Not only the dates fly by but other fruits are hovering on the brink of ripeness. On the upland woodland edges and even clinging to scree slopes the hardy rowan trees are aflame with colour. It seems to be a particularly good year as the orange berries are hanging so thick that the more slender branches are bending under the weight. A free feast for fattening the blackbirds and thrushes at the back end of summer.

Ospreywatch

Friday 25th August 2006 Fisticuffs at lunch today when one chick brought in his own fish to the nest but then brother arrived and decided that it should be his! Both locked talons onto the hapless prey and lurched round the nest screeching and flapping. In the end the rightful owner won the bout and his disgruntled sibling flew off in a huff. We have not seen this particular rivalry between in/our juvenile birds before.

Ospreywatch

Saturday August 26th 2006 Deciding what fish is which can be quite difficult but today we had a sure identification when No-ring brought up a long and sinuous pike. Its underside gleamed white and it's back was marked with attractive grey shadings. Its armour-plated head and jaw however proved quite a tough assignment for the hungry juvenile - but as usual all went slowly down the same way. The biter was well and truly bitten.

Ospreywatch

Sunday August 27th 2006 Three birds only have been seen over the Lake in the past few days, No-ring and we think, the two males. Has our female juvenile decided to pack her bags and go? Last year our young female disappeared about the same time as her Mum, around August 21st and as we know XU has been able to catch her own fish for some weeks now. Just keep your eyes skinned if you are walking near Bassenthwaite at the moment.

Ospreywatch

Monday 4 September 2006. Updates will be provided again next season when we hope the osprey returns towards the start of April.