

Lake District Osprey Project



Lake District Osprey Project Diary Archive 2007

Archive of entries upto the end of June 2007 prior to launch of new Diary format. Full archive will be produced at the year end.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 30th June 2007. Three under one won't go! Our chicks are now so chunky that it is impossible for them all to fit under Mum. In spite of all her contortions to spread her wings over two and straddle the third their tails are sticking out into the rain at all angles. And hasn't it rained again today! No-ring has continued to bring in large fish regularly and this afternoon saw two juicy tail ends lying on the nest. For a few blissful minutes the chicks were being fed by both parents but Mum wasn't happy with this arrangement and soon nudged No-ring off.

Ospreywatch

Friday 29th June 2007 Nasty neighbours are not confined to human settlement - mutual dislike exists in the bird world also. Overflying a nest by any large raptor is a definite No-No for the occupants! So Buzzard Bunkhouse on the fellside, chock full of tear-away fledglings, is regarded with loathing by the Osprey Entourage. The Buzzards, it is fair to say, have equally strong feelings whenever No-ring wheels over their territory. Sky-skids and stand-offs have been the order of the day.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 28th June 2007 'Like Mother, like child,' doesn't always hold true. With Ms No-ring concentrating on chick-rearing rather than 'housework' the nest itself looks a bit of a tip; sticks random and no signs of any fresh moss. But a diminutive home-help was at hand as one of the older chicks purposefully started moving twigs out of the nest cup today. This is instinct kicking in of course, rather than child exploitation.

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 27th June 2007 The chicks' wings are growing every day, unfolding like ever extending concertinas. In conjunction with constantly expanding feet inadvertant 'wing walking' in the nest has all the pain and none of the grace of the aerial sport.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 26th June 2007 A nice interlude today had Mum sitting on the edge of the nest preening and 3 little beaks below her all busy smoothing out their own miniscule quills. Much like a baby's first tooth the new feathers need regular gnawing to help them grow comfortably..

Ospreywatch

Monday 25th June 2007 With the continuing adverse weather Monday has made it a deuce of a difficult time for high fliers both tennis players and ospreys trying to keep

their balls or fish in the air. At 14.30 the strong N wind was seen to blow No-ring backwards as he attempted to land his catch on the nest –not his fault poor love.

Ospreywatch

Sunday 24th June 2007 At 3 weeks old the chicks have reached their toddler stage and are using both legs and wings to paddle themselves about the nest, dragging themselves out of the tiny nest cup and getting under both parents' feet. Just as well Dad's DIY has made such a good job of the nest perimeter or they'd be off over the edge.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 23rd June 2007 A nest of six baby robins discovered just outside one of the busiest doors of the Visitor Centre. 1000's of people must have passed by without noticing over the past few weeks!

Ospreywatch

Friday 22nd June 2007 Thunder rumbling and thin wraiths of cloud wrapping mysteriously around the peaks. The woods are full of slightly scared and soaking school parties and the roads with wringing wet cyclists. All arrive at the Visitor Centre to steam off with a hot drink. At two weeks old the older chicks are also looking pretty browned off – not due to the weather but because their brand new teddy bear brown down is growing through their first white coats. It distinguishes them from the little one who is still bobbing up and down like a bunny tail.

ospreywatch

Thursday 21st June Why do ospreys return? Today is an answer

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 19th June 2007 It is good to remember that there are lots of chicks, other than ospreys, all hatching out in the woods. So it was not surprising that staff and volunteers on their way to do their duty at Dodd wood were delayed the other day by unforeseen circumstances. Just as they were about to leave the Sawmill Tea-rooms car-park they noticed an adult Blue Tit getting rather excited on a nearby bird box. Taking a second look the watchers saw the adult bird move away from the entrance as a small face appeared from the inside! The face pushed itself forward until it was almost through the hole, then reversed almost out of sight, then came forward again. A moment of uncertainty followed, and then a quick thrust, a whirl of wings and the tiny body propelled itself to a nearby branch. One tiny Blue Tit fledged. It was not alone. Five more siblings followed, some being encouraged by Mum and a juicy morsel. Show over, staff and volunteers started back to work. Or nearly. Just as the engine revved up on the trusty Osprey mobile another miniature face appeared at the nest box entrance and, even more unsure of itself than the previous occupants, proceeded to launch itself into the big world outside. Did it make it to the nearest branch? Of course it did – just. Bill and Kate eat your heart out!

Ospreywatch

Monday 18th June 2007 There are many groups and individuals who use Bassenthwaite, all of whom appreciate the amazing natural diversity of this beautiful and special place. Managed primarily for wildlife by the Lake District National Park Authority at the South end, sailing and fishing are enjoyed as low impact sports at the North end. Our osprey No-ring knows no such bounds on his fishing trips and it is a credit to all those regularly using the Lake that he is able to go about his business safely. In particular this is due to the high standards of responsibility shown by our fishermen in their disposal of old fishing tackle and hooks. Becoming entangled in

nylon line spells almost certain death or injury, as those who have been reading about the terrible time the Loch Garten ospreys have had will readily understand. We are just glad to hear 'Henry' osprey has managed to survive and that there is another Scottish chick to replace the one killed.

Ospreywatch

Sunday 17th June 2007 Chicks one and two are a week old and must have doubled in size. Today saw a first major squabble between them. Mum didn't serve up elevenuses quickly enough (the food was still flapping) and little tummies just couldn't wait! In desperation they pecked for phantom fish from each at the other's beaks ending up in a half-nelson beak lock and falling over backwards. Sensibly, our little fly-weight chick kept well out of the way of the fighting feather-weights at the bottom of the nest, only reaching up when Mum with the corporeal thing appeared.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 16th June 2007 Dull overcast and midge-ridden – but at least not so wet. Do midges bite through feathers or is it just bare skinned humans that suffer the indignity of fighting a losing battle with so small but so irritating an enemy?

Ospreywatch

Friday 15th June 2007 The terrible weather continues with scarcely a let up in the rain today. Ms No-ring has been doing a sterling job faced with tough decisions concerning the chicks' survival. Should her priority be to keep them warm and dry by constantly covering them and thus neglect feeding them – or feed them and risk letting them get wet? Either scenario could spell disaster. As it is she has sat firmly on them, dripping with water herself, and has been using every window of opportunity to jump up and feed them a few mouthfuls whenever the rain has eased off. She has taken to slipping bits of uneaten fish down into the nest cup so that there is always a supply (if slightly broiled) to use. As a result the chicks are still looking A1.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 14th June 2007 Still very vulnerable, the nest has suffered terrible weather overnight - wind, thunder and rain. But fears that the chicks would not survive were unfounded as they all popped up from underneath Mum as cute as three cotton buds, begging for breakfast. Little one is definitely holding its own against its growing siblings and got a good eight mouthfuls.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 12th June 2007 A third chick hatching – well, not very likely we thought when we turned on the screens at 10.00 this morning. Although the weather has been warm Ms No-ring had stopped incubating - the 2 chicks taking all her concentration. In comes a beautiful fish at 10.50. two little heads stretch eagerly to the sky. (Manna comes from heaven.) At least 50 Visitors are avidly watching the screen, and they are the ones to get the first view. Muffled gasps –Is that an extra wing? Opinions fluctuate back and forth. Yes, No, Maybe. No. It's definitely a third tiny white head swinging like an erratic pendulum in the effort to raise itself up for the first time. Hooray!!! Later it can be seen more clearly, a string of neck uneasily attached to a scrap of body, and Ms No-ring pulls out the speckled round of eggshell that until so recently was its entire world. The full clutch is hatched and there is the start of a brand new family.

Ospreywatch

Monday 11th June 2007 After the last exciting few days we have had time to turn round and look at some of the DVD recordings taken of the first few hours of our 2

chicks' lives. (09.06.07) They are amazing. Again, the differences in behaviour between our old female XS and our new Ms No-ring have opened up whole new insights into how ospreys live and learn. All through this season No-ring has had to nurture his new and inexperienced bride, taking on all the stick collection and much of the nest building as well as providing all the fish. She responded by laying three eggs and taking on incubation duties. But how would she manage her newly hatched family? Would instinct take her the whole way or would learning play a part? The moment arrived for the first feed – and it was obvious she was completely baffled. Her first problem was how to reach down into the nest without tipping into it. It took her a few tries before she got the correct 'knees bend,' technique. Then, what was it the chicks wanted? To our initial horror she appeared to start 'mouthing' them, running her open beak over their wobbly little heads. At this point No-ring, who was eating some of the fish he had brought up noticed she was struggling. After watching for some minutes he dragged the fish closer to her and very gently started pulling off chick sized pieces. He fed a few mouthfuls to the chicks to attract her attention and then proceeded to pass little bits to her, gently encouraging her to feed the chicks with them. It was a quite heart-stopping performance of intelligence and patience - and it worked! She has not looked back since and has been feeding both bouncing babies with the utmost success.

Ospreywatch

Sunday 10th June 2007 Mother Father and babes doing well but no sign of a third egg hatching yet.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 9th June 2007. There are now two chicks in the osprey nest at Bassenthwaite Lake. They hatched out overnight - the first was spotted by the watchers at 3.40 this morning. The second a few hours later. It's unusual for them both to have hatched so close together - there's usually a gap of at least a day. There's still another egg in the nest. Thursday 7th June 2007 Pre-hatching nerves seem to have led to a bit of role reversal. No-ring has sat warming his toes on the eggs for much of the day, steadfastly refusing to acknowledge Ms No-ring's raucous cries for food. At last, fed up (or rather NOT fed up) she took to the skies and went and caught her own fish, which she ate sitting on a post in the marsh. With the remaining fish tail in claw she then proceeded to display above the nest in much the same way as a male bird would, swooping and diving and showing off her prey. Was this a very broad hint or a tit for tat demonstration? – Certainly she had no intention of sharing her meal

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 6th June 2007 Waiting and pacing! No chicks yet.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 5th June 2007 Ms No-ring is becoming more and more confident in her adopted neighbourhood. This morning, after eating a large piece of perch she spent a long time flying majestically over the Lake, perching on one of the posts and bathing on the marsh edge. Meanwhile No-ring seemed quite content to sit on the eggs. They are so close to hatching that surely the parents can hear them cheeping inside....

Ospreywatch

Monday 4th June 2007 Volunteers, staff and visitors are all looking forward to hatching with eager anticipation. Being optimists we are all counting out ospreys before they are hatched.

Ospreywatch

Sunday 3rd June 2007 Clumps of Bistort, recommended as an ancient culinary vegetable, are shooting up spikes of exotic looking baby pink flowers from between luxuriant foliage, especially in damper areas of the hedgerows. The taste of the large leaves is bland but the texture, reminiscent of bald sandpaper, leaves a lot to be desired.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 2nd June 2007 'Why did the hedgehog cross the road?' The unfortunate answer is, 'To see his flat-mate.' The past few weeks have seen a sharp rise in hedgehog casualties as they trundle across the roads and alongside verges in search of juicy invertebrates. As they come out at dusk and are so well camouflaged they are often difficult to see in the half-light. Drive carefully!

Ospreywatch

Friday June 1st 2007. Listen! Blackcaps, Redstarts, Garden Warblers, Whitethroats, Wood Warblers, Pied and Spotted Flycatchers, Wheatears, Swallows, Martins, Swifts, Willow Warblers - all the migrants and all the resident birds, chirping and whistling and singing fit to bust!

Ospreywatch

Thursday 31st May 2007 Pike have been on the menu today -both brought up to the nest headless. Bassenthwaite Lake of course grows some very large specimens of 'freshwater shark' but No-ring's normal prey is the young jack pike. These toothy hunters wait to ambush smaller fish from the shelter of the water-weed, whilst these in their turn suck up mini-beasts born from the mud - who eat each other and nibble at the plant life. So the food chains stretch above and below the sunlit waters and bind the life of the Lake into a hungry whole.

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 30th May 2007 The nest, already as large as a double bed, is steadily growing in depth with No-ring's efforts. From a random selection of twigs and branches manipulated by a beak - how does it all hold together? Re-making the mock-up nest at Whinlatter Visitor Centre has proved to be a salutary lesson to us humans. Even with nails, wire, fishing twine and opposable thumbs it is with the greatest of difficulty we have managed to entwine sticks to form a nest only a third of the size in the approximate shape and prevent it from falling apart! (Gold star for D of E Jonathan!)

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 29th May 2007 Nearly June and only about a week before hatching. Huge swathes of the fellsides are changing colour and texture. Bracken, tenacious on the steepest slopes is sending up its succulent green fronds uncurling through last year's flattened brown stalks. Seen as a virulent weed by upland cultivators it is very poisonous to grazing animals and spreads via an underground rhizome system as well as spores. But walking past the delicate leaves unfurling in the sunshine and the rich smell of new growth is one of the joys of early summer.

Ospreywatch

Monday 28th May 2007 Last night was the coldest night in May for many years with temperatures at the nest at 6C and freezing on the tops. Ms No-ring's fluffy white feather pantaletts and petticoats came into their own, helping provide that 4 season tog rating around the eggs.

Ospreywatch

Sunday 27th May 2007 As we have seen No-ring is very much a 'New Man' taking on tasks at the nest as well as bringing home the fish. This is not unusual amongst ospreys. As the incubation process has progressed it has been a joy to watch both No-ring and Ms. tend the precious eggs with such care. Regular turning with beak and feet ensure that the developing embryos do not adhere to the inside of the eggshell or become malformed. Constant warmth fuels the growth process. Both parents have a brood patch; an area of bare skin under their breast feathers. Males have a small 'hot-spot' that works like a thermos when he is incubating (about 25% of the time, during daylight hours). However, female ospreys have a large area with many vessels that can be suffused with blood whenever the egg temperature falls. She will nearly always incubate throughout the hours of darkness. Her special motherhood adaptation is to be able to instinctively sense temperature change and to control it within the nest through her own body mechanisms. Amazing. A completely green central heating system!

Ospreywatch

Saturday 26th May 2007 A day bathed in sunshine again but with a chilly wind for those sitting up in the fells. Inside the nest cup though it appears that a warm micro-climate is being created, due to No-ring's hard work at placing his sticks around the edge of the nest. As a wind-break it is certainly quite effective for what with his own feathers and the extra insulating moss he brought in today he was definitely panting slightly throughout the afternoon.

Ospreywatch

Friday 25th May 2007 DIY on the nest is going great guns today. No-ring has brought in sticks of varying length (his biggest the other day was 1.5m). And surprise - Ms No-ring has brought in 2 bunches of moss. She has been finding out that 'Make your bed and lie in it' takes on a literal meaning when there is not enough padding underneath.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 24th May 2007 Many people enquire as to when the best time of day is to see No-ring catch a fish. Here are the statistics, data collected and collated by our fully awake and alive 24 hour Nest Protection Team. Of the 148 fish he has killed so far 34% have been caught between 04.00 and 12md and 64% between 12md and 22.00. Thus, in theory it is possible for anyone to see a catch at any time of day. And many do. Following Murphy's Law however, this often translates into it happening in the 5 mins just before you struggle over the brow of the hill to the Viewpoint - or worse, 2 minutes after you have left, following a 3 hour vigil. (In the latter case you can also be sure you will collared later in the cafe by the couple who saw it all and can't wait to tell you in detail how wonderful it was and how sorry they are you missed it! Grrr.)

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 23rd May 2007(Overheard and paraphrased only lightly...) Back when I were a lad in 2001 on 24 hour Nest Protection we just crouched down hidden in the wet grass, come rain, come gale. Gaw, we thought us lucky when we were given an umbrella. That was proper Protecting right enough – just us and the birds. Soaked through to the skin, shaking wi' cold and moiled up wi' cramp. But we were Happy! Not like t' chaps today. They got a hut, a stove, a chair each, and a Portaloo - no stamina for the shifts like what we had. And to cap all, this year there's bin Glass put in the windows. I ask you, when did a minus 6 whistling draught ever hurt anyone? Talk about soft! The lads and lasses of today don't know they're living.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 22nd May 2007 What a magnificent effort. Today, from daybreak until nightfall No-ring and Ms. No-ring have only left the eggs uncovered for a total of 4 minutes. Any business would be proud to have whittled time and motion down to this efficiency!

Ospreywatch

Monday 21st May 2007 Bathing in the Lake has held few charms for Ms No-ring since she arrived from the warm waters of Tropical Gambia. As all Cumbrian lasses know, you have to be hardy to be a successful British beach babe. However, encouraged by these two beautiful days of sunshine she took the plunge this morning and immersed herself, splashing out with gay abandon in the chilly waters off the marsh.

Ospreywatch

Sunday 20th May 2007 What a relief – sunshine! Both ospreys have had a relaxed day sitting on the nest and preening out their crumpled feathers. At Dodd Viewpoint the morning was further enlivened with the sight of the resident buzzard and a raven from higher up the hill going at each other hammer and tongs above visitors' heads. Despite the buzzard's fierce looking claws and beak the raven is often the more determined bird, especially if there is a juicy carrion meal at stake. Also, as ravens usually breed early from mid February onwards they will already have well grown hungry young. Buzzards breed later in April or May so their chicks will still be vulnerable in the nest..... Not a combination that makes for good neighbours.

Ospreywatch

Saturday May 19th 2007 After the rain, gales. Very choppy indeed on Bassenthwaite with small craft scurrying for shelter during the heavier squalls. No-ring managed to feed Ms No-ring with a catch at 08.55 this morning but gave up on this Lake in the afternoon. After being told off severely by his hungry female he was seen flying away over Whinlatter Pass at about 14.20, probably hoping Loweswater Buttermere or Crummock had a more sheltered fishing spot. However, he had not returned by 17.00.

Ospreywatch

Friday 17th May 2007 Another morning of torrential rain. Ms No-ring is sitting low down in the nest cup with her back and wings curved over the eggs like an umbrella. Her head is pressed flat to the surface so that the rain trickles down under her neck feathers and drips off her beak into the soaking moss. Anyone with a hoodless cagoule will sympathise.

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 16th May 2007 Rain and more rain, in every conceivable strength from bucketfuls rebounding off the ground in a thick roaring haze to delicate fine droplets deceptively clinging to hair and feathers and soaking through to the skin in 5 minutes. Every new leaf is folded in on itself funneling drips and every branch droops, quietly weeping with the weight of water. Living in an aquarium no doubt has its joys so it would come as no surprise to see all the fish in Bassenthwaite rising up from the lake and swimming around the fell sides in the saturated air.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 15th May 2007 As many visitors have said, watching the No-rings incubating is a pastime similar to watching paint dry - if with an eggshell finish. But as with all great paintings the obvious image points to deeper and more significant

levels. Within those egg shells cataclysmic events are happening. Powered by warmth and the yellow yolk cells are dividing, tissues changing function, nerves differentiating from backbones, an eye develops in its cartilaginous socket, a heart beats. Energy movement growth, change, life; the miracle of creation is happening at this moment right in front of us.

Ospreywatch

Sunday 13th May 2007 Taking Sunday as a day of rest No-ring only brought in 2 fish today. This has not affected his excellent average catch of 4. Ms No-ring brought in a stick –building her personal grand total up to 2 sticks and 1 piece of moss!

Ospreywatch

Saturday 12th May 2007 Every week many of our Osprey Volunteers do other work for nature conservation in the area, including a weekly bird count on the Solway Estuary. Here is a tale from earlier on in the month whilst walking the shoreline near Bowness-on-Solway; illustrating the diversity of wildlife and very different habitats just next door to the Lakes. The morning's highlight was the sight of three Pomeranian skuas overflying mixed flocks of Knot, Grey-plover and Godwit feeding quietly on the silver flats. But in the mid-afternoon suddenly the whole lot rose in a whirling mix of flashing wings set against the magnificent backdrop. A lone osprey soared overhead causing the tumultuous panic. Simultaneously, 6 shelduck took off and like a formation WW2 fighter squadron defending civilian light aircraft, homed in on the raptor silhouette. With a shift of its pinions it effortlessly flicked itself out of range and continued its way North - a late migrant running the coastal gauntlet.

Ospreywatch

Friday 11th May 2007 Red squirrels everywhere – including some tiny ones – possibly weighing only as much as a few boiled sweets.

Ospreywatch

Monday 14th May 2007 A dry sunny day with the May and Rowan in full blossom, filling the air with their musky scents in the valley and up onto the fells. Both ospreys are sitting well enjoying the view over the flower surrounded Lake from their desirable residence.

Ospreywatch

Friday May 11th 2007 No-ring seems to have branched out into 'stick mode' and has treated his partner to three pretty large bits of bough today. To coincide with this Ms No-ring is twigging onto the fact that she should arrange them after delivery to form a lattice-work around the edge of the nest. They should act as a windbreak and keep any potential predators at bay. (Incidentally, our nest camera 3 has, as last year, succumbed to natural wastage and now its lens peers again through a fishy mist.)

Ospreywatch

Thursday May 10th 2007 Now incubation is well under way here is a review of the main events for the period leading up to laying. Figures bear out our suspicions that Ms No-ring has abundant sex appeal with 150 matings, a third higher than the average for XS over the same period. This would indicate that all 3 eggs have a very good chance of being fertile. However, on the housework front she is either very immature or very clever. No-ring has brought in 30 sticks and 21 pieces of moss. Ms No-ring has only tangled her toes around one wisp of greenery. No-ring has caught 'pounds of fun' with 101 fish !! All is going swimmingly.

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 9th May 2007 May, a month mixing mid-summer warmth and winter sleet so here is an adaptation of 'Tripe a la Lyonnaise,' a wild French taste for the chilly English nights. Along the roadside banks the plant 'Jack-by-the-Hedge' is standing tall, its stem of serrated spade shaped leaves topped by a round of small white flowers. Raw, it smells of garlic but its flavour is much more subtle when cooked and can make cordon bleu out of a traditional poor man's dish. Cut and fry a large onion. Dice up a skirt of prepared tripe enough for two and toss it in the onions with 2 tablespoons of vinegar. Lastly, finely chop two heaped tablespoons of leaves and flowers of 'Jack-by-the-Hedge' and mix this in. Heat until the flavours mingle. Eat accompanied by a glass of country French wine - to toast success to the pioneer French Osprey colonies in Orleans and Chambord.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 8th May 2007 The Lake District Osprey Project team has confirmed that the new female osprey has now laid three eggs at the nest near Bassenthwaite Lake. The female bird was seen laying the third egg at about 9.30 on Sunday morning, six days after the first egg was spotted in the nest. The female osprey does about 70% of the incubation with the male giving her rests so that she can leave the nest to exercise and clean herself. Incubation takes between 34 and 40 days, so the first chick can be expected to hatch in early June. Last year all three eggs laid by the original female osprey successfully hatched.

Ospreywatch

Monday 7th May 2007 After his prolonged burst of energy, mating, fishing and single handedly nest building prior to the laying, No-ring obviously felt he needed a day of rest. Since dawn he had only given two tiny tail ends of fish to Ms, much to her disgust, and had eaten the rest himself. A thick piece of stick in lieu of lunch was not appreciated. In the afternoon he couldn't wait to get his toes down under the moss and snuggle up on those eggs, taking over incubation. Ms, standing on the nest edge became more and more vocal culminating at about 16.30 in their first serious lovers' tiff. He just would NOT get out of the nest bowl, despite the frenzied cries of his now ravenous bride. At last in desperation she caught hold of the offending stick in her beak, swung it round and deliberately gave him a hefty shove and poke with the end of it. It certainly worked as he was up and off in a minute. It seems that the glove of silk may hide a rod of iron!

Ospreywatch

Sunday 6th May 2007 After all our attempts to predict the timing of an egg yesterday it was Ms No-ring's body-clock that has had the last say, of course. At 09.37 this morning up she stood, pushed and there it was! The THIRD egg - a full clutch. She has surpassed all our expectations. A bare 2 hours of recovery time after this she took her first test of practical motherhood in the face of adverse weather. Would she sit on the exposed nest battered by Bank Holiday rain, cold and wind or would she flee to shelter? Tucking her head low and arching her wings and back into an umbrella shape she sat as tight as she could, only lifting off to turn the eggs when the rain had stopped. She may not have lifted a toe to bring in any nest material in the last two weeks but she certainly has passed the egg producing/nurturing exams with flying feathers.

Ospreywatch

Saturday 5th May 2007. This could be the day for a third egg, so visitors and staff all turned into amateur midwives and watched Ms. No-ring on the Big screen avidly for signs of untoward stress. The day started well with 2 successful matings, which was

an indication that another egg might be on its way. (Mating stops very soon after there is a full clutch.) Mid morning we agreed she seemed to be breathing rather heavily – but didn't seem to be blinking, as she had with the second egg. However, at 11.35 No-ring came in with a fine perch. If she was near to lay she would most likely eat it on the nest (that's what XS used to do) But no, she took it off to eat in a tree – so all before was a false alarm. Later she did eat a tail end of a fish on the nest edge – but there seemed to be no other signs by then. Also by 17.00 there had been no more matings. It is frustrating but absolutely fascinating trying to 'read' this new bird.

Ospreywatch

Friday May 4th 2007 We all have winter moments – when something so dramatic or profound or beautiful happens in the natural world that it imprints on our memories; to be treasured and taken out in the dull sunless days to give joy again. Here is just such a once in a lifetime moment – a gift from the Lake to the watchers at Dodd. Since their return seeing ospreys would be more than enough, flying and fishing in a sunlit vista over one of the most varied and wonderful habitats in England. But fell, marsh, wood and water hold constant surprises. So, earlier in the week, suddenly, another bird of prey is on the scene, quartering the reed beds. It is identified as a rare female marsh harrier, her brown back and buff head catching the sunlight as she wheels and soars. No-ring spots her and furious at her intrusion on 'his' lake, flies to the attack. The marsh harrier responds, also showing aggression as No-ring presumes to fly over 'her' reed beds. As both birds are of similar size, the resulting dogfight is watched with awe and hearts in mouths. Although bluff is the name of the game fights such as this can result in injury, if split second timing is out when a razor sharp talon whistles by. Then comes the caviar on the cake! As the marsh harrier swoops low over a clump of reeds it erupts in a flurry of brown limbs and fur. One of our otters has been caught napping! In a panic it rushes across the marsh with the ungainly gait of a water mammal out of its element, short legs going like the clappers, nearly leaving bits of its body behind. No-ring and the harrier, equally startled, back off and the Lake life resumes its calm tenor for the rest of the day. Beauty danger and a spice of comedy – file that under the top 10 in the memory bank!

Ospreywatch

Thursday May 3rd 2007 14.15 today – ANOTHER egg! Well done Ms No-ring. As eggs are laid at approximately 2 day intervals -will there be another on Saturday? She is sitting very nicely, starting off incubation.

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 3rd May 2007 A fantastic day with weather the stuff of fantasy. Blue skies, bright sun, green woods and a cool wind. Two proud birds have been sitting in turns on the nest, both of whom seem absolutely fascinated by their beautiful egg. For Ms No-ring it is all of course, an entirely new learning curve, but you'd think that for No-ring, father of 10 eggs/chicks events in the nest bowl would be a bit of inverted old hat. Not a bit of it. He is on top of the world as in previous years, and still especially keen on incubation, eagerly awaiting his turn to snuggle down, rocked by the gentle breeze like a contented Never-Never Bird in the nest cap.

Tuesday 1st May 2007 The Lake District Osprey Project team are celebrating today after an egg was spotted on the nest near Bassenthwaite Lake. The news comes less than two weeks after the male osprey, who has been nesting in the Lake District since 2001, found himself a new partner. Following the new female's arrival in the Lake District just after Easter, the pair of ospreys quickly settled in together at the nest. The egg was first seen just after 7pm on Monday. The female bird is now

incubating her precious egg and 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

Monday 30th April 2007 Time flies. Already No-ring and his new Ms have been here for nearly 2 weeks. In the normal course of things we would expect eggs to be laid 14 days after first mating. However, other factors may come into play. A first time mother may take longer to develop eggs inside her, she may only lay one egg or sometimes none at all until her second year. On the other hand she could lay a full clutch of three with no problem. We'll just have to see!

ospreywatch

Sunday 29th April 2007-04-30 It has been difficult not to notice that the webcam has had little connection with reality over the past few weeks. Like a malfunctional TARDIS it has been grabbing pictures from the past and squirting them at random onto the net. To all of you who have written in on the subject, thank you for your concern. Our screw-driver wielding Time Lord from the BBC has been trying his best to arrow in on a complex and extremely frustrating technical problem. In the here and now our ospreys have had an excellent day and both are looking far more in condition than when they first arrived.

Ospreywatch

Saturday April 28th 2007 Heave ho me hearties! A fine day and stiff southerly wind has made for a choppy ride on the good ship 'Nest.' Landlubbers watching on the Big screen have felt slightly seasick as the picture has swung about but our gallant Captain No-ring has been in and out keeping everything ship shape and bringing in the occasional stick and fish. Mate Ms No-ring has stood on the lookout camera with her telescope eyes surveying the distant shores of Dodd. Land ho! Goose-winged vessels on the marshy horizon – mostly Greylag but look closely to spot a single castaway buff breasted Brent goose amongst them!

Ospreywatch

Friday April 27th 2007 'The cuckoo then from every tree mocks married men' goes the mediaeval refrain, coupling the unorthodox habits of a bird that makes no nest, has no family life and passes on the entire responsibility of child-rearing to unsuspecting foster parents, with the human cuckold. An uncomfortable comparison, but always a welcome and evocative sound, heralding the next stages of Spring. A much more uncomfortable comparison is that the author of the song expected to hear them from 'every tree'. In the past few days there have been reports of one in Ennerdale, one in Grisedale, one in Borrowdale, reflecting the overall national decline since 1970. It is a worrying trend that unfortunately is probably due to habitat destruction and a resulting lack of hairy caterpillars rather than increased matrimonial fidelity.

Ospreywatch

Thursday April 26th 2007 So with No-ring fully functional again and Ms No-ring enjoying his attentions it is easy to forget Green XS, female founder of this first osprey nest in England in 150 years. Hatched at Loch Inch in Scotland in 1995 she would have been 12 years old this May. She has produced 10 live chicks in her 6 breeding years, culminating with a full clutch of 3 – a bird in her Prime. We have watched her develop from courtship in 2000 into a young mother, not entirely sure how to manage incubation changeovers, to the self-assured matriarch of the last few years. Her first chick hatching coincided with the tragedy of Foot and Mouth in 2001.

For many of the people in the Northern Lakes this new life brought a ray of new hope in a very dark and grief-stricken time. Moreover, the 10,000 visitors that came to see the new little family helped save many local people's livelihoods. Although there is an outside chance that she may still arrive it is daily becoming more likely that she will never return. The 3000 mile journey is one so full of hazards the miracle is that any make it. We still hope she does. But in any case Green XS will always be thought of as a very special, very Cumbrian, bird.

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 25th April 2007 The nest was again empty this morning when we switched on the screen, thankfully today it was bathed in sunshine. Various fleeting glimpses of the birds proved a little frustrating until mid morning saw two positive matings. After this, over lunchtime the female began nest building in earnest, perhaps fuelled by the male who brought in lots of material. This was some of the most dedicated attention to the nest we have seen so far, and the visitors at Whinlatter watched in awe as the female purposefully dug out the nest bowl, and then shaped it by almost rolling around. This may seem a funny picture, but is done with grace and an assured dedication. Mid afternoon saw a fish brought onto the nest by the male, given to the female who devoured the majority of it before the male finished off the remainder. After their afternoon snack, another successful mating occurred, and both birds then left the nest. The viewpoint reported both the male and female osprey sat on the posts on the marsh, and over the last few days things have very much settled down at the nest site, and suffice to say our birds are now very much more of a couple than merely a liason.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 24th April 2007 The last two days rain left a heavy cloud hanging over the valley and the lake, which gave a silent, slightly oppressive air. Our pair of birds greeted us from the nest when we arrived, and the news from Protection was that they had been busy moving nest material in and out of the nest! Some jovial comings and goings on and around the nest resulted in a successful mating, shortly after which the male left the nest, not to return until the early afternoon. Perhaps by divine intervention, perhaps not, but at the same time the sun broke through the cloud and it turned into a glorious spring day. Some more nesting material was brought into the nest through the afternoon by both the male and female and some frantic digging and shaping of the nest bowl was completed. A late afternoon mating again was positive, and over 300 visitors throughout the day had once again been captivated by our happy couple.

Ospreywatch

Monday 23rd April 2007 The rain has painted the Lakeside world Green. Sap-green grass, viridian hawthorn and lime-green larches all converting water and light into rampant growth. But for non-plant life such as humans and ospreys it has just felt WET. It would seem that the new female, Miss No-ring, is also quite a green girl in many ways and interestingly there are differences in behaviour between herself and our old Mrs. XS. For example, XS rarely ate fish on the nest until after the chicks were hatched whereas Miss No-ring seems to favour eating her meals spitted on the chopsticks of the nest edge. As regards the progression of the relationship of the current pair No-ring seems to be on the mend and has caught a couple of fish, which he has felt able to share with her. There has been some successful mating this morning – although still rather lacking the fire of Thursday.

Ospreywatch

Sunday April 22nd 2007 Misty and wet today with some gusty wind which did not

really encourage No-ring's convalescence. However, he did catch a couple of fish showing that eyesight and muscles are working well although he did not feel up to sharing them with the lady.

Ospreywatch

Saturday April 21st 2007 No-ring's lazy afternoon yesterday extended into the evening and by 10.00 this morning we had worked that something was wrong. He had caught no fish since 8.00am yesterday and latterly had brought in no moss; mating seemed at a standstill. He sat with his wings hunched in the bottom of the nest, the picture of dejection, his behaviour changed from Superbird to Saddo in 24 hours. Meanwhile, his erstwhile lady-love tried to regain his attention – screaming repeatedly down his ear for nearly 4 hours, but he ignored all her blandishments and haranguing. Was he belatedly pining for his own familiar Mrs.XS or just plain exhausted? In the end Bride gave him up as a bad job and soon caught a large perch for herself, which she didn't share. It was not until the afternoon that the zoom camera picked up that his left eye was quite swollen and sore. What could have caused it? Was he now incapable of fishing? Dark thoughts of the poor survival rates of injured birds of prey immediately sprang to mind. However, just before 5.00pm he flew off the nest and to our heartfelt relief returned with a fish. Let's just hope he feels more up to scratch tomorrow.

Ospreywatch

Friday 20th April 2007 Passion is a wonderful thing but housework is always waiting in the wings. The new bride has spent periods today digging out the nest bowl. No-ring spent the afternoon quietly paddling by the Lakeside – no doubt recovering from his Casanova impressions yesterday. Then, at lunchtime, far below the nest on the forest floor another first time event occurred. Watched by our 24 hour Protection team a magnificent Red Deer Stag strode up from between the trees. A breathless moment, held until the osprey rose with a clatter of wings from the nest and the deer fled back deep into the wood.

Ospreywatch

Thursday 19th April 2007 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush' is obviously No-ring's motto this Spring. He and his new maiden are smitten with each other and have been busy consolidating their budding relationship. New moss has been gathered and tumbled around the nest and No-ring has presented his inamorata with 4 fish.

Ospreywatch

Wednesday 18th April 2007 After the euphoria of seeing our male back on the Lake, today started quietly with No-ring revisiting his old perching places and occasionally rising up with a fish in a display flight over the nest territory. Unfortunately, there was no XS to appreciate this, but his efforts were by no way in vain because at 17.45 he arrived on the nest with a fish and a strange new female in tow. After a quick tug of war over the fish she was all his. That's pulling power for you!

Ospreywatch

Friday 20th April 2007 A new female osprey has been spotted on the nest at Bassenthwaite Lake. The project team has had a number of enquiries over the last few days from eagle eyed osprey enthusiasts who have been watching live pictures of the nest at the Forestry Commission's Whinlatter Visitor Centre and on the internet. Fish King, the male osprey that has been nesting at the same site in the Lake District for six years, was seen a number of times during the day in the company of another osprey. What everyone wanted to know was whether this bird

was Fish King's long standing partner, called GreenXS after the markings on a ring around one of her legs, or a new bird. After zooming in on the female, using a camera inside the nest, Project staff were able to confirm that this is a new osprey that has no ring. Live pictures from a camera overlooking the nest are beamed to a giant videowall at the Visitor Centre, near Braithwaite. The Centre is open daily from 10am to 5pm.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday 17th April 2007 After what was an interesting, exciting and sometimes worrying start to the season, this afternoon saw the arrival of a male osprey which frequented the nest briefly, and then the posts on the lake shore where it eat a fish before bathing at the mouth of the river. Although at this stage we cannot confirm that this bird is 'our' unringed male, it is highly likely, given its apparent knowledge of the area and use of the same perches which have been used in previous seasons by the resident pair. Late yesterday afternoon, the bird was seen to be in the vicinity of the nest, displaying and apparently prospecting for a mate. If it is 'our male', it is the latest it has returned since the birds nested. This seems to fit into the national pattern with many birds across the UK being late in arriving at their wintering grounds. Fingers, talons and fish scales crossed !

Ospreywatch

Monday April 16th 2007 This morning we viewed our vandalised 'spy' camera, now abandoned by our fumble-footed visitor, with dismay! We realised that no possibility existed of close-up filming of the nest interior, if and when our birds return. At this point, and completely fortuitously, a knight in shining red hard hat and girded with climbing gear hove into our sights. It was the matter of a moment for this brave individual to shin up the tree, balance precariously 70 feet above the ground, re-position the lens, re-secure the camera fixings and descend again. Thank you to the National Park Authority Climbing Team. (It should withstand a 10 ton bus landing - but perhaps judgement should be withheld until osprey tested)

Ospreywatch

Sunday April 15th 2007 Our tiny spy camera on the nest edge has had a chequered career in previous years. It has been power-pooed and pole-axed and buried but usually it lasts a few weeks into the season. Not this time. This morning a visiting osprey, a delightful dusky-fronted but buxom maiden alighted on the nest edge. Guess where? Yes! And it took no more than a slip of her less than dainty foot to bend the lens 45 degrees. We now, as on past occasions, have a droopy nosed close-up view of a pile of sticks from camera 3. On a more sanguine note her arrival (and later departure) tells us that osprey migration is now in full swing despite the continuing dirty weather in S. Europe. Come on SX and No-ring!

Ospreywatch

Saturday April 14th 2007 One swallow swooping into the outhouses at Whinlatter yesterday doesn't make a summer and neither do two more dive-bombing a buzzard over the Lake today. For us, our summer will only start with our ospreys' arrival - soon we hope!

Ospreywatch

Friday April 13th 2007 After a promising start at 6.30am with sight and sound of an osprey in the wood below the nest, there was nothing more. So, presumably our loss is Scotland's gain. Sightings of ospreys moving North over the past few days from all over the country are keeping us optimistic about our own pair. On a different note the consistent amazingly good weather has brought its own problems. Bracken grass

and heather are now tinder dry – with the resulting risk of fire on the fells. Cigarette butts, glass and reflective tins can all cause conflagration!

Ospreywatch

Thursday April 12th 2007 No signs of yesterday evening's birds until 'Eureka!' at 12.25 there was one sitting on the nest!! We were so surprised and delighted after our long wait that one or two of us had to sit down to get over the shock. Was it our female SX or male No-ring was our next thought? A breathless camera zoom-in from the Protection team focussed on the bird's legs. No ring to be seen on either leg. Not SX then 'Turn around to face us,' we breathed, wanting to see the pure white breast of No-ring. A half turn and the suggestion of a brown breast band and then it was off. Oh-oh. It didn't seem to be one of our pair at all. After another brief visit it disappeared. Gone off to Scotland? Not yet, because at 15.00 it was spotted again sitting below the nest and there was confirmation that 2 birds had been seen fishing earlier on. At 17.00 we were left hanging. Will they be here tomorrow or are they just resting passage birds?

Ospreywatch

Wednesday April 11th 2007 Millions of birds are migrating into this country right now. Millions more are flooding out. Of the 416,000 widgeon that spend the winter in GB we are watching the last of those due to leave from Bassenthwaite for the North and East. On the other hand the budding trees and bushes all over the area have today suddenly sprouted Willow Warblers. If birds this small have just made it in from central and southern Africa it means that weather conditions have improved across Europe. Surely our ospreys cannot be too far behind? 18.00hrs Two ospreys spotted fishing over the Lake.....

Ospreywatch

Tuesday April 10th 2007 No ospreys.

Ospreywatch

Monday April 9th 2007 The best Eastertide message of new life and spring hope would have been a Bassenthwaite Osprey landing on the nest. But no, our pair don't seem to have been following the same calendar as us. This is disappointing but at this stage certainly not a cause for concern. Dates of return over the past 6 years have ranged from April 3rd to April 18th. Keep watching this space, and willing them onwards!

Ospreywatch

Good Friday April 6th Spring comes so fast in this warm weather that in the time it takes to look over your shoulder the landscape has changed from dormancy to Life! Cheery Celandines are coming up in swathes along damp banks. In the cool of this morning they were all closed up tight, the backs of their petals camouflaged green in the grass. Then as the weather warmed, they all opened together, showing their shiny yellow faces to the sun and early insects. From a little distance it seemed whole areas were turning to gold.

Ospreywatch

Thursday April 5th 6.00pm, Wednesday evening, an osprey is sighted fishing over the Lake. Is it one of ours? Judging by the still empty nest this morning –NO. It was a passage bird probably aiming for Scotland.

Ospreywatch

Wednesday April 4th 2007 Lack of Ospreys means there is the opportunity to

concentrate on some of the other inhabitants of the woods. The Red Squirrels at Dodd have been out gambolling in front of the Viewpoint for much of the day, their coats glowing vivid russet in the sunlight. Fed throughout the winter they are the pictures of good health. Obviously Red Stars – they weigh the same as four Mars Bars.

Ospreywatch

Tuesday April 3rd 2007'Daffodils, that come before the Swallow dares and take the winds of March with beauty.' Shakespeare's words that have pretty well summed up the look of the Lake District Spring over the past few glorious days. The daffodils are tossing vibrantly in the woods and along the roadsides and the two Bassenthwaite Ospreywatch sites are open and raring to go. Dodd Viewpoint has its bank of telescopes trained on the nest and Whinlatter has live CCTV pictures of the same but alas, no ospreys (or swallows) yet. We are all just hoping our pair are taking the winds of April seriously and will be with us very soon. In the mean time, Welcome Back to all our readers!