

For immediate use: 3 March 2005

REPAIRERS OF THE LOST NEST
OSPREY "SUPERNEST" BUILT AFTER STORM DAMAGE

The world-famous osprey nest in the Lake District has been completely re-built today (Wednesday 3 March) after storms in January destroyed the breeding site of the rare birds.

Ospreys first nested at Bassenthwaite Lake in 2001, when a pair of the spectacular fish-catching birds bred in the Lakes for the first time for at least 150 years.

However, disaster struck in January this year, when gale-force winds blew the ospreys' nest from the top of a tree in Wythop Wood, near Keswick, Cumbria. The nest - which was the size of a double bed and built up from branches and moss - was wrecked by the storm.

Ospreys use the same nest year-after-year and with the birds due to arrive back in the area next month, the Lake District Osprey Project team was faced with the possibility that the birds would have nowhere to nest on their return to Cumbria.

The nest has been the focus of global attention since the ospreys arrived, with pictures beamed from a camera overlooking the nest sent around the world over the internet. Millions of people have followed the private lives of the Lakes ospreys and watched as five young ospreys have been successfully reared in the nest over the last four years.

So, in a race against time, a team from the osprey project partnership has constructed a new nest in the ospreys' chosen tree and are hoping that the birds will never know that anything has changed.

The new osprey "supernest" is designed to withstand the worst that the Cumbria weather can throw at it in future. It has been constructed with a secure timber platform as a base and a cocoon of weld-mesh to give added strength. Branches, twigs and moss have been painstakingly applied by hand to re-create the appearance of the lost nest.

Now the project team can only wait and hope that the ospreys will approve of their new designer home and that these special birds will settle down to nest again this year.

The return of ospreys to the Lake District is one of the greatest conservation good news stories of recent years, and the birds are bringing important economic benefits to the region. Around 100,000 visits are made to see the nesting birds each year at special viewpoints set up by the Lake District Osprey Project. Visitors who come to see the ospreys contribute around £2 million to the Cumbrian economy each year.

The Osprey Viewpoint at the Forestry Commission's Dodd Wood near Keswick will re-open to visitors on Monday 11th April.

The Lake District Osprey Project is managed by the Forestry Commission and the RSPB, in partnership with The Lake District National Park Authority.

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For further information and to arrange an interview with a representative of the Lake District Osprey Project, please contact: David Hirst, RSPB North of England region: 0191 233 4321 or 07885 834889

Images:

Photographs of the building of the new osprey nest and images of ospreys are available in digital format. Please contact David Hirst on 0191 233 4321/07885 834889

Additional notes:

1. The Lakeland ospreys re-colonised England naturally in 2001 as part of a population expansion in Scotland, following the return of ospreys there in the 1950s, after they had been extinct for over 50 years.
2. Bassenthwaite Lake has been owned and managed by the Lake District National Park Authority since 1979 and is now a National Nature Reserve.
3. The Lake District Osprey Viewpoint at the Forestry Commission's Dodd Wood gives open-air viewing of the birds and if the ospreys nest again this year, it will reopen on Monday 11 April. It is located, 3 miles north of Keswick, off the A591 - follow signs to Mirehouse. The Viewpoint is open all daylight hours. Between 10 am and 5 pm, osprey project staff are on hand with telescopes for visitors to use. Access for disabled visitors is available using a specially equipped minibus - call 0789 9818421 to book. Pictures from the nestcam are shown on a videowall at the FC's Whinlatter Visitor Centre, near Braithwaite.
4. For the latest news about the Lake District Osprey Project click on www.ospreywatch.co.uk or 'phone 017687 78469.