

media release

Issued by the Lake District Osprey Project

A partnership of The Forestry Commission and the RSPB, with the support of the Lake District National Park Authority

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SEASON ENDS ON A HIGH AS OSPREY FAMILY HEAD SOUTH

The ospreys that have given pleasure to thousands of visitors to the Lakes this year are now heading for the warmer shores of Africa, the Lake District Osprey Project team said today (Friday 23 September 2005).

The pair of adult ospreys has nested near Bassenthwaite Lake every year since 2001 and this year successfully raised two chicks. All four birds have now left Cumbria for their wintering grounds in Africa. This year around 90,000 people visited the special viewpoints set up by the Lake District Osprey Project near Keswick to see the nesting birds.

The adult female osprey was the first to migrate and left Cumbria on the 21 August to start her annual 3,000-mile journey to West Africa. The young female osprey born in the Lakes nest this year, followed soon after. The adult male and the second chick, believed to be a male, stayed a little longer and were last seen on September 11th.

Despite an anxious start to the year, this season has been hailed as another success by the Lake District Osprey Project team – a partnership between the Forestry Commission and the RSPB, with the support of the Lake District National Park Authority.

Graeme Prest of the Lake District Osprey Project said: “Despite some nail-biting times, it has been another wonderful year for the project. It was an anxious start to the season when winter storms destroyed the ospreys’ nest and we had to rebuild it from scratch. Fortunately, the adult birds accepted the new nest and in July we were able to celebrate the successful fledging of two young ospreys.”

“There has been an incredible level of interest in the ospreys again this year and we have had tremendous support from our visitors and the local community, as well as from our wonderful team of volunteers.”

Visitors to the Lake District have been able to see the ospreys from the special viewpoint at Dodd Wood and watch live pictures beamed from a camera overlooking the nest at the Forestry Commission’s Whinlatter Visitor Centre.

People have also followed the ospreys’ story on the internet and this year’s ospreywatch diary and images from the osprey nest can be re-lived at www.ospreywatch.co.uk

Mr Prest added: “It’s always a bit sad when the ospreys leave, but we are already looking forward to next spring, when we hope that our regular pair will return again to the Lakes. Perhaps next year we may even see the arrival of a second pair of ospreys in the Bassenthwaite area.”

The adult ospreys will spend the winter in Africa but should return to Cumbria next spring. Young ospreys spend several years in Africa before they are ready to return to find a partner and settle down to nest.

Until the ospreys return, visitors to the Lakes will be entertained by some of Cumbria's other special wildlife. The camera has been moved from the osprey nest, and visitors to Whinlatter now have the chance to follow the antics of red squirrels on the big screen. While the ospreys are away the squirrels will play - and until next spring, *they* can enjoy being the centre of attention for a change!

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For further information or to arrange an interview, please contact:

David Hirst, RSPB North of England Region on 0191 2334321 or 07885 834889

Paul Gardner, Osprey Communications, on 07766 906561

Highlights of the 2005 season:

3rd March

Project team re-build the ospreys' nest in Wythop Wood, overlooking Bassenthwaite Lake, after the double-bed sized nest is destroyed by winter storms

4th April

Adult female osprey (GreenXS) arrives back at Bassenthwaite Lake but is accompanied by a different male (Red02). Red02 tries to woo GreenXS with gifts of fish

6th April

Adult male osprey (NoRing) arrives back to find Red02 has moved in on his bird

8th April

Red02 decides that discretion is the better part of valour and moves to pastures new

20th April

First egg laid in nest. The momentous event watched on CCTV by nest protection wardens

23rd May

Second egg laid

28th May

First egg hatches

5th July

Jennings Brewery launches a brand new ale - Fish King - as a tribute to one of Cumbria's most high-profile local attractions.

22nd July

Female chick makes first flight from the nest at 3.20pm. Second chick makes maiden flight on 27th July

21st August

Adult female ospreys starts migration to Africa

31st August

Dodd Wood Viewpoint closes. Around 90,000 visits have been made to see the ospreys from Dodd Wood or the Forestry Commission's nearby Whinlatter Visitor Centre

11th September

Last sighting of adult male and second juvenile

Additional notes:

1. The Forestry Commission's Whinlatter Visitor Centre near Baitwaite is open all year round and after the ospreys have departed, a compilation of highlights from the nest cam footage is shown along with live images from a red squirrel feeder.
2. The Bassenthwaite 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 an absence of more than 50 years. It was the first time that ospreys had nested in the Lake District for at least 50 years.
3. The osprey viewing at Dodd Wood is one of the RSPB's Aren't birds brilliant! (ABB) of events. ABB events give everyone the chance to get really close to some of the most exciting birds in Britain. ABB schemes operate in partnership with other organisations including the Forestry Commission. Some schemes are small while others, such as the Lake District Osprey project, may have contact with thousands of people over a season. For information about other Aren't birds brilliant! sites, visit www.rspb.org.uk or phone 01767 680551.
4. Bassenthwaite Lake has been owned and managed by the Lake District National Park Authority since 1979 and is now a National Nature Reserve.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds • North of England Office

1 Sirius House • Amethyst Road • Newcastle Business Park • Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 7YL

Tel: 0191 233 4300 • Fax: 0191 233 4322 • e mail: david.hirst@rspb.org.uk

ISDN line: 0191 233 4336