

## PRESS RELEASE

Issued on behalf of The Lake District Osprey Project – a partnership between the Forestry Commission and the RSPB, with the support of the Lake District National Park Authority

11 April 2006

# FISH KING & HIS QUEEN ARE BACK

## OSPREY PAIR RE-UNITED AFTER A WINTER APART

Cumbria's most popular birds are back in the Lakes following a hazardous 3,000-mile migration flight from Africa, the partners in the Lake District Osprey Project confirmed today (11 April 2006).

The now famous pair of ospreys was re-united at Bassenthwaite Lake last week after a winter spent apart in Africa. The two ospreys have arrived back at the nest site they have used since 2001, and where they have successfully raised seven chicks. The Osprey Viewpoints near Keswick are now open to the public, providing opportunities for visitors to Cumbria to see the magnificent birds.

The female osprey arrived back in Cumbria on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> April and the male returned on the 4<sup>th</sup>. The project team hope that the birds will now settle down to nest and a team of volunteers has begun a 24-hour guard to protect the nest.

The Lake District Osprey Project is a partnership between The Forestry Commission and the RSPB, with the support of the Lake District National Park Authority.

Local people have closely followed the fortunes of the ospreys and the birds have attracted many thousands of visitors to the viewpoints set up by the Lake District Osprey Project team. Last year around 90,000 visits were made to Cumbria's osprey viewpoints and visitors contribute as much as £2million to the local economy each year.

The Osprey Viewpoint at Dodd Wood, near Keswick, is now open, giving spectacular views over Bassenthwaite Lake National Nature Reserve, which is owned and managed by the LDNPA. The ospreys fish in the lake and from the viewpoint the nest can be seen through the telescopes provided for visitors to use. The Viewpoint is open all daylight hours, with staff on hand with telescopes from 10am-5pm daily, and is part of a UK-wide network of RSPB Aren't Birds Brilliant! sites.

At the Forestry Commission's Whinlatter Visitor Centre, near Braithwaite, an exhibition area is dedicated to the ospreys. Live pictures from a camera overlooking the nest are beamed to a giant videowall, allowing visitors to watch all the action as it happens. The Centre is open daily from 10am to 5pm. The images can also be viewed on the Lake District Osprey Project website – [www.ospreywatch.co.uk](http://www.ospreywatch.co.uk) and the BBC Cumbria website at [www.bbc.co.uk/cumbria](http://www.bbc.co.uk/cumbria).

Graeme Prest of the Lake District Osprey Project said: "Every year since 2001 these wonderful birds have captured the imagination of tens of thousands of people and have come to represent all that is most special about wildlife tourism in the Lake District. We will be keeping our fingers crossed that all goes well and that the birds nest successfully again this year."

The Bassenthwaite ospreys re-colonised England naturally in 2001 as part of a population expansion from Scotland, where numbers have been increasing since the first pair returned to the Highlands in the 1950s. It was the first time that ospreys had nested in the Lake District for at least 150 years.

**ends**

**For further information contact:**

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**Images:**

Images of ospreys in digital format are available – contact David Hirst on 0191 2334321/Mobile: 07885 834889

**Additional notes:**

1. The Lake District Osprey Viewpoint at the Forestry Commission's Dodd Wood gives open-air viewing of the birds and will be staffed until the end of Wednesday 31 August. 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, the osprey project information team are on hand with telescopes for visitors to use.

2. The Forestry Commission's Whinlatter Visitor Centre near Braithwaite 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.

3. Aren't birds brilliant! (ABB) is a series of events run by the RSPB all over the UK. It gives everyone the chance to get really close to some of the most exciting birds in Britain. ABB schemes operate away from RSPB reserves, 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](http://www.rspb.org.uk) or phone 01767 680551.

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