

# THE OSPREY OBSERVER

Bywyd Gwyllt Glaslyn Wildlife



## End of an era

For almost two decades the large dark silhouette of female osprey Mrs G reigned supreme above the skies of the Glaslyn Valley but 2023 was, sadly, to be the year she would fail to return from her winter migration.

In this edition we look back on Mrs G's 19 remarkable years in the Glaslyn Valley and celebrate her life and legacy which will live on for generations to come.

## New beginnings

Happily, Aran was soon to find a new mate, who has been named Elen, after Yr Elen, a mountain in the Carneddau Range in Eryri (Snowdonia). We believe Elen, who was first seen at Glaslyn on 3 April, the day Aran returned from his migration, is a young osprey breeding for the first time.

The pair have two eggs with hatchings due to take place at the beginning of June. Turn to page six.



**Save the date...** Return of Gŵyl y Gweilch, August 12 and 13 . See page nine for more details

## Remembering Mrs G

Our Centre Manager Heather Corfield pays a special tribute to a remarkable bird who will never be forgotten at Glaslyn Ospreys.

“For almost two decades the large dark silhouette of female osprey Mrs G reigned supreme above the skies of the Glaslyn Valley. In fact, if she was the late summering female seen in 2003, she would have been present for 20 seasons.

Alas we will never know whether it was her that summer, but a photograph taken of her in 2004 shows that it was the same female throughout all those years thereafter (photographer unknown).



Many females tried to challenge her, but none succeeded. Often Mrs G would calmly and patiently tolerate younger intruding females with the tenderness of a mother teaching her young, sometimes even showing them her eggs. That was until they tested her patience too far and then she would forcefully send them packing and on their way. 5F/Seren experienced the wrath of Mrs G on several occasions and over time she learned to give the Glaslyn nest a wide berth, or at least until Mrs G started fishing for herself at the end of the season.



Through all kinds of weather, Mrs G protected her precious 60 eggs and 52 chicks, from hailstones and torrential rain to gales and blazing sunshine. A total of 44 chicks successfully migrated from the nest under her care and several of those chicks have gone on to breed themselves, making Mrs G a grandmother to at least 130 and a great grandmother several times over. Her legacy will live on for generations to come throughout the UK.



Mrs G only had two mates during all those years, her first mate Rutland translocated Ochre 11 (98) failed to return from his migration in 2015 and at the end of April that year her second un-ringed mate, Aran arrived. There were only two failed nesting attempts during all those years, one with each mate. The nest collapsed in 2004 and the two chicks were killed and in 2021 Aran injured his wing and was unable to fish at a critical stage and the three newly hatched chicks tragically did not survive.



Although we mourn the loss of Mrs G, we always knew this day would eventually come. She would have been at least 22 or 23 years old and we are incredibly lucky to have had the same female returning to the Glaslyn nest for so many years. It is doubtful that we will ever see another bird returning to the Glaslyn nest for 19 seasons again. Mrs G was remarkable, a very special bird, a legend in her own lifetime and will always be remembered at Glaslyn Ospreys. Fly high sweet beautiful lady. “



## Special memories

Volunteers and trustees, past and present, have let us have some of their special memories of Mrs G.

**Gail Edgley:** “Mrs G sure knew how to catch a whopper! One favourite memory is of her alongside Aran on the perch, with a fish five times the size of his, in their early days of bonding together.”

**Gwyn Harrison:** “The first memory is one of lying in bed on a Saturday morning listening to Galwad Cynnar on BBC Radio Cymru and hearing the news that ospreys were nesting near Porthmadog. My second memory is being at the Visitor Centre last year and spotting her returning for what turned out to be her last visit to the Glaslyn”.

**Tony Pope** recalls nights on protection duty in atrocious weather conditions:

“I have seen Mrs G incubating her precious eggs with water pooled in the gap between her folded wings, snow all around her and one night the wind was so strong that there was a real chance the nest could be lost as indeed it had been a few years previously. The nest platform swayed into and out of camera view but she never wavered. You just cannot help admire such character and physical prowess to carry on her contribution to Osprey ecology in Wales and further afield.”

**Vivien Finn:** “As a protection site volunteer, I spent many happy hours watching over Mrs G and her chicks and one memory is how she took flight following one of her young on its maiden flight, she was calling, encouraging all the time. So precious to witness.

“She was a very patient osprey but she did have her limits. She had been harassed for days by a pair of crows; it was incessant. She took flight late one afternoon and flew above the crows. Suddenly losing height she deliberately winged one on the way down. I watched as it tumbled to the ground. She was awesome.”

To mark her 80th birthday volunteer and Trustee **Judith Babbage** got a small tattoo of Mrs G on her arm.

“I will never forget the crow killing incident in 2017 and of course I will have Mrs G with me forever!” said Judith.

**Ieuan Bryn:** “What I shall remember most is Mrs G’s loyalty, and her almost human care for her chicks. When she presented the very young ones with morsels of fish, you could almost hear her speaking to them, praising them, and offering them more and more!

Her ferocity in protecting the nest was phenomenal. She was the great defender of the nest; her sweeping sorties left all intruders in awe. But what tenderness she displayed as she slowly closed her talons to roll over her eggs in turn for them to warm evenly.

My most treasured memory will probably be an image of her on screen, sitting calmly on eggs during a storm, her back covered with hailstones, but no thoughts of moving anywhere for shelter or more comfort.



## Aran and Elen's first weeks together

NEW GLASLYN FEMALE  
ELEN



ARAN AND ELEN ON  
THE GLASLYN NEST

ELEN LAYS HER  
SECOND EGG ON  
27 APRIL



ELEN DRIES OFF  
AFTER A BATH



ELEN AND ARAN  
TOGETHER ON THE  
PERCH



## Meet the Team

Helen Morris is featured in this edition's Meet the Team in which we introduce some of the dedicated people who play such a vital role in the work of Glaslyn Ospreys. A familiar face to people visiting Pont Croesor on a Wednesday, her regular volunteering day, Helen tells us why she thinks the project is a great place to volunteer. A retired legal assistant in local government in North Wales, she hails from nearby Penygroes. Regular visitors will know that Helen is a very good cook and her home-made sausage rolls have been much enjoyed at special events at Pont Croesor!



### How did you get involved?

I had visited the project and when I had more time on my hands following retirement from Conwy County Borough Council, I decided in 2018 to make enquiries about becoming a volunteer. I didn't know anything about birds but sent an email to Heather saying I was interested in becoming more involved.

### What is so special about the project?

It's magical in every way! The location in the beautiful Glaslyn Valley, the lovely visitors who support us so well, a great team of volunteers and of course the stars of the show - our wonderful ospreys.

### What do you enjoy most about volunteering?

I have learned so much about ospreys and nature and wildlife in general. I believe it has been particularly beneficial to many people, volunteers and followers, during the pandemic. I have made many new friends which is another positive outcome. I really enjoy meeting and chatting with our visitors who travel to see us from all over the UK and from abroad.

### Would you recommend volunteering at Glaslyn Ospreys?

Absolutely! I work part time at a local garden centre and earmark every Wednesday as my Glaslyn volunteering day. But the volunteering hours can be very flexible and we are always pleased to welcome new volunteers.

### Favourite osprey? Favourite chick?

Well, it has to be Mrs G. It's been such a sad start to the season and we will never forget her. But we are so happy that Aran has a new partner, Elen, and look forward to telling people about their unfolding story. I don't really have a favourite chick - I love them all!

If you would like to volunteer at the project find out more on our website: [www.glaslynwildlife.co.uk/volunteering](http://www.glaslynwildlife.co.uk/volunteering) or contact Visitor Centre Manager Heather Corfield on [info@glaslynwildlife.co.uk](mailto:info@glaslynwildlife.co.uk)

## Pointing the way with Osprey Charging

Visitors to Glaslyn Ospreys will have noticed that replacement information signs have been put up around the site.

Designed to help visitors make their way around the Centre at Pont Croesor, and using a more consistent style, the new signs have been kindly funded in partnership with sponsors Osprey Charging Network.

Chair of Bywyd Gwyllt Glaslyn Wildlife's Board of Trustees, Gill Pritchard said:

"We are extremely grateful to Osprey Charging Network for their continued support. Last year they funded new interpretation panels on site together with new telescopes and picnic benches. All these things are helping us to enhance the visitor experience at Pont Croesor and make it a top destination in North Wales for wildlife enthusiasts"

Dora Clarke from Osprey Charging said:

"We're delighted to be continuing our partnership with Bywyd Gwyllt Glaslyn Wildlife this year, contributing to the important osprey conservation and education work at the visitor centre and project more widely. Our staff and customers share their values of environmental stewardship and preserving a healthier planet for current and future generations to enjoy."

Osprey Charging is one of the UK's largest networks of rapid Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points, with over 500 live on major routes and in towns and cities. The open-access network is actively expanding on its existing 60 rapid charge points in Wales which includes locations in St Asaph, Welshpool, Abergavenny and Cardiff. All chargers are simple to use with the tap of a bank card, and can re-charge an average electric car in 40-50 minutes.



One of the new signs at the entrance (pictured) features a picture of Glaslyn female osprey Mrs G's 50th chick, Blue 497, hatched last year. Much to the project's delight the young bird was sighted in Senegal in January having made his first successful winter migration.

# GŴYL Y GWEILCH 2023

To mark our tenth anniversary and to celebrate ospreys breeding in the Glaslyn Valley for 20 years, we are relaunching our successful two-day Gŵyl y Gweilch event on the weekend of 12 and 13 August.

Our theme will be a celebration of the growing Osprey population in this region of Wales and beyond and we are delighted to announce that we have secured the respected nature conservationist Dr Tim Mackrill as our keynote speaker.

Tim managed the Rutland Osprey Project for more than ten years and works with the Roy Dennis Wildlife Foundation on species recovery projects, including the Osprey translocation at Poole Harbour. We are firming up arrangements for the event and more details will be published in due course.

## Thank you!

We're delighted to announce that we have topped the £10k target of our annual St David's Day appeal and it's all down to your generous support.

In this, our tenth anniversary as a charity, the funds will go towards our work to protect the birds, operate our cameras and live stream and improve our site for the thousands of visitors every year to Pont Croesor. A big thank you from all of us at Glaslyn Ospreys.



## Promoting Glaslyn Ospreys

We have updated and redesigned our information leaflet and guess who's on the cover? We chose a picture last autumn of Mrs G's 50th chick, Blue 497 (2022) to appear on our new promotional material. Little did we know that our 'Golden' chick would then be seen flying high in January in Senegal having successfully made a first long migration to Africa!

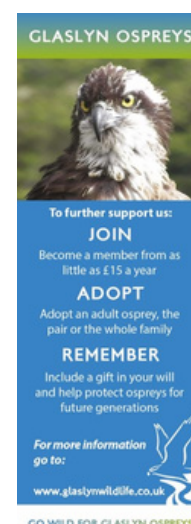
Our leaflet is distributed to visitor attractions, holiday accommodation and shops across North Wales.

Thank you to Chris Wood for letting us include a brilliant picture of Blue Z2/Aeron in flight over Pont Croesor, as one of the images in the new publication.



## JOIN - ADOPT - REMEMBER

We have produced new bookmarks and posters to promote fund raising for Glaslyn Ospreys, namely becoming a member, adopting an osprey or the family and remembering the charity in your will.



Glaslyn Ospreys volunteers got together at Pont Croesor and on Zoom to prepare for the new season.

## Welcome back Becci

We are delighted to report that Becci Phasey is coming back to work for us. Becci has been doing some freelance work and volunteering for the project in the last 12 months but will now be returning to work with us for three days a week as Education and Communications Officer. She will be working with local schools to arrange visits to Pont Croesor and assisting with social media and other on-line communications to promote Glaslyn Ospreys.



As part of the site improvements over the winter four new bird feeding stations have been built at different locations at Pont Croesor and volunteer Jack Goode is pictured filling one of them.

To enhance the wildlife on the site, wild flowers and trees have been planted, and new nest cams and nest boxes have been installed.

Volunteer Mary Cheadle (pictured) kindly donated two trees to plant at Pont Croesor in memory of her late nephew Paul Whittaker.

Inside the Visitor Centre we have purchased new furniture and added new shop items and Centre Manager Heather Corfield is pictured below with some of the new shop items now on sale.



## We'd like to hear from you!

We hope you enjoy reading the Osprey Observer and we welcome your comments and any suggestions for future articles. Please contact

Volunteer and Trustee

Barbara Milne on

[barbara@glaslynwildlife.co.uk](mailto:barbara@glaslynwildlife.co.uk)