

THE OSPREY OBSERVER

Bywyd Gwylt Glaslyn Wildlife



New season improvements get under way

While the Glaslyn ospreys are on their winter migration, trustees and volunteers at Bywyd Gwylt Glaslyn Wildlife have a very busy work programme ahead of them in the coming weeks.

Major improvements are planned at the Protection site where key technical equipment on and around the nest site is being improved and upgraded. This includes replacing solar panels to improve energy efficiency, repairing air fibre technology, which enables live pictures to be streamed from the Glaslyn nest, and other important upgrades. **Turn to page two.**

A memorable 2023 season

Despite the very sad start to the season with the absence of Mrs G, the new pairing of Aran and Elen and their two chicks made it another successful and memorable year. We were delighted to welcome over 13,000 visitors to Pont Croesor and everyone at Glaslyn Ospreys would like to thank each and every one of you for your support and generosity. Thank you to those of you who also support and loyally follow our Live Stream which continues showing the beautiful Glaslyn Valley landscape and wildlife throughout the winter months. Picture shows Elen bringing in one of her many pieces of wood to the nest while Aran incubated the eggs.

Save the dates!

We're pleased to announce that Gwyl y Gweilch 2024 will be held at Pont Croesor on the weekend of August 10 and 11. We will also be holding our Chatters' Extra Time event for Live Stream followers on Monday 8 July. Programme details and booking arrangements will be announced in the New Year.

New season improvements get under way

Thanks to support from sponsors Osprey Charging, we are also replacing one of our two nest cameras - the original one - which has served us well since 2014. The new camera will have the latest 4K technology to ensure we see top quality live images of the birds when they return in the Spring. It means that both nest cameras will be of the highest 4K specification.



The caravan at the Protection site has also served us well but needs replacing. Our dedicated volunteers spend many hours, day and night, on site, watching over the ospreys and their young. We are replacing the caravan with a purpose-built Protection Cabin which will provide better facilities for our volunteers and will also blend well into the surroundings.



Back at Pont Croesor, visitors will be familiar with the toilets, located on the Station platform, and for which we share responsibility with the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railways.

Blockages and other issues have often been an unwelcome distraction for staff and volunteers, so to improve visitor facilities we are intending to replace the toilets with new modern units which will also be easier to clean and maintain.

As you will be aware, work at both the Protection and Pont Croesor sites can be weather dependent but we will be doing our utmost to have the improvements at Protection in place by the time we open for the new season in mid-March. Replacing the Pont Croesor toilets may have to wait until the end of the 2024 season but, rest assured, we will have working toilets during the season.

We will keep you informed over the winter on Facebook, with a full update in the next edition of the Osprey Observer in February.



HEATHER CORFIELD AND MARTIN ROBERTS

We are now in November and autumn is well underway. With the clocks having now gone back the nights are long and the days are short. There is no shortage of activity on our Winter live stream however, and apart from the beautiful views of the surroundings we have seen plenty of wildlife activity including; Otters, Tawny Owl, Whooper Swans, the Mute Swan family, Grey Herons and have even been entertained by Wood Mice under our bird feeders. Our live stream camera also picked up several shooting stars during the recent Orionid meteor shower. There are a few more meteor showers due before Christmas, so we will be hoping for a few more clear nights.

We last sighted an Osprey near Pont Croesor on September 22 and now hope that our Ospreys are all safely enjoying the sunshine in their winter homes. It was the most successful year yet for Ospreys in the Glaslyn Valley, with a total of 11 chicks fledging from four nests.

During October we held our Autumn Birdwatch Weekend and we recorded 42 species during the weekend; including Whooper Swans, Hen Harrier, Redwings and Fieldfare. We also launched our Glaslyn Ospreys 2024 calendar at the event. Thanks to Martin Roberts of M:art Design and Print in Pwllheli, pictured here with Visitor Centre Manager Heather Corfield, for another great design.

The calendar contains beautiful photographs from our nest cameras plus the winning images from our 2023 Photographic Competition, judged this year by Gail Edgley and Tony Pope. In the centre pages there is a special souvenir tribute to our legendary Osprey, Mrs G, who failed to return this year after 19 seasons breeding at the Glaslyn nest. It is available to purchase through our online shop and can be purchased locally in Siop Eifionydd, Siop Pikes and Siop Dewi.



Meet the Team

Weekend visitors to Pont Croesor are sure to receive a warm welcome from volunteer Judith Babbage who is on duty every Saturday and Sunday. Having been involved in the project since 2007, she has dedicated thousands of hours volunteering and working as one of the charity's trustees. Judith has lived in the area for many years but originally hails from Sutton Coldfield and was once a public health inspector in Birmingham. In this edition's Meet the Team we hear how she got involved and what Glaslyn Ospreys means to her.



What brought you to Gwynedd from the Midlands?

I first started visiting the area in the late 1950s. My Dad and brother were both volunteering at the Ffestiniog Railway and I joined them at the weekends. It was how I met my late husband John, who was also a railway volunteer. We first started our married life in Wiltshire where John was a dairy herdsman. We then moved to farm in Penrhyndeudraeth in 1979.

How did you become involved with the Osprey project?

I started visiting soon after the ospreys appeared in the area in 2004 and began volunteering three years later. I knew nothing about the birds then but learnt so much from volunteers like Mick Alexander and Heather, who volunteered with the project before she became Manager.

What makes the project so special?

As well as the magnificent ospreys, the whole ambience of the place makes it very special, from the spectacular backdrop of Snowdonia to the lovely group of volunteers who work so hard to make it such an enjoyable place to visit. I enjoy meeting our regular visitors and those from far and wide who might be calling in for the first time.

Would you recommend volunteering?

Volunteering at Glaslyn became a lifeline for me after I lost my husband. The friendship and support from other volunteers has been fantastic. I also became a Director of the community interest group which took over the running of the project when the RSPB pulled out and am now one of the Trustees involved in the management of the charity.

Favourite osprey? Favourite chick?

It has to be Mrs G. For my 80th birthday I had a small tattoo of her on my arm so she will be with me for life! I can't really choose a favourite chick – I love them all!

Judith is pictured in the Visitor Centre by the information board commemorating the legendary Mrs G.

Glaslyn Ospreys volunteers met up at Pont Croesor for an end of season get together. Chair of the Bywyd Gwyllt Glaslyn Wildlife Board Gill Pritchard thanked everyone for their hard work and dedication and for helping to make the season such a success. Centre Manager Heather Corfield gave a presentation recollecting the early years of the project and in particular the story of the first Glaslyn male 11(98) and how he and Mrs G paved the way for 20 years of ospreys breeding in the Valley.



Our volunteers took part in a CPR and Defibrillator awareness session led by Wales Ambulance PADS Support Officer, Tomos Hughes.

Although it is one piece of equipment, we hope we never have to use it was a very useful and informative session. Thank you Tomos for taking the time to share your life saving knowledge.



It was a pleasure to welcome John Delap to the Visitor Centre during our Autumn Birdwatching Weekend to receive his prize as winner of the wildlife category of our photography competition.

All four of the winning images from this year's competition are featured in the gallery section of the 2024 Glaslyn Ospreys calendar.

Order yours here: <https://www.glaslynwildlife.co.uk/shop/>

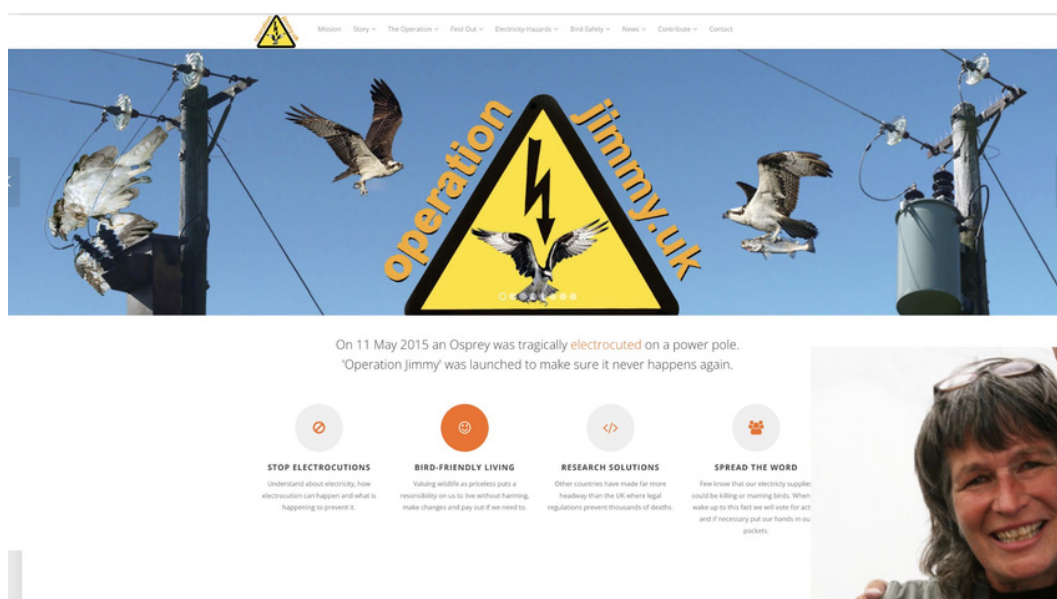
Through the eyes of ospreys

Volunteer Bronwen Lewis reports on a recent lecture at Dundee University by Sacha Dench on her Conservation without Borders team Flight of the Osprey Expedition to Africa in 2022

Why do 70% of fledged ospreys never return to the U.K.? That was the question which biologist Sacha Dench was trying to answer by following the 5,000 km migration routes of Scottish ospreys to Africa. Sacha and her team travelled through 9 countries, stopping along osprey flyways, and talking to local people and conservation groups.



She began with the good news. Ospreys are making a comeback in the U.K. after centuries of persecution. She celebrated the life's work of Roy Dennis and the thousands of volunteers who erect nest platforms, guard nests and educate the public. And she highlighted the inspiring story of 'Operation Jimmy', Gail Edgley's campaign to make UK electricity companies insulate power lines on osprey migration routes. There have also been translocation projects in France and Spain, and many conservation groups are working to reduce illegal shooting and poisoning of ospreys, dynamite fishing and habitat loss.



Osprey migration is perilous, and many ospreys die through natural causes. They may be predated, lost at sea after being blown off-course, or they may die trying to cross the Mediterranean or the Sahara Desert.

But the team highlighted other threats, related to climate change and human activity. Wetland areas are shrinking because of hotter temperatures and lack of rain, or they are being drained. Winds are becoming more turbulent, and massive forest fires create smoke barriers. River pollution is depleting fish stocks.

In Bordeaux, they observed helicopters spraying wetlands with bacteria to kill mosquitos, thus removing insects from the bottom of the food chain. Off the southern tip of Spain, an oil tanker was leaking oil into the sea. Factory ships were decimating fish stocks off Senegal.



New renewable energy projects result in the construction of more and more uninsulated power lines. Plastic pollution, including tangles of plastic fishing net, was evident everywhere. In one African wetland reserve, a huge illegal rubbish tip has grown up. Sacha commented that, ironically, it was so ugly that it would probably protect the rest of the reserve from being developed.

The team identified 38 major threats to migrating ospreys, and Sacha's organisation, Conservation Without Borders, is already hard at work trying to reduce them. Because however hard we work here to help ospreys, we will not succeed until more ospreys can migrate safely between their breeding and their wintering grounds.

<https://www.conservation-without-borders.org/>
www.facebook.com/conservation.without.borders

If you would like to volunteer at the project, find out more on our website:

www.glaslynwildlife.co.uk/volunteering

or contact Visitor Centre Manager Heather Corfield on **info@glaslynwildlife.co.uk**