



Ospreys

A treat for observers at the Gann recently has been the presence of an osprey - or possibly more than one. First sightings were at the end of August and as I write this on 10th September there are still regular reports. Some observers have been lucky enough to see the osprey catch a fish, but there also seem to be a number of unsuccessful attempts! The bird is often mobbed by crows or gulls who do not seem to recognise that it presents no threat to them. And two ospreys have been seen regularly around the West Williamston area of the Cleddau. However, none of these birds are there every day - it is a mystery where they go between-times.

The Gann osprey has a blue leg ring on its left leg - this means that it is a Scottish osprey. Unfortunately no-one has yet been able to read the numbers, which would tell us exactly who he/she is.

I initially thought that this osprey was a wandering 2 or 3-year old bird; these birds spend the summer visiting suitable locations where they might set up a breeding territory in the future. We know from experiences with the Dyfi ospreys (www.dyfiospreyproject.com) that settled pairs suffer much intrusion and competition from young birds on the look out for a suitable nest site with good fishing nearby.

However, with better views and pictures it appears that the Gann osprey, and indeed the Cleddau ospreys, are juveniles - that is, this years' youngsters. This is surprising. Tracking studies have indicated that once an osprey decides to migrate, it travels quickly, resting only when absolutely necessary, arriving in West Africa in as little as two weeks. And it was generally thought that juveniles do not start to fish for themselves until they arrive on their wintering sites. So our Gann osprey, lingering for several weeks and successfully (sometimes!) fishing, seem to be going against the current received wisdom.

Perhaps, as a result of these visits, in a few years time we will have breeding ospreys at the Gann or perhaps further up the Cleddau - there is good fishing and there are suitable trees for a nest site. So far, in the UK, they have not bred in sites with so much human disturbance, but they do in other countries. So here's crossing our fingers!

Rosemary Royle

PS By 20th September it seems they have all headed south (but maybe not??)