

Ospreys



In October 2014 I wrote the following in Peninsula Papers:

“A treat for observers at the Gann recently has been the presence of an Osprey. First sightings were at the end of August and it was seen regularly through the first three weeks of September. 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.

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 it 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 is a juvenile - that is, a youngster from this year's breeding season. 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!”

Well almost exactly the same thing has happened this year, the main difference being that this time the blue leg ring has been photographed (422) and this tells us that this is a juvenile bird from a nest in Elgin in Scotland. The bird has been appearing quite regularly, often about lunchtime and has been attracting quite a crowd (well, 20 people and several big lenses!) It seems that the habit of a long stay somewhere on the migration route but quite close to home is becoming more common – the youngest bird from the Dyfi nest has been hanging around the Truro river in Cornwall for several weeks.



Picture courtesy of Craig Nicoll

Rosemary Royle