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22 May 2025

Friends of Osprey AGM, Chair's report 2025

It is now just over three years since Friends of Osprey was founded in March 2022 and there is no doubt that our group has positioned itself as a productive, energetic and innovative conservation organisation, with a reputation for getting things done.

Uniquely for a 'Friends' group we are focused on the conservation status of a particular species as opposed to a geographical park like a traditional Friends group would.

Friends of Osprey has an interest in ospreys wherever they are found across the state, but our particular focus areas are the Yorke and Eyre peninsulas, with a growing focus on Kangaroo Island. We hope that as the population of ospreys grow, we will see birds establish territories along the coastline to the north of Adelaide and hopefully in time on the Fleurieu peninsula. Lone birds are regularly seen in these areas.

Our aim is to support the National Parks and Wildlife Service to advance the strategies found in the South Australian Recovery Plan for Eastern Osprey and White-bellied Sea Eagle.

Particular highlights since the establishment of Friends of Osprey include:

- constructing and/or protecting 19¹ artificial nesting platforms around the state in partnership with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and private property owners
- banding 40 young osprey and tracking 21 ospreys, helping us to better understand what happens to these birds when they fledge
- re-establishing osprey breeding on the mainland of the Yorke Peninsula (at Price, Point Davenport, Coobowie and Gleesons Landing)

¹ Includes a nest located on a barge at Proper Bay, Port Lincoln, and a nest on a disused water tank at the estuary of the Tod River, Port Lincoln.

- securing funding and volunteer partnerships with multiple government and non-government organisations, including a number of private philanthropic charities and the Ardrossan Community Men's Shed
- gaining DGR (tax deductibility) status, making it more attractive for some donors to support our work. I wish to thank former committee members Anita Corbran and Pia George for the extensive effort they put into securing this status.

Since our formation we have had committee members come and go and new ones join our team. Those who were on the inaugural committee who have stepped aside to attend to other commitments over the past three years include our foundation treasurer, Anita Corbran, vice chair Ian Falkenberg, and committee members Pia George, Ian Hodson and Kirsten Rough. I wish to thank them for their service and commitment to ospreys in South Australia.

As at the AGM in May 2025, the committee is comprised of myself as chair, with other office holders including:

- Fran Solly (Eyre Peninsula), Secretary
- Ainsley Parker (Eyre Peninsula), Treasurer
- Kylie Correll (Yorke Peninsula), committee member
- Max Barr (Yorke Peninsula), committee member
- Barry Hockaday (Eyre Peninsula), committee member
- Janet Forster (Eyre Peninsula), Patron and committee member.

We are always keen to expand the breadth and experience of our committee and welcome new members. We have received a nomination from Claire Bourne, based in Adelaide, and we trust she is able to join the committee for the forthcoming year. We would also be keen to see a Kangaroo Island based committee member and will actively seek someone to join the committee from the island.

Success of artificial nesting platforms

Friends of Osprey has been the coordinating body for the construction of artificial nesting platforms to provide safe havens for ospreys to breed on. These have proven to be very successful, leading to the re-establishment of breeding ospreys on the mainland Yorke Peninsula and the success of previously unproductive nests on the Eyre Peninsula.

A number of artificial platforms have not yet been taken up by breeding birds, but we are encouraged by the presence of young birds in their vicinity including at Tulka near Port Lincoln (on a platform financially supported by Birds SA) and at Port Broughton in the northern Yorke Peninsula region. With increasing numbers of fledging birds, we are hopeful that these platforms will become home to successful nests in the coming years.

A census of osprey across the state, undertaken between 2021 and 2025, has shown that there has been a marked increase in birds found in the areas where Friends of Osprey's work has been focused. While the results of this census are preliminary, it is heartening to see that the dial is being moved in relation to the population of this critically endangered species.

Banding and tracking birds

Another key body of work advanced by Friends of Osprey has been the banding and tracking of young ospreys so that we can better understand what happens to them when they fledge.

Using the expertise of former vice chair, Ian Falkenberg, with professional advice from UK raptor expert, Roy Dennis OBE MBE, a highly successful banding and tracking program has provided incredible insights into the movement of birds once they leave the care of their parents.

We have been able to share much of this information via social media platforms, engaging the community (both in South Australia and internationally) in the story of our ospreys and creating opportunities for fund raising for our conservation efforts.

To date 40 birds have been banded and 21 fitted with non-invasive GPS trackers.

Partnership with Ardrossan Community Men's Shed

I want to take the opportunity to specifically mention the fantastic partnership that has been secured between the volunteers of the Ardrossan Community Men's Shed and the Friends of Osprey. Shed volunteers have designed and constructed many of the nesting platforms that we have installed and have been instrumental in making this not just a conservation initiative, but also a social enterprise.

The relationships forged between Friends of Osprey and Ardrossan Community Men's Shed members has been special and enduring. We trust that this partnership will continue well into the future.

Funding and support partners

Friends of Osprey is grateful for the many funding partnerships that we have been able to secure in our three years of operation. Too often conservation groups rely solely on government grants and while Friends of Osprey has been fortunate to receive support via both Friends of Parks grants and Landscape Board funding, we have also secured funding from private foundations including the Carthew Foundation, the Lang Foundation and the Teakle family.

I want to thank the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board for the logistical and financial support that they have provided. This has made such a difference in providing financial, logistical and planning support of the installation of platforms and related activities such as educational signage and community engagement activities.

I also want to specifically mention the financial and practical support provided by our patron and committee member, Janet Forster. Janet's passion and drive to provide ospreys in South Australia is unparalleled and she has given countless hours and significant resources to the cause.

Protecting critical habitat, Greyhound Road wetlands, Port Lincoln

As well as focusing on specific nesting sites and birds, Friends of Osprey is also keen to see the protection and enhancement of key areas of habitat around the state. We are currently lobbying a range of government bodies with the aim of protecting and rehabilitating a series of wetlands and remnant vegetation found around Greyhound Road at Port Lincoln. This is a key foraging site for ospreys and many other species and we believe that there is a significant opportunity to see it enhanced as part of the construction of the desalination plant at Billy Lights Point, Port Lincoln.

Community engagement

Friends of Osprey is committed to spreading the word about ospreys, their conservation status and what is being done and what can be done to help them survive and thrive.

To that end we write a regular newsletter, appear in media where appropriate, have stalls at shows and field days, and engage with community organisations such as service clubs and schools. One great way to engage young people in our work is to get schools to help us construct nests to place on top of our nesting platforms. This is a fun way in which to engage the future generation in our work.

A great example of Friend of Osprey's community engagement in action is the community hub at Price which includes a fantastic osprey mural which has become quite the drawcard for visitors. Thank you to Friends of Osprey committee member, Kylie Correll, for pioneering this work and other community engagement activities across the Yorke Peninsula.

Roy Dennis OBE MBE visit

Friends of Osprey was delighted to be able to host Roy Dennis OBE MBE for a field work tour in South Australia in late November and early December 2024. Roy was visiting his son in Sydney and accepted an invitation to take some time away from his family and visit South Australia, the timing of which was fortuitous because it coincided with the banding and tracking of young ospreys at sites on the Yorke and Eyre Peninsula.

Roy, known as Scotland's David Attenborough, has been instrumental in the recovery of ospreys in the UK, increasing the population from just a single pair in the 1950s, to over 300 pairs today. He has also pioneered the reintroduction of white bellied sea eagles in England, resulting in the first successful nest there for over 250 years. We felt privileged to be able to spend time with Roy and glean information from him about how we should approach our recovery efforts.

Roy spoke to many of our members at three separate dinners in Adelaide, Coobowie and Port Lincoln which not only raised awareness about our work, but also raised funds. Roy also participated in a live interview (while attending an osprey banding and tracking session at Gleesons Landing!) with David Bevan on ABC Mornings.

In another remarkable moment of chance, Roy was able to provide hands-on assistance when Marie, a bird which fledged prematurely from her nest at Coobowie, was found distressed and vulnerable on the shoreline. Roy's expertise helped force feed the bird, mimicking what the parents would have done, while he also advised

that it would be best if Marie were transported to Gleasons Landing and an attempt of fostering her into another nest was made. This occurred and was successful, saving the life of a bird that would otherwise not have had a chance.

We are grateful for Roy's interest in the work of Friends of Osprey and look forward to keeping in touch with him.

Concluding remarks

Finally, I would like to thank Friends of Osprey committee members and members at large for their support for me as President over the last couple of years. I took on this role as my time as South Australia's Minister for Environment and Water was concluding and it has given me a great opportunity to continue serving our state's environment and biodiversity in a practical and meaningful way.

Through a prolonged season of personal change, my involvement with this group has provided me with a wonderful sense of hope, purpose and continuity. I have felt a sense of fulfilment having been able to contribute practically and strategically to the improved survival of a wonderful, charismatic species of bird, and I hope to continue this role into the future.

David Speirs

Chair, Friends of Osprey