



Friends of Osprey

NEWSLETTER
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Welcome to the first newsletter of the Friends of Osprey. This group has been established under the auspices of Friends of Parks South Australia.

Unlike many traditional Friends of Parks groups, Friends of Osprey is focused on the conservation status of a species, rather than looking after a particular geographical park or physical feature.

As you may be aware, the osprey is a very rare raptor which primarily feeds on fish and is found around coastal South Australia (and occasionally inland waters such as the River Murray and its anabranches). It is particularly susceptible to both direct and indirect human disturbance and most nests are currently located on offshore islands or rock stacks. There are thought to be less than fifty breeding pairs in South Australia, a figure which has declined markedly in recent decades.

Friends of Osprey formed in March 2022 to support a recovery strategy which has been written by the National Parks and Wildlife Service, with community input. The group's aims include increasing the number of successful fledglings by installing elevated breeding platforms which minimise disturbance by humans and interference from predators such as foxes. We also hope to significantly raise community awareness about the species through educational signage, community events and online resources.

Thank you for becoming a member and joining us on the journey to protect this precious species.

We are in the process of developing a website and Facebook page for members of the group and in the meantime this newsletter will tell you a little about our activity to date.

Elevated Breeding Platforms



Artificial nest platforms for Osprey have been established across the Yorke Peninsula and more recently Eyre Peninsula. Having safe places to nest is one of the focuses of the group. The need for a nest platform on Tumby Island was born out by nest predation of the Osprey eggs by a fox last year.

We have had magnificent support from Ardrossan Community and Men's Shed Volunteers who are fabricating the platforms. In partnership with the Southern Yorke Peninsula Landcare Group nest platforms have been

installed at: Port Gawler, Sheoak Flat, Wills Creek Conservation Park (Price), Gleesons Landing, Port Davenport Conservation Park, Port Broughton, Tumby Island Conservation Park, and Shoal Bay on KI. At least five of those platforms either have birds nesting or at least birds inspecting the site, so we are very hopeful of a successful breeding season in 2022.

More platforms are planned for the coming year at Edithburg/Cowbowie Bay, Coffin Bay, Arno Bay, Streaky Bay and Tulka. Each of these sites are in response to birds nesting in unsafe situations such as telecommunication towers, channel markers, predation risks or where there are birds ready to breed and no suitable nest sites available. Each site will take some time to gain the necessary government planning approvals but with a combination of Government Partnership Grants, N&Y Landscapes SA grants and generous private donations we are confident we can get the work happening.

Satellite Tracking

Satellite Tracking has been a real "game changer" in the monitoring of Osprey in South Australia. Under Scientific Research Permit, Wildlife Ethics Approval and Australian Bird Banding Scheme approval, the first bird tracked "Solly" flew from Port Lincoln to Eba Anchorage west of Streaky Bay where she remained for 12 months before being electrocuted on a power pole. This has led to conversations with SA Power Networks about how it might be possible to make power poles safer not only for Osprey but for a range of other raptors including the endangered White-bellied Sea Eagle. Meg, an Osprey fitted with a satellite tracker on Thistle Island

on the 8th November 2021, became independent on the 18th February when she departed Thistle Island and flew west to Yorke Peninsula. Then she headed north along the coast to Port Pirie and Port Germein. Then she headed inland to the Southern Flinders Ranges near Wirrabara and south to Crystal brook and onto Port Broughton. A few days later she flew south to Wallaroo and then inland again and then followed the coast back to Dhilba Guuranda-Innes NP. This represented a total combine flight of over 805 km in 19 days. Fledging to Independence for this Osprey was about 77



days. Following 19 days of independence sadly, Meg was found dead near Stenhouse Bay in Dhillba Guuranda-Innes National Park. An autopsy by Adelaide University Veterinary Facility revealed the death was due to starvation. While this was a sad loss it was again valuable information and an insight into the causes of Osprey mortality. Currently satellite trackers have been fitted to three Osprey young – Ervie (pictured) from the Port Lincoln Osprey Barge has remained in the Port Lincoln area. Phantom, a bird that hatched on the nesting platform at Price on Yorke Peninsula has flown to Kangaroo Island and is foraging in the vicinity of American River. A satellite tracker was also fitted to Desy, a rescued adult male found tangled in a TV antenna at Louth Bay but unfortunately the tracker has not transmitted the GSM locations since around 10 days after his release and no ground sighting has been made since that time. Rescued Raptors generally have a poor survival rate when released back to the wild, however the jury is still out as to whether this Osprey has survived. This year another four Osprey young are proposed to be fitted with satellite trackers and colour banded however the number and locations will be subject to Scientific Research Permit and Wildlife Ethics Approvals.

Colour Banding



Under the Australian Bird Banding Scheme and SA Scientific Research, approval has been given to colour band Osprey young. Given that some Ospreys frequent coastal towns and popular coastal areas, Colour Banding of Osprey is another technique used to determine movements of birds over time. The colour bands are conspicuous on the birds' legs and with very sophisticated camera equipment used by some birdo's these days, some outstanding photos of the colour banded Ospreys have been received to help build a picture of Osprey movements.

As this photo shows, Calypso a female Osprey banded on the Port Lincoln Barge in 2019 has regularly been seen in the Tulka area just south of Port Lincoln. For the past year she is often seen in company with a male Osprey, and it is likely the two have formed a bond and could mate as early as this season. It was also exciting to receive photographs and a report from a follower 13 Km south of Port Augusta of an Osprey banded in November 2021 and fledged from the Port Lincoln Barge fitted with a yellow band. Once people become more aware of the birds and observe the colour bands, they are more likely to report sightings which helps with the question of "Where do they go?" which until now has been a major knowledge gap.

Reporting Sightings

Sightings of birds from Friends of Osprey and members of the public help us to maintain a record of Osprey movements around the State. Friends are reminded to maintain a safe distance from the birds and to use long telephoto lenses (minimum 400mm) for photographs or to simply observe using binoculars or spotting scopes. It is particularly important that in the coming months as the nesting season progresses, birds are not flushed from nests by people getting too close. Predators such as gulls and corvids can predate on Osprey eggs in a matter of seconds when the adult Osprey is inadvertently flushed from its nest and distracted and forced to defend its nest against the intruders.



A recent report from a member of the Public showed this female Osprey that locals at Louth Bay have called Pro (because she is a Pro-fisher). The Osprey had brought her catch of fish and perched on a TV Antenna attached to a house near the Tod River early in the morning. At lunch time she was still there, not eating but just holding on to the remaining half a fish for later. To report a sighting of a colour banded Osprey please send details and photos if you can get them safely, to friendsofosprey@gmail.com