

# Osprey Migration Activity Sheet

## Introduction

Ospreys can't be seen all year round in the UK. This is because they are a migratory species and spend only part of their year in the UK. Other species of birds also migrate, some of which you may be familiar with like swifts and swallows.

Ospreys can be seen in the UK between mid-March and early September. Their main priority during these months is to breed and successfully raise a brood of chicks. Those ospreys which are returning to a nest, that have bred for several years, will tend to return sooner than those birds who are unattached. This could be to reclaim their nest and see off any other competition or to make sure the nest is ready for eggs to be laid.

Ospreys have to migrate to warmer countries for the winter months because the weather in the UK may become too cold for them. If it becomes cold then there is a risk that water bodies, such as rivers and lakes, will freeze, making it very difficult for Ospreys to catch the fish they need to survive. So, once the breeding season comes to an end the Ospreys start to leave their UK homes and return to where they spend the winter months. Usually, the adult breeding females will leave first, followed by the juveniles and last but not least the adult breeding males. Unlike other bird species that migrate, such as geese, Ospreys don't travel as a family unit, which means that juvenile Ospreys have to navigate to a suitable wintering ground all by themselves! But where do they go?

**ACTIVITY** Suggest three countries that Ospreys will migrate to in the autumn and winter.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Ospreys from the UK usually spend the winter months along the coast of west African countries. That could be over 5,000km from their breeding grounds in the UK, roughly 3 to 4 weeks of travel! Due to the huge distance Ospreys can travel they are faced with many hazards along the way. Some are natural and some are caused by people.

**ACTIVITY** Can you unjumble these letters to discover some of the threats and hazards that Ospreys face on their migration?

GSTNRO NDIWS

NONTAMIU GESNRA

HNMAU NPESRCUTIOE

HSARAA SERTDE

SIFHNGI TSEN

## How do we know where Ospreys go?

These days we are particularly dependent on technology, which we use in our day to day lives. Thanks to a brilliant development in technology, we are able to follow the lives of some of our Ospreys, through satellite trackers, which send data back to us ever hour. We gain a rare insight into individuals' movements when it comes to foraging habits, as well as the path of their migration.

Satellite trackers are very light, weighing only 30g, and are carefully fitted to an Osprey, a bit like a rucksack, using a special Teflon harness, which is made up of biodegradable material.

## What data do we receive?

- Location - we can pinpoint the exact place an Osprey is!
- Speed
- Direction of travel - we can tell whether an osprey is flying north, east, south or west.
- Altitude - how high an Osprey is flying.

Ospreys are creatures of habit and will follow the same routes for their migrations year after year, sometimes visiting the same feeding spots and even perching on the same trees overnight. Have a look at male 4K(13)'s migrations below, which is the only Rutland individual fitted with one of these amazing satellite trackers, and see how much each migration mirrors the other....



ACTIVITY Using the blank map below, label the different countries that Ospreys will fly over from the UK to their wintering grounds. Borders of countries are in yellow.

