

Osprey

Pandion haliaetus

Bird · Summer migrant · Mar-Sep



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A large, long-winged raptor, dark brown above and startlingly white below, with a white head crossed by a dark band through the eye. Ospreys returned to Scotland in the 1950s after being driven to extinction, and now breed at scattered sites across the country including Dumfries and Galloway. They need large fish-holding water — loch, reservoir or estuary — within reach of a tall nest tree.

BEHAVIOUR

The hunting dive is spectacular: the bird hovers, then plunges feet-first, often submerging completely, and hauls out with a fish gripped in both feet. Barbed pads on the soles and a reversible outer toe give the grip; the fish is then turned head-forwards to cut drag in flight. Nests are huge stick platforms at the top of a pine, added to year after year by a returning pair.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Ospreys (Pandionidae)
SIZE	52-60 cm · wingspan up to 1.7 m
UK STATUS	Amber-listed

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