



PRESS RELEASE

No. 208/2017

Date: 31st March 2017

Environment installs artificial nests for Ospreys

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Climate change (DEHCC) has today begun installing artificial nests within the Gibraltar Nature Reserve to help attract a spectacular fish-eating bird of prey back to the Rock; the Osprey also known as the Fish Eagle. The nests have been built in Gibraltar by the Nature Reserve Management Team.

Ospreys were known to nest on Gibraltar's steep eastside cliffs up until the 1930s when the last breeding pair was recorded. Population numbers declined throughout much of Western Europe during this time largely due to the collection of eggs, hunting and habitat destruction. In Gibraltar, it is likely that quarrying and military activity during the War years also contributed to its disappearance. In the region, a few pairs of Ospreys remained nesting on inaccessible sea cliffs on the coast of north-eastern Morocco. In the last decade, the Osprey population has increased in many places around Europe including Scotland, Germany and Scandinavia. Thanks partly to re-introduction efforts, it has also recolonised places where the species was lost like England and France.

A reintroduction programme is currently underway in Cadiz and scientists from the Department of the Environment have recently joined the regional efforts to increase population numbers in consultation with the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society as well regional experts from Andalucía.

Partly as a result of the reintroductions in Cadiz, where some pairs are now nesting, Ospreys are now found all year round in the Bay of Gibraltar and are regularly seen on migration in Spring when arriving from their wintering grounds in Sub-Saharan Africa. The installation of artificial nests with decoys is aimed at attracting the interest of passing Ospreys that may be enticed to stay. With other conservation measures carried out within the reserve, this initiative forms part of the Department's wider efforts to re-wild the Gibraltar Nature Reserve and help bring back an iconic bird of prey.

PHOTOS: Reuben Senior of the Nature Reserve Management Team constructing an artificial nest.