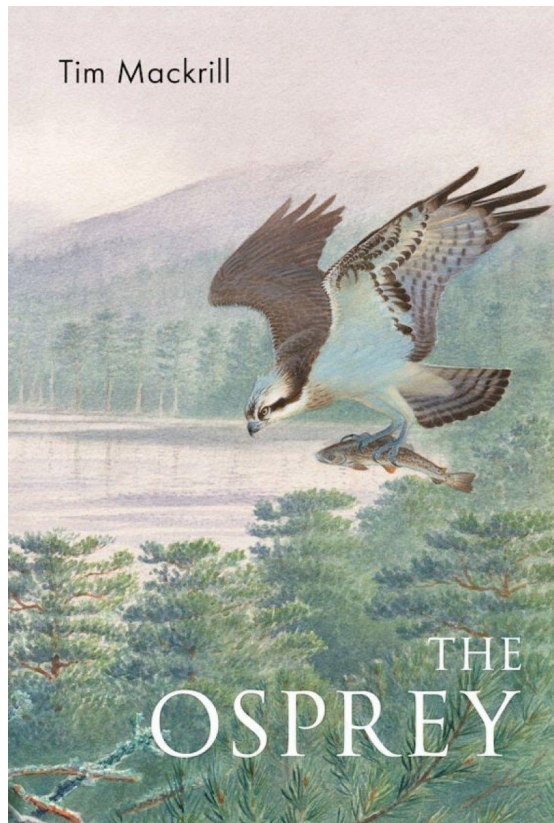


The Osprey

September 2024





The Osprey

By Tim Mackrill

T. & A. D. Poyser, 2024

Hbk and flexibound, 304pp; many colour photographs and figures

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(flexibound)

Mention 'Tim Mackrill' and anyone who knows the name will instantly associate Tim with Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus*. As Roy Dennis – the godfather of modern Osprey conservation in Britain – says in his Foreword, few are better placed to write a Poyser monograph on the species; and he's right. This book, through its nine chapters, delivers both up-to-date science on the subject and an interesting, readable account of this globally distributed species.

The nine chapters run through topics as diverse as the identification and taxonomy of the Osprey, food and feeding, dispersal, nesting, migration and wintering. Throughout, the author has taken a worldwide approach to the material, but with a clear emphasis on Britain and an often even clearer emphasis on Rutland Water, where he cut his Osprey-studying teeth, as it were. Although historical studies are widely referenced, it is notable that much of the data presented comes from the past two decades; and, far from being a sea of raw data, graphs and maps are explained in the context of real-world scenarios, which makes for particularly fascinating reading when it comes to the extensive chapter on migration. Not surprisingly, data from satellite-tagged birds is extensively referred to – a reminder that this sort of technology really has furthered our knowledge of these birds beyond what anybody just a few decades ago would ever have dreamt possible.

Amongst all of the science, there is an obvious passion for the species; one that shines through not only in the chapter 'Our relationship with the Osprey' (which details both the present good and the past bad in humanity's

interactions with the species), but also in places such as the paragraphs on the recognition of individual Ospreys and the way the author writes passionately about the return of certain birds to nesting sites. One striking set of photographs, which, for me, highlighted the individual story of one Osprey more than anything else, shows Osprey 09(98) being fitted with a satellite tag at Rutland Water followed by the bird's leg, post-predation in the Sahara Desert.

Ospreys connect the world by their migration routes, thrill spectators with their spectacular dives and offer a conservation success story in a world that is all too often filled with ecological doom and gloom. This book offers a superb, modern overview of a magnificent species, and is a fine addition to the Poyser collection.

Stephen Menzie

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