

ENVIRONMENT

Ospreys nesting in south Wales cause headache for organisers of Green Man festival

Adam Vaughan, Environment Editor

Friday September 15 2023, 12:01am BST, The Times



The nesting pair at Gilestone Farm are likely to return next year

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Ospreys have been found nesting in south Wales for the first time in centuries, posing a potential headache for expansion plans by the organisers of the Green Man festival.

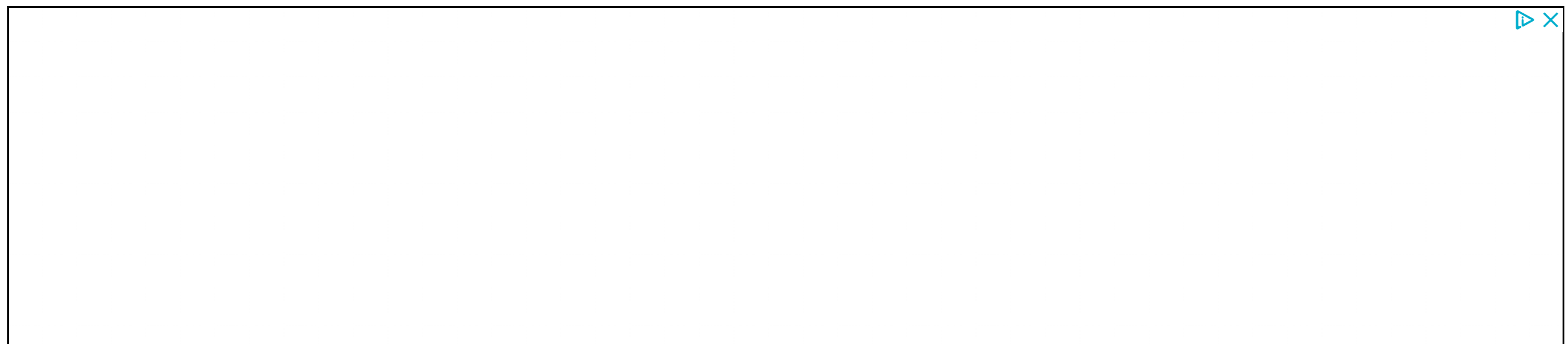
The pair made their nest at Gilestone Farm at the foot of the Brecon Beacons, or Bannau Brycheiniog, in early June. Last week the rare birds of prey migrated to west Africa for winter and are considered likely to return to the nest next year.

Both the birds and their nests are legally protected and can require significant exclusion zones to prevent disturbance from people, meaning they could present a dilemma for the Green Man team's plans for food businesses and small events there. The Welsh government is also involved, as it bought the farm for £4.25 million to help the organisers create jobs.

Ospreys were hunted to extinction in the UK in the 19th century. After being reintroduced and breeding in Scotland in the 1950s, they have spread southwards with [about 250 pairs across the UK](#). The only six breeding pairs in Wales so far have been in the north of the country.

"These are the most southerly, and it's just brilliant news," said Peter Seaman, who lives in nearby Scethrog and has been photographing the ospreys, which have been seen feeding on fish from the River Usk.

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While the Welsh government's climate department said it was "delighted" at the birds' arrival, their presence may provide extra ammunition for some local people already opposed to plans for Gilestone Farm.

The Green Man team do not intend to extend the festival to the site — it is too small — but have a £23 million plan involving regenerative farming, glamping, small events and a bakery, brewery and baking school.



The Green Man group director described the arrival of the ospreys as "incredible"

RICHARD GRAY/ALAMY

Even before the ospreys, Seaman already objected to the Green Man plans. "I feel they've chosen the wrong place, which is environmentally unsuitable: it floods. And it's wrong! for wildlife reasons, because of the impact of light and noise on bats, and other animals including otters and kingfishers," he said.

Andrew King, Brecknock county bird recorder, said it was "very exciting" that a young male osprey that had been "scoping out" the area for at least two years appeared to have chosen to breed there. He has seen the birds building the nest from June to the start of September.

The Welsh government is looking to commission an expert to report on the osprey nest. King said: "It's going to be very hard to hold public events near it."

Tim Mackrill, a conservationist at Roy Dennis Wildlife Foundation who has visited the nest, said: "That site now is really significant for the conservation of ospreys in Wales, because it is by far the most southerly site. They can cope with normal farming, but anything over and above that, there would have to be careful consideration."

Fiona Stewart, managing director of Green Man Group, said the nest discovery was "incredible". She said the plans at the farm did not require new buildings. "This gives us the flexibility to adapt," she said.

The Welsh government was contacted for comment.

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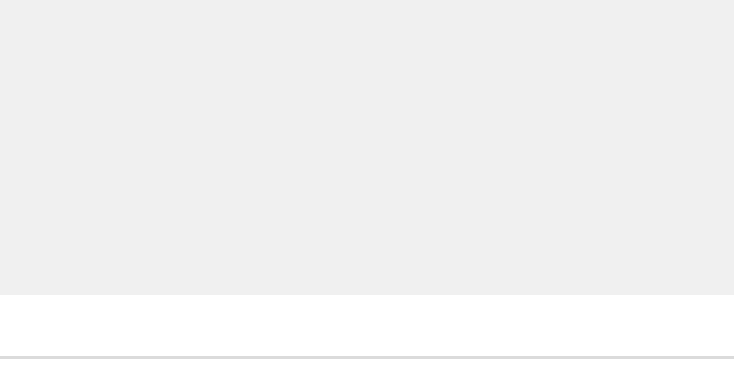
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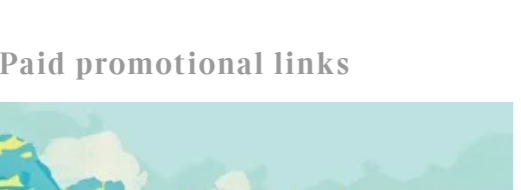
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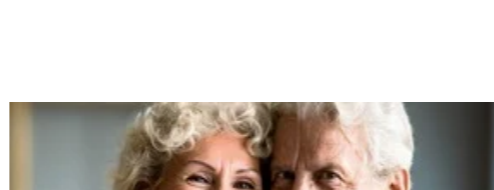
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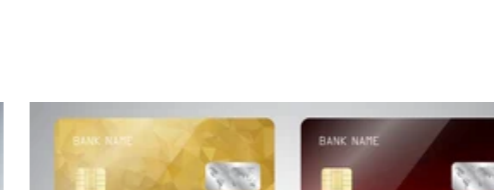
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Mary Steggles

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A Andrew Walker 2 DAYS AGO
Festivals can be held anywhere, Ospreys are far more important.

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B B.L.Nicholls 2 DAYS AGO
In Florida they can be seen in numbers along highways. I suspect we think they are shy due to their rarity but as they continue to recover we will realise they can share space with us as long as we leave their nests alone.

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H Hugh Maund 2 DAYS AGO
They have a very wide distribution world wide. They have become fairly common in the UK particularly in Scotland. Even in the West Country we see them on migration visiting our trout farm but they are usually driven off by crows. I have yet to see one catch a fish here, but live in hope.

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A anthony m barton 2 DAYS AGO
Made me laugh the site is unsuitable because it floods, which is great for the Ospreys because they feed on fish

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J j garner 2 DAYS AGO
They can nest on top of the defunct Tata steel works once they've got the government dosh

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W William Croom-Johnson 2 DAYS AGO
It would be awkward if the ospreys settled in (say) Cardiff, and the evacuation of the city was required.

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M Mike Gray 2 DAYS AGO
Nature is cleverer and much more resilient than we think. Legally protecting them from being killed is all that's required. If the ospreys don't appreciate the Green Man festival (and they may?), they'll either adapt or move.

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J J Heaton 2 DAYS AGO
I think I left my box of crested newts at Gilestone Farm last year. Should we look for it?

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