

[Birds and wildlife](#)

# Osprey

*Pandion haliaetus*

Group: Osprey

UK Conservation status: ● Not assessed



## How to identify

When seen in flight from below, the Osprey has white or slightly mottled underparts. The wings are angled, bending at the 'wrist' (middle) which has a black patch contrasting with the white wing linings and, at a distance, it could be mistaken for a large gull. This spectacular fish-eating bird of prey is an Amber List species because of its historical decline (due to illegal killing) and low breeding numbers. They are listed as a Schedule 1 species on The Wildlife and Countryside Act.

## Call

**Osprey**  
Patrik Åberg / [xeno-canto](#)

## Key features to look out for

- Males and females look very similar, with brown upperparts and white underparts
- Juvenile birds have buff tips to their feathers, giving them a scaly appearance
- Females are larger and tend to have a 'necklace' of brown feathers on their chest
- White head with distinctive dark eye 'mask'
- Black beak
- Adults have yellow eyes, juveniles have orange eyes
- Pale grey legs, not yellow as in many other birds of prey
- Wings angled at the 'wrist' making Ospreys look a bit like gulls at a distance

### What's that bird of prey

From tiny Merlins to enormous White-tailed Eagles, the UK's birds of prey come in all shapes and sizes. These masterful predators are a real treat to see, but they're often super-fast and many species look quite similar, which can make identifying them a challenge. In this guide, we share some simple ID tips to help you.

[Identify your bird of prey here](#)

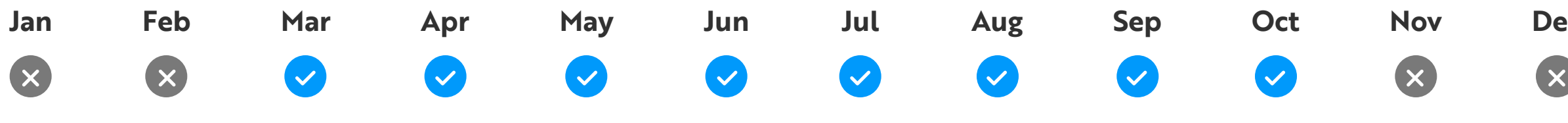
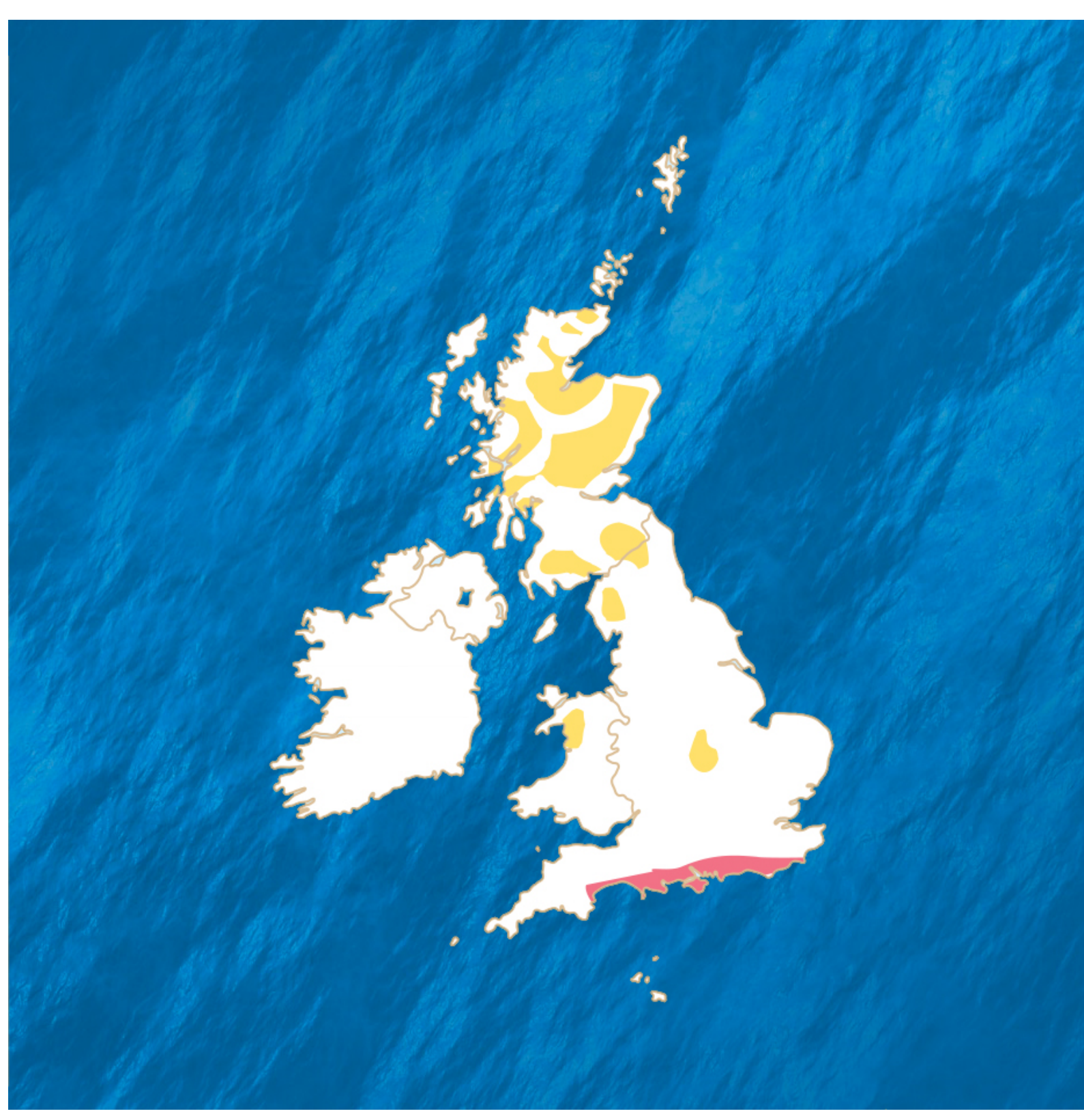
## Where to see them

Ospreys breed by lochs and lakes. They're increasing as a breeding bird and nesting in more and more places, but Scotland remains their stronghold. You might also spot them further south as they pass through on migration.

### Key

- Resident
- Passage
- Summer
- Winter

\* This map is intended as a guide. It shows general distribution rather than detailed, localised populations.



## Where best to see them

**Loch Ruthven**  
Croachy

Set among woodland and heather-covered hills, this remote loch is home to Slavonian Grebes who hide among the sedge beds.

**Loch of Kinnordy**  
Kinnordy

Wander round this wildlife-rich patchwork of habitats and you might spot Osprey, otters, beavers, waders and wildfowl.

**Loch Lomond**  
Gartocharn

As well as spectacular views of this famous loch, you'll get to explore woodland, grassland and all of the wildlife that lives there. Join us for a guided walk or an evening looking for bats. Visit our Nature Hub to discover even more.

### Behaviour

Ospreys are fish-eating birds of prey and you might see them soaring over a lake peering intently into the water, before hurtling downwards and diving in head-first, with their talons outstretched to grab their prey. They will also fly low over the water to snatch any unsuspecting fish that swim close to the surface. To help them keep hold of their slippery prey, Ospreys have special spines on their feet and will hold the fish headfirst to limit air resistance and help with flight.

## Key facts

General	
Beak	Black
Conservation status	<span style="color: grey;">●</span> Not assessed
Diet	Fish.
Feather	Cream/Buff, Brown, White
Leg	Blue
Length	52-60cm
Habitats	Marine and Intertidal, Wetland
UK breeding birds	200-250 pairs
Weight	1,200-2,000g
Wingspan	145-170cm