

Osprey Monitoring Report

Summary – End of Season 2025/26

Introduction

For the first time in 2025, Friends of Osprey undertook a comprehensive nest monitoring program across South Australia with trained and dedicated volunteers. This milestone initiative marks a significant step forward in our understanding and conservation of osprey populations in the region and adds a powerful citizen science element to our existing conservation works which has included the installation of safe nesting platforms and the banding and tracking of young birds.

Monitoring commenced in June 2025 and continued until the end of January 2026, covering the entire breeding season. It is anticipated that monitoring will be an ongoing activity for members and supporters of Friends of Osprey into the future.

Why we monitor osprey nests

Nest monitoring is essential for several critical reasons:

Population health assessment: Regular monitoring allows us to track breeding success rates, identify population trends and detect early warning signs of decline. This data is crucial for understanding the overall health and distribution of osprey populations in South Australia.

Threat identification: By observing nests throughout the year, but particularly around the breeding season, we can identify and document threats such as habitat disturbance, predation, human interference and environmental factors that may impact breeding success.

Conservation planning: The data collected informs targeted conservation efforts, helping us prioritise protection for active nesting sites and identify areas where habitat enhancement or threat mitigation is needed.

Long-term research: Consistent monitoring over multiple seasons builds a valuable dataset for understanding osprey behaviour, habitat preferences, and responses to environmental changes, including potential climate change impacts.

Community engagement: The monitoring program is a powerful citizen science initiative, engaging volunteers and raising public awareness about ospreys and coastal ecosystems, fostering stewardship and support for conservation initiatives.

2025/26 season summary

Monitoring effort

Our dedicated team of volunteers invested significant time and effort throughout the breeding season:



Photo: By Brian Krywanio of Dave Wetherall monitoring on Yorke Peninsula – can you spot the two Osprey watching.

Total nests checked: 40 of 70 known nest locations were checked, some monthly but others as regularly as possible with the aim being to check nests three times during the breeding season. Weather conditions, volunteer availability and the remoteness of some nests made it impossible to check each nest with equal frequency.

Number of nest checks: 150

Number of incidental sightings: 34 incidental sightings reported from River Murray to Ceduna

Total volunteers: 34

Estimated volunteer hours: 230 hours

Number of nests occupied: 32



Photo: by Dave Weatherall – the photo of him above with his camera shows how he is able to get these shots without causing the birds to fly.

Number of inactive nests: 8, no birds were sighted at these nests during monitoring this year

Breeding success

The 2025/26 breeding season showed encouraging results, with successful fledging recorded at multiple sites across the region.

Chicks fledged: 16 from 9 nests

Successful fledging was recorded at the following locations:

- Cheetima Beach, Far West Coast
- Deep Gully, Eyre Peninsula
- Gleesons Landing, Yorke Peninsula
- Point Davenport, Yorke Peninsula
- Point Tin Line, Kangaroo Island
- Price, Yorke Peninsula
- Streaky Bay, Eyre Peninsula
- Thistle Island, Eyre Peninsula
- Whalers Way, Eyre Peninsula.

Birds were also confirmed on a nest in Lincoln National Park, Eyre Peninsula, on 5 January 2026, but it is not known if they were two adults or juveniles.

Banded bird sightings

Total reported sightings: Eleven sightings of banded birds were formally reported to the Australian Bat and Bird Banding Scheme.

Notable individuals: Two birds, nicknamed Calypso and Bradley, were observed regularly throughout the season around Port Lincoln and the Lower Eyre Peninsula region but not formally reported for every sighting due to their sedentary nature. Calypso was consistently present at the Tulka Platform a short distance outside the city of Port Lincoln, while Bradley remained at the mouth of the Tod River, also close to Port Lincoln, demonstrating strong site fidelity.

Threats identified

Throughout the monitoring period, volunteers observed and documented several potential threats to nesting ospreys:

- **Human disturbance:** Recreational activities near nesting sites, including boating, fishing, and coastal access, can cause stress and nest abandonment, particularly during critical incubation and early chick-rearing periods
- **Industrial Disturbance:** most likely cause of failure at the Port Lincoln Osprey Barge where three eggs found to be viable were abandoned by the adults just days from hatching. The female abandoning the eggs corresponded with the day drilling commenced at nearby Billy Lights Point. The drilling resulted in significant visual and noise impact.
- **Habitat modification:** Coastal development and changes to nesting structures pose ongoing challenges, with some traditional nesting sites becoming unsuitable or lost
- **Weather events:** Extreme weather conditions, including strong winds and storms, can impact nest stability and chick survival
- **Fishing line entanglement:** Discarded fishing line and marine debris continue to pose entanglement risks for both adult birds and fledglings
- **Food availability:** Changes in fish populations and water quality may affect prey availability, impacting breeding success. Friends of Osprey also holds concerns about the impact of the algal bloom on the availability of fish, particularly in near

shore foraging grounds on the Yorke Peninsula and Gulf St Vincent.



Photo: from Facebook of Algae Bloom at Pondalowie where there is a natural nest. It was noted that the birds there were flying further and taking longer to land a catch.

Looking forward

The inaugural monitoring season has established a strong foundation for ongoing osprey conservation in South Australia. The data collected will guide future protection efforts and help us better understand the needs of our local osprey populations.

Key priorities for the upcoming season include expanding nest coverage, increasing monitoring frequency at critical sites, and developing targeted threat mitigation strategies based on this season's observations.

We extend our sincere gratitude to all volunteers whose dedication made this program possible. Their commitment to osprey conservation ensures a brighter future for these magnificent birds.

For more information

Friends of Osprey welcomes community involvement in osprey conservation. If you observe ospreys or would like to participate in future monitoring efforts, please contact us.

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