

# NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate use

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## Wildlife Trust Leads the Way with Osprey Recovery Project in Herts

The County's leading wildlife conservation organisation has today unveiled its plans to aid the recovery of one of Britain's most beautiful birds. The work, which has been taking place at Stocker's Lake Nature Reserve, near Rickmansworth, aims to entice ospreys to nest in Hertfordshire.

Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust (HMWT) has installed a special nesting platform at the nature reserve which it manages on behalf on the site's owners Veolia Water Three Valleys (Veolia Water) as part of a national conservation programme to extend the range of this endangered bird. The 30 foot high nesting platform will imitate the nests the bird uses in the wild, and the aim is that males will spot it on their return from West Africa next spring.

Ospreys were once widespread in Britain – breeding across the entire country, but by 1842 they were extinct due to hunting, persecution from trout farmers and loss of suitable habitat. In the 50s and 60s slowly recovering numbers were further hit by pesticides widely in use in farming. A slow recovery in numbers in Scotland has built the population and today 200 pairs breed in the Highlands.

Following reintroductions, four pairs have been nesting successfully in Leicestershire, one pair in Cumbria and one pair in Wales. No ospreys have nested or bred south of Leicestershire for over 150 years, so this project will give people in Hertfordshire, and those from London and the surrounding areas, a chance to see this magnificent fish-eating bird with a 6ft wingspan much closer to home.

The Colne Valley offers some excellent habitat for ospreys and in recent years birds have been stopping-off for weeks as they migrate south in the autumn. Two or three birds have been seen recently, spending time in the area before moving off south, so it is hoped that the males will spot the nesting platform when they return next year.

Tim Hill, Conservation Manager for HMWT said “The installation of this nesting platform is part of a county-wide strategy to provide nesting opportunities for ospreys at suitable locations across Hertfordshire. The osprey is an iconic species and being at the top of the food chain is a good indicator of the health of our wetlands.”



## Herts & Middlesex

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Hertfordshire & Middlesex  
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under Registration No 239863.  
VAT No 366 9276 06

President - SA Bowes-Lyon, PCA

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He continued “We are extremely grateful to Veolia Water for providing the funding for this first platform and along with the advice and help we’ve had from national osprey expert Roy Dennis and Rutland and Leicestershire Wildlife Trust we’re hopeful that we can encourage ospreys to come to Hertfordshire as a more permanent resident - giving future generations the opportunity to see this wonderful creature on their doorstep.”

Andrew Hodges, Contracts & Environmental Manager of Veolia Water said “Veolia Water and HMWT have worked very closely on this project. We’re both committed to preserving wildlife and by supporting the construction of this nesting platform, we’re delighted to be part of a project that will entice the rare osprey off its migratory path to settle and breed at Stocker’s Lake Nature Reserve”.

Male birds like to use existing nests, so the platform has been constructed with a distinctive twiggy nest to entice them. Tree and conservation contractor, Pat Venables who carried out the construction of the platform said, "This is the first time I have built an osprey platform and working on an island posed a number of new challenges but our extensive experience of working on wetlands for the Trust came in very useful."

The Trust now hopes to secure more funding to enable platforms to be installed at other reserves in the County.

**ENDS**

***Notes for Editors***

- 1. Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust is a charity dedicated to protecting wildlife for future generations. It safeguards and manages 43 Nature Reserves across the two counties, advises on wider countryside issues and is at the forefront of developing long-term nature conservation strategies. It has over 21,000 members and is one of 47 local Wildlife Trusts across the UK.*
- 2. Veolia Water Three Valleys has been supplying water to the local community for more than 130 years. It provides around 825 million litres of water each day to 3.5 million customers, in parts of Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Surrey, the London Boroughs of Harrow and Hillingdon and parts of the London Boroughs of Barnet, Brent, Ealing, and Enfield. Veolia Water Three Valleys is the UK’s largest water supply only company and is part of Veolia Water, the world leader in water and wastewater management. For more information logon to [www.veoliawater.co.uk/tv](http://www.veoliawater.co.uk/tv).*

*For further information, or for a Jpeg of the photograph(s) shown, please contact: **Clare Gray, Marketing & PR Officer, Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust on tel. 01727 858901 or [clare.gray@hmwt.org](mailto:clare.gray@hmwt.org)***

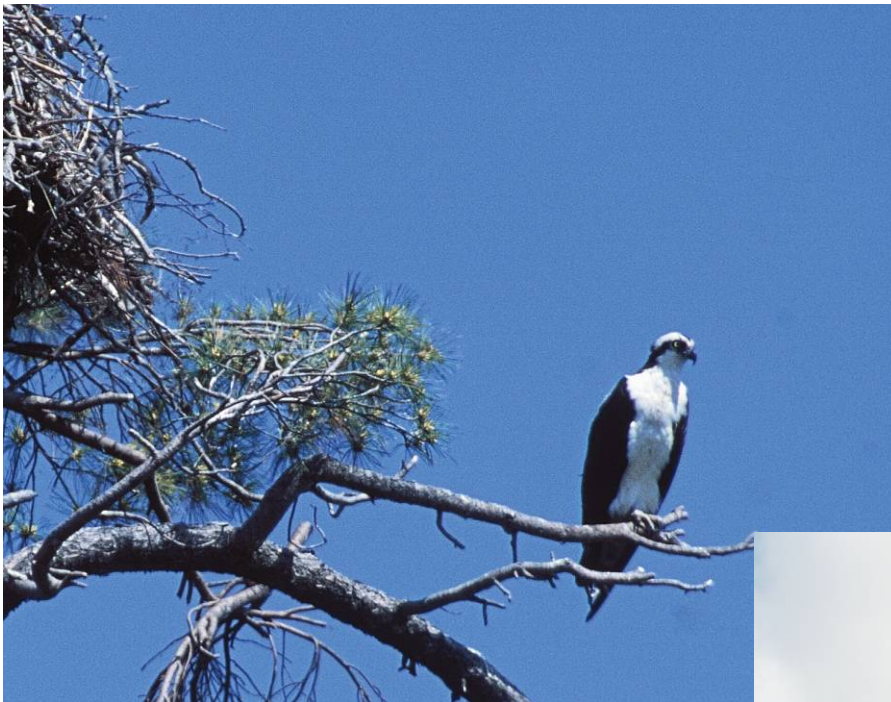
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Herts &  
Middlesex



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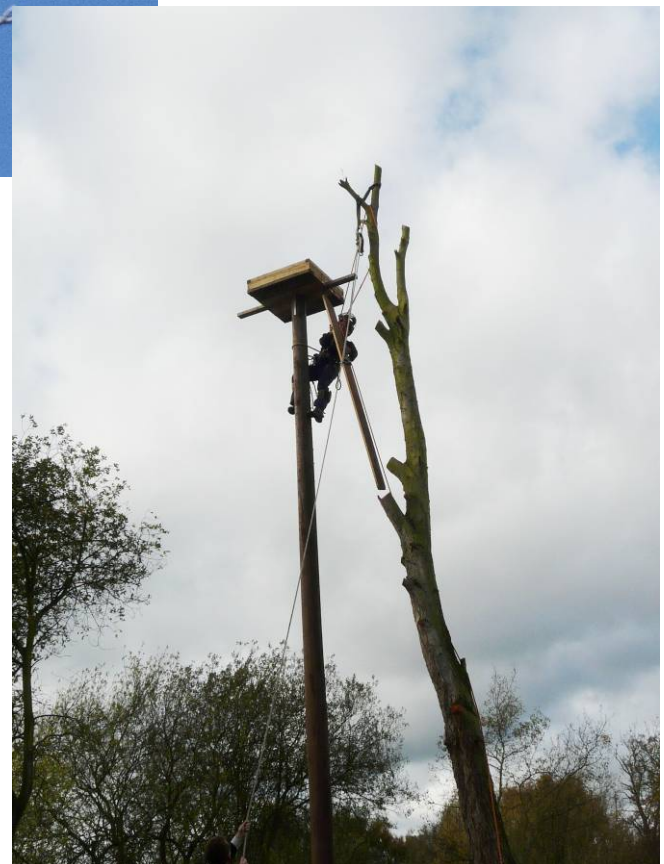
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*An osprey in the wild with a tree nest.*



*Putting the finishing touches to the nest. The adjacent tree was left in while the job was in progress, and felled once it was completed.*



*The nesting platform at Stocker's Lake. Contractor Pat Venables building the platform on its 30 ft pole*