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### Habitat

Lakes, swamps, marshes, coasts. Migrates to lagoons, sea faces, estuaries, broad rivers and reservoirs, but always near water where fish is available.

**Habit:** Perch for prolonged periods on trees, poles, stumps submerged in water, or on boulders near the sea coasts. Always near water, singly or in pairs on wintering grounds.

**Distribution:** In temperate and tropical regions with almost worldwide distribution, except Alaska. Winter in S and SE Asia, Africa and S America. "Breeding and wintering lation of Palearctic Osprey". [From Poole A.F. Ospreys: a natural and unnatural history. 1989. Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge, NY U.S.A. 246 p.]

**Status:** Winter migrant in India. Sporadic breeding records from Kashmir, Ladakh, Garhwal, Kumaon, Maharashtra and Assam.

### Food

Piscivore (mainly fish: 150-500 grams, range: 50-2100 grams). In the taiga zone of the North-West of Russia: Bream Abramis brama, Abramis ballerus, Rutilus rutilus. On a broader geographic scale: Bream, Roach (Rutilus rutilus), Carp (Cyprinus carpio), Pike (Esox lucius) and trout (Salmo spp.) depending on latitude, size and depth of lakes fished. Hover

above water to identify possible fish that may be within reach and close to the surface. Dive in water for fish with legs stretched. Emerge with laboured wing beats. One in five dives is successful. Rarely take mollusks, crustaceans, amphibians, rodents, birds, hares and small reptiles.



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## Phenology



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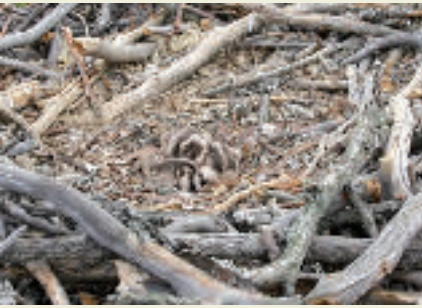
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## Key features



- Dark brown above and cream below.
- Typical 'highwayman' mask around the eyes.
- Female has a prominent breast-band.
- Black patches on wrists (base of 2 & 3 primary) in flight typical.
- Iris golden yellow; Eyelids, cere- greenish blue. Bill black.
- Tarsi reticulate, toes equal.
- Legs and feet yellowish green. Claws rounded, black.
- Sole pad with prickly-scales.



- Female larger than male.
- Young have pale edged scalloped feathers; adult plumage after 18 months.

### FACT FILE: Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* (Linnaeus) 1758.

**Type locality:** Europe = Sweden.

**Local names:** *Machmanga* (Marathi); *Machlimar, Machmanga* (Hindi); *Machharang* (Nepal); *Utkrosh* (Bengal); *Koramen gadda* (Telugu); *Hegguli* (Yerukali); *Vral addipan* (Tamil); *Talipparundu* (Malayalam); *Pantiong* (Lepcha).

- **Size:** 56 cm.
- **Average weight:** Male - 1400 g, Female - 1800 g
- **Wing:** Male 452 - 495 mm; Female 468 -508 mm.
- **Average wing span:** 1600 mm.
- **Breeding season:** In Russia: May-July.
- **Clutch:** 2 to 4 eggs. Hatch in 40 – 45 d.
- **Fledging period:** 7 – 8 weeks.
- **Eggs:** Yellowish-white; Blotched with red brown. Oval. 61.6 mm x 46.3 mm. (Baker).
- **Average life span:** 25 years in wild.
- **Call:** *Kai, kai, kai*. Whistles. Silent in winter.



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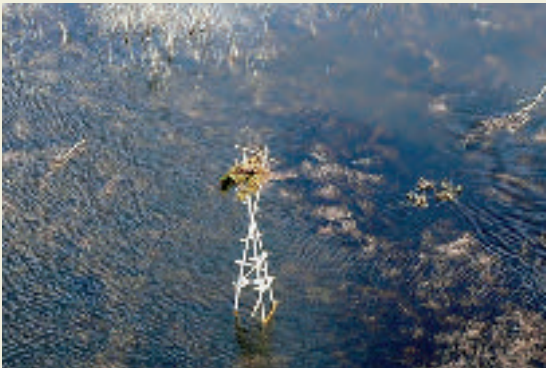
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### Nest

Large wide and deep platform built with sticks and branches in highland moors, lakes and marshes. 12 m or higher on a tree in a swamp or lake; nests on thin tall trees are prone to crash. Nests are built on the coast or water at a distance of 15 km from the lakes.

### Study



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# Osprey

- **Order:** Falconiformes. ● **Family:** Pandionidae.
- **Status:** Winter Migrant. Included in Red Data Book of Russia.



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### THREATS

Habitat loss due to draining of marshes and swamps, falling of old water-soaked nest trees, water pollution, overfishing are major threats. Water turbidity is a major hazard for this ‘sentinel of clean water’!



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### Importance and conservation

It affects only clear unpolluted water bodies. Artificial nest platforms are readily accepted and these have augmented the breeding osprey populations in Darwin Reserve, Russkiy Sever National Park on banks of Rybinsk and Sheksna water basin, Russia. Hacking and Osprey relocation programs are successful in America.



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### Amazing Facts

Slimy talons are dragged in water in flight, probably to clean them. Osprey can close the nose flaps when it dives under water. The third toe can be swivelled backwards for better grasp on slippery fish. Occasionally, this supreme aerial angler drowns and dies, when it is dragged underwater by a very large fish that it fails to disengage from the spikes on the sole pads.

### Cultural aspects

Features in Greek mythology and is associated with kings Megara, Theseus and Pandion. Appears in Shakespeare’s play Coriolanus, ‘... As is Osprey to the fish, who takes it by sovereignty of nature’. Depicted on postal stamps of many countries.

### Etymology

Pandion (Gr), after Pandion, the mythical king of Athens, whose daughters were turned into birds; halos (Gr), sea; aetus (Gr), an eagle. (Pande, Satish. 2009). Osprey, from Anglo-French ospriet, bird of prey; and also probably from ossifragus (L), bone-breaker.

### Flight

Oslo wing flaps and glides. Also hovers.

### Related species

Monotypic genus and species.

Photographs and field research by Miroslav Babushkin (Russia) at Darwin State Natural Biosphere Reserve and «Russkiy Sever» National Park, Russia.