

The movements of Heather in 2008

August Migration

Because of the chick's behaviour of perching quietly in big trees near the nest for hours on end waiting for the male to bring fish, the radio was not getting enough sun on the solar panel, so the GPS did not function properly until the migration flight charged up the battery.

10 September 2008

The first signal that the chick was migrating was received at 1014GMT from the Inner Forth near Grangemouth, west of Edinburgh. This is 161 kms south of the nest site. Very interestingly at 1000GMT, the older chick was at Alva, just 15-20 kilometres away, suggesting very strongly that the chicks set off together early in the morning. It is a pity the radio battery was not charged because it would have been very interesting to have checked how the two birds migrated between the nest and central Scotland.

The radio signals were non GPS fixes so they are not accurate but the chick moved east and was south of Aberlady Bay, East Lothian at midday, and at 2pm was near Burnfoot in the Borders. She then migrated south-west for 67 kilometres to the Solway estuary and quite amazingly was over the Nith estuary at 1344BST, where her mother had spent five weeks, but had departed between 6am and 7am - she had missed meeting her mother by seven hours or so! Her SSW heading took her out over the Irish Sea; being 15 kms out to sea off Workington at 2.38pm, 41 kms WSW of Blackpool just after 4pm, and at 4.53pm she was near Bwlchgwyn, - west of Wrexham in Wales. The last signal of the day was a little later just NW of Oswestry, so she did reach land after her first over sea migration. Her days' flight was at least 557 kilometres, in strongish northerly winds.

11 September 2008

The first GPS was at 12am, when she was flying south at 57kph between Pontypridd and Caerphilly in South Wales; 143 kms south of last evening's last position. At 2pm she was just NW of Barry in South Wales, flying SSE at 371metres and heading for the Bristol Channel. By chance I was not far away on the Cotswold escarpment above Cheltenham - it was a hot sunny day with some

clouds and a fresh N to NW wind, ideal conditions for raptor migration and I kept an eye on the sky for passing ospreys but saw none.

At 3pm, she had crossed the Bristol Channel and was south of Hinckley Point in Somerset; her mother had crossed the Bristol Channel a bit further east a day earlier. An hour later she was near Honiton flying south at 64kph and at 5pm she was flying SSE out over the English Channel at 42kph and 210 metres, about 16 kms south of Seaton on the south Devon coast. She clearly got worried because she turned back and by 6pm was perched just NW of Weymouth in Dorset, about 4 kms from The Fleet. She stayed the night there.

12 September 2008

No radio signals until 1100GMT when she was 94 kms out over the English Channel heading for France on a SSW heading. She was flying at 63kph at 77 metres over the sea; an hour later she was 43 kms west of the Channel Isles still flying at 61kph. She was still heading for Brittany at 1500GMT and at 1600GMT was circling just NW of Morlaix. Slowly moving south she was just north of Quimper at 1600GMT and settled for the night just north of Treogat. A journey of 334 kilometres.

13 September 2008

She was still at the roost site in Brittany at 0600GMT but there were no signals until 1900GMT when she was 462 kilometres SSW over the Bay of Biscay heading for Galician coast in Spain. She must have departed the French coast near Pointe de Penmarch. At 2000GMT she was still flying SSW at 56kph, altitude 145 metres, about 21 kms north of Golfo de Foz. She roosted overnight about 4 kms inland after completing a 550 kilometre direct flight over the Bay of Biscay - fortunately she hit land on the NW coast of Spain.

14 September 2008

She was at roost until 0600GMT, then moved 7.5 kms inland where she sat around for several hours. At 1000GMT flying SW and was south of Abadin in Lugo province; south of Lugo by 1100GMT and an hour later flying S at 46kph along a large reservoir near Portomartin. At 1300GMT, was flying south at 75kph at 926 metres in hilly lands; passing Ourense before 1400GMT. An hour later was circling over the south end of a large reservoir at Las Conchas. 1600GMT; last signal in this transmission and she was flying SSW at 56kph, and had

entered Portugal and was near Vilarinho das Furnas. Her flight by this time was 219 kilometres so she was on active migration south. Will she stop-over in Portugal or immediately head south for Africa; if she does will she head out over the Atlantic Ocean for Morocco or veer into southern Spain? Weather good.

She stopped to roost for the night 28 kms further south in scattered trees on a hill top near Povoia de Lanlosa, where she stayed from 1700GMT until 0600GMT. Her day's flight was 247 kms.

15 September 2008

At 0700 and 0800GMT she was perched in trees 400 metres northwards on the same hill. Then she started flying south. At 0900GMT she was perched beside a river near Briteiros, and then flew steadily SSW at between 30 and 40kph, passing just east of Porto at 1200GMT. An hour later she was perched on the Douro river near Crestuma dam, but continued south passing Carvalho at 1500GMT and had reached the large estuary and marshes north of Aveiro at 1600GMT. This looks excellent habitat for ospreys and she roosted here overnight beside a small river running into the marsh near Vilarinho.

16 September 2008

At 0700GMT she was further out in the bay and was still out in the bay three hours later so was presumably hunting and feeding. At 1200GMT she had travelled 16 kms south near Requeixo and was flying at 54kph in a SSE direction. At 1300GMT, she was 21 kms further on and flying at 41kph but apparently heading east. At 1400GMT she reached a large river between Coimbra and Foz just 29kms further on, and there she stayed for the rest of the day - a journey of only 76 kilometres. Most of the time she was perched on the riverside at Ganja do Ulmeiro, but at 2000GMT her overnight roost was on river side trees further downstream.

17 September 2008

Still at last night's roost at 0400GMT; next transmission was at 1400GMT when she perched beside the upper reaches of Lake Cabril near Padroes; she moved short distances downstream and roosted beside this large lake. So a day of short journeys and stopping to fish and feed up.

18 September 2008

Still at the roost beside Lake Cabril until 0700GMT; an hour later she was flying over the lake further downstream so presumably fishing. Two non GPS transmissions came in later in the day. At 1346GMT she crossed into Spain after a flight of 95 kilometres just north of Portalegre and at 1728GMT she was a further 86 kilometres further SE just south of Montillo in Extremadura. At 1700GMT she was on a river SE of Puebla de la Cazada, and later in the day she roosted beside this river. The signals were intermittent today but she travelled 221 kilometres.

19 September 2008

At the roost until 0700GMT and then at different places by the river presumably fishing for breakfast. The next signal was at 1300GMT and she was flying SSW at 51kph near Zafra; continuing south she flew up into the mountains at the western end of the Sierra Morena. At 1500GMT she was at 1725metres. Two hours later she 44 kms further south and was at a large reservoir near Zufre, to the NW of Seville. This is where she roosted after a journey of 120 kms during the day.

20 September 2008

Still at the roost at 0500GMT and 250 metres away along edge of lake, probably fishing at 0600-0900GMT. At 1000GMT she was ten kilometres south flying at 58kph; continued flying south probably against strong winds. Was approaching the north of Coto Donana at 1200GMT and flying over the River Guadalquivir, near the ruins of Ermita de la Senuela, at 1300GMT and an hour later was just west of Trebujena. She then turned west and an hour later she was 4 kilometres at sea off the dunes of the Coto Donana reserve, flying NNW at 75kph, presumably downwind. At 1600GMT she was 45 kilometres to the NW over woodlands to the east of Huelva. An hour later she was at her roost site in a band of trees by an olive grove, about 6 kilometres NE of Huelva. Southward migration is on hold while the weather is apparently overcast with 25kph easterly winds. She is 2300 kilometres from her nest site, shortest distance, only 7 weeks since her first flight. The marshes near Huelva are where a few Scottish ospreys have wintered in recent decades, including a female which breeds near Aberfoyle. It is also one of the two sites where northern European ospreys have been released as part of the Spanish reintroduction project.

21 September 2008

The radio was not fully charged presumably due to overcast weather, so signals today have been erratic but some signals came in which showed that she had stayed in Andalusia but wandered east. She was still at the roost at 0600GMT but 29 kms SE at 0900GMT, just north of El Rocio (the town at the gateway of Coto Donana); 3 hours later she was 66kms east between Utrera and Los Molares. At 1500GMT, she had flown another 98kms to the east and was SE of Mollina, after flying past the Sierra de Humilladero. In the late afternoon she turned NW and flew a further 30 kms NE and at 1800GMT was perched by the Iznajar reservoir. This is a place I have visited and is a good fishing lake for ospreys.

22 September 2008

She was apparently roosting a little further north at the north end of the lake at 0400GMT. Still some problems getting full series of GPS fixes; the weather is partly cloudy with no wind, so her battery appears to be low on charge. At 1600 to 1800GMT, she was located at the large Lake Negratin, a water reservoir north of Baza in Granada province.

23 September 2008

She was flying over the water in the eastern arm of the lake at 0800GMT, presumably fishing; an hour later she perched at the north end of the lake, 3 kilometres away. At 1000GMT she was perched on the shore near the corner of the two arms of the lake.

25 September 2008

The last two days of signals were intermittent and we seem to be having a problem with the radio.

30 September 2008

One very incomplete signal received - it looks as though the transmitter has malfunctioned. No further signals - we do not know if this was due to a failed transmitter or if the chick died - probably the former.