

Moray's Movements in 2008

Autumn Migration

Resume: The chicks hatched from about 12th June; and two of them survived; they were ringed on 24th July and Moray flew for the first time between 4th and 6th August. The two chicks ranged much more than last year's female young and were to be found, when away from the nest, in trees surrounding the area up to 700 metres away. The male regularly brought in fish, while Logie protected the nest site and sometimes fed the young. In the last week, at least one and once two intruder chicks sat on the nest and tried to scrounge food. Moray departed on 26th August, just over three weeks after fledging. This is a quite short post fledging period and the chicks have left rather early.

26th August 2008

A nice warm day in Moray, and I checked Logie's nest at midday, no sign of either chick, but there was an unringed chick on the nest hoping to scrounge fish from the male. I had another look at 5pm, and then the male 6R was perched in the dead Scots pine eating a medium sized flounder, and the unringed chick was squeaking for food on Logie's eyrie. Both chicks departed their nest area during the day, Moray was still there midday but at 1pm was flying SSW over Dorback, near Nethybridge; and hour later he was flying south at the top of Strath Nethy to Loch Avon, well below the flanks of Cairngorm. By 3pm he had turned back and was at Kinveachy, near Boat of Garten, and roosted overnight in Scots pine wood above Kinveachy Lodge.

27th August 2008

5am still at roost but then she set off south east and at 1pm was just off the coast north of Arbroath; an hour later he was flying east over the North Sea at 1200 feet, but he realised that this was not the place to be as he turned back and at 3pm was further north and offshore of Montrose Basin. He came ashore and headed north inland and roosted overnight near Glensaugh.

30th August 2008

Moray tracked across country and by evening was just north of Arisaig on the west coast. Moray roosted overnight near Lochan Loinn nan Donnlaich, just over 3 miles north-west of the west end of Loch Rannoch. Still at roost at 8am; but at

midday was flying at 43km/h over a mountain called Ceann Caol, 3 miles west of Fort William. From 2pm to 4pm, (signals were intermittent today because of overcast weather) he was perched on the coast just north of the Sands of Moray, just south of Mallaig. At 6.44pm a non GPS signal came in showing that Moray had crossed to the Isle of Skye and was roosting in a wood just SW of Ben Grasco, 2.5 miles west of Portree. This would have been a difficult day's flying in the wrong direction for autumn migration, due to poor weather and south-west winds. Today 31st, it's forecast partly overcast with very light wind. Sadly, Moray has run into poor weather conditions for migration, just like its brother, - they should have stayed at their nest and waited for good weather.

31st August 2008

He was perched near the Old Man of Storr, north of Portree at 1pm.

1st September 2008

This evening a non GPS signal gave his position as in the Pairc, in the Isle of Lewis

2nd September 2008

Early this morning the bird was further NE in Pairc. Later in morning, I received a telephone call from Robin Reed in Lewis who had seen Moray at the head of Loch Seaforth, near Seaforth Head at 10.30am. Looked well and he says there are plenty of fish in that area and it is sheltered. After days of rain, it was a much nicer day, clear with patches of sun, and a light southerly wind. Let's hope he catches fish and feeds up, and sets the compass back to the mainland. Later in the day, he flew further NW and by 4pm was at Barvas on the west coast of Lewis, close to Loch Mor Barvas, and Moray roosted there at night. Let's hope he stops travelling NW because it is the open Atlantic Ocean ahead, and landfall is a long way in the wrong direction.

4th September 2008

First data coming in - Moray was just north of Tolsta Head north of Stornoway at 7am, but back at Barvas at 10am.

6th September 2008

A batch of signals came in during the day, and I became worried that Moray had not moved location; and after examining the data carefully, including the activity counter, I was convinced that he was either dead or unable to move at Barvas. I telephoned Martin Scott who lives nearby and he and a couple friends went and checked the exact position using GPS, and after some searching found the body of the young osprey in a road side ditch. I am very grateful to them for checking so quickly. Some local children told them that they had seen the bird dead in the ditch earlier in the day. It is possible that he had sadly been hit by a passing vehicle, and was found near a small roadside conifer, which may have been his last roost. This is a very sad end to the chick. He had a very difficult migration after running into bad weather; having to turn back out of the Cairngorm mountains on his first flight, then flying out into the North Sea and back off the Angus coast, and finally blown by winds and poor visibility to Rannoch, Isle of Skye and Lewis. Young ospreys leaving Scotland really need good weather to make that first migration through Scotland and England successfully, and nowadays we seem to have so many storms of rain and wind in late August and early September. Let's hope his brother is successful, but he has also been blown in a dangerous direction into Ireland

7th September 2008

Martin Scott emailed to say the young osprey weighed 870 grams, which is very light - he weighed 1446 grams in July and should have gained a little weight post-fledging, but his journey was very difficult in bad weather and he probably failed to catch fish sufficiently to feed himself and his weakened condition may have caused him to be hit by a vehicle. Moray left the nesting area in poor weather and was then subject to the vagaries of the weather, being blown in different directions by prevailing winds and migrating blindly in overcast wet and windy conditions. Unfortunately he did not find a sheltered place to rest and fish, and wait for clear weather. This shows the difficulties for migratory birds leaving Scotland when the weather is against them.