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THE OSPREY.

One of the most interesting of the predaceous birds which belong to Great Britain is the celebrated osprey or fishing hawk. This fine bird was formerly very common in England, but is now but rarely seen within the confines of the British Isles, although isolated species are now and then seen.

As the bird is a fish-eater, it is generally observed on the sea coast or on the banks of some large river, but has occasionally been observed in some comparatively waterless situation, where it has been probably driven by stress of weather. In some parts of Scotland the osprey year after year on the same spot, generally choosing the summit of an old ruined building or the top of a large tree for that purpose. The nest is a very large one, composed almost wholly of sticks, and contains two or three whitish eggs, largely blotched with reddish-brown, the dark patches being collected toward the large end of the egg. As is the case with the eagles, the osprey is monogamous; but on the death of either of the pair, the survivor soon finds another mate, and is straightway consoled by a new alliance. From all accounts it is an affectionate and domestic bird, paying the greatest attention to its mate and home, and displaying a constancy which is not to be surpassed by that of the turtle-dove, so celebrated for matrimonial felicity.

The flight of the osprey is peculiarly easy and elegant, as might be expected from a bird the length of whose body is only twenty-two inches, and the expanse of wing nearly five feet and a half. Living almost wholly on fish, the osprey sails in wide undulating circles, hovering over the water and intently watching for its prey. No sooner does a fish come into view than the osprey shoots through the air like a meteor, descends upon the luckless fish with such force that it drives a shower of spray in every direction, and soon emerging, flies away to its nest, bearing its prey in its grasp. In order to enable it to seize and retain so slippery a creature as a fish, the

claws of the osprey are long, curved and very sharp, the soles of the feet are rough and the outer toe is capable of great versatility. When the bird has settled upon its nest, or upon any spot where it intends to eat its prey, it does not relinquish its hold,

but, as if fearful that the fish should escape, continues its grasp, and daintily picks away the flesh from between its toes. Sometimes in making its swoop it arrests itself for a second or two, as if to watch some change of position on the part of its intended prey.

The singular beauty of the osprey's flight attracted the attention of M. de Quatrefages who remarked that the bird was able with outstretched and immovable wings, not only to withstand the power of a "squall" that would have flung a man to the ground, but

even to work its way against the wind. How this feat was performed he confesses to be a mystery to him, and that the so-called scientific theories of "acquired velocity" or "tremulous movement" of the wings could not at all account for the phenomenon which he observed.

Harmless though the osprey be—except to the fish—it is a most persecuted bird, being not only annoyed by rooks and crows, but robbed by the more powerful white-headed eagle, who strikes the osprey on the wing and snatches from the poor bird the results of its morning's labors.

There is but one species of osprey although it has been thought that the American bird ought to be reckoned as a different species. The general color of the osprey is dark brown, but it is pleasingly variegated with various shades of black, gray, and white. The crown of the head and the nape of the neck are covered with long gray-white feathers, streaked with dark brown. The under surface of the body is white, with the exception of a light brown band which extends across the chest. The primaries are brown tipped with black, and the tail is barred above with a light and a deep brown, and below with brown and white. The legs, toes and cere are blue, the eyes golden yellow, and the beak and claws black.—Woods, *Natural History*.

MANY a Christian trusts Christ to carry him through the valley of the shadow of death, who does not rely upon him to take him through the dread to-morrow. If you are Christ's, you have no right to worry. He is a safe pilot. You can trust him in the shallow, quiet river, as well as in the sea beyond.—*Morning Star*.

I HAVE ALWAYS noticed that those who know the most are the best listeners, and the most anxious to know more.



THE OSPREY.—(*Pandion haliaetus*.)