

FARM & COUNTRY

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WALES' birding community was in mourning this week after an osprey known as Jimmy struck an electricity pylon and was killed.

The young male had just caught a fish near Pentrefoelas and was taking it to a perch to feed when he touched an electricity transformer and was electrocuted.

Jimmy was the first male to touch down at the Glaslyn osprey site this spring and it had been hoped he would go on to establish only the fifth nest in Wales.

Around 20 local properties lost power until Scottish Power engineers arrived at the scene on Monday morning.

They discovered and retrieved the dead osprey before handing it over to RSPB Conwy.

A spokeswoman said: "This is a highly unusual incident and the discovery was reported through the appropriate channels to the RSPB bird sanctuary in Conwy.

"Power supplies were restored after approximately an hour."

Helen Guy, who lives in Pentrefoelas, said her electricity went off for about 10-15 minutes.

"We had no idea what was going on," she said. "When we found out, it was such sad news - they are such beautiful birds."

Jimmy was ringed "CU2" as a chick near Carsphairn in Dumfries & Galloway on July 8, 2012.

He arrived at the Pont Croesor nest on the Glaslyn, near Porthmadog, on April 15 and remained there for nine days.

For a while it looked as though he might couple up with "Mrs G", the resident female, who was still pining for her long-time mate.

But other males were also interested in the Glaslyn nest and Jimmy was eventually evicted from his new quarters.

Writing on the Bywyd Gwylt

20 homes lose power as Jimmy the Osprey dies on electric wires



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■ Jimmy the young male Osprey during his brief sojourn at the Pont Croesor nest in the Glaslyn Valley

PICTURE: BYWYD GWYLLT GLASLYN WILDLIFE

Killed for finding a perch for his lunch

Glaslyn Wildlife Facebook site, the nest's custodians expressed their devastation at Jimmy's loss.

They said: "The area where he was found is ideal osprey territory and there is no doubt he was prospecting potential nest

sites and searching for a suitable partner.

"If he had survived, there is a good chance that he would have settled down in Wales to breed, and would have added to our small breeding population. Alas Fate dealt him a cruel hand."

As a young bird, Jimmy had most of his breeding life ahead of him and he had been earmarked as a keystone prospect for the Welsh Osprey population.

Dennis Bannister, a keen bird-watcher from Denbigh, said his

death was a setback for the Welsh Osprey project.

"This is really sad news," he said. "I've seen two flying around Llyn Brenig, and saw one just the other day diving for a fish in the lake, but there aren't that many around."

It's now or never for your subsidy applications

WELSH farmers who fail to submit their Single Application Forms (SAF) by tomorrow's deadline will face a 1% penalty per working day.

However by Tuesday this week, around 3,000 SAFs were still outstanding, said the Welsh Government.

Applications received between May 16 and June 9 will be accepted but will incur financial penalties.

All forms submitted after midnight on June 9 will be rejected outright.

Once SAFs have been submitted, formal acknowledgements will be sent out electronically or through the post.

Farm unions are advising members to double-check these acknowledgements, as changes can be made up to, and including, June 1 without penalty.

Nick Fenwick, the FUW's head of policy, said the penalties for errors were harsh.

"A single tick in the wrong box or a miscalculation of eligible areas can result in vast financial penalties - or even lead to the loss of everything," he said.

Under EC rules, if Welsh Government officials find an error before a farmer does, the error cannot be corrected, so the onus is on farmers to double check their acknowledgements, added Mr Fenwick.

Can anything be done to prevent this happening again?

THE tragic death of an osprey near Pentrefoelas is a setback but it will not derail the species' recovery in Wales, a bird expert believes.

Julian Hughes, manager of the RSPB Conwy reserve, said the rise in Osprey numbers in recent years meant the population was now stable enough to withstand the loss.

"It is a setback," he said.

"But the number of Ospreys now in Wales gives us more confidence the population will cope with this loss.

"If this had happened five years ago, when numbers were still quite small, it might have been different."

Each year overhead cables account for the deaths of a small number of big-winged birds, such as Ospreys and

Eagles, as they are more likely to bridge the gap between two conductors.

Other bird deaths result from collision with power lines, especially earth wires as they are less visible.

Scottish Power said it takes measures to prevent bird accidents but Jimmy's death has

prompted calls for greater protection.

Energy companies often install "pigtailed" - small metal spirals - on wires near wetland sites to deter birds such as swans and geese.

In some countries, modified pylon designs, to prevent perching, as well as greater cable

insulation and increasing the separation of conductors, has reduced bird deaths.

Julian said: "It's more difficult to mitigate for birds like Ospreys, which roam widely and in remote sites.

"But perhaps there is scope to improve preventative measures around established nesting sites such as the Dyfi and Glaslyn rivers."



■ Julian Hughes

