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7<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL  
**OUTDOOR EDUCATION RESEARCH**  
CONFERENCE  
UNAMA'KI/CAPE BRETON ISLAND  
NOVA SCOTIA, CANADA

**BOOK OF ABSTRACTS**

Cape Breton University  
**JULY 4-8, 2016**

## Hooked on Osprey - the role of an “iconic” wildlife species in outdoor education

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Much of the narrative associated with wildlife and habitat conservation has focused on individual, often iconic species. In the United Kingdom one of the most significant wildlife re-introduction success stories has been that of osprey. Although present in several regions since the 1950s, it was not until 2001 that osprey nested in the Lake District National Park, Cumbria, England. The return of osprey, after an absence of 150 years, was a major opportunity to engage park visitors with new outdoor activities and education.

To date, in excess of 1 million visitors have participated in osprey viewing at sites managed by the Lake District Osprey Project. A core feature of the project is an educational program involving the contribution of a team of 100 volunteers. Econometric analysis has demonstrated a net gain to the local economy from osprey eco-tourism of approximately £2M/year. However, there has not yet been a detailed analysis of visitor perceptions of the educational and social value of the osprey project.

This presentation will share the results of a research study based at two osprey viewing sites in the Lake District National Park. Interviews were conducted with approximately 300 visitors and incorporated questions, which pertained to demographic information, lifestyle, well-being, attitudes to nature, as well as the learning experience from interacting with osprey project volunteers. Our findings highlight the role that species conservation can play in stimulating outdoor engagement and education, and as a catalyst for physical activity. We discuss some of the opportunities and challenges associated with sustainable wildlife projects, and identify several policy implications.

## **Biographies**

**Fiona Stoddart** is the Cluster Lead for Media Arts and the Course Leader for the Wildlife Media BA (Hons) at the University of Cumbria Institute of the Arts, Carlisle. Fiona is a keen walker and cyclist and has been involved with the IOERC series since 1996.

**Edward (Ted) Wilson** is head of education for the Royal Forestry Society and an adjunct professor with the Faculty of Forestry, University of Toronto. Ted has undertaken a wide range of projects in forestry, and maintains a strong interest in environmental education and research.

**Nathan Fox** is head of education at the Forestry Commission Whinlatter Forest, near Keswick, Cumbria, England. Nathan has been managing and directing outdoor education programs for over 15 years. He currently leads the Lake District Osprey Project and has worked on the Forestry Commission's National Education and Learning Strategy for England.