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SENSITIVE OSPREY RELOCATION KEY TO REPTON RAIL WORK

- **Critical rail maintenance work requires careful environmental management**
- **Expert ecologist guiding native Osprey relocation**

The North Coast NSW town of Repton is to be the site of a delicate operation, as the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) works with an expert ecologist to relocate native Ospreys from a rail bridge.

ARTC is undertaking critical maintenance work to the busy rail bridge at the head of the Bellinger River, including repairs to each of its massive bridge spans. One of three known Osprey nests in the Bellinger Valley is on this bridge.

Before the work started however, ARTC built on previous work and engaged specialist ecologist David Charley to help it develop and implement an Osprey Management Plan. In particular it includes where a purpose-built nest pole could be located – key to minimising disturbance to the native birds, particularly during breeding and nesting season.

“We are working with David to ensure we manage this critical wildlife matter as sensitively and professionally as possible,” ARTC’s Executive General Manager Interstate, Peter Winder said.

David, from Wildsearch Environmental Services, has a wealth of experience in Osprey management and nest relocations, performing numerous successful Osprey nest relocations on the North Coast of NSW.

“We are committed to reducing our impact on the environment as much as possible and before every big maintenance job – such as this project – we undertake a review of environmental matters before work starts,” Mr Winder said.

Part of the plan proposed a relocation of the Osprey nest situated on Repton rail bridge, to provide a more secure nest site away from ongoing disturbances at the site. This should ensure the long-term security and viability of this breeding pair.

This will result in the Ospreys being relocated to a purpose built nest pole next to the southern bank of the Bellinger River. These nest poles have been successfully used throughout coastal NSW and are one of the key reasons for the rapid recovery of the native bird across the State.

The rail work is quite an extensive maintenance upgrade, replacing and upgrading the steel formwork of the bridge which supports dozens of heavy interstate freight and passenger trains every week.

Works on the first steel span at the northern end of the bridge started in late November and will take approximately four months to complete.

Additional spans will also take approximately four months each for maintenance to be complete, with the project forecast to conclude at the end of 2016.

In September 2013, ARTC was also involved in a successful Osprey management plan, demonstrated by the Osprey’s ongoing use of the nest and offspring, when undertaking similar maintenance work at the nearby Urunga railway bridge.

The relocation of the birds and nest will take place in early 2016.

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