
WHY OSPREYS NEED OUR HELP?

It is likely that Ospreys once nested throughout Michigan in significant numbers, but habitat destruction, indiscriminate shooting and later the widespread use of pesticides like DDT nearly destroyed their populations.

Like the Bald Eagles, Ospreys in Michigan in the late 1960's suffered from the damaging effects of this pesticide which caused eggshell thinning through bioaccumulation.

During incubation the eggshells crushed, killing the developing embryos. This led to a severe decline in the Osprey population as in the Great Lakes region nine out of every ten attempts failed to produce young.

After the use of DDT was banned in the United States in 1972, Osprey reproduction rates began increasing and their populations started to rebound.

Today, Michigan's Osprey numbers are increasing but we need to remain vigilant to ensure a continuing and healthy population.



Banding Ospreys helps us to keep track of their numbers as well as our ecosystems

HOW CAN WE HELP OUR OSPREYS?



- Help support clean ecosystems by removing fishing lines, lures, nets, and other hazards from their environment.
- Be an advocate for our Michigan Ospreys by sharing the story of these amazing birds with family, friends and your community.
- Report an Osprey sighting to the MDNR, your local Audubon Society, or to us at www.michiganosprey.org
- Volunteer and make a difference that will positively impact both Michigan Ospreys and our environment.

MICHIGAN OSPREY

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Photographs courtesy of Michigan Osprey Volunteers

MICHIGAN OSPREYS



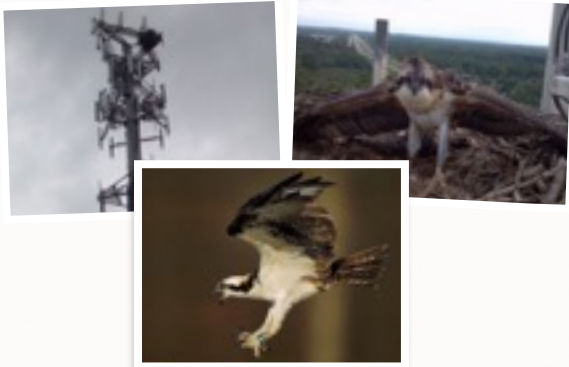
Life of an Osprey

*An Environmental
Messenger*



WHAT IS AN OSPREY?

An Osprey is a large bird of prey (raptor), usually found near water. This raptor has long legs and long, gull-like crooked wings. Its talons are specially designed for catching fish, its primary food. Ospreys weigh between three and four pounds and have five to six foot wingspans. Until recently they were a threatened species in Michigan but now are classified as a species of special concern.



Ospreys live and breed in high places but they hunt for their food at sea level.

WHERE CAN I SEE AN OSPREY?

Ospreys are world-wide residents, residing on every continent except Antarctica.

In Michigan we see them throughout our state from April through October.

Although snags were once favorite nesting locations for our birds they now find cell towers, utility poles and other man-made structures popular spots on which to raise their families.

You can watch them fishing in clear, shallow rivers, lakes, streams and man-made bodies of water.



The loud and shrill call of an Osprey is both unmistakable and unforgettable!

NESTING AND MATING: APRIL-MAY

The male Osprey returns from migration to his natal nesting area, finds a mate and begins the nesting process. Together they build and arrange their nest with sticks and soft materials to line the bowl. During courtship the male will often demonstrate his flight, fishing and defending skills. Once a bond is formed mating begins. They will remain a couple as long as they are successful nesters.



Male Osprey bringing sticks to build the nest



Male Osprey showing off his flight skills to his mate

RAISING A FAMILY: JUNE-JULY

The female Osprey lays 1-3 eggs, each a day or two apart. Once the first egg is laid incubation begins. The eggs hatch in about 37 days and in the order they were laid. Hence, the first hatched has a size advantage over its younger siblings. The young chicks grow rapidly and by 7 weeks are as large as their parents, males being smaller than females, and fledging (first flight) begins between 7-9 weeks.



Ospreys eggs are about the size of a large chicken egg



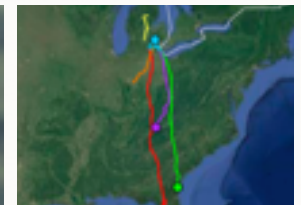
The chicks (left) quickly grow to be adult size

MIGRATION: SEPT-OCT

Michigan Ospreys migrate each fall to Central and South America, flying as far as 3,500 miles one way, and face many dangers along their route. The adults return home each spring and begin nesting. Youngsters remain in their wintering grounds until breeding age (2 yrs) before migrating north. Survival rates for juveniles is only about 30%. Adult migration survival reaches 80%.



Osprey fitted with Transmitter backpack



Migration path live tracking at MichiganOsprey.org