



Group FOR THE East End.

## The Osprey



A Conservation Success Guide for Eastern Long Island

# They're Back!



## East End Ospreys Return from the Brink

Every summer you can see scores of ospreys soaring over eastern Long Island—a testament to decades-long conservation efforts.

In the early 1970s, however, ospreys were a rare sighting. Local populations had been plummeting for years due to widespread use of the pesticide DDT, which caused the thinning of eggshells and unsuccessful breeding attempts.

Thankfully, several environmental actions helped bring the birds back from the brink of local extinction. These included the banning of DDT, implementation of fishing restrictions, and preservation of coastal ecosystems. Group for the East End played a vital role in the species' recovery by building nesting platforms, placing them in safe and optimal breeding habitats, and monitoring the local population.

It is no wonder that these majestic fish hawks have become a beloved icon of the East End. Their recovery is a remarkable conservation success.



Osprey photo by Jay Rand

# New Challenges Emerge

Now that the osprey population is thriving, the Group's conservation strategies have shifted to address potential hazards and conflicts between people and nesting birds.

Today, more ospreys are getting entangled in fishing line and other debris that cause injuries and/or prevent them from flying. Some are dying from electrocution on utility poles as a result of increased competition for nesting real estate. There are also reports of unauthorized nest destruction and harassment of birds. The Group is committed to keeping the number of these potential conflicts and hazards to a minimum. In addition, we are intent on maintaining positive public attitudes about osprey conservation through education and outreach.

To reduce the risk of electrocution, the Group partners with the utility company PSEG Long Island to identify, map, and install hundreds of "V-guards" to serve as nesting deterrents on the most dangerous poles and equipment. These efforts help protect the birds and allow for safe and proper utility maintenance.

The Group continues to monitor the local osprey population and preserve habitats critical to the birds' survival. **Learn how you can help protect them in the Q&A section of this brochure.**



# Osprey Q&A



## DO OSPREYS ONLY NEST ON MANMADE PLATFORMS?

No. Historically they nested in trees, on offshore rocks, or right on the beach. When the osprey population sunk to just 75 pairs in the early 1970s, the Group and other organizations installed platforms in prime nesting locations to protect the birds from predators and increase breeding success rates. Today, we see more ospreys returning to natural nesting sites.

## CAN I INSTALL AN OSPREY PLATFORM ON MY PROPERTY?

Maybe. If your property has suitable habitat for an osprey platform, we strongly suggest using a licensed, insured contractor and adhering to local building requirements. **To determine if you have a suitable habitat to install a platform, contact the Group at [info@thegroup.org](mailto:info@thegroup.org).**

## CAN I REMOVE AN OSPREY NEST FROM MY PROPERTY?

You cannot remove an osprey nest without approval by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC). Federal and state laws protect ospreys and their nests from disturbance and/or disruption during the breeding season, which is March 15 to September 1. Outside of the breeding season, the NYS DEC can authorize the removal of a nest if its location is a nuisance or creates a danger to the home. **For details, contact the NYS DEC Regional Office at (631) 444-0200.**

## I'M CONCERNED ABOUT AN OSPREY NEST THAT IS DAMAGED OR HAS FALLEN. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Osprey nests may sustain considerable damage after a storm or deteriorate over time, but the birds are skilled carpenters and can usually secure or rebuild their nest. Not all platforms will endure, just as natural nest sites change over time.

## DOES THE GROUP INSTALL NESTING PLATFORMS?

No. We have shifted our conservation strategies from species recovery to reducing potential human-osprey conflicts through education and outreach. The Group also continues to monitor the local population and protect nesting habitats critical to the birds' survival.

## CAN I RELOCATE AN OSPREY NEST ON MY PROPERTY TO A NEARBY PLATFORM?

Possibly. The nearby platform must be in an appropriate nesting location and you must get approval from the NYS DEC. See back panel for contact information.

## I'M CONCERNED ABOUT AN OSPREY POLE/PLATFORM THAT IS LEANING. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

If you see a leaning or otherwise unstable osprey platform/pole, the Group may be able to offer advice. **Contact us at [info@thegroup.org](mailto:info@thegroup.org).**



## Did You Know?

### Ospreys blink upward.

An osprey's lower eyelid covers its eye when it blinks. This unique adaptation helps keep water out of their eyes as they hunt for fish.



### IF I SEE AN OSPREY ENTANGLED IN DEBRIS OR IN VISIBLE DISTRESS, WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Ospreys can get entangled in fishing line or other marine debris that can cause serious injury or death. If you know of a local wildlife rehabilitator, contact them immediately.

**If not, call the Evelyn Alexander Wildlife Rescue Center Hotline at (631) 728-9453.**



### WILL BALD EAGLES ON LONG ISLAND AFFECT THE OSPREY POPULATION?

In recent years, the number of bald eagle breeding pairs has increased here, but there are substantially more osprey pairs. While the two species undoubtedly compete for food and nesting locations, they are known to coexist successfully in other areas. Going forward, our monitoring efforts will help determine if bald eagles are having any effect on the ospreys.



**Bunker (aka menhaden) is the fish of choice for ospreys.**

More than 99% of an osprey's diet consists of fish.

### HOW CAN I PREVENT OSPREYS FROM NESTING ON MY CHIMNEY, DOCK, OR OTHER STRUCTURES THAT MAY BE DANGEROUS TO THE BIRDS AND/OR CREATE A NUISANCE?

Ospreys can be tenacious once they find a nesting site they like. It can be extremely difficult to deter the birds from nesting, even if the location is dangerous. The best strategy is to make the nesting site unattractive or difficult to build on.

HERE ARE SOME IDEAS THAT HAVE WORKED:

- **FLAGS:** Use colorful flags or windsocks to create movement around the potential nesting site.
- **PHYSICAL DETERRENTS:** Create a slippery, steep, or uneven surface around the nesting site. Plastic cones, piling covers, uneven crates, and slippery plastic pails all make for good deterrents. Don't use spikes that typically deter pigeons from nesting as they can serve as a good foundation for osprey nests.
- **DECOYS:** Success rates vary, but a bald eagle decoy can be effective in deterring an osprey from nesting. Other decoys such as a fox, coyote, red-tailed hawk, and owl may also work. Decoys should be installed **before March 15**, when the breeding season begins.



Photo by Kevin Knulsen



**If you wish to deter ospreys from nesting on your property, DO NOT use materials that can cause entanglement:**

- fishing line
- wire
- twine
- fishing nets
- chicken wire
- bungee cords

**Ospreys and other wildlife can easily become entangled and sustain life-threatening injuries.**



### Local ospreys can migrate as far as South America.

During their 15-to-20 year lifetime, an osprey can fly more than 160,000 migration miles.

# Have Osprey Concerns?

## NEST ON ELECTRIFIED UTILITY POLE WITHOUT PLATFORM

PSEG Long Island  
(800) 490-0075

## INJURED OSPREY

Evelyn Alexander Wildlife  
Rescue Center  
(631) 728-9453 (Hotline)  
(631) 728-4200 (Office)

NYS DEC Regional Office  
(631) 444-0200

## NEST REMOVAL & RELOCATION

NYS DEC Regional Office  
(631) 444-0200

## UNLAWFUL DESTRUCTION OF A NEST

NYS Environmental Conservation  
Police Dispatch Center  
(844) 332-3267

## GENERAL CONCERNS

Group for the East End  
P.O. Box 1792  
54895 Main Road  
Southold, NY 11971  
info@thegroup.org  
(631) 765-6450



## OSPREY CAM

Scan here for a live stream of an osprey nest during breeding season, March-September.



Group FOR THE  
East End

PROTECTING THE NATURE OF  
THE PLACE YOU LOVE SINCE 1972

Go to [thegroup.org](https://thegroup.org) to learn more, volunteer, or make a donation.