



## Press Release

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### **Another Sign of Spring! Osprey Pair Returns to Milford Point Nesting Platform for 12<sup>th</sup> Year in Row: View the Action Live And 24/7 on State's 1st Osprey Cam: [www.ctaudubon.org](http://www.ctaudubon.org)**

**Milford, CT, March 25, 2008** – Bird watchers were delighted to witness the return of a male Osprey on Friday, March 21 to the Milford Point nesting platform at Connecticut Audubon Society's Coastal Center, while the female Osprey returned on Sunday, March 23. Many birders viewed the Ospreys' return via Connecticut Audubon Society's Osprey Cam at [www.ctaudubon.org/action/osprey.htm](http://www.ctaudubon.org/action/osprey.htm), the first in the state. A pair of Osprey has been returning to the platform, located in the 840-acre Wheeler Salt Marsh, since 1997.

In 2007 the male and female Osprey returned on March 22. The female laid four eggs between April 11 and April 19, 2007. During the incubation period, which typically lasts 28 to 35 days, both parents protected the Osprey eggs. The first egg hatched May 22 and the second hatched May 25, while the two remaining eggs failed to hatch. July 13 marked the first solo flight for one of the Osprey chicks, and by July 23 both chicks were practicing their take-offs and landings. By September 4 both adults and one chick had left the nest, heading for points south (somewhere between Florida and Venezuela) and the remaining chick left shortly thereafter.

On June 16, 2007, tragedy was averted when one of the fledglings was freed from a tangle of bubble wrap. A Maryland resident saw the problem while watching the Osprey Cam and was the first of a dozen Internet viewers to alert Connecticut Audubon's Coastal Center staff in Milford. Lacking a ladder long enough to reach the platform (which is about 18 to 20 feet high), CAS staff called the Milford Fire Department for help. Reporter Bill McDonald described the rescue in his June 16, 2007 story in the Connecticut Post, excerpted below:

*"It wasn't exactly like rescuing a cat from a tree for the Milford Fire Department, but it was close. Or call him one lucky baby osprey. This bird's particular problem was first picked up by a Connecticut Audubon Society "osprey cam" watcher in Maryland. 'We do cats in trees, swans on ice. We take care of animals,' said battalion chief Brad Ross. The fire department's rescue unit provided a ladder long enough Saturday afternoon to rescue a month-old osprey entangled in bubble wrap in its platform nest near Milford Point. 'We got a call about bubble wrap stuck on one of the babies,' Ross said of the 1 p.m. report. 'We called in a ladder truck to bring in an extra long ladder, and it did the job. I didn't know you could see this bird from all over the world.' . . . The rescue operation consisted of two canoes from the center pulling a rubber Zodiac boat carrying the 20-foot ladder 100 yards out to the platform nest perched on a small island. Matt Hoyt, former CAS animal handler helping as a marsh canoe trip volunteer, climbed the ladder and cut off the offending wrap in several seconds, all covered on the osprey cam TV monitor."*

Similar to the Bald Eagle and other raptor species, Osprey populations have been making a remarkable comeback in recent years along the Connecticut coastline. In the 1940s and 1950s the Osprey population was plentiful in Connecticut. In the 1960s, however, Connecticut's Osprey population virtually disappeared. (Table 2, below, provides the results of annual statewide surveys conducted by CT DEP Wildlife Division staff.)

"Connecticut's Osprey populations reached their lowest points in 1973, when only 3 successful nests and 4 fledglings were observed statewide, and again in 1974, when only 9 active nests were observed," said Julie Victoria, Wildlife Biologist with CT DEP's Wildlife Division, Wildlife Diversity Program. "As with Bald Eagles, the rapid decline of Ospreys was directly attributed to the effects of pesticides, particularly DDT, on breeding populations. The most significant factor in the recovery of the Osprey was the restriction placed on the use of organochlorine pesticides. Use of DDT was banned in the U.S. in 1972. When the first Connecticut

‘Endangered and Threatened Species’ list was compiled in 1992, Ospreys were listed as a ‘Species of Special Concern.’ The list was reviewed 5 years later and Ospreys were de-listed in 1998 due to the success of their recovery. While Ospreys are no longer a Connecticut-listed species, they are still protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and as such, their eggs and nests cannot be destroyed.”

In the late 1970s, these long-winged hawks began returning in increasing numbers, adapting to new man-made nest sites constructed by individuals and private groups in and around rivers, marshes and coastal areas, and successfully fledging. In the early to mid-1980s, CT DEP began an aggressive program of Osprey nest platform construction and public education in cooperation with public and private organizations, Connecticut Audubon Society, other wildlife and conservation non-profits and individual. In 1998, CT DEP removed the Osprey from its “Species of Special Concern” list. (Due to the Osprey’s de-listing and to resource constraints, CT DEP no longer constructs Osprey nesting platforms.)

**Table 2.\* Summary of Connecticut Osprey Breeding Activity Since 1969.\*\***

<b>Year</b>	<b>Active Nests</b>	<b>Successful Nests</b>	<b>Total Young Fledged</b>	<b>Average # of Young Fledged Per Active Nest</b>
1969	16	7	10	0.63
1970	13	5	8	0.62
1971	12	3	8	0.67
1972	10	4	9	0.90
1973	10	3	4	0.40
1974	9	4	7	0.78
1975	10	5	10	1.00
1976	10	7	14	1.40
1977	10	9	20	2.00
1978	14	8	15	1.07
1979	15	14	25	1.67
1980	19	15	26	1.37
1981	22	17	36	1.64
1982	29	16	34	1.17
1983	34	24	40	1.17
1984	38	24	46	1.21
1985	44	34	72	1.64
1986	38	29	62	1.63
1987	35	29	74	2.11
1988	51	40	95	1.86
1989	52	44	91	1.75
1990	55	45	95	1.73
1991	66	55	121	1.83
1992	66	51	97	1.47
1993	65	54	119	1.83
1994	95	67	137	1.44
1995	103	76	148	1.44

Year	Active Nests	Successful Nests	Total Young Fledged	Average # of Young Fledged Per Active Nest
1996	106	78	143	1.35
1997	131	111	243	1.85
1998	141	110	203	1.44
2001	176 (and 244 nesting platforms)	152	286	1.62

\*Table provided by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, Wildlife Division.

\*\*Information not available for 1999 and 2000.

In 2003, Connecticut Audubon Society, with the support of Westport businessman and conservationist Leon Hirsch, built the first “Osprey Cam” in the state, to provide 24/7 live web coverage of its Osprey nesting platform at Milford Point. CAS’s Osprey Cam enabled CT DEP wildlife biologists, ornithologists and bird lovers to observe and track the breeding, nesting and fledgling behavior of the Osprey. Every March since then, thousands of amateur and professional birders start tuning in to [www.ctaudubon.org/action/osprey.htm](http://www.ctaudubon.org/action/osprey.htm) to witness the ups and downs of Osprey housekeeping via Connecticut’s first “Osprey Cam.” In 2006, Connecticut’s second Osprey Cam, operated by the Maritime Aquarium in Norwalk, went on line.

#### More General Information about Ospreys

**Clutch size:** 2-4 eggs (3 on average). Incubation: 28-35 days. Life span: 15-20 years (in the wild).

**Appearance:** Osprey are large (22” to 25” in length) black-and-white fish-eating raptors, with a bold white forehead and eyebrow, and a wingspan of 58” to 72” inches. Both males and females are similar, but females generally exhibit more spotting (a “necklace” of spots) on the breast than males and are generally a little larger. In flight, they hold their wings back in a characteristic “M” shape. An adult Osprey generally weighs between 2 and 2.4 pounds.

**Mating habits:** Ospreys mate for life but will often accept another mate if one of the pair dies.

**Nesting habits:** Ospreys nest in tree tops, poles, towers, stubs, sometimes rooftops, chimneys, navigation buoys, rock pinnacles, stick piles, and even on the ground, but never far from water. Nesting material includes sticks, grass, seaweed and clods of mud. Other materials have also been found in Osprey nests: oars, fish nets, life preservers, hay rake, toy boats, brooms, boots, shoes, dolls, baskets, plastic sheeting and bags, door mat, bird wings and bleached bones. (In 2006, a blue stuffed teddy bear adorned CAS’s Osprey nesting platform in Milford!). Adults return year after year to rebuild and add material to the nest. Some nests are occupied every year for 40 or more years by a succession of birds and reach a depth of over 10 feet. Fledglings leave the nest after about 8 weeks from their hatch date.

**Eating habits:** Strictly fresh-caught fish: herring, flounder, striped bass, bluefish, perch, eels, goldfish, shad, carp, catfish, trout and many others. Ospreys plunge-dive feet first into the water to catch fish that are either swimming near the surface or in shallow water.

**Natural enemies:** Crows, gulls and raccoons will eat unguarded eggs and young.

**Voice:** Loud, rich musical whistled series of chirps (“cheep, cheep, cheep”) or rising, shrill whistle -- “whew, whew, whew, whew.”

**Range:** Ospreys are found on every continent except Antarctica. In the northeast U.S., Ospreys migrate south from September to early November, to winter in the Gulf States, Florida and Central America, returning to the northeast by mid to late March.

**About Connecticut Audubon Society:** Founded in 1898 by pioneering conservationist Mabel Osgood Wright, Connecticut Audubon Society conserves Connecticut’s environment through science-based education and advocacy focused on the state’s bird populations and their habitats. Connecticut Audubon Society operates nature facilities in Fairfield, Milford, Glastonbury and Pomfret, an EcoTravel office in Essex and an Environmental Advocacy office in Hartford. Connecticut Audubon Society manages 19 wildlife sanctuaries around the state, preserves over 2,600 acres of wildlife habitat in Connecticut, and educates over 200,000 children and adults annually. Working exclusively in the state of Connecticut for over 100 years, Connecticut Audubon Society is an independent organization, not affiliated with any national or government group. For membership and other information, please visit [www.ctaudubon.org](http://www.ctaudubon.org).