



Osprey Nation 2018 Report



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The Connecticut Audubon Society
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Contents

Introduction	3
Osprey History	4
The 2018 Season	5
Figures	7
Osprey Nation Map	7
Yearly Data	8
Population Trends	9
Acknowledgements	10
2018 Stewards	11

Cover photo by Joseph Szalay

“Osprey Nation enables us to mark the progress of Ospreys in Connecticut: Learning where they can thrive; and perhaps individual nest sites that are not appropriate, but offer possible local alternatives. This documented success of ospreys in Connecticut leans toward the future: The Ospreys' adaptability and persistence; and humans' fascination and delight in connecting with these elegant seasonal visitors and the ecosystems/food-chains that support them. ... That essential function is made possible by the baseline data connected through this exemplary Citizen Science.”
– Osprey researcher Paul Spitzer, Ph.D., on Osprey Nation

Introduction

Osprey Nation is a citizen science program created by the Connecticut Audubon Society in 2014 in association with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to monitor Connecticut’s Ospreys. The goal is to gather data over the years to determine the health of the state’s Osprey population. Before Osprey Nation, the DEEP was responsible for collecting Osprey data. As Osprey populations increased, Connecticut Audubon took on the task and recruited hundreds of volunteer citizen science stewards to find and monitor as many nest sites as possible. In 2018, 314 volunteer stewards monitored and collected data on 603 nests, an increase of 9.4% and 11.6% over 2017, respectively. Nests and data are plotted on an interactive map on Connecticut Audubon’s website.

Volunteers are assigned to a nest of their choosing, and collect data including nest type, nest condition, whether the nest is active or inactive, number of nestlings, number of fledglings, etc. Over the long term, the data will show whether the population is declining or increasing. Because the population of raptors such as Ospreys is tied directly to environmental health, changes in the population can serve as an indication of water quality and fish abundance and health. Osprey Nation data may eventually also show whether the carrying capacity – the maximum population size that the environment can sustain considering the resources available – for Ospreys has been reached.

Osprey History

Ospreys are migratory, fish-eating raptors widely distributed throughout the world. They occur in every continent except Antarctica. In the mid-twentieth century, Osprey populations declined because of the widespread use of the insecticide DDT (Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane) to control mosquitoes. In the late 1960's and early 1970's, populations plummeted along the east coast of the United States. DDT was banned in 1972 and Ospreys soon began to increase, helped by government conservation agencies, environmental organizations, and concerned individuals. To encourage Ospreys to nest, these agencies and groups built wooden nest platforms, which have been very successful.

The 2018 Season

Each year since 2014, the number of volunteer stewards participating in Osprey Nation has increased, as have the numbers of nests, nests with data, active nests, and fledglings, as shown in Table 1 (with percent year-over-year increases in parentheses). In 2017, the Connecticut Audubon Society speculated that Osprey populations were approaching maximum carrying capacity in Connecticut and that the population increase would begin to level off. In 2018, the number of active nests in the state rose by 5.5% and the number of fledglings by 19.4%. Both were the lowest year-over-year increases since the program started in 2014.

Table 1

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Stewards	100	146 (46%)	224 (54.4%)	287 (28.1%)	314 (9.4%)
Nests	414	515 (24.3%)	606 (17.6%)	680 (12.2%)	775 (13.9%)
Nests with data	174	322 (90.8%)	420 (30.4%)	540 (28.5%)	603 (11.6%)
Active nests	210	250 (19%)	337 (34.8%)	394 (16.9%)	416 (5.5%)
Fledglings	NA	356	490 (37.6%)	607 (23.8%)	725 (19.4%)

Osprey Nation stewards found 775 nests and collected data on 603 of those in 2018; 416 of the nests were active, meaning they were occupied by an Osprey pair. The 416 active nests fledged 725 Osprey young.

Inactive nests were never occupied. Nests with no data were unmonitored.

In 2018, there were 62 failed nests. Nests fail for various reasons: predators such as raccoons or Great Horned Owls eat the young; Ospreys die after becoming entangled in monofilament fishing line; the adult Ospreys were new, inexperienced nesters and hadn't learned how to raise and care for their young, among other possibilities. Connecticut saw several highly-publicized Osprey fatalities in 2018 because of monofilament line entanglements. The Connecticut Audubon Society in collaboration with the Ash Creek Conservation Association in Fairfield and Bridgeport has been involved in one of a number of efforts to encourage proper disposal of fishing line.

It can be observed in Figure 1, below, that Osprey nests are most abundant along the coast of Long Island Sound and up the Connecticut River. Osprey nests are also found in northern and eastern Connecticut near small lakes and rivers.

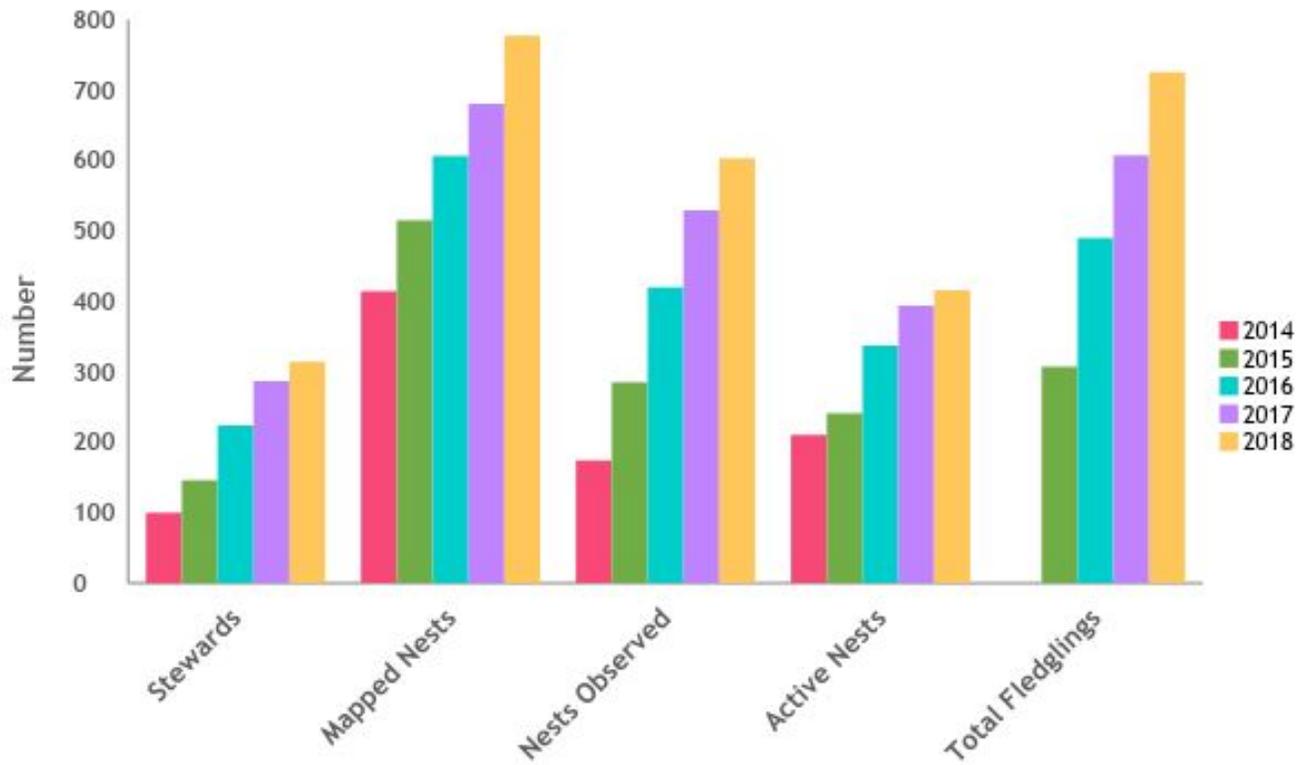


Figure 2. Osprey Nation data from 2014 to 2018. Each year continues to increase in all categories, presumably due to the increase in the Osprey population. Data was not recorded for total fledglings in 2014.

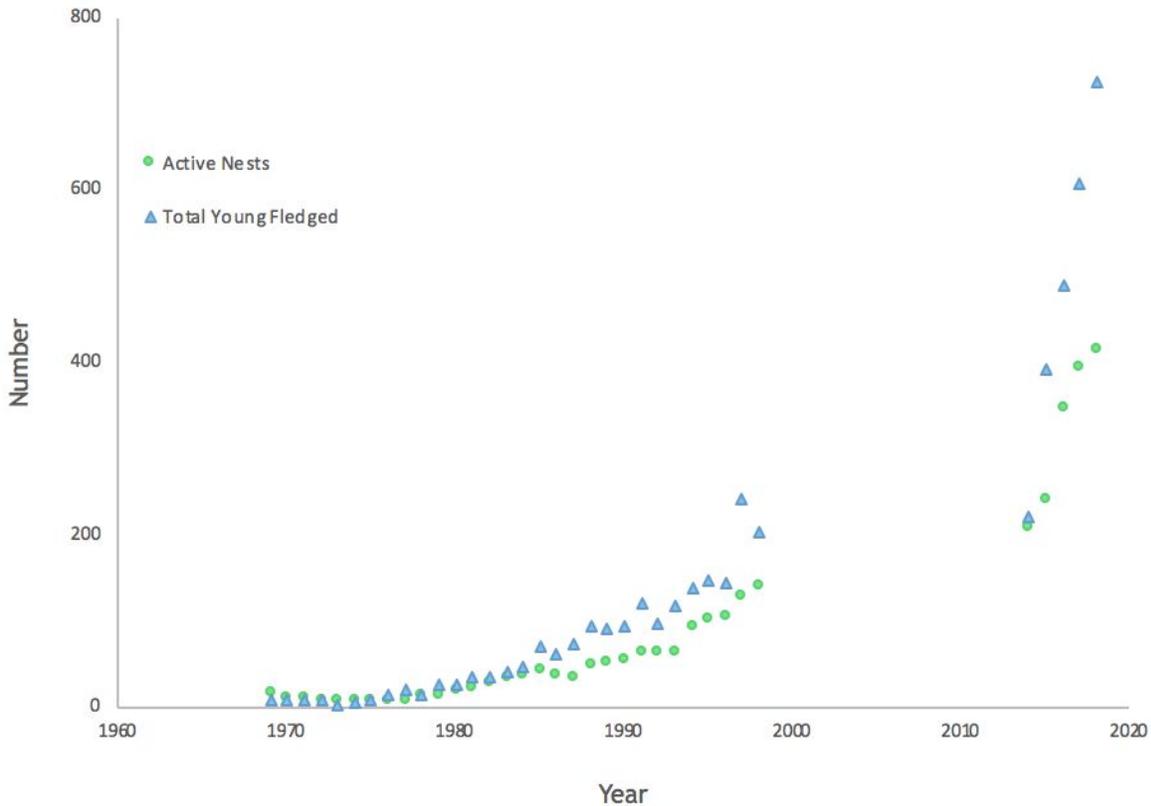


Figure 3. The Osprey population from 1969 until 2018. DEEP started monitoring the Osprey population in 1969. DEEP data of Osprey populations was not available from 1999 to 2013. Total fledglings and active nests continue to steadily increase.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the stewards of Osprey Nation who monitored and helped gather data that reflected the health of the Osprey population in Connecticut. Thank you to the members of the Connecticut Audubon Society and The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection for supporting and coordinating this special program. A special thank you to Menunkatuck Audubon for replacing and eradicating Osprey platforms and assisting in the rescues of injured Ospreys. Another special thank you to A Place Called Hope and Christine’s Critters for helping in the rescues of injured Ospreys throughout the season.



Photo by Joseph Szalay

2018 Stewards

Jane Aldieri
Richard Allison
Kim Amatrudo
Tom Andersen
Mark Anderson
Lynn Anderson
Jo Ann Davidson
Eileen Annino

Ginny Apple
Jillian Arbour
Bette Arey

Martha Asarisi
Tim Baffaro
Lori Baker
Pam Barber
Kelly Barbieri
Mary Barravecchia
Heidi Bartolotta
Grace Bartunek
Maureen Bashaw
Lori Bassett
Laura Bastien
Kirsten Begg-Swider
Janer Belson
Krista Berish

Chris Berman
Mary Blackwell
Amanda Blair
Bobbi Blake
Cyd Blake
Ron Blanchard
Maggie Blundon
Susan Bogan
Antonette Bolles
Maura Bonafede
Gregory Brenner
Andrew Brierly
Kathy Brinckerhoff

Scott Brinckerhoff	Kathy DePasquale	Joan Gallagher
Susan Brooks	Laurie Desmet	Ray Gaulke
David Cameron	Melissa Devaux	Jessica Geervliet
Dottie Cameron	Denis Devaux	Mark Geist
Joe Carney	Donna Devillez	Ray Gilbert
Tabitha Carter	Dale DiFronzo	Dawn Gilday
Mary Casey	Vincent DiPierro	George Giles
Bonnie Castellani	Maria DiPierro	Terry Gobeli
Bonnie Cerruti	Warren Disbrow	Holly Gonyea
Bridget Cervero	David Dodd	Debbi Goodman
Jayne Champion	Susan Donoghue	David Goodman
Roger Charbonneau Jr	Kathy Donovan	Catherine Graham
Lisa Chase Barton	Janice Dowin	Steven Greenhouse
John Chevalier	Rich Dowin	Andy Griswold
Lee Chontos	Sue Driscoll	Marisa Grittini
Diana Cirillo	Jerilyn Duefrene	Paul Groell
Sarah Coccaro	Gretchen Dugan	Kylie Guest
Gerald Cohen	Carol Dunn	Dottie Gutaj
Naomi Coleman	Mara DuToit	Betty Hadlock
David Collins	Brenda Dyson	Janice Hager
Eve Coolidge	Nancy E. James	Christine Haley
Liz Coolidge	Amy Edwards	Donna Hansen
Rob Coolidge	Cynthia Ehlinger	Richard Hansen
Lynn Craska	Fran Ellesio	Joy Hansen
Paul Criscuolo	Cyndi Ellis	Scott Harris
Kimberly Curry	Ken Ewell	Karen Harris
Tasha Cusson	Jo Fasciolo	Krista Hayward
Megan Czekaj	Susan Ferency	Craig Healy
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Robin Danzak	Michael Ferry	Joy Herbst
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Miriam Levin
Bruce Lighty
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Glen M Cummings
Jeanne M Raccio
Carol M. Coyle
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Nick Maiorino
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Anna Martino
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Janet Messick
Michael Mishik
Karen Morley
Doreen Morrison
Sue Mullaney
Eileen Murphy
Robert Myers
Dave Nager
Chris Newlan
Rick Newton
Ted Norris
Gayle Norris
Jill Notar-Francesco
Dave O'Brien
Kathy O'Brien
Maureen O'Brien
Aileen O'connell
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Mary Poster
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Amy Poturnicki
Nancy Pratt
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Beverly Propen
Jane Purcell
Ryan Quinn
Eugene Ralph
Robin Rathjens
John Rathjens
Pat Raucci
Barbara Reck
Pamela Reeser
Lawrence Reinhardt
Liz Reisman
Laurie Renda
Bill Renda
Gwen Rice
Brenda Rich
Bruce Richardson
Loralee Richter
Kathleen Riley
Brian Roach
Debbie Rollins
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Vicki S. Smith
Laurette Saller

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Lewis Spero	Amanda Wilson
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Alice Spinelli	Kendra Wingate
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Rob Stout	Susan Worboys
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Ann Sullivan	Michael Zarotney
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Bob Sundman	Sophia Zaslow
Meredith Sundman	Anastasia Zinkerman
Rob Sundman	Alison Zyla
Tamara Sutfin	
Christine Sweeney	
Joeseph Szalay	
Susan Taff	