

THE OSPREY

You are most likely to see this magnificent fish-eating hawk, the Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) soaring high in the sky or around its nest of sticks. You may even see it dive, entering the water feet first with a splash, then rise perhaps triumphant with a fish in its talons.



The Osprey is a gentle creature, seldom harming other birds. With the help of dedicated individuals like members of the Georgian Bay Osprey Society and a responsive public, the Bay is once again becoming one of its important summer breeding areas.

DESCRIPTION

Adults are about the size of a small eagle (21" to 24" tall, wing span 54" to 72"). Dark brown, with white undersides, they have a partly white head with a typical Osprey mask - a dark brown streak running from the eyes across the cheeks to the sides of the neck. In flight, Ospreys can be recognized by a gull-like crook in the wings, or the shrill "peep" of their cry. The male is smaller than the female. The young, in their first year, have peppered breasts.

LIFE ON GEORGIAN BAY

Adults return from their wintering grounds in South or Central America in early April to claim, build or repair a nest. Watch for nests made of interlocking sticks, either in tall treetops or on a man-made platform, near water. You may also see fantastic aerial courtship displays in April and early May. Eggs, usually two or three, are laid in May, with the female doing most of the incubation while the male brings her food.

The young hatch in June. The female feeds the chicks increasing quantities of flesh, torn from fish brought by the male. Both parents guard the nest against predators - Raccoons, Great Horned Owls and Bald Eagles. The male can often be seen perched nearby.



The most critical time for the chicks is their first flight, which happens in late July or early August. They must learn to fly, dive and fish before their parents leave for the South near the end of August. The chicks stay another couple of weeks to gain strength before they follow. They will live in the South for 2-3 years reaching reproductive maturity before returning to the Bay.

Watch them from a distance of at least 600 feet (200 metres) to avoid undue disturbance. You may see some nests near busy channels where the birds have become more acclimatized to steady traffic. **If you are in a boat, keep moving steadily** to reduce stress on the bird.



IMPORTANCE TO HUMANS

The Osprey is at the head of the food chain and is particularly sensitive to chemical pollutants and human disturbance. It serves as an "early warning system" for problems in our northern waters. Their success or failure is a reminder of the interdependence of all living things and the fragility of our waters.



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Membership and Donations are always welcome and are fully tax-deductible.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

Province _____ Postal Code _____

E-mail _____

Telephone:
(Home) _____

(Cottage) _____

I ENCLOSE A CHEQUE FOR:

\$ _____ payable to

THE GEORGIAN BAY OSPREY SOCIETY.

Individual - \$10.00.
Family - \$15.00
Institution -\$20.00

Mail To:

Ian and Meta Ferguson
130 Courtland Cres.
East Gwillimbury, ON.
L9N 0B1

THE GEORGIAN BAY OSPREY SOCIETY (GBOS)

The GBOS is a volunteer organization of people dedicated to the restoration and preservation of the Osprey in the waters of Eastern Georgian Bay.

The work of this organization involves:

- Yearly Osprey nest monitoring
- Building, installing and maintaining nest platforms where natural sites are no longer available
- Installing predator guards and "Stay Away" signs to protect the nest site
- Reporting damage to nests or injury to the birds
- Sharing our knowledge and enthusiasm about the Osprey

We welcome volunteers, new members and new information.

THE GBOS OBJECTIVES ARE TO:

- Protect and enhance the habitat of the Georgian Bay Osprey.
- Study and survey Osprey life cycle, habits, nesting and habitat.
- Promote awareness and appreciation of the Osprey through education.



HAVE YOU SEEN
THIS BIRD ?



The Georgian Bay Osprey Society
wants to know . . .
Have a look at our website:
www.gbosprey.ca