



## **Press Release**

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### **Osprey Pair Returns Today to Milford Point Nest: View Live Activity on State's First Osprey Cam: [www.ctaudubon.org](http://www.ctaudubon.org)**

**Milford, CT, March 22, 2007** – Today avid bird watchers who had been on high alert were delighted to witness the return of an Osprey pair to the Milford Point nesting platform at Connecticut Audubon Society's Coastal Center. Many birders viewed the Ospreys' return via Connecticut's first Osprey Cam: [www.ctaudubon.org](http://www.ctaudubon.org). A pair of Osprey has been returning to the same location in the Charles E. Wheeler Salt Marsh at Milford Point for at least seven years.

In 2006 the male Osprey returned on March 26 and the female Osprey returned on March 29. The female laid the first of four eggs on April 11; Osprey eggs two, three, and four followed between April 14 and 20. During the incubation period, both parents protect the Osprey eggs. On May 30 a bright blue stuffed teddy bear also appeared in the nest – a welcoming present, apparently, for the first egg that hatched on May 31. On June 6, a domestic disturbance ensued when the male Osprey brought a fish into the nest for the baby's dinner -- and was followed by another pair of Osprey! The uninvited guests stayed and pestered our nesting pair for quite some time. One of the newcomers even landed on the nest briefly, but was chased off by the female Osprey.

“For the past two summers, this second pair of Osprey has appeared in the Marsh looking for a place to nest,” said Frank Gallo, Director of Shoreline Education for Connecticut Audubon Society. “Since they had no nest of their own to go to, they failed to breed. A lack of nesting platforms is a problem for other Ospreys around the state. Some have taken to building their nests in cell towers. This creates problems if maintenance work needs to be done on the towers during nesting season. If the adult Ospreys are disturbed by humans during this time, they may abandon the nest and its eggs. The same problem may affect Osprey pairs that build nests on channel markers and buoys in the Housatonic. In the early spring human activity is minimal, but with the warmer weather, increased boat traffic can also disturb adults that are protecting eggs and fledglings and cause them to abandon their nests.”

By the end of May 2006 – well beyond the 28-35 day incubation period for Osprey eggs -- it became apparent that three of our Ospreys' four eggs were not going to hatch. “We believe this was due in large part to the long, cold and wet spring that affected many other birds' eggs and hatchlings throughout the state,” said Frank Gallo. By mid-July 2006, the young Osprey was standing in the nest and flapping its wings, having spent weeks watching its parents fly back and forth. At one point, the chick boldly jumped on top of the Osprey Cam we had installed! On July 28, the young Osprey took its first solo flight. All went well, ending with the fledgling's safe landing back in the nest. By mid-to-late September the entire family had flown the nest, heading south, with the parents migrating a few days before the baby.

Similar to the Bald Eagle, Ospreys 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. However pesticides (DDT) and coastline development nearly eliminated the entire population in the 1960s, and in 1989, Connecticut's Department of Environmental Protection placed the Osprey on its “Species of Special Concern” list. CT DEP, in cooperation with public and private organizations, wildlife and conservation non-profits and individual volunteers, then began an aggressive program of nest platform construction and public education. Starting in the late 1970s, these long-winged hawks have been returning in increasing numbers and adapting to

new man-made nest sites around rivers, marshes and coastal areas. In 1998 CT DEP removed the Osprey from its list.

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, and enable DEP wildlife biologists, ornithologists and bird lovers to observe and track the breeding, nesting and fledgling behavior of the Osprey. Every March, thousands of amateur and professional birders start tuning in to <http://www.ctaudubon.org/action/osprey.htm> to witness the ups and downs of Osprey housekeeping via Connecticut’s first “Osprey Cam.” (In 2006, CT’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”-25” in length) black and white fish-eating raptors, with a bold white forehead and eyebrow, and a wingspan of 58”-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 2-2.4 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 roof tops, 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. The following 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 (and in 2006, one blue stuffed teddy bear!). The 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:** A loud, rich musical whistled series of chirps -- “cheep, cheep, cheep” -- or a 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-March.

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/open space in Connecticut, and educates over 200,000 children and adults annually. An estimated 20,000 visitors participated in Connecticut Audubon Society’s 8th Annual Eagle Festival™, held February 17-18, 2007 in Essex, CT. Working exclusively in the state of Connecticut for over 100 years, Connecticut Audubon Society is an independent organization, not affiliated with National Audubon, Audubon Connecticut or the state government of Connecticut. Web site: [www.ctaudubon.org](http://www.ctaudubon.org).