

## Osprey Nest Platforms – Guidance for Placement

To best ensure use and nesting success, the following considerations should be given when choosing a site to place an osprey nesting platform:

- *Proximity to Water:* Osprey feed almost exclusively on fish so as a general rule, the closer to the water the better!
- *Potential for Predation:* Osprey platforms should not be placed near forests or hedgerows as this will provide easy access for predators like great horned owls.
- *Potential for Disturbance:* Osprey platforms should be placed in areas that are isolated from human disturbance during the nesting season by several hundred feet. If a nest location does experience some level of human activity near the site, it is best if the activity is already occurring prior to the nesting season. That way, if an osprey nesting pair choose to nest at a site that is already experiencing disturbance prior to their arrival, it is more likely that the osprey will be able to tolerate that activity for the duration of the breeding season. Alternatively, if activity near the site increases after the osprey has begun nesting, they may be disturbed from incubating eggs or feeding chicks and the young will die. Moreover, it may be too late for them to attempt nesting elsewhere.
  - *Note that ospreys are most sensitive to disturbance during April, when they are laying eggs, and are most likely to abandon the nest if disturbance is too great. They will grow more defensive of the nest area in May and June when they have chicks, and both males and females must forage and feed their chicks often to keep up with all the appetites. It is important that disturbance is avoided during this time as well.*

### Other considerations

- *Timing:* Osprey will start returning to Delaware by Mid-March, so it is best to have a structure in place prior to March 1. This will ensure it is available for the upcoming breeding season.
- *Platform Height:* In the Inland Bays region, ospreys are often found nesting on low-profile structures such as duck blinds and low-profile platforms. However, in Kent and New Castle County, ospreys are typically found nesting on much taller structures.
- *Predator Guards:* In general, we recommend single pole structures with a platform on top. In mainland areas and any area where raccoons and other predators are present, we recommend outfitting the pole with a predator guard (inverted cone, or a sleeve of aluminum flashing) to prevent predators from climbing in to the nest.
- *Landowner Permission:* It is necessary to obtain permission from the landowner prior to installing a nest platform. Landowner information can be obtained at a county or municipal office.
- *Permit requirements:* A permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is necessary prior to placing any platforms within water bodies designated as Waters of the United States. Currently placing osprey platforms in state-regulated wetlands does not typically require a permit from the DNREC Wetlands and Subaqueous Lands Section. However, you should contact this agency directly to receive the latest information (302-739-9943).