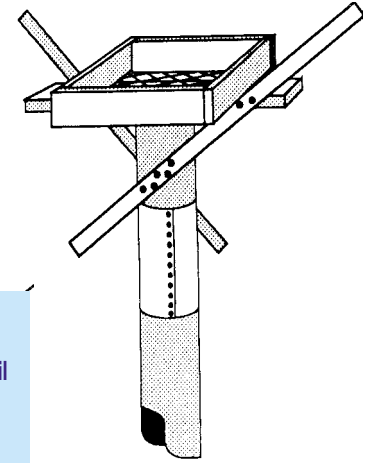
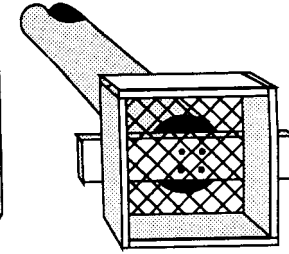
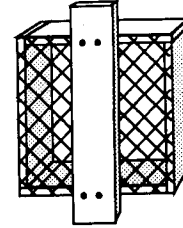
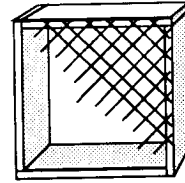


Osprey



Osprey Platforms

How to build a platform



List of Materials:

4 – 2" x 4" x 3' boards* (Frame)

2 – 2" x 4" x 6' boards* (Braces)

1 – 2" x 6" x 4' boards* (Base board)

1 – 3' square chain link fence

1 – 3' square of aluminum sheet

4 – 6" galvanized lag bolts or nails

Assorted Galvanized stainless steel nail

lags and staples as needed

* NOTE:

Recycled plastic lumber is best. Pressure treated can be used.

STEP #1: Nail or screw the four frame boards together.

STEP #2: Staple the chain link fence to the top of the platform frame.

STEP #3: Lag the base board across the middle of the platform frame.

STEP #4: Turn the entire platform over so that the base board is on the bottom. Mount the platform on the top of the pole using the 6-inch nails, before the pole is placed upright.

STEP #5: Mount the brace boards on opposite sides of the platform, with one end attached to the pole and the other end attached to the base board, extending a few feet above the platform.

STEP #6: Wrap the sheet of aluminum around the pole so that it will be at least 10 feet above ground level after the pole is planted. (This acts as a guard against raccoons climbing the pole into the nest.)

STEP #7: Install the pole at the chosen location. To help attract ospreys to the platform, place a few sticks (no larger than 3/4 inches in diameter and 18 inches long) within it.

Disclaimer:

Neither Lee County, The International Osprey Foundation, IOFC, or their employees shall be held responsible for injuries incurred in the construction or installation of the platform or for the faulty construction or installation of platforms that may result in damage or injury. The installer assumes all risks in erection of structure.

What is an osprey?

The osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) is a large, fish-eating hawk that is found on every continent of the world except Antarctica. They are generally found along the seacoasts, bays and large unfrozen rivers and lakes. Northern populations migrate to warmer climates in the winter. Around the world, the osprey population has suffered because of hunting, egg collecting, and the abuse of pesticides like DDT which can weaken egg shells. At one time considered a "threatened" species in this country, the osprey has made a comeback. In Florida, ospreys are currently designated as a Species of Special Concern in Monroe County and are protected by several state and federal laws. Because of its position at the top of the food chain, the osprey is considered to be an "indicator" species, whose health and success directly reflects the status of the overall coastal environment.



How and where do they nest?

Ospreys nest in Florida from about December to May. They mate for life and are very territorial, with some pairs returning to the same nest for decades. The nests are built of sticks, but often include seaweed, bones, driftwood, and other



material from marshes and sites not far from the water. Ospreys usually select the tallest structure around, with an unobstructed view. If the ospreys decided that the snag of a dead tree (for example) looks promising, they will hover over it and drop sticks until they catch. More sticks will be added until they become intertwined.

How will I know one when I see one?

Adults are almost eagle size, about 21 to 24 inches tall with a wingspan of 54 to 72 inches. They are dark brown, with a white underside and a mostly white head. Because of their size and dark brown body with a partially white head, ospreys are often mistaken for adult bald eagles. They can be distinguished by two main features – eagles don't have a white underside and they don't have an osprey's "mask", a dark brown streak that runs from the eyes across the cheeks to the sides of the neck. In flight, ospreys are easily distinguishable by the white underparts, the long wings with a conspicuous bend at the wrist, and barred brown and white tail and flight features.

In hunting for fish, its primary prey, the osprey hovers over the water and then dramatically dives in feet first. The bird then splashes up out of the water, pauses to shake the water from its feathers, and (if successful) carries the fish "torpedo-style" back to its perch or nest. To help in its quest for food, the osprey has developed a couple of unique physical features.

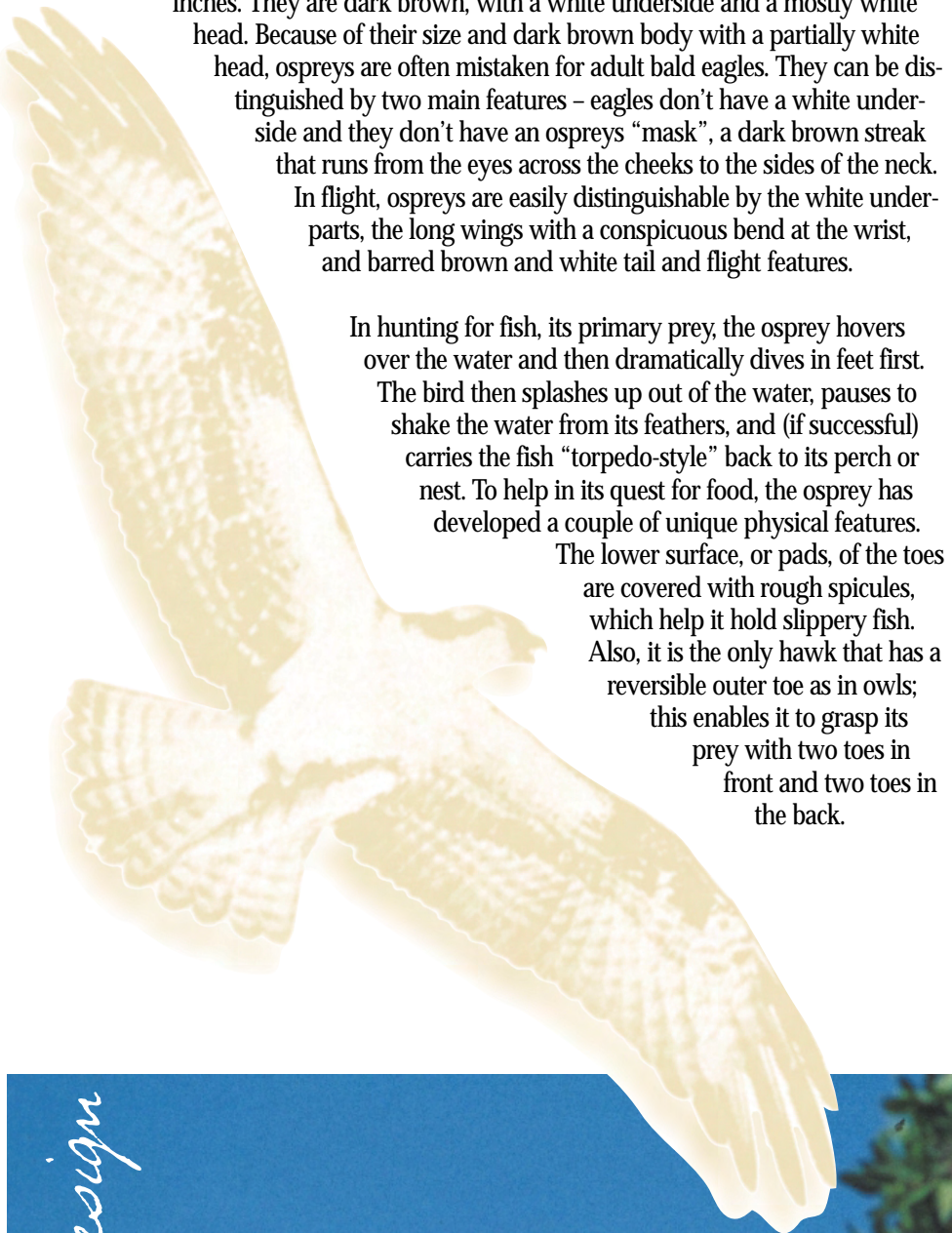
The lower surface, or pads, of the toes are covered with rough spicules, which help it hold slippery fish. Also, it is the only hawk that has a reversible outer toe as in owls; this enables it to grasp its prey with two toes in front and two toes in the back.

The search for tall, semi-isolated sites has often led to ospreys nesting on man-made structures, including antennas, channel markers, chimneys, windmills and utility poles. In utilizing these structures, ospreys have demonstrated an ability to successfully interact in the presence of human activity. Of course, they also have created an occasional nuisance. To aid in the reestablishment of ospreys in many areas, and sometimes to keep them off man-made structures, nesting platforms have been erected. These platforms have proven to be beneficial, providing a stable base for nests and better nest survival.

How can I put up a platform?

If you are interested in establishing a nest platform for ospreys on your property, you must ask yourself one important question – "Am I willing to live with a large wild bird which makes noise, eats and discards fish, and make a mess from its nest or a nearby perch?" If that is acceptable to you, you must then ask whether your neighbors will mind. There's no point in creating a confrontational situation that may eventually lead to the harassment of these protected birds.

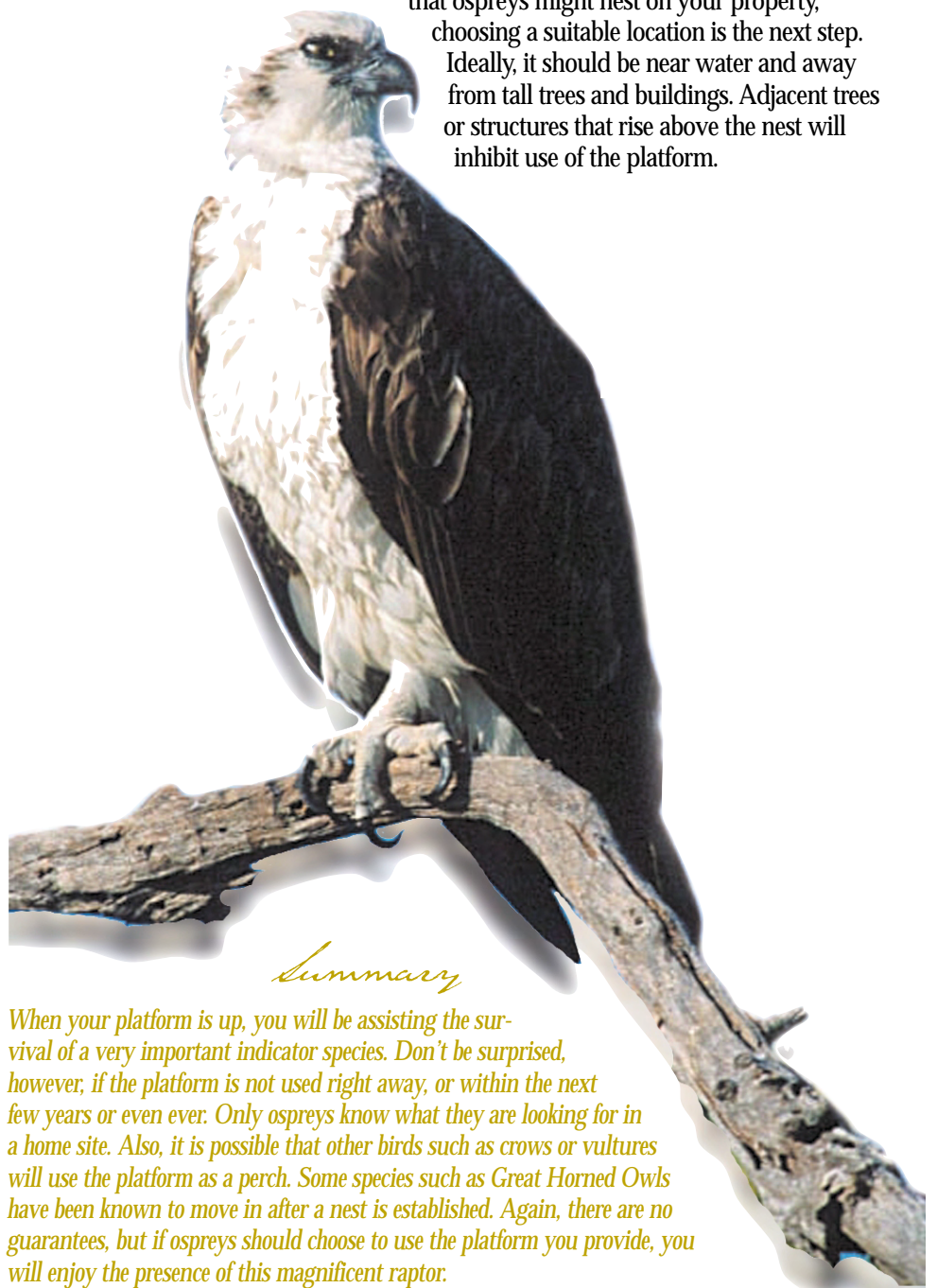
The next step in to determine if ospreys would be interested in nesting on your property. Remember, they prefer areas near water, so far inland areas may not be appropriate. On Sanibel Island which is a barrier island in the Gulf of Mexico, osprey nests are found in the middle of the island and on the bay side. However, very few are located on the gulf side. If there are no ospreys currently nesting anywhere near your property, that may be an indication that the site is undesirable. Even if ospreys currently nest nearby, a new platform may not be used. Ospreys are very territorial and the size of the territories varies greatly. Once you have decided that ospreys might nest on your property, choosing a suitable location is the next step. Ideally, it should be near water and away from tall trees and buildings. Adjacent trees or structures that rise above the nest will inhibit use of the platform.



Once a suitable location is determined, you will need to make arrangements to have a utility pole or something similar erected, preferably to a height of 30 to 40 feet. This is what the platform will sit upon. Utility companies often will sell and install old poles, for a price. In Lee County, those interested can contact Florida Power and Light Company or the Lee County Electric Cooperative (LCEC) It is also essential to contact your local city or county building department to find out if a building permit is required to erect a platform.

One suggested design for a platform to be mounted on a utility pole is included in this brochure. Variations in design or materials are possible. Remember that this platform will be exposed to the elements, so all boards should be recycled plastic or pressure treated, and the platform should be examined after a few years to determine its condition.

In addition to this design, particularly in areas that are not suitable to heavy equipment, a design known as the "Sanibel Tripod" can be used. Essentially, this is similar to a three-legged tepee that can be transported to a site and erected manually by four or five adults. For more information on this alternative design, or for membership information, please contact The International Osprey Foundation at P.O. Box 250, Sanibel, Florida 33957-0250.



Summary

When your platform is up, you will be assisting the survival of a very important indicator species. Don't be surprised, however, if the platform is not used right away, or within the next few years or even ever. Only ospreys know what they are looking for in a home site. Also, it is possible that other birds such as crows or vultures will use the platform as a perch. Some species such as Great Horned Owls have been known to move in after a nest is established. Again, there are no guarantees, but if ospreys should choose to use the platform you provide, you will enjoy the presence of this magnificent raptor.



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