

*October 2021*

## **Osprey**

**The osprey is a migratory hawk that may cover over 160,000 miles in its lifetime.**



***John West***

It has a slender body, long, narrow wings and long legs, reversible outer toes and hooked pads to help them hold slippery fish, and an awareness of aerodynamics demonstrated by carrying captured fish headfirst to minimize wind-resistance. While foraging, ospreys set the standard for

concentration, as they dive with outreached talons and yellow eyes sighting straight along their talons.

Either sex weighs between 49.4 and 70.5 ounces, with body length of 21 to 23 inches and wingspan of 59.1 to 70.9 inches. Brown above, white below, and generally lighter and whiter than most raptors, their white head shave a brown stripe between their eyes. Juveniles display white spots on their backs and buff shades on their breasts.

They feed primarily on live fish, but also consume fish carcasses, birds, snakes, voles, squirrels, muskrats and salamanders.

Ospreys nest from Alaska to New England, Montana to Mexico, and Carolina to California. Their preferred nesting habitat requires accessible fishing within a maximum of around twelve miles, and the

nest is elevated, often on manmade structures like poles, channel markers, duck blinds and specially designed platforms. The nest is built with sticks and lined with bark, sod, grasses, vines, algae, or flotsam and jetsam.

The male collects the building materials and the female molds them into a structure initially less than 2.5 feet in diameter, but often expanding to 3-6 feet over the years. One seasonal brood consists of one to four cream- to cinnamon-colored eggs, speckled with reddish brown. Incubation is 26-42 days, nesting 50-55 days, and chicks hatch with down and eyes open. Eggs do not hatch all at once and older chicks often monopolize food, which can cause late hatchlings to starve if food is scarce.

Osprey populations grew by 2.5% per year from 1966 to 2015, and the species rates a

7 out of 20 on the Continental Concern Score.

While visiting Prescott's many water features, be on the lookout for these beautiful and exciting raptors.