

Osprey Chicks Born in Duxbury

Norman Smith felt lucky when he saw blood on his shirt after being attacked by an angry female Osprey in Scituate. While Smith was recently working to place an identification band on a three-week old Osprey chick, the protective mother spread her five-foot wings and dove for Smith's face. He ducked just in time to save his eyes, but not before the Osprey's talons dug into the left side of his head. "It hurt. It felt like somebody wound up and punched me," he said.

The attack was part of an otherwise pleasant annual task, Smith's once a year count and banding of Osprey chicks along the South Shore. The director of the Blue Hills Trailside Museum and 28 year Massachusetts Audubon Volunteer, along with Joe Grady, local conserva-

tion administrator, worked their way down from Weymouth to Duxbury, stopping in Hull, Scituate, and Marshfield, to band Osprey chicks.

This year, 10 new Osprey hatchlings have been reported on the South Shore, including three chicks discovered in Duxbury. Including the chicks, there are approximately 25 Ospreys living on the South Shore.

Duxbury has four Osprey nesting poles throughout the marshlands but only the two poles north of the Power Point Bridge house Osprey nests. Although different pairs of Osprey use both nests, chicks were only produced from the Scat Island nest, visible from the bridge.

Once on the Massachusetts Threatened List, Ospreys are

now flourishing throughout the state. In the 70's, Osprey numbers were seriously reduced as a result of DDT and other pesticide residues that ran into the ocean, were absorbed by fish, and eventually eaten by Ospreys. The DDT affected the Osprey's reproductive organs and made the shells of their eggs very weak. As a result, mother Ospreys would often break their eggs while trying to incubate them.

Massachusetts Audubon began the project to save the Ospreys 15 years ago. Since then, the town and the Audubon have worked closely to ensure the safe return of Osprey to the area through projects such as the annual banding and construction of nesting poles.

Although the Osprey population has not completely rebounded from the impact of the now-banned DDT pesticide, they can be found along much of the North American Atlantic Coastal region. Some Osprey can be found inland near lakes, but will always stay close to the water because they only eat fish.

Ospreys are normally peaceful birds and will not harm humans, but Smith was an exception to that rule. "I have worked with the Audubon for 28 years and have never heard of an Osprey attacking a person, that is, until I was attacked," Smith said. "I'll wear a helmet when I go back to that nest in Scituate."

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