Citizens United to Protect the Maurice River and Its Tributaries, Inc.

Osprey Restoration Project

Pictorial Instructions for Erecting an Osprey Platform

photo credit Renee Brecht

Photos by J. Morton Galetto unless otherwise noted

This set of instructions is intended to complement other directions and information on our website. Our website will provide you with natural history facts and two slide shows about osprey. Additionally, you will find detailed drawings of the platform and predator guard. There is a thorough description on our site of how to cut out and apply the guard to the platform. The following instructions were developed to help you in physically placing the pole at a selected site.

Location is critical to selecting a successful site. First and foremost, there must be a plentiful supply of fish nearby. Commonly, osprey nest where fish are plentiful and views are unobstructed. Essentially, a minimumof 200' from a treed shoreline is helpful. The closer to a 360 degree viewscape, the better. In Southern New Jersey, we prefer marsh flats because of the proximity to fish and the large views. We find it best for nesting platforms to be about 10 – 11 feet off the marsh or water so that we can service the structures, band the young, make emergency calls, and access them quickly and easily. We also do not want our structures to look like telephone poles because we do not want to encourage ospreys to nest on those, as electrocution is a major cause of mortality. Our structure is intended to resemble the crook of a tree for a number of reasons: in order that natural nests might be built in trees, so that adults can perch on the V shaped perches in order to have a protective position in the event of predation, and so that they can stay out of the nest when young are raucous.

We have used a number of methods to transport and erect nests over the years. Depending on how many poles you might intend to erect in a day, your methods of transportation will vary. Pictured is an example of transporting and erecting one nest. When we erect multiple nests we likely would not attach the platform until we arrive at the landing site, primarily because we would need to use a larger truck or trailer.

Using a pick-up with a rack and trailer, we are able to take both the boat and the nest to a launch site simultaneously.

We have found that by placing the weight of the nest in the boat we are able to transport it assembled to the desired location.

This method has proved much more efficient for us than other alternatives. We have tried towing the nest in the water and on a separate boat, and would not recommend this approach. We transport the crew in a separate boat or have three strong people ferry the nest to the site, off-load it and return to the launch for the additional crew. A larger boat might accommodate both the crew and the nest.

Normally, we would use a minimum of five strong people. Ideally some taller crew members are very useful. In the photos you will see much larger crews. We believe it is important to get people involved in wildlife restoration. It gives people a stake in caring about the natural world.

Next, we load the pump and the nest onto the boat.

WB20

- Easy-start Honda OHV Commercial engine
- 153 gal./min. capacity
- Silicon Carbide Mechanical Seal
- Cast Iron Volute and Impeller
- **4 h.p.**

The size of your vessel will determine whether the pump is ferried on a separate craft or brought in on the original trip. The crew can disembark more easily from smaller boats, and they are more manuverable on the marsh plain and in shallow water.

Once we have arrived at the erection site, we break the surface of the marsh with a shovel if there is a thick mat of vegetation that needs to be removed in order to jet a hole in with water. On the Maurice River, we normally have a sandy or muddy surface and this step is not normally necessary. But where you have cord grass/*Spartina alterniflora* or *patens* you will want a shovel as part of your arsenal.

Attached to the pump's hose is a 6' galvanized "L" shaped pipe. One individual will allow the water to do the work.

Allow the pipe to wash in a hole large enough to accommodate the 6-inch square pole. We prefer this to using a post-hole digger. If you hit a hard object, it may be preferable to move a few feet away. But it is wise not to allow this hole to be in the path of those erecting in a different hole. Marsh plains in our area are already ankle twisters due to rough terrain and muskrat tunnels.

When the hole has reached about 5-6 feet deep, we allow the water to run until it seems as though the hole is the proper circumference to take the pole. The individual who is handling the pipe will wiggle it around to get a sense of this.

The crew lines up the pole's end with the hole and someone is in charge of footing the end: in other words, anchoring the end by holding the pole's tip down as best as they can. Line the crew up with the tallest person at the platform end. A very strong short person comes in handy nearer the footed end.

If the marsh is too soft to walk on, we have used two sheets of plywood for the crew to walk the pole up into position. We have also employed the use of ropes when the crew is large and then some folks can pull opposite those who raise the nest. The nest is lifted the way soldiers lift a flag, as in the WW II image of Iwo Jima. When the nest is out of reach for folks on the plaform end, they should try to come around and help out on the far side of the pole.

If the pole is too loose once it is in place, it may help to backwash the nest from a bit of a distance, as in the above photograph. Often we tamp the dirt in around the pole with our feet, but this approach can seriously twist an ankle and should be done only by a person with proper boots and good physical abilities.

Starting the guard on the nesting pole

It is important to place a predator guard on the pole. Snakes and raccoons are capable of robbing eggs. We have seen raccoon scat on the marsh, at the bottom of a pole, as far as two miles from shore. The guard should be placed as high on the pole as possible. Staying as high above the high tide (or water) line as possible helps to keep ice or wind-blown waves from destroying the guard.

Placing the guard as high as possible on the pole

Details on fabricating the guard are found on our website as are the instructions for affixing the guard. These photos are primarily to give you an idea of how to attach the guard and to remind you of the importance of placing a guard on each nesting pole. We are not proponents of simply encasing a portion of the pole in metal. The conical guard pictured here is much more effective. Raccoons and snakes can easily navigate a simple ring of metal.

Screwing the guard at two spots on each side of the nest

Drilling holes for pop rivets along open seam

Inserting pop rivets in holes

Rivets in place

New Jersey Fish and Wildlife suggests the guard pictured above in high wind situations or where volunteers are not maintaining guards on a regular basis. State biologists have placed grease on these guards as a further deterrent to access. We hope to experiment with some predators in controlled situations to see if this style is effective.

The finished nest

Photo credit Roy Kaneshiki

Once the nest is complete, the crew normally feels a sense of pride and accomplishment in a job well done. Seeing a family of osprey raised in the platform is truly the icing on the cake.

Photo credit Ken Walker