

# Maurice River Recollections Project: Osprey Nest Anecdotes



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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Citizens United's River Recollections Project. These stories are but a few of my memories associated to osprey nesting structures along the Maurice River and its tributaries. It is part of a larger project including an interactive map of the of river reach lore, live campfire recollection events, documentaries, presentations and archives held by the organization.

I believe the greatest connection that people have to a river is the sharing of their bond to it through the telling of stories. These stories are accurate accounts from my perspective- the truth, as I know it. The stories are designed to give you insight into some life history of the osprey but are primarily designed to give you a flavor for being an osprey volunteer. Over 150 volunteers have been involved in the construction of the osprey platforms.

This pdf is a supplement to our Maurice River Recollection Project. The project, available on our website at <http://www.cumauriceriver.org>, includes natural history facts, plans for constructing osprey nests or predator guards, the history of the colony project and much more. Or you may simply go to Google Earth along the Maurice River and visit the nests virtually and the accompanying anecdotes.

If you enjoy these stories or have a love of history, you may find visiting our interactive River Reach Map, which allows you to explore cultural aspects of the Maurice River's tidal reaches, simply click on buoys to begin your voyage.

We hope to have a file available shortly that can be downloaded and viewed using Google Earth.

Sincerely,

Jane Morton Galetto  
President

Acknowledgement proofreading; Leslie Ficaglia and Renee Brecht- Thank you!

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# NEST ANECDOTES

## *MEADOW VIEW*

This was the first nest we erected on the Maurice River. Prior to this platform, there were only two on the Maurice River. Both were believed to be placed by the NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife, Endangered and Nongame Species Program. These were the Fralinger Nest and the Four Star Nest #1. It was about 1985 and my husband, Peter Galetto, and friend, Eddie DiPalma, said they wanted to put in a piling in conjunction with the pilings driven for our dock. We had lived on the tidal river for about two years. I called a State (NJ) biologist and asked for advice. He didn't think an osprey would have an interest so far north on the river but said we were welcome to give a try. The next year a pair of osprey was in residence and "played house." Often first year birds will essentially go through all the motions of nesting but not produce eggs. We dubbed the initial pair of osprey after one of Red Skelton's skits, a favorite comedian from my childhood. His routine at the beginning of each TV show involved two gulls talking to one another and making commentary from above about folks below. The gulls were affectionately named Gertrude and Heathcliff.

This pair over many years has been one of the earliest nesters and was extremely productive. It was the start of a very large and successful osprey nesting colony project in which nearly 150+ volunteers have participated.



FIGURE 1: TEENAGER GETS TO SEE CHICKS



**FIGURE 2: JUST A FEW DAYS OLD**

Closest River Reach: Haley's Gravel

<http://www.cumauricriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=14>

## ***BURCHAM***

This was the second nest we erected, and it was one of two put up on one weekend. The other has since been removed. The one we removed was too close to a tree line later suspected of having nesting horned owls. Over time, we learned that the most suitable nests have very clear sight distances. A 360° view and a distance of 200' or more from a dense tree line fosters the greatest interest in nesting pairs.

This nest is named for the people who own the property closest to the nest: the Burcham Sisters. They are twin sisters (one is now deceased), Janice and Jeanette Burcham. They are living legends on our river. Their home has been in the same family since it was built in 1860 and is the winner of a Century Farm award. The bricks of the home were manufactured on site from the clays of the Maurice River. It is NJ's last remaining diked farm.

Originally, we used 24 6'x6' poles for nesting platforms. The height, we felt, increased the sight distance of the birds. In order to erect a nest we had to use scaffolding. We used to use an old pallet hung off the edge of the pole, making the pole less balanced and unusually heavy. The combination of imbalanced, long, and weighty made the pole very difficult to manage. Added to these difficulties, we put the nest in a very muddy bottom and 4' of water. The inevitable happened on the day we put it up: the structure got away from us and took out a small pram we were using for the pump, and hit two spectators. Fortunately, no one was hurt and the nest proved successful. Since then we have changed to 16' poles and use a well-balanced structure. Ten feet above the marsh plain is sufficient for success and makes maintenance and banding much more efficient. Also, we try to find marsh areas where we might have the best footing. In our river basin, this is not an easy task. At times, we have laid a couple of sheets of plywood so we don't sink in the muck above our knees.



**FIGURE 3: VIEW OF BURCHAM FARM FROM BURCHAM NEST**



**FIGURE 4: SCAFFOLD IS USED TO AFFIX A NEW PLATFORM ON AN EXISTING POLE**

Closest River Reach: Yawp Shore

<http://www.cumauriceriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=19>

## ***Johnson***

The Johnson nest, like many, is named for the folks whose property the nest is erected on or who are the observers and stewards; in this case, both are true. The nest lies adjacent to Acorn Gut. This pair of birds is always the first to set up shop and get down to the business of raising their family. Normally the female will be on eggs before the end of March. On Mother's day, we normally make our first egg checks and we use the activity at this nest as a guideline for the beginning of each maintenance task. Twice we have made the error at this nest of coming to band too late, primarily because the birds start so early. In both instances, a chick prematurely jumped ship. This means having to recover the chick and place it back in the nest. It is not a lot of fun for the bird or the banders. We like to think we are wiser and will avoid this issue by banding earlier. So far so good.



**FIGURE 5: CHICKS JUST BEFORE FLEDGING, ABOUT 8 WEEKS OLD**

Closest River Reach: Acorn Gut –Sweet Meadows

<http://www.cumauricriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=21>

## ***BRICKSBORO LAWRENCE***

This nest is named for the village of Bricksboro, presently a neighborhood, but at one time a thriving enclave. The village was situated across from where the platform now stands. The town was the namesake of its founder Joshua Brick. There were sundries and ship stores and it was an active little community. It was Jack Lawrence who asked that we put the structure there. He also lent his boat to the construction project. Jack and his neighbor Mary Lou Barbose are vigilant in watching this nest and report osprey arrivals and any problems. At this nest, we had one of the most unusual occurrences take place. In 2003, we found an adult female dead on top of two live chicks and one dead one. We turned in the carcass for necropsy and the band number to the USGS service. We were concerned because it was a cold, wet, dismal spring for osprey and we were finding chicks starved in the nest. From the band it was determined the adult was an eight-year-old female who had choked to death. The bird had also been fledged a few watersheds northwest in Canton by a colleague, Ted Nichols of NJ Fish and Wildlife. When we later returned to band the chicks, as they were too young for banding on the previous visit, we found the male had raised two healthy chicks that subsequently fledged, thus showing it is possible for an adult osprey to raise the chicks on its own. However, it could not have been an easy task and would take an experienced bird. Had the chicks been one week younger they would likely have perished from exposure. A clutch of three can consume six pounds of fish a day! In fact, the dead chick died of starvation. Chicks are fed in the order in which they are born and as such, the youngest chick is fed when the oldest has had its fill. Thus, it is not uncommon for the youngest to starve if food is in short supply.



**FIGURE 6: THREE CHICKS ABOUT THE SAME AGE, BUT ONE IS STARVED TO DEATH, FIRST LAID IS FIRST FED**

Closest River Reach: Brickboro

<http://www.cumauriceriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=31>

## **Kirby**

This nest is named for one of Citizens United to Protect the Maurice River and Its Tributaries, Inc. founders and it is the nest for which he is the steward. I shall never forget the day we met Berwyn Kirby. He was a legend to us. We had been asked to come on an inner tube/ canoe excursion by a group of folks that called themselves Citizens United. We couldn't make the trip departure time because of prior commitments, but decided to catch up with the group by boat on their return up-river. The tide was rushing out and there was wind to deal with so we offered to raft some of their vessels together and give them a tow. Most were grateful for the offer and we obliged. Berwyn however was determined to make the trip on his own, paddling upstream against the tide in an inner tube. At this point, we were towing so many vessels and tubes that he actually kept up with us. Remarkable. This incident did not dispel the lore surrounding his vitality but rather enforced it and is now lore in itself.

Berwyn is known for his very protective proclivities. And the nest was the first and only nest that was camouflaged, for Berwyn didn't want it to be obvious to possible mischief-makers. Shortly after that, we did in fact have one nest that was vandalized at Union Lake. Berwyn is also known for his well-kept and robust physical condition. To be clear, Berwyn is the picture of fitness topped off by a buzz cut. His overall demeanor, oratory skills, and flair have gained him the respect of many a wayward student and teachers, as well as the members of our organization. Ironically, his birds have matched his vigor and healthy spirit. Their nest is always the largest on the river and they remain the best example of not knowing when to stop building. These attributes extend to creatures that surround Berwyn. The day we put up the nest, I took photos of his Chesapeake retrievers carrying logs of their choice for retrieval. It is only in Berwyn's 70s that he has considered trimming down on his own bulk. His strength of character and resolve remain in force.



**FIGURE 7: KIRBY INSTRUCTS CHESAPEAKE RETRIEVER IN FINE ART OF LOG CARRYING**



**FIGURE 8: VIEW FROM KIRBY PLATFORM**



**FIGURE 9: KIRBY NEST BUILDER BIRDS!**

### ***FRALINGER/ KONTES***

This is yet another nest that is named for its property ownership. For many folks the site is known as Fralinger, as it appears on the USGS map for identification. Since the time of the Fralinger ownership Jack Kontes has become the proprietor, so we added the Kontes name to the identification. This nesting site is one of the original man-made structures on the Maurice River, pre-dating our colony project. The pole and platform of the original nest fell into disrepair and we replaced it with a new structure. There was a period of time that the nest failed or was inactive. We thought that the pair from the early to late 80s possibly perished and a new less experienced pair had taken over. For the past few years, this being 2009, the nest has been successful. One of the birds in this pair has an aggressive display habit that involves dipping its talons in the water when we make nest checks. This is not a habit unique to this bird, but clearly, this bird really fancies it to the extreme. Ospreys unmistakably have individual personalities and we have been able to predict specific habits at certain nests. So much so, that if the habit is not displayed, we suspect that one member of the pair has perished.



**FIGURE 10: NOTE OSPREY BEATING WATER**



**FIGURE 11: OSPREY FLIES OVERHEAD AS THE VOLUNTEER CHECKS THE NEST**



**FIGURE 12: SUBTENANT AT FRALINGER NEST- A MUSKRAT HOUSE**

Closest River Reach: Steve Clark

<http://www.cumauriceriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=27>

Check out reaches #25-28

## ***FICCAGLIA***

The Ficcaglia family watches the nest and helped to erect it. They are the dutiful watchers of the birds' endeavors.

When we first started the osprey colony project, we had just entered our 30s. Now I don't mean to infer that young folks have no common sense, but I will share that we were clearly in our invincible years. And it is with that attitude that we likely put up this early structure. The pole was 24' long and very heavy. We were also blessed that day to have an Eagle Scout candidate Curt Hartenstine and his younger comrades join us. Curt was in his senior year of high school and earning his Eagle Scout badge, a true sign of accomplishment and tenacity. He was a football player and a big strapping fellow.

The tiny scouts got in the bow of the pram and when he got in, the stern the craft went wild. At this point, the craft was only in 2 ft of water. It was March and not the warmest of days. The only thing we did correctly, as I recall, was put lifejackets on the crew. Somehow, we righted that first incident, only to send out three smaller women in the same boat. We just needed to navigate about 100 yards of waterway, so really, what could go wrong? So we persisted. Who knew a small metal pram could sink? Sink it did, and if I recall correctly, even the press was present to memorialize the incident in photos. Thankfully, they were kind to us. Fortunately, everyone swam to shore, boots and all, and although one camera drowned, no one was hurt and we learned an important lesson on using adequate-sized crafts. It was one of those times when you were only a thread away from having a tragic story to tell and ended up with a memorable tale that will not be easily forgotten. Yes, the invincible years; the years we survived simply by sheer luck.

Let's move on to the personality of the birds in this nest. You have heard of a junkyard dog? Well, this bird has it all over any local junker. Besides the usual sticks and grasses, its nest is filled with primarily two items: orange nylon rope and clear plastic - so much so that we have, on occasion, had to cut chicks free from the bondage of the line. We don't know where the orange rope comes from but we have written it up in the local paper to try to get to the bottom of this. The mystery remains unsolved. The bird is also a "builder bird," making an unusually large nest.



**FIGURE 13: FICCAGLIA NEST FESTOONED WITH ORANGE ROPE, PLASTIC, CARDBOARD, TIRE TREAD, PLASTIC PLANT CONTAINERS**



FIGURE 14: PORTION OF ORANGE ROPE REMOVED FROM NEST



FIGURE 15: ORANGE ROPE HANGS DOWN LIKE STREAMERS FROM NEST

## CAUSEWAY

This nest is near the Mauricetown Causeway Bridge and is probably one of our most-viewed nests. It was placed behind a stand of especially thick phragmites (common reeds). We have accessed it for many years via a watered gut in the marsh. Over the years the gut has filled in with silt and phragmites, so that recently we moved it about 100' to the edge of the river.

The most memorable aspect of this nest is the day we put it up. You might say it was the meeting of two young organizations that are now well established in the local fabric of our community. The entire time we were putting up the nest we could hear pumps running in a steady drone. We also had a type of spectator group aboard the deck of what resembled a sunken or grounded ship. We went about our business of erecting the pole and when we completed the task at hand, we decided to see what was going on. We said, "Hey, what are you folks up to?" And they replied, "What are you up to?" We said we had just put up an osprey nesting platform. They thought our goal was optimistic; after all NJ had had 500 pair of osprey and was probably down to around 50, so not too many osprey were being seen in those days. We returned to our original inquiry, "What are you up to?" They responded, "We are restoring a ship; want to take a look?" We looked around at our work crew to see if folks were game and the head nodding seemed to imply that we would soon be on tour. There looked to be more water in the hull of that ship than in the river. We tried to be polite and hide our skepticism. I think our smirks likely gave us away. They explained that the hull of this forgotten oyster vessel was not always part of a motorized craft, but at one point in its glory, it was an oyster schooner, traveling only with the wind. They planned to remove the pilothouse and restore the low profile entrances to the galley and berths, equip it with masts, and sail it as a floating classroom. We offered our best wishes: "Good luck." And their reply seemed to have a trace of equal uncertainty: "Good luck with the birds."

Today, the boat is NJ's Tall Ship, the AJ Meerwald, and it is owned by the Bayshore Discovery Project and in fact, it is a floating classroom. And now the dream focuses on the completion of a museum on site. And our osprey colony fledged 74 chicks in 2008. Any more skeptics out there?



FIGURE 16: PHRAGMITES BEGIN TO TAKE OVER CAUSEWAY NEST #1



**FIGURE 17: CREW MOVES CAUSEWAY NEST CLOSER TO RIVER'S EDGE**



**FIGURE 18: LOIS ABBOTT LEARNS TO BAND OSPREY**

Closest River Reach: Mauricetown

<http://www.cumauricriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=33>

## **FGW 4 STAR #1 & FGW 4 STAR #2**

Occasionally when folks see these nests so close together they question what we could have been thinking. The nests are across the river from their namesake- 4 Star Marina. The #1 nest was probably put up by NJ Fish and Wildlife. It was falling into disrepair. So we ventured out to replace it with a brand new pole. When we arrived on location we found that the platform was in terrible shape but the old piling supporting it was sound. We had planned to cut down the entire structure. We did not have the scaffold necessary to place a new nesting platform on top of the existing pole so we decided to put up the new nest, because after all, it was March, and the birds would return any day. We thought we would take advantage of the good pole and return in the future to place a new top on it and to test how close the birds would nest to one another. Historically, there are places where osprey actually nested on the ground in colonies. Ospreys exist on every continent but Antarctica so it is conceivable that in some places trees are not a common commodity.

So what happened? Well, the birds rotate between the two nests but never has there been a pair on both structures. As the colony grows, we wonder if both poles will someday be occupied.

There is one little twist of fate that is worthy of note this pair is one of only three pair that have produced four chicks. To give you an idea how extraordinary this occurrence is of 279 clutches since 1994 only 15 have had four eggs and only three actually raised four chicks. And I'm thinking possibly the mother is very grateful that we did not call the nest 5 Star.



**FIGURE 19: FOUR EGGS IS VERY UNUSUAL; OF 279 CLUTCHES BANDED, ONLY 15 HAVE HAD FOUR EGGS**

Closest River Reach: Fish Factory

<http://www.cumauricriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=41>

## **UNION LAKE**

The year was 1987 and Union Lake was drained in order to replace the spillway. It seemed like the perfect time to do a little construction in the Wildlife Management Area. We would be able to walk the lakebed and erect some osprey structures. In fact, we erected three during low water levels. Only one remains. One was prey to vandalism and the other just wouldn't tolerate ice events on the lake. But the remaining one does afford an opportunity for a good story about founder Berwyn Kirby ([see Kirby nest also](#)). We got permission from Fish and Wildlife to operate an ATV and cart a water pump that we employ to jet a hole for the pole. Berwyn had just purchased an image-stabilizing video camera and was planning to film the erection of the pole. He rode tandem on the ATV and shot footage of the surrounding scenery. Upon arrival at the site, he continued to film the dry lakebed; keep in mind that this habitat had not been seen in over 100 years. He was so engrossed that when he finally put the camera on the crew we were all done. We had a lot of fun at his expense, which I might say was risky business. Berwyn's flattop and physique do not make him a person that you would cross intentionally.

As we were leaving, we came upon a young man who was riding an ATV illegally on the bottom of the dry lakebed. Unfortunately for him, he had come across a deep muddy area and had gone over the hubcaps of his monster machine. Berwyn sternly asked him what the problem was and we thought the poor kid might have a heart attack having just met our version of John Wayne. Berwyn pressed, "You know you can't ride that thing here." The young man remained silent. Berwyn asked, "Where would you like to see this thing?" The emphasis on the word "thing" defies description, but you might have thought all the evil in the world was wrapped in that wheeled version of Pandora's box. In a shaky reply the fellow said, "Well, over here," pointing to a dry spot next to the over-sized mud pie. With what seemed like little effort Berwyn lifted the machine to the dry spot, sheer force, absolutely impressive muscle. Then Berwyn told him that he had better head home and stay out of the Wildlife Area with his contraption. The incident had completely awed all of us and when the dust from Pandora's wheeled box was far enough away to speak over I asked, "Well, does anyone want to tease Berwyn about his filming skills now?" Berwyn simply got a special glint in his eye. Off we all went, with a reinforced respect for not only his physical strength, but also for his strength of character.



**FIGURE 20: JUVENILE OSPREY HAVE ORANGE IRISES; ADULTS HAVE YELLOW**

## VANAMAN

The Vanaman nest was erected at the Vanaman homesteads on the Maurice River. It was Pat Vanaman Witt who suggested that nephew Frank needed a nest. He had wanted to attract an osprey to the upland on his property but the structure he employed wasn't having much luck attracting any. We put up a platform in the marsh and it was active for 15 years before the upland nest finally developed osprey appeal.

The marsh platform was involved in one of our more tragic occurrences with osprey and it caused us to redesign an aspect of our nesting box design. We originally used 1/2" hardware cloth across the bottom of the box. Between the side of the box and the middle support we place a 2" x 36" piece of wood to help support nesting materials so the weight of the nest is supported not only by the hardware cloth. When we clean off a nest, we do not clean it down to the structure but rather leave about 3" of sticks and grasses in place. First-year birds often don't use a lot of nesting materials. And the first-year birds that built on this platform hardly placed any nesting materials at all. They were inexperienced and had gotten a typically late start. The chicks were reared in a hastily built nest and the 1/2" wire was, unbelievably, large enough for the chicks' legs to grow through the openings. We had put up over a dozen nests and not had this problem before. In 24 years of banding birds, and many more nests neither I nor the biologists at NJ Fish and Wildlife have ever witnessed a similar tragedy. I have seen only one nest with an equally sparse amount of nesting materials. To insure against a similar occurrence we now use 1/4" hardware cloth. We also do egg checks and, at that time, check that the adult birds have assembled a sufficient amount of nesting materials. In fact, most osprey don't know when to stop building; collapse is a common problem in natural nests or when maintenance of man-made structures is inadequate.



FIGURE 21: BEDRAGGLED CHICK IN VANAMAN PLATFORM AFTER A THUNDERSTORM



FIGURE 22: VIEW OF VANAMAN HOUSE FROM VANAMAN NEST

Closest River Reach: Old Ferry Compton

<http://www.cumauriceriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=30>

Ferry Crossing Clue to Reach Names III

<http://www.cumauriceriver.org/reaches/narratives/ferry3.cfm>

## ***BREEDEN***

The Breeden nest has since been relocated. We moved it in 2004 after 11 years of being almost completely ignored and never successfully used. The nest was on the Manumuskin on a property where the homeowner encouraged us to place it with such enthusiasm that we could not resist. But this stretch of the Manumuskin is very narrow and we felt that the views were such that the birds might feel threatened by other birds of prey perching in nearby trees along the bank. The leading expert on osprey, Dr. Poole, says osprey nesting is all about location, location and location. Normally we let the birds tell us where to place nests. This statement will be better understood by reading the other stories contained in these web pages.



**FIGURE 23: BANDER USES MIRROR TO COUNT EGGS AT BREEDEN NEST. THE MIRROR ALLOWS NEST CHECKS TO MOVE MORE SWIFTLY THAN CLIMBING THE LADDER AND IS LESS INVASIVE.**

## **NOVAKOWSKI**

When this nest was put in place, the osprey had started to give us indications as to what sites they desired on the river. The birds placed a nest on top of a duck blind very close to where we ultimately erected this one. The duck blind was unsuccessful and we suspected that raccoons likely preyed on the nest. We have found raccoon scat on the marsh over a mile from the bank or any high ground.

Often I speak of the distinctive personalities of osprey. For a number of years, the female in this nest was especially aggressive. There were times that I doubted my sanity when I banded birds at the Novakowski platform. Repeatedly, this bird would dive down and drop its talons in the most threatening way. I suspect that the female perished one year when the nest failed. Today, the new mother is just not as nasty as her predecessor is and although I thought I would be glad to pass up her aggressive behavior during our little encounters, I reservedly admit to missing that little bit of an adrenaline pumping in my veins.

When a bird, year after year, displays a particular behavior, and on a nest visit I don't see the behavior anymore, I feel a little sad, because I suspect that one member of the pair has perished.



**FIGURE 24: NOVAKOWSKI BIRD GIVES BANDER GRIEF- GOOD MOM!**

Closest River Reach: Bailey's and Boiler Reach

<http://www.cumauriceriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=24>

## ***AE MENANTICO***

This nest was ultimately removed. It was thought that the height of the trees and lack of a wide view might have been why no birds claimed it.



**FIGURE 25: THE PROXIMITY TO TREE LINE PROBABLY MADE OSPREY FEEL INSECURE**

## ***PEEK PRESERVE***

In 1995, a few years after the Natural Lands Trust had purchased the Peek property for a preserve site, we erected this nest. Visitors can get a good view of it from the boardwalk on the Preserve. We believe it offers a wonderful opportunity for people to enjoy seeing osprey raise their young. *The Peek preserve is accessible from Route 47 one and a half miles south of the junction of Routes 49 & 47.*



**FIGURE 26: TEACHING YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT BANDING AND OSPREY AT PEEK NEST**

Closest River Reach: Jawbone

<http://www.cumauriceriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=9>

## ***STRAUSS***

The Strauss family properties abut the shore near this nest. It was one of four platforms erected in 1995. It lies on a river reach referred to as Bone Yard, named for the old Swedish Cemetery (now gone) that was on the nearby riverbank. It is said that the bones of bodies were exposed on the face of the bluff as the banks receded.



**FIGURE 27: AUTHOR SCRIBES BANDING NUMBERS AS REPORTED BY BANDER ABOVE.**

Closest River Reach: Bone Yard

<http://www.cumauricriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=22>

## ***JOHNSON NORTH***

This nest was one of four erected in 1995. At this point we were looking for locations that were rather far from the upland bank and were close enough to existing nests to make maintenance go faster. Additionally, we noticed over time, that when we worked on a nest, we drew a flying crowd of agitated onlookers. This is a colonial behavior and is effective in warding off intruders. It is likened to a mob of siblings showing up to protect a wronged sister. In this area there are at least nine nests visible in a half-mile radius. We affectionately call it the osprey ghetto. And it definitely has a “don't mess with us” atmosphere.



**FIGURE 28: ASSISTANT GETS A PEEK AT CHICKS**

Closest River Reach: Acorn Gut – Sweet Meadows

<http://www.cumauriceriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=21>

## **CAUSEWAY #2**

This nest was one of four erected in 1995. This pair of ospreys has very eclectic taste in décor, making them one of the most interesting nests to visit on the river. The hodgepodge of items that they have brought to the nest really outdoes the other pairs. Likely the male brings these prized gifts to its mate. We have found a turkey wing, rope, a neoprene rubber glove, a goose call, fishing line (unfortunately we find fishing line all too often and the results are sometimes tragic), a tin can, and various assorted treasures. It is fun to read other accounts of what banders find in nests they visit.



**FIGURE 29: THIS GLOVE IS ONE OF NUMEROUS ITEMS FOUND OVER THE YEARS AT CAUSEWAY #2**

Closest River Reach: No Man's Friend

<http://www.cumauriceriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=21>

## **CMBO**

This nest was erected in 1996. On this particular occasion, we had two work crews. Clay Sutton and Jimmy Watson headed up the crew who left the Maurice River Watershed to Goshen and the new Cape May Bird Observatory Center for Research. The one thing that I recall is that the crew reported that they had great difficulty hoisting the nest primarily because the marsh was so soft that they could not obtain any sure footing. Somehow they managed to get the nest into position but it was not without a great deal of difficulty. Then we later described to them that in such circumstances we often put two sheets of plywood on the marsh surface to keep us from sinking knee deep in mud. Needless to say, we were soundly chided for this omission in our instructions. In the many years the nest has been in place, sadly, not an osprey has taken an interest in the platform. In this particular case, we may have been unrealistic in our eagerness to put up this platform, mainly because of the nest's proximity to the Research Center. So many folks would have a wonderful view of the nest and so many interpretative possibilities exist if the nest were to be successful in attracting osprey.



**FIGURE 30: MAYBE SOMEDAY WE WILL BE ABLE TO BAND AT CMBO**

## ***CENTERTON***

Historically, osprey nested in inland lakes. So, in 1996, we succumbed to the prodding of a few very fervent volunteers from the Centerton Lake area and we erected a nest there. To date, 2008, occasionally an osprey perches there, but no nesting has taken place. We do have some limited reason to be optimistic, in that we placed a nest at Willow Grove Lake in 1997 and it wasn't until 2006 that birds nested there. Centerton isn't very far away and you never know. But everything is about safety and food...so we shall see.



**FIGURE 31: OSPREY AND DINNER EXCHANGE A GLANCE**

## ***PEEK SOUTH***

The northern nest was the first to be placed at the Natural Land Trust's Peek Preserve. It was very popular with preserve visitors, and the vastness of the meadow beacons accommodation for another pair of osprey. The refuge manager was supportive. Thus we constructed this nest, erected in 1996. It was an immediate hit with osprey returning from their South American winter break.



**FIGURE 32: MILLVILLE CITY PLANNER HELPS BAND AT PEEK SOUTH**

Closest River Reach: Coal Wharf/Cargill's Grainery

<http://www.cumauriceriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=9>

## ***ABBOTT FARM***

There is generally a natural nest in the vicinity of the Abbott Farm on the Menantico Creek. This year we could hear osprey warning us with their calls but we did not find the nest. Many years the nest is in one of a few trees along a 100' stretch leaning over the water.

## ***BUCKSHUTEM***

In 1998, a natural nest that was perched on an old snag, along the Buckshutem Creek, collapsed of its own weight. This was a great example of the birds leading us to exactly where they wished to be housed. The nest failed in 2007 and '08; at times, it appears the female may not have a mate. I must say her disposition is admirable in her tenacity to sit the nest. In fact, she refuses to flush until you are very close, and she has no problem defending the nest with the same bravado. It does beg one to anthropomorphize that it might be her disposition that wards off even a date with a likely male candidate.

Sadly, in 2007, we found an adult that had fledged from this nest in 2001, wrapped in fishing line and hung from a stump. The careless disposal of monofilament has been a real issue for osprey. Sometimes line simply gets snagged and is impossible to retrieve. But a certain number of species mortalities are attributed to disregard for the planet we all share.

From banding and observation we can deduce that the bird was born in 2001 and returned at three years old in 2004 to play house. In 2005 and '06 it raised a family. In 2007, it ended up with a hook in its breast and hung upside down from a stump. It was a cold and frosty March day when I kayaked out to retrieve the carcass. Ice actually formed in small droplets on the bow of my craft. It is hard to describe the feeling of recovering one of the birds you banded before it was old enough to fly. You go back to look at your banding records to determine if the bird appears there. Then you discover the fragility of life and the brief time one winged denizen blessed the sky. Six years old, two broods and then simply gone. In 2007 the nest had one lone occupant. It was a sad vigil as it called to each osprey that passed.

But nature has a way of healing lonely hearts, and in 2008 the nest raised three chicks.



**FIGURE 33: FISHING HOOK EMBEDDED IN CHEST**



**FIGURE 34: MONOFILAMENT ENTANGLED IN TALONS**



**FIGURE 35: AUTHOR HOLDS UP CHICK FOR PHOTO OP**

Closest River Reach: Some Buckshutem Creek

<http://www.cumauriceriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=18>

## **BAUER**

This nest was erected on State Wildlife Management Area (as are many). The former owner of the property who saw fit to preserve his property was/is named Bauer, so we named the nest in his generous honor. I don't have much to tell about this particular nest; it certainly takes a knowledgeable person to navigate to it for the ditch leading up to it runs much differently that one might suspect and it is easy to run aground when servicing the nest. Probably the more interesting story that one could tell has to do with Canada geese. One of the NJ State biologists, Ted Nichols, placed a goose enclosure not far from this platform in order to see the effects of herbivory of the wild rice by the geese. For a number of years, the grazing geese decimated this keystone species. Canadas generally snap off grass shoots but because the substrate of our meadows is so soft the entire plant is uprooted, leaving the marshes somewhat of a wasteland and lacking a critical link in the food web. Inside the enclosures, rice was hearty and outside of the fenced areas, the marsh was a mudpie, void of green. But there were a few other exceptions to the eat-out. Along the tree-lined marsh edge, the geese feel threatened by possible predators and they stay about 20 feet from shore. And at the base of most osprey nests, nary a goose will roam. The Bauer bird's circle of influence was a tad more spectacular than other birds' nests; clearly it was more intolerant of the geese. These patches have acted as seed set to populate the marsh surface in years when the geese have been kept at bay.

One day I witnessed a fantastic display of intolerance for geese by the osprey that nests closest to my home. The male osprey repeatedly dive-bombed a line of marching geese. And the reaction by the geese was to hit the deck in anticipation of the attack. In short course, the geese dispersed.



**FIGURE 36: CREW PUTS UP BAUER NEST.**

Closest River Reach: Ferguson, Strabmuller Farm

<http://www.cumauriceriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=13>

## ***WILLOW GROVE***

This platform was put up in 1997 and was not used until nine years later, in 2006. To some degree, I think we left this nest in place because of the enthusiasm of the folks that encouraged us to put it there in the first place. The female in this nest is especially aggressive. In fact, she is the most aggressive bird that I have ever run across in 24 years. Most birds that want to scare you off repeatedly dive-bomb you from above. This bird actually flies toward you at about the level of your knees, and by the time she begins her ascent she is only six feet away from your face. Very impressive. One story is particularly ironic. In 2008, we discovered a nest at Dorchester Shipyard on top of an oyster or clam dredge, on the stern of a ship. The shipwrights warned us that this bird was especially aggressive and that they had avoided the decks of this vessel throughout the breeding season. We embarked to band the chicks. Having been impressed by the worker's stories I donned a hard hat, something I had never bothered to do before. The workers had a lift alongside the boat to ascend the heights. When we had reached a level with the nest the mother showed up for what I assumed was a match of nerves. But she never once came any closer than 30' from me. I tried not to diminish the workers' experience and was grateful for their prowess with the lift. It was a great deal of fun to share the banding experience with others up there. Normally the bander is solo on a ladder, so maybe it was the number of intruders that gave the mother pause... or maybe she just did not seem as aggressive to a person who has dealt with numerous osprey.

We left the Dorchester Shipyard site and headed to Willow Grove Lake. We took a nice lazy paddle in a canoe to the nesting site, totally secure in what we were about, only to find that I had worn the hard hat for the wrong osprey. But isn't that often the way life seems to unfold? We know about being prepared - we simply are a little off base on various occasions.



**FIGURE 37: OSPREY AT WILLOW GROVE**



**FIGURE 38: BIRD BUILDS ON CLAM DREDGE AT DORCHESTER SHIPYARD**

## ***MILLVILLE INDUSTRIAL PARK***

Two osprey have been especially persistent about nesting on a telephone pole in the Millville Industrial Park near the Menantico Creek. Fortunately, the pole is at the end of a line and the electric company has disabled the electric to the pole. Unfortunately, the chicks continue to imprint to the structure so that as adults they may be more likely to be attracted to a similar setup. With a six-foot wingspan, it is possible for an osprey to span two hot wires, act as a conduit for current, and thus be electrocuted. In fact, many osprey die this way each year.

The nest has given me a chance to work with the lineman from the local electric company when it is time for banding. It is nice to see the interest that the workers have for being part of the process.

## ***WOODSTOCK***

This nest is named after the adjacent property owner, but I cannot help but think of the Charlie Shultz character from the comics. The gentleman that owns the upland from this nest was given the name Woodstock because he looks like a Woodstock Festival attendee. I don't know the gentleman myself, but a good bit of lore surrounds his image. The one most often repeated is that he is a weekend hermit on the property and is stuck in the 60's. When we conceived of placing the nest there, I was instructed to allow one particular member to inquire about the possibility. The inference was that it wouldn't be safe to approach him if you hadn't been properly introduced. I did meet him at an event many years ago and he had a foreboding appearance. Likely, he is a big pussycat of a guy. And I have no idea about the legitimacy of these stories; as far as I know he could be a Wall St. stockbroker. But it is fun to think that a ferociously independent thinker watches over the nest like a troll watches over a bridge. And frankly, for now, I have chosen to leave it at that, because it is simply more fun that way.



**FIGURE 39: A SINGING TRIO AT WOODSTOCK**

Closest River Reach: Bailey's and Boiler Reach

<http://www.cumauriceriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=24>

## ***SPRENGLE***

This nest was erected in 1999 not far from the Fralinger nest, the river's original structure. The meadow in which it is located is historically known as the Boudelier farm. This was one of the largest diked meadows on the river and now, like most, is once again flowed by the tide. Rumor has it that bootleg whiskey was made at the Boudelier Farm during prohibition. The Sprengle name comes from the property owner nearest the nesting site at the entrance to Manumuskin Creek.



**FIGURE 40: HEALTHY OSPREY CHICK**

Closest River Reach: Port Creek

<http://www.cumauriceriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=28>

Check out reaches #25-28

## ***OWL COVE***

This nest was built in 2001 and taken up in that same year. An osprey was making its nest on a muskrat house on the marsh plain, which meant a blow-in or storm tide would destroy it. It did not take this osprey any time at all to recognize improved housing.



**FIGURE 41: BOY SCOUTS MAKE NESTING PLATFORMS**



**FIGURE 42: BIRD'S EYE VIEW FROM OWL COVE NEST**

Closest River Reach: Owl's Cove

<http://www.cumauricriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=12>

## ***BAUER II SOUTH***

This nest rests close to the scene of one of our river's tragedies. Railbirding is a traditional activity on our river. Fall is the earliest hunting season. Railbirding was traditionally a sport of the “fancy gents” who would hire a guide or “pusher” to pole a skiff across the high waters of the marsh in search of sora rails. In general, a small flotilla of crafts would traverse the waters in unison in hopes of flushing a rail for a clear shot. It takes a fit and skillful fellow to propel the craft, and it takes a good deal of balance. On one occasion, a reputable leader had put together a team of pushers. Unfortunately, one young man had a grand mal seizure, fell from the craft, and his body was not recovered for many days. The family stood vigil for almost a week at my home in hopes of a speedy recovery of the body and some closure. It was simply tragic. After he was found and laid to rest the family returned months later to erect a cross in the meadow where he perished. It wasn't far from the Bauer II nest and the male bird loved the new perch. He simply looked so regal, that to my eyes, he was standing a respectful watch, much like a soldier at the tomb of an unknown comrade. About two years after this man's passing, I bumped into one of the family members and relayed the story of the osprey's use of the cross. Their eyes misted and a smile came across their face; in a gentle voice they said, “He would really have liked that. He loved wildlife.”



**FIGURE 43: CREW PREPARES TO PUT GUARD ON BAUER II NEST**

Closest River Reach: Ferguson, Strabmuller Farm

<http://www.cumauricriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=13>

## ***CIANCARELLI***

This nest was put up to discourage a pair of nesting ospreys from using a duck blind. The duck blind was very susceptible to predation and likely, the duck hunters didn't enjoy the mess each fall. It was erected in 2001 and used that same year. We have found that nests have been extremely successful when we use the bird's own attempts as clues to where they want nests.



**FIGURE 44: DINNER**

Closest Reaches- Spring Garden Ferry

<http://www.cumauricriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=23>

Bailey's and Boiler Reach

<http://www.cumauricriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=24>

## ***PORT ELIZABETH***

This nest was along Route 47 in a Port Elizabeth church parking lot. The electric company put up the pole in an effort to lure the bird away from the existing electric pole that they fancied. The only problem was that it was too close and too similar to the electric poles. Most years, the birds were electrocuted on the nearby electric wires. The electric company was finally successful in discouraging the birds from using this pole. Initially, the church patrons were upset by our efforts to encourage the birds to abandon the site, until they learned of the electrocutions and our efforts to have the birds imprint to the safety of trees and our platforms. The church's preacher was instrumental in developing an understanding among the congregation.



**FIGURE 45: THIS OSPREY DETERRENT IS USED SUCCESSFULLY IN BRITISH COLUMBIA**

## ZIRBSER

This platform was erected in 2002. To get this nest in place we bribed my nephew and his friends with a free waterskiing lesson in trade for some muscle.

I recall that when we first put up this nest a male bird took to it immediately. Most nesting platforms had already begun the process of raising young. This lonely male made quite a spectacle of himself for about three days. Each time another osprey passed over, it lowered its head, raised its hackles, and put out its wings in a menacing fashion to announce that he was claiming this nest. The comedy was that the other pairs had no interest, having already established their territory. The following season a mate gave this bird something to squawk about.

The nest does not bring to mind any truly unusual stories but it recalls some rather usual stories. We have been erecting osprey nests since 1985 and we have put up about 80 platforms and made a couple of dozen for other organizations to erect. It is very difficult not to have a few items end up in the drink. Apparently, I am the queen of the butterfingers. At this nest, I lost a garden claw used for cleaning off the nest for the coming season. The water was waist high. Months later, we returned at a lower tide and naturally, I found the tool by stepping on it. Somewhere out there is a catfish with a closet filled with wrenches, sunglasses, prescription glasses, a cordless drill, a camera and it's even making calls on my cell phone. Hey, look, who was I to deny that poor whiskered beast?



FIGURE 46: AUTHOR SHOWS OSPREY EGG; THIS EGG WAS UNSUCCESSFUL.

Closest River Reach: Mud Haul

<http://www.cumauriceriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=15>

## ***FISHER/BARBOSE***

This nest was sited in 2002. It is named for the closest residence and property owner and their neighbor, who diligently make observations of the osprey. Having stewards of the nests has saved young and protected birds on a number of occasions. Sometimes the reports and observations of our nest stewards have enabled us to rescue birds wrapped in fishing line and avert other types of disasters.



**FIGURE 47: CREW JUST FINISHED INSTALLING FISHER / BARBOSE PLATFORM**

Closest River Reaches- Old Ferry Compton

<http://www.cumauriceriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=30>

Bricksboro

<http://www.cumauriceriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=31>

## ***OLD SHACK***

The impetus for putting up this platform was that newly returning birds had started to build on a very low and abandoned dock. The first extreme tide events would surely wipe out the nest. It is placed next to a shack on the river that many folks ask about the origins of, you can read more about the construction of the shack in Citizens United's river recollections project; "Once Upon a River Island" (<http://www.cumauriceriver.org/reaches/pg/recollections.cfm?sku=15>)

We had a small crew in March of 2003. It was a miserable cold day and the day's events are a clear testament to the dedication of our volunteers. Normally a strong crewmember will do what we call "foot the nest." After washing in a hole, one person keeps the end of it from slipping past the entrance of the hole when the platform is hoisted up. This task was left to me and is not easily forgotten. The water was about knee deep which meant my shoulders were in the water and my face was getting plenty wet. When I lifted my arms out of the water, the sheen of water on my water jacket turned to ice and when I bent my arms, the ice cracked and fell like a thin sheet of glass. Everyone including myself found this humorous. But I will tell you that when we finally returned to the warmth of the house it was a welcomed treat.



**FIGURE 48: LOOKING UP ACORN DITCH TO THE OLD SHACK NEST**

Closest River Reach: Acorn Gut- Sweet Meadows

<http://www.cumauriceriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=21>

## **ANDRUS**

This nest is placed in such a phragmites-infested area that it has a very poor viewscape. A pair of birds persists there nevertheless, but that is unusual. Poor viewsapes normally mean no takers. Thus far, the birds have shown immaturity in that they raise their brood late like first-year breeders. By the second year of nesting, pairs normally catch up to the schedule of the neighboring birds. Dr. Alan Poole, one of the world's leading authorities on osprey, believes that most late broods don't survive migration. We had one other nest that took about four seasons to catch on and now they are one of the earlier nesters. So time will tell what schedule these birds ultimately adopt.



**FIGURE 49: CREW WATCHES AS HOLE IS PUMPED FOR THE POLE FOR ANDRUS NEST**

Closest River Reach: Upper Mauricetown

<http://www.cumauricriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=32>



FIGURE 50: VOLUNTEER HANGS FROM NEST TO FURTHER SINK POLE

### **TNC STRAUBMULLER**

This nest is on The Nature Conservancy's Bluffs Preserve and appropriately named for the family that gave the land to the organization- the Straubmullers. One of the birds using this nest was born about three reaches south. Unfortunately, we know this because it perished in fishing line on a stump next to the nest. It did give us insight into a number of things: The bird lived six years. A mate will find a new partner in time, and often misses a breeding season. Birds are returning to natal areas. Other details of this story can be found under the [Buckshutem nest](#).



**FIGURE 51: NEWLY FLEDGED OSPREY**

Closest River Reach: Ferguson, Strabmuller Farm

<http://www.cumauriceriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=13>

## ***SILVER***

This nest is named for the family who lives closest to the platform. We have been trying to lure a pair of birds that just does not seem able to get it right. Unfortunately, thanks to phragmites, I don't think we got it right either. This particular pair has not been successful on any number of structures that they have tried in about a 300' radius of the platform provided. We are hoping to get some kind of synergy that works for the birds, as they are continually ill fated in their nesting attempts. We'll see.



**FIGURE 52: NOTICE YELLOW EYE ON MATURE OSPREY; HEAVY FLECKS ON CHEST WOULD INDICATE A FEMALE.**

## ***DOC NEMORE***

Erected in 2006 in the memory of a dear member of Citizens United to Protect the Maurice River and Its Tributaries, Inc., Dr. Edward Nemore. Ed was a beloved doctor to all his patients. He came to our area with his wife, Dr. Jill Mortensen. He loved the river and all its creatures. His practice was established to help the underprivileged but grew to be diverse. The nest is located in view of his home where his wife of many years can appreciate the unfolding of each new nesting season.



**FIGURE 53: DR. JILL MORTENSEN INSPECTS CHICK AFTER BANDING ON A RAINY DAY AT DOC NEMORE'S NEST.**

Closest River Reach: Legion's Reach

<http://www.cumauriceriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=20>

## ***TRAILER PARK DIKE***

The platform was positioned in 2002. It got its name from the closest upland activity – a trailer park. These birds continually were building along a dike remnant left in the aftermath of farmed marshland in the early half of the 1900s. One snag after another just did not seem productive, and year after year, the nest collapsed or failed. Some of the nests were especially low to the marsh plain and likely made a great lunchbox for raccoons and opossums. The new structure has been very successful. But that remnant must simply be irresistible to osprey, because pairs have persisted a few hundred feet away from the Trailer Park nest. In fact, for the past few years, a bird has been a successful neighbor. Inevitably, it has collapsed under its own weight. The birds know what they like and quite possibly, they are giving the Trailer Park's density a run for its money. State biologist Kathy Clark offers an enthusiastic, often-repeated remark, “Yeah, you gotta love a bird that makes a natural nest!” Who could argue with that? This would be an appropriate time to offer that Kathy is a pioneer in the recovery of osprey in NJ- so when you see an osprey fly overhead be sure to tip your hat to her.

This particular stretch of river is frequented by eagles and aerial fights are a common occurrence; so much so, that a group of birders saw an argument that occurred when the osprey was put in its place and bore the cuts from the ensuing battle. Osprey/eagle arguments are extremely interesting. Osprey use their smaller, more agile wings, with their greater maneuverability, to their advantage, while the eagle uses strategy and bulk. The match of wills makes for a very action-packed test. The eagle seeks to gain higher elevations to provide the speed it can gain in a stoop, or swift downward descent.



**FIGURE 54: THE NATURAL NEST FELL IN THE 2008-09 WINTER; SOME BIRDS JUST OVERBUILD.**



**FIGURE 55: THIS NEST, BUILT ON THE SAME DIKE, WAS SO CLOSE TO THE GROUND THAT PREDATORS HAD EASY PICKINGS.**



**FIGURE 56: MOST NESTS BUILT ALONG THIS DIKE HAVE COLLAPSED.**



FIGURE 57: TAMPING IN MUD AT BASE OF NEST AFTER HOISTING, NOTICE NATURAL NEST IN BACKGROUND.

## **CHAOS NEST**

The name of this nest comes from the chaos an osprey caused before we accommodated him with a brand new home. This is one of those nests that the birds told us they needed, by persistently trying to place sticks on top of a bank of purple martin gourds. In fact, we would remove the sticks and he would be right back at it the next day. The crosspieces atop the martin gourds really did not support the sticks, and the martins did not think much of the building process either. The entire area was truly in chaos. We normally travel the river looking for opportunities like this to know where to place the next platform. *Build it and they will come* is sometimes effective, but *build it where they are* – REALLY works best! In this case, the birds came to us, for the martin house is on the end our dock. So we decided to place a platform directly across the river. We took bets on how many minutes it would take after we left the construction site for the birds to begin using the nest. And those who guessed less than 10 were the winners. Yes, *build it where they ARE* or want to be. The only thing these birds did not do was knock on the front door with floor plans.



**FIGURE 58: CREW PUTS PREDATOR GUARD ON CHAOS; NOTE PURPLE MARTIN HOUSES ON OPPOSITE SIDE OF RIVER.**



**FIGURE 59: BEFORE PROVIDING OSPREY PLATFORM, BIRD CONTINUES TO TRY TO GET STICKS TO STAY ON TOP OF PURPLE MARTIN GOURDS.**



**FIGURE 60: STICKS LACE PURPLE MARTIN GOURDS.**

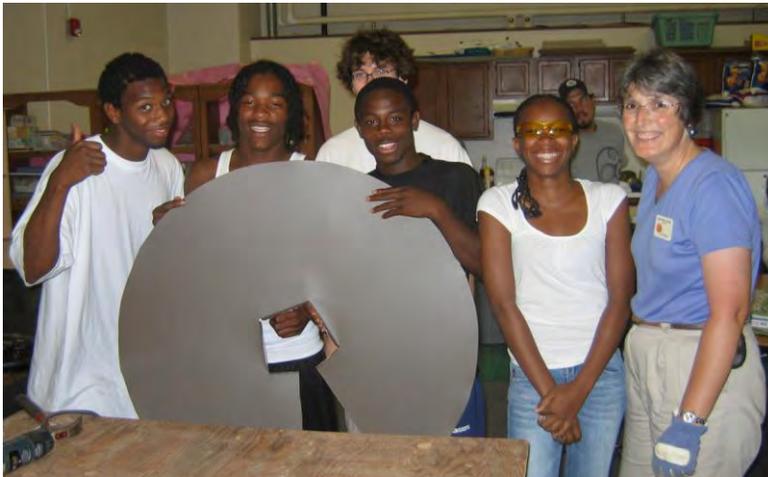
Closest River Reach - Haley's Gravel

<http://www.cumauriceriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=14>

## ***FRANKIE'S NEST***

The nest is named for Frankie Marchansini who lived on this stretch of the river for many years. Frank loved the river and fished it most every day until his 80s when he finally moved to his sister's home in Levittown, PA so they could pool their energies together. In your 80's, four hands are better than two are.

This nest was hoisted in 2006 at which point in time I was 51 years old. I bring this up because it is a great display of someone not being in touch with his or her age or not having acquired the wisdom of age (still working on that). Anyway, we ferried one portion of the crew out to the site ahead of the full complement. I was in this first group. It was lousy cold out and the crew was getting bored waiting for the nest. In such times, I do my best to keep folks focused on fun. For some unexplainable and foolish reason I decided it would be a neat idea to try wrestling a teenage boy to the mud. Well, what ensued was clearly ridiculous and seemed to humor the troops. But it was a reminder that I wasn't completely up to the task, especially with a young fellow who wasn't going to have his pride bruised by some old lady. Lots of mud later and one destroyed cell phone, I believe we tied- or at least that is how I prefer to remember it. I will say I think the shovel-throwing contest of 2005 was a better idea. By the way, a construction worker won that contest and I think there is a lesson in that.



**FIGURE 61: AUTHOR AND STUDENT INTERN RYAN DAILY TEACH SUMMER PROGRAM STUDENTS HOW TO MAKE A PREDATOR GUARD.**

Closest River Reach: Little Haul

<http://www.cumauriceriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=16>

## ***CHUTE NEST***

We put this nest up after some eagles had vacated their river residence. We thought visitors to local preserves would enjoy observing osprey. Well, evidently, the eagles didn't like their new territory and the following year they reclaimed a nearby residence. The osprey set up shop later than the eagles and were likely somewhat surprised to find large and aggressive new neighbors. Over the years, we have found that each spring they settle their pecking order issues and raise successful families.

The name Chute is the name of the closest reach. The Keys Sand Plant existed on this stretch of the river in the late 1880s and we suspect the "chute" refers to the mechanism that loaded material onto vessels at this site.



**FIGURE 62: CREW AT BASE OF CHUTE NEST JUST AFTER CONSTRUCTION.**



FIGURE 63: CHICK SURPRISED TO SEE BANDER AT CHUTE

Closest River Reach: Keys or the Chute

<http://www.cumauriceriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=11>

## ***BOATWORLD NEST***

The nest is placed across from Boatworld Marina and so it bears its name. It was placed to lure one of two pair using this reach of the river. It was hoped that the Whibco Dolphin birds might select a more accessible site, thus making the nest easier to service, or that a pair using a nearby dike remnant would begin to use this pole. Our ideas aren't always the same as the birds. The Dolphin settlers stayed put and the dike remnant pair nested atop an oyster dredge on the back of a ship at Dorchester Shipyard. Go figure.

The day we put up this structure was an introduction for our Associate Director to the placing of platforms. For some reason the mud seems to beckon to a handful of our volunteers in a way that has caused great levity over the years. On this particular day, Renée Brecht decided a mud facial was in order. We had time-out for a photo op.

I'm not sure why but it seems as though the women take the mud much less seriously than the men and find it especially hilarious to be stuck in it. And we do appear to feel an obligation to help those in need, sort of Florence Nightingales of the muck. One day in particular I think about three of the more curvaceous among us were stuck together and were of no assistance except to provide the levity for those who actually hoisted the nest. I'm not sure how we finally escaped the knee-high "blue mud" predicament, but I clearly remember us laughing so hard that our sides hurt.



**FIGURE 64: CITIZENS UNITED ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR HAS A LITTLE FUN WITH A MUD FACIAL**



**FIGURE 65: WOMEN VOLUNTEERS ENJOY CAMARADERIE**

## ***WHIBCO DOLPHIN***

This nest was built by a pair of ospreys on top of a dolphin (a cluster of pilings strapped together) in front of what was once the Whibco shipyard. In order to band in this nest we do a somewhat harrowing ascent. We strap the stern of the boat to the pilings and climb a ladder. When we arrive at the foot of the nest, I envision that we should draw straws to see who will make the steep climb.



**FIGURE 66: NOTE SECOND EYE LID, WHICH IS TRANSPARENT AND PROTECTS EYE (NICATATING MEMBRANE)**

Closest River Reaches:

Leesburg

<http://www.cumauriceriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=39>

Lower Leesburg

<http://www.cumauriceriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=40>

## ***THOMPSON'S BEACH***

In 2007, we received a call from Maurice River Township officials that a snag with an osprey nest had fallen, along the road to Thompson's Beach. Did we have a platform to replace the structure, they wondered. We were touched that the Township and the road crew wanted to spring into action to accommodate the birds. We provided them with a pole and they put it right along the road just as the natural nest had been. We would have placed the platform deeper in the marsh as a courtesy to the birds. But these hearty individuals were "roadworkers" so I guess the birds are too. If it hadn't been for the birds selecting the roadside (numerous other dead snags were in close proximity) we would still move it. Maybe the birds and their rescuers have an unexplained synergy?



## ***NO MANS FRIEND***

Put up the fall of '08, and was used the spring of 2009, its first season it was available for nesting. Let's hope its name offers no foreshadowing of events.

Closest River Reach: No Man's Friend

<http://www.cumauriceriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=21>

## ***DORCHESTER SHIP YARD***

Put up the fall of '08. See [Willow Grove Lake story](#). This nest was used in the Spring of 2009, its first season available for nesting.



**FIGURE 67: 6'4" ROB DAILEY CLOWNING AROUND SHOWING PROPER PLACEMENT OF NEST**



FIGURE 68: TIM RUSSELL FINISHES PREDATOR GUARD



FIGURE 69: LARRY YOUNG AND TIM HAPPY WITH NEST PLACEMENT AT DORCHESTER

Closest River Reach: Dorchester

<http://www.cumauriceriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=35>

## ***TAT STAR FARM NLT GLADES***

Put up the fall of '08, nothing to report yet.



**FIGURE 70: CREW SHOWS PROPER WAY TO LIFT NEST INTO PLACE- TALLEST PERSON ON FAR END**

## ***UPLAND VANAMANS***

This nest was on the upland of the Vanaman Farm for likely over 20 years without a single taker, until 2008. This is most likely because of the success of the surrounding colony. We avoid upland locations for numerous reasons, the top rationale being it is more accessible to two and four legged ne'er-do-wells. This nest was available for many years before we placed a nest in the meadow in 1993. The meadow nest was used one year after putting it up.

Closest River Reach: Old Ferry Compton

<http://www.cumauriceriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=30>

Ferry Crossing Clue to Reach Names III

<http://www.cumauriceriver.org/reaches/narratives/ferry3.cfm>

## ***DIPALMA***

Named both for its placement and in honor of longtime osprey crew co-leader Eddie DiPalma. On April 1<sup>st</sup> of 2009, a pair of birds was trying to build on a duck blind just out back of Eddie's home. On April 4 within 20 minutes of placing this platform, the pair of birds switched housing sites and claimed the platform as theirs. Those birds were no April Fools! Strategically building within a clear view of one of our main builder's homes landed them new digs.

Closest River Reach: Ferguson, Strabmuller Farm

<http://www.cumauriceriver.org/reaches/pg/narratives.cfm?sku=13>