

GEHR Watershed Minute #13

Osprey: (199 words)

The Great Egg Harbor Watershed is home to many breeding birds, including the Osprey. The Osprey is a large raptor with a wingspan from 4 ½ to 5 feet and is strictly associated with bodies of water that support adequate fish populations.

Since Ospreys are dependent on fish, they inhabit coastal rivers, marshes, bays, and inlets as well as inland rivers, lakes, and reservoirs. Ospreys nest on live or dead trees, man-made nesting platforms, light poles, channel markers, or other artificial structures that are in close proximity to fishing areas and offer an unobstructed view of the surrounding landscape.

Prior to the 1950's, the Osprey population in New Jersey was estimated at 500 pairs. But due to biologically harmful pesticide pollution and habitat loss, the breeding Osprey population dropped to 68 pairs statewide by 1975. So in 1979, state biologists and volunteers began erecting nesting platforms and transplanting eggs from healthy nests in the Chesapeake Bay to unsuccessful New Jersey nests.

As a result of these efforts, the breeding Osprey population in New Jersey has grown to just over 400 nesting pairs in 2007. Many people are continuing to help the Osprey reach the next milestone of 500 nests.