



Wildlife Window: The Osprey

Beautiful Birds of Prey. Great Anglers. Plus, Our Hometown's Namesake.

By the Rivendell Ponds & Preserves Committee

[Woodlands Word – November 2021]

9.26.21

The Osprey, (*Pandion haliaetus*) is a bird of prey or raptor, commonly seen along coastal habitats in Florida, and often in Rivendell. Ospreys are found on every continent except Antarctica. In North America, they nest along the coasts and large inland lakes. You have probably heard their call – their high-pitched whistling cry can carry easily over half a mile. Let's learn more about these beautiful raptors, and the namesake of our hometown.

Appearance: Ospreys are a species of raptor sometimes mistaken for the bald eagle. They are large, with a height of 23" tall and wingspan of 72". White undersides and a crook in its narrow wings identify this bird as it soars above the water.

Adults are dark brown above with brownish-black marks on the wings and brown speckling on its white breast. The head is white with a dark brown crown and brown streak down the cheek. The female is typically larger than the male.

(Bob Frank)



Habitat and Nesting: In Florida, nesting season usually begins in December and lasts until late February. Nests are commonly found atop large trees, channel markers, utility poles and urbanized areas with manmade nesting poles.

Ospreys make their nests out of sticks and reuse them year after year. Osprey return not only to their same breeding area each year, but also to their same wintering grounds.

(Bob Frank)

Feeding: Ospreys, also known as "fish hawks," are expert anglers that like to hover above the water, locate their prey and then swoop down for the capture with their talons extended. Ospreys feed primarily on live fish they catch from the water by using their long, hooked talons. An osprey can plunge so forcefully into the water that it will completely submerge!

Ospreys, like all raptors, are believed to have the keenest eyesight in nature due to its large eyeball size and eye muscles designed for rapid focus. They can see about eight times farther than humans.

(Allie Sandow)



Fun Fact: Ospreys have several amazing adaptations that set them apart from other birds of prey. They possess a reversible outer toe that can move at will to place a fish in a more aerodynamic position. Another adaptation is the short spines located on their feet that help to hold onto their slippery prey tightly as they fly over water.

Protect their Habitats: Overdevelopment, poor water quality, and toxic pesticides continue to threaten precious wildlife habitats. Let's keep our ponds and preserves healthy and attractive for these wonderful Osprey and other wildlife friends. We can enjoy their beauty and enhance our quality of life, plus keep our property values strong.