THE STORY IN PICTURES

Osprey chicks in an Idaho nest

Osprey chicks in Idaho are banded and nests are monitored, allowing the safe removal of a few chicks to help South Dakota restore this species.

Platform telemetry transmitters, called PTTs, allow long-distance tracking of movements with satellites.

Mark Martell (left) of Audubon Minnesota attaches a PTT.

Images provided by Wayne Melquist, Eileen Dowd Stukel, Janie Fink and Deb Palmer.

Avista Utilities crew in St. Maries, Idaho, removes an osprey chick from a nest.

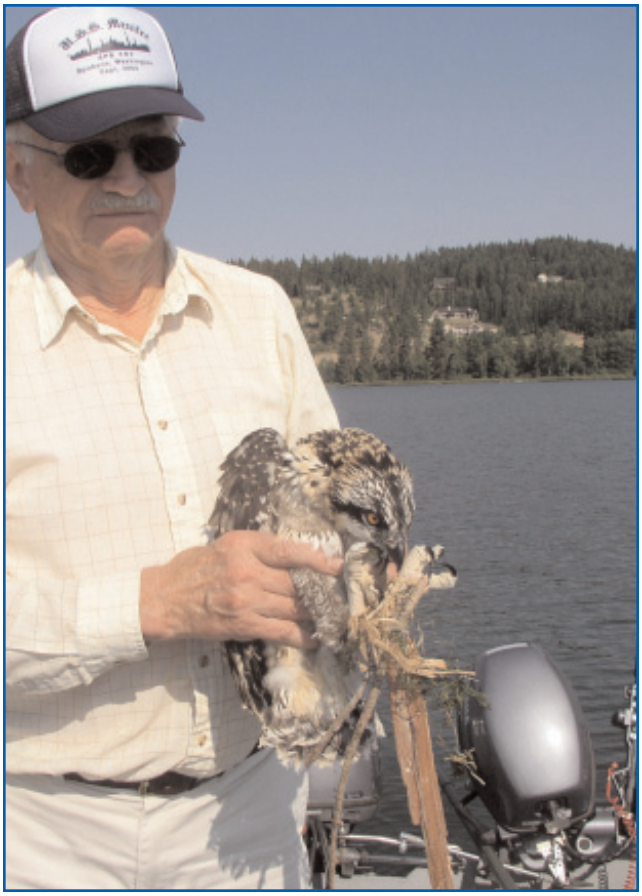
Janie Fink with Avista crew and below. Janie has assisted with osprey chick removal and care in Idaho since the project began. She was the hack site coordinator in South Dakota from 2008 - 2010.

Melissa Horton of Wildlife Experiences loads an osprey for its trip to South Dakota. Melissa was the hack site coordinator in South Dakota from 2002-2006.

Young birds at one of the hack sites in Yankton County.

Jodi and Kyle from Wildlife Experiences at the hack site in Clay County.

Osprey wearing a PTT. This bird was reintroduced in South Dakota in 2004 and sighted later that year near Kansas City, Missouri.



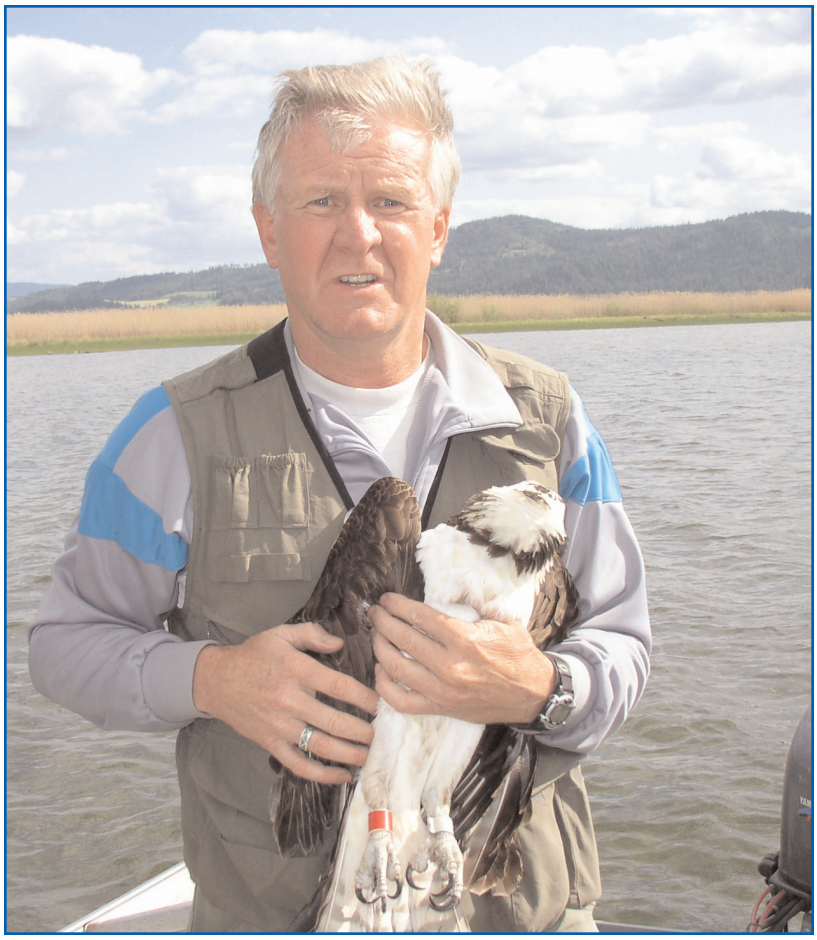
Among hazards to osprey is discarded fishing twine, which is tangled around this chick's legs. Pictured is Don Johnson, who assisted with nest monitoring in Idaho and chick collection for South Dakota.

An osprey chick is weighed while being readied for travel to South Dakota. Health and condition are closely monitored.

Paul Cantwell starts work on a new hacking tower to be situated along Lake Yankton near the Gavins Point Dam.

The finished product (right). The tower's two divided sections minimize disturbance to the birds. The ladder is removed unless birds must be fed or cared for to prevent unauthorized access to the tower. Metal guards help prevent mammals from climbing the posts.

To assure that ospreys from Idaho do not introduce diseases into South Dakota, they must be examined by a veterinarian (center) before leaving Coeur d'Alene. Also pictured are Eileen Dowd Stukel, project coordinator for SD Game, Fish and Parks (left), and Janie Fink (back to the camera).



Wayne Melquist, Idaho raptor and furbearer researcher, has been a tremendous partner in facilitating the collection of osprey chicks in Idaho, in helping to select hack site locations in South Dakota, and in monitoring birds fitted with satellite transmitters.

Don Johnson and Janie Fink prepare to load ospreys onto a plane bound for Yankton, South Dakota. This mode of travel reduced the amount of stress placed on the birds.

Chicks in the tower. Note the green bands on the left legs and silver-colored bands on the right legs. If birds return to nest and bands can't be read, we will at least know that these birds were reintroduced at the Lake Yankton site in 2008.

Janie Fink weighs a chick at the tower. Some birds need special medical care and monitoring at the hack site before they are judged ready to fly.

A view into one of the rooms within the hack tower, showing an assortment of fish. The osprey's diet is composed almost entirely of fish.

Samples of the 3 color bands used on reintroduced birds in South Dakota since 2005. The identification code can often be read with the aid of a spotting scope.

A surveillance camera is mounted to the front of the hack tower. Remote viewing of the birds allows prompt detection of illness or other problems.

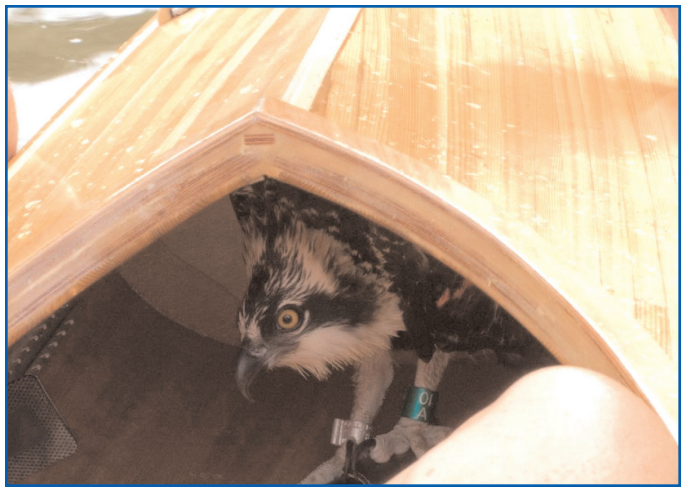
Dedicated volunteers helped with the project in 2008 and in previous years. Their help is especially important while birds are learning to fly and hunt.

The remote camera allows this view of an osprey from inside the observation trailer This system also allows observers to identify specific birds as they return to the hack tower following release.

In addition to leg bands, birds are marked with temporary paint at the hack site to help observers identify release groups. This aids in documenting that birds are flying well and hunting successfully before they migrate from the area in early fall. The paint fades with time. Birds may use the covered perch to exercise wings as they near the time of their first flight attempt.

Raptor biologist Greg Kaltenecker assisted with the 2008 reintroduction project. He is pictured here with a bighead carp, a specimen that is quite a bit larger than an osprey can capture. The project has benefited from donations of fish from anglers and from SD Game, Fish and Parks and U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff.

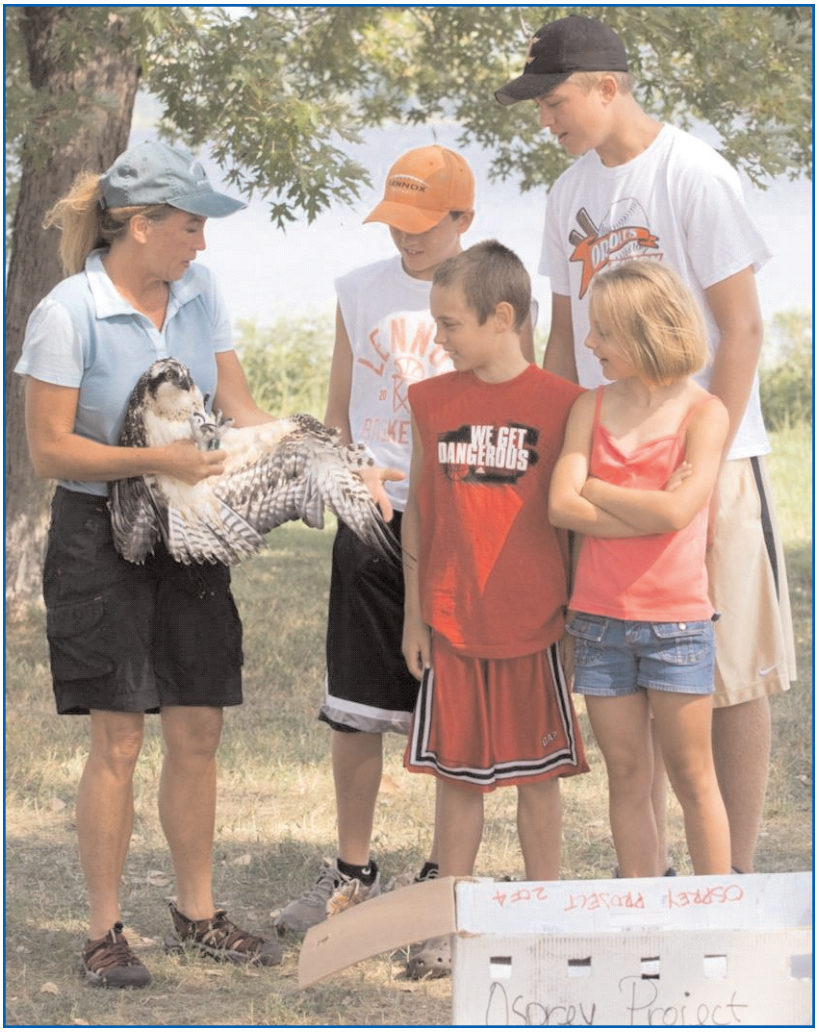
View of the front of the hack tower. Doors on the two middle compartments have been lowered to allow birds to come and go as they learn to fly and fish for themselves.



First flights are not always successful. Some birds needed to be retrieved if they failed to make it across Lake Yankton to a favored island perch. Janie Fink is pictured retrieving and handling a bird that gets another chance to perfect its flying ability.

The temporary paint is visible on the wings.

Young birds have a distinct necklace or bib. Adult females are typically larger than males. Adult females often have a much more distinct bib than males, although this characteristic does not always separate males from females.



The project has generated a tremendous amount of interest among local residents and visitors to the area.

Janie Fink (left) and Silka Kempema. Silka helped coordinate the project for SDGFP.

Volunteers in 2009 included Sondra Kuklish, Deb Palmer and Stephanie Hilding (left to right).
Sadly, Deb passed away in November 2009.

Birds released in 2010 wear orange metal bands on the left leg. This bird's band code is 5H.

Closeup of osprey talons, showing the orange metal band on left leg and "silver" USGS band on right leg. One of the species' adaptations for its fish diet is a reversible outer toe.

Veterinary care with Dr. Cynthia Franklin in Yankton, South Dakota. Hooding calms osprey and other raptors for brief medical procedures.

Stephani Hilding, a staff member from Boise, helped with the project.

Interns from Colorado State Katie Werner (left) and the University of Idaho Blake Linde (right).

Two birds released in 2009 that are fitted with PTTs. The temporary green paint is visible.

The hack tower at Lake Yankton was dismantled in the fall of 2010, once all birds left the area for their southward migration. In the photo on the right, a nesting platform is placed in the area to encourage future osprey nesting.

A bird released in 2010 with color band 5E was photographed at the Lake Yankton release site (left) and later (below) at the Celestum Biosphere Reserve in the Yucatan peninsula (above) by Alexander Dzib in October and December 2010.