



Friends of the Osprey's Telemetry Day with Bird Studies Canada

Tuesday, May 25, 2010 – a project comes to fruition. It was a beautiful sunny morning as we headed out to meet with the team from Bird Studies Canada. Our mission this day was to witness BSC capture two Osprey in the Kawartha Lakes Region and outfit them with an identification band and a satellite transmitter. This project has been in the works for 5plus years now... a lot of pavement pounding to secure donations, sell lottery tickets, funding applications, silent auctions and collaboration with Bird Studies Canada.

The purpose of the telemetry devices is to see and learn more about where the Kawartha Lakes Osprey specifically go during the winter months.

"They could go to Cuba, they could go to the Caribbean, it's really anybody's guess," Jody Allaire, a biologist and science educator with Bird Studies Canada said.

Arriving at a nearby lake that was to be our starting point, we met up with Biologists Debbie Badinski and Jody Allaire along with their technician Myles. From our group, Friends of the Osprey was Jim Brown, President; Simon Connell, Secretary; and Directors Phil Puxley (and a co-founder of FOTO); K. Beck; Terry McInnes-Edick; Greg Chapel, and Jim Elliott. We were all excited and apprehensive.... over the next 2 days we'd be catching two Osprey, banding, attaching the satellite transmitter....and capturing all of those elusive photographs. That was a tall order for some senior and not so senior citizens, along with the BSC staff. But we stood the challenge. Within 30 minutes of our launch we were at our first nest, it was a stump nest, which meant that it pretty much sat on the surface of the water. Assessing the situation we realized we needed some more tools along with a few props and headed back to shore to regroup and collect our supplies. The Osprey at this time of year are awaiting the arrival of their chicks and Mom was diligently nesting on her eggs. In this nest we found 3 eggs and like a gift from heaven, one was pipping. Timing is everything! And to hear that little chick chirping from the inside.... Incredible. Nature at her finest! It was quite surprising to see just how colourful the eggs are and they are quite large. Right about now you are probably wondering how in the world does one "catch" an Osprey.... Well, I will tell you (and sorry, it won't be the technical wording expected as this missive is coming from one of those almost senior citizens).

Also, I will tell you that we were in a couple of boats, and the boat that went nearest to the nest was the BSC crew.... those of us from FOTO sat back at a reasonable distance, our binoculars poised and with baited breath. The biologists had brought a cap for the nest, made from a conglomeration of chicken wire and fishing line, and as they coasted up to the nest.... Mom Osprey flew up into the air allowing them to cap the nest.... then they moved off a distance to allow her to return to the nest, which she did in about 5 to 6 short minutes – at which point her talons got caught in the “lid”. Never fear though, the biologists were over to her in less than a minute and as they released her from her entanglement with one hand, they captured her with the other. Outstanding, clean, no muss and no fuss (actually the fuss will have begun when Dad Osprey who was sitting off in the tree watching all of this came home I’m betting he was in big trouble!)

Once she was secure, a thermal blanket was placed over the “lid” to protect the eggs from the heat of the sun (it had to be over 34 C on that windless lake). While the technician is outfitting her with a little hood (so she couldn’t see, and oddly this little mask would calm her), the biologists are checking her over to ensure she is healthy, estimate her age and give her an ID banding bracelet. After what felt like an eternity, ensuring a perfect fit of the transmitter – (which incidentally is fully operational now) , we got the thumbs up from the BSC boat that Mom Osprey was good to go and once they let her go, we had to skedaddle back to that nest and remove the blanket and the “lid” so that Mom could get back to her eggs. All this in approximately 45 minutes.

The time now is about 2:30pm.... “Guess what?” said the Biologists...“we’re going for nest number 2 right now – we are on a roll.” We headed back to shore for a bio-break and some cold drinks and plan our next quest.

The momentum is building as we discuss how we are going to approach a platform nest that rises 6 feet above the water. This time, we’re loaded up with 12 foot ladders on board. Travel time was in excess of 45 minutes, and when I saw where we were working, well, let me just say I have great respect for the drivers of our boats – it could be described as where no boat has gone before! Once again BSC performed their magic.

Very noteworthy, we were able to see that again there were 3 eggs in this nest too. Coupled with our earlier findings and the many nests we saw that day, our Kawartha Lake Osprey are indeed populating well. And, if you have noticed things missing from your yard or a nice red T-shirt.... mystery solved..... they are buried in an Osprey nest.

A short time later we headed back to our home base to share a well deserved dinner and re-live the day’s journey.

Mom Osprey number 2 was a beauty and not much more than a youngster herself, and yes once again, Dad sat off in the trees watching the show.

By Terry McInnes-Edick