

The Osprey is an increasingly common breeder along water bodies in the Hudson River Valley.

Conservation Status

The Osprey is listed as a Species of Special Concern in New York. NY Breeding Bird Atlas data indicate that its breeding distribution has increased across the state and in the Hudson River Valley in the past twenty years.



Osprey sometimes use perches to scan for prey.

Identification

This large raptor has dark brown upperparts, white underparts, and a white head with a prominent dark eye streak. Dark wrist patches on the underside of its long and narrow wings are readily visible in flight. Its call sounds like a series of short, ascending whistles.

Habitat

Ospreys are found near the shorelines of water bodies such as rivers, lakes, larger ponds, and reservoirs. They dive feet first into the water for their prey, accessing only about the top three feet, so they are restricted to surface-schooling fish and to those in shallows. They need an adequate supply of accessible fish within 6-12 miles of the nest as well as open nest sites free from predators.

Food

This species eats almost exclusively live fish caught by a feet-first plunging into shallow water, usually by flight hunting, but sometimes from a perch. It will also occasionally eat rodents, birds, or crustaceans. It forages along rivers, marshes, reservoirs, as well as natural ponds and lakes. Nesting densities indicate a preference for clear, shallow-water environments, since fish can be caught in deep water only when driven near the surface. They avoid water with thick emergent and submerged vegetation. Reservoirs provide ample expanses of shallow, clear water—ideal conditions for hunting.

Nesting

Ospreys typically build large stick nests both on living and dead trees, but also will use numerous human-made structures, including nesting platforms, utility poles, wharf pilings, chimneys, and channel markers. Nesting platforms need a sufficiently wide and stable base to accommodate the large nest. Common characteristics of nest sites are close proximity to water, especially good feeding areas, openness allowing easy access to the nest, and safety from ground predators. It is not uncommon to find nests near human activity, such as highways or houses. Territory size is largely dependent on food availability. If food is plentiful, nests can be in close proximity (approximately 20 meters apart), but if it is scarce, nests will be further apart (up to 75 sq. miles).

Threats

- Decline of feeding opportunities due to disturbance from recreational boating.
- Contamination from organochlorines, which contribute to eggshell thinning and low hatching success.
- Collision with vehicles when nests are near highways.
- Electrocution when adults land or attempt to nest on double-cross arm power poles with transformers.
- Predation by raccoons and owls.

Management Recommendations

- Construct and maintain nesting platforms. Artificial nest sites of many different designs have been accepted by Ospreys; construction manuals are available (See Ontario Extension Notes 1999).



Hudson River Tidal Marsh

Adapted from NatureServe 2008 and Poole et al. 2002.

For additional information, see the following references:

NatureServe. 2008. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.0. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>.

Ontario Extension Notes. 1999. Building Nesting Platforms for Ospreys. http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/mnr/forests/extension_notes/pdf/ospry.pdf.

Poole, A. F., R. O. Bierregaard, and M. S. Martell. 2002. Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), The Birds of North America Online (A. Poole, ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Retrieved from the Birds of North America Online: <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/683>.

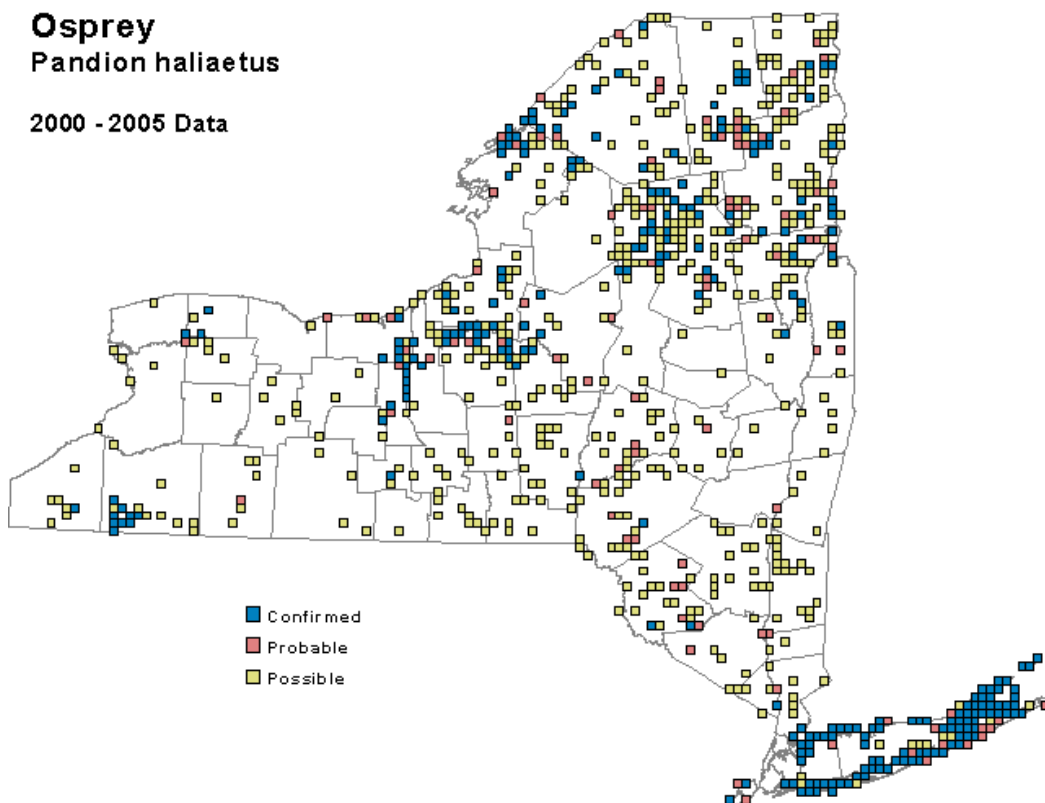
Toschik, P.C., M. C. Christman, Raattner, B.A., Ottinger, M.A. 2006. Evaluation of Osprey habitat suitability and interaction with contaminant exposure. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 70 (4): 977–988.

Vana-Miller, S. L. 1987. Habitat Suitability Index Models: Osprey. Biological Report 82(10.154). U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, DC. <http://www.nwrc.usgs.gov/wdb/pub/hsi/hsi-154.pdf>

NYS BREEDING BIRD ATLAS COMPARATIVE DATA

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

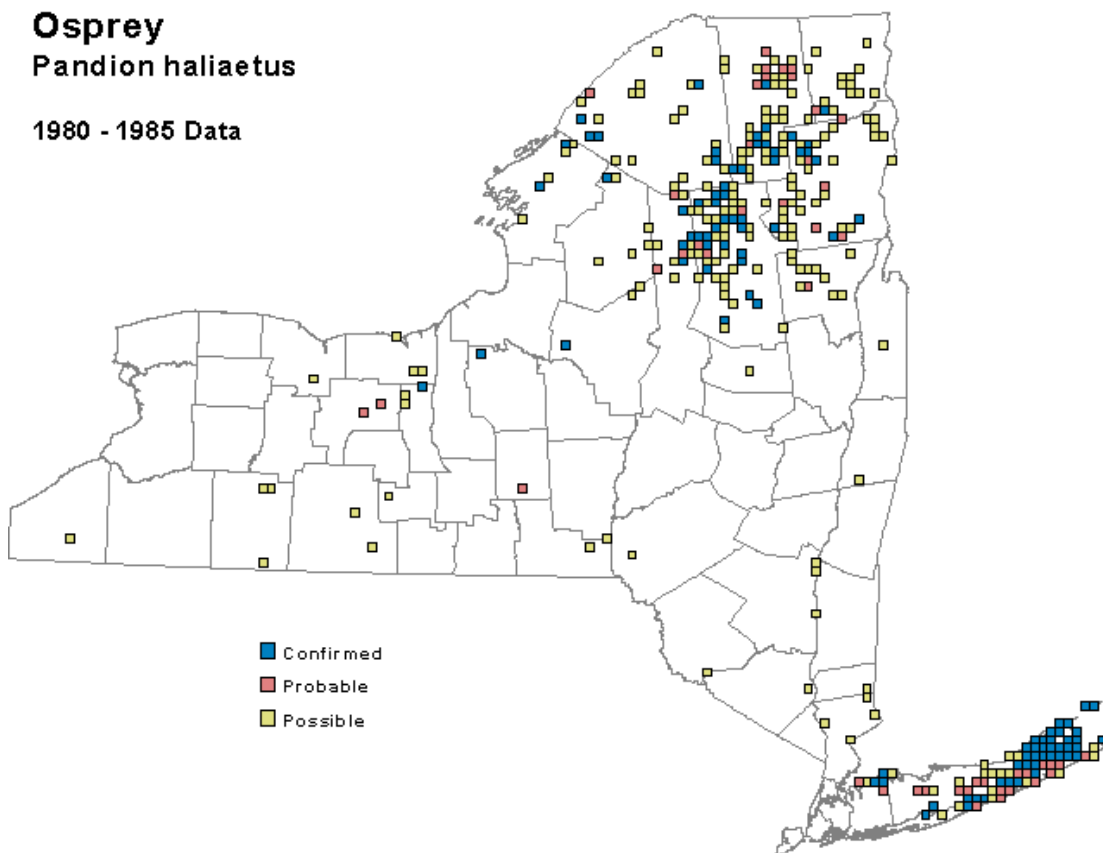
2000 - 2005 Data



- Confirmed
- Probable
- Possible

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

1980 - 1985 Data



- Confirmed
- Probable
- Possible