

Osprey

(*Pandion haliaetus*)



Flora
Fauna



How to Identify:

- Smaller than a Bald Eagle; larger and longer winged than a Red-tailed Hawk
- Bodies are slender, with long, narrow wings and long legs
- An Osprey's head is white with a broad brown stripe through the eye. Bodies are brown above and white below, and overall, they are whiter than most raptors
- From below, the wings are mostly white with a prominent dark patch at the wrists
- Ospreys fly with a marked kink in their wings, like having bent elbows (actually their wrist), making their silhouette an M-shape when seen from below

The largest fish caught by an Osprey weighed about 2.5 pounds!

Explore Idaho
with Scout the Fox!

Scout



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Habitat:

- Look for Ospreys around nearly any body of water: rivers, ponds, lakes, reservoirs
- Ospreys prefer shallow water fishing grounds, frequenting deep water only where fish school near the surface
- Large stick-built nests are usually found on snags, treetops, utility poles, bridges, cliffs, or human-built platforms. Come visit Hells Gate State Park and see one for yourself!
- Most Ospreys that breed in North America migrate to Central and South America for the winter. Ospreys return to Hells Gate State Park on April 1st every year

Fun Facts!

- 99% of what Ospreys eat are live fish, and they dive into the water to catch them
- Ospreys can dive three feet under water
- Ospreys have a reversible outer toe that allows them to grasp with two toes in front and two behind. Barbed pads on the soles of the bird's feet help them grip slippery fish



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Help Protect the Osprey

- Osprey numbers crashed in the early 1950s to 1970s, when pesticides poisoned the birds and thinned their eggshells. Laws banning the use of certain pesticides (DDT) have helped them to rebound
- Construction of artificial nest sites have also helped in their recovery
- A growing cause of death for Ospreys is entanglement at the nest: the adults incorporate baling twine and other discarded man-made lines into their nests; these can end up wrapped around a chick's feet and injure it, or keep it from leaving the nest
- Many parks provide fishing line recycling stations. Instead of leaving old fishing line on the ground or throwing it in the water; find a fishing line recycling station or discard the line in the trash. People living on farms should avoid leaving baling twine from haybales in fields or on the ground, where an Osprey might pick it up and incorporate the twine into their nest

ACTIVITY TIME

1. Find a video on the internet that shows an Osprey diving into the water to catch a fish. Find another video of a Bald Eagle plucking a fish from the surface of the water as it is flying.

Number 2 on the next page!



Portals to Parks



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2. How are their hunting styles different? What is different about how an Osprey holds a fish while they are flying compared to a Bald Eagle?

VOCABULARY

- **DDT (dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane):** A pesticide (poison) developed as the first modern synthetic insecticide in the 1940s. Its use is now banned
- **Habitat:** The natural home or environment of an animal, plant, or other organism
- **Prey:** An animal that is hunted and killed by another for food
- **Pesticide:** A substance used for destroying plants, insects, and other animal life that are considered pests
- **Raptor:** A bird, such as an eagle or a hawk, that kills and eats small birds, animals, and fish
- **Reservoir:** A large natural or artificial lake used as a source of water supply for supplying a community, irrigating land, furnishing power, etc.