

KPUD Helps Osprey Stay Safe

By Lori Froehlich

It is the time of year again when the osprey of the Columbia and Klickitat rivers make their summer homes in our county. This happens from late March through September every year.

Protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, the fish-eating osprey is also known as a seahawk, which is where the inspiration for the Seattle Seahawks mascot comes from.

Osprey pairs mate for life and generally return to the same nest every year to hatch and raise their young before their annual southern migration in the fall.

If there is an abundant supply of fish nearby, they will build their nest on any tall structure appropriate enough. This includes PUD power poles, channel markers or cell towers close to the water.

Often, these large stick nests are built on top of the double cross-armed PUD power poles. This can pose a fire hazard or an outage when the sticks from the nest interfere with the electrical equipment. Rain and snow compound this risk when the nests become wet.

A danger exists for the osprey as well, as their nearly 5-foot wingspan can be a potential for electrocution if it completes either the circuit between closely spaced energized equipment or between one energized wire and one neutral or ground wire.

Through the years, Klickitat PUD has seen an increase in ospreys that build their nests on poles, especially near communities on the water such as Bingen, Dallesport, Lyle and Klickitat.

Occasionally, it becomes necessary for Klickitat PUD crews to remove parts of an osprey's large stick-built nest to restore power and prevent fire. If the birds are in the nest, the crews leave enough for the birds to use for the rest of the nesting season. After the migratory birds migrate for the winter, PUD crews install a nesting platform.



A pair of osprey occupy a nest atop a KPUD pole with a new platform along the Klickitat River.

In areas where nesting platforms have been installed, the displaced ospreys have readily accepted the alternate nesting spots, and each spring all the platforms have been occupied. Keep a close watch for osprey in your travels through the Columbia River Gorge. They can often be seen diving into the Columbia or Klickitat river after fish throughout the spring and summer.

Klickitat PUD works closely with the state Department of Fish and Wildlife to help do our part to protect this migratory bird. This cooperative effort is to provide safe, reliable power, while preventing hazardous bird interactions with power equipment. This helps us maintain a successful coexistence between people and wildlife. ■