



An osprey spreads its wings in an active nest built on a nesting platform.

Photo by Linda Steider

Klickitat PUD's Avian Support

Nesting platforms help keep osprey safe and returning year after year

By Lori Froehlich

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

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 each 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 build their nests on any tall structure they deem appropriate. This includes PUD power poles, channel markers or trees close to the water.

Often, these large stick-nests are built on top of the double cross-armed PUD power poles. That poses a fire hazard

and increases the risk of a power outage when the sticks interfere with electrical equipment. Rain and snow compound this risk when the nests become wet.

A danger exists for the osprey as well. Their nearly 5-foot wingspan can subject them to 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 building nests on poles—especially near communities on the water such as Bingen, Dallesport, Lyle, Wishram and Klickitat.

Occasionally, it is necessary for Klickitat PUD crews to remove parts of an osprey's 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 birds migrate for the winter, PUD crews install a nesting platform.

In areas where nesting platforms have been installed, the displaced ospreys have readily accepted the alternate nesting spots, and each spring the platforms have been occupied.

Keep a close watch for osprey in your travels through the Columbia River Gorge. They often can be seen diving into the Columbia or Klickitat rivers in search of fish throughout spring and summer.

Klickitat PUD works closely with state and federal Departments of Fish and Wildlife to help do our part to protect not only this special migratory bird, but all birds. This cooperative effort provides safe, reliable power, while preventing hazardous bird interactions with power equipment. This helps us maintain a successful coexistence between people and wildlife. ■

To see more photos by Linda, visit <https://steiderstudios.wordpress.com>