

The Satisfaction of Watching Osprey Nests – 15 of Them!

Katherine Blacker first noticed the Ospreys on the Groton Utilities property where she works a few years ago. They were hard to miss: at least seven were visible from the company's buildings, and employees would watch for them, posting the first sightings of the season on a bulletin board.

Blacker's interest was sparked. Being in regular proximity to the birds "definitely increased my awareness and appreciation," she said.

The utility company's land has long been known as prime Osprey grounds. As far back as the 1970s, the company started putting up utility poles with Osprey platforms on its watershed. Connecticut Audubon's Osprey Nation stewards have monitored nests visible from the road since 2014 as part of the 300-strong network of volunteers who collect data on some 600 nests statewide, creating a long-term record of the state's Osprey population.

Connecticut Audubon approached the company about allowing volunteers on land normally closed to the public and the company agreed. Blacker's role was to guide the stewards on the property.

After a while, Blacker became a volunteer herself. Getting started was straightforward: another volunteer provided training

on what to look for, and Melina Giantomidis, the Osprey Nation coordinator, was available for questions. Blacker went out with a clipboard and binoculars to check on 15 nests once or twice a week, then wrote up notes for her weekly report to Melina:

"6/10/19: 2 Adults on nest, vocalization. ... 7/12/19: 2 adults and 2 chicks in nest, early morning."

In her first season as a volunteer, Blacker developed a routine. She found that the best sightings were in the morning, so she visited before work. Often she'd spot Ospreys while walking around during the course of the workday, so she remembered to add a note to her report later.



Kate Blacker began monitoring Osprey nests in Groton this year. Visit ctaudubon.org for more on Osprey Nation.

She's seen some memorable sights, fledglings in the nest and Ospreys fishing among them. "Being around when they were learning to fly was really fascinating," she said.

Developing her newfound interest in birds while knowing that her observations will be put to good use has been a rewarding experience.

"The stewardship is what's satisfying," she said.



Osprey Nation coordinator Melina Giantomidis, on the ladder, recruited her father, Tom, to help remove monofilament fishing line from an Osprey nest in Waterford on a recent Saturday morning. Ospreys often pick up improperly discarded fishing line for their nests, making them vulnerable to entanglement and strangulation. Photo by Nancy James.

Anglers, Take Note!

Dedicated wildlife advocates in Bridgeport and Fairfield built, distributed, and installed 19 monofilament line recycling bins this year. Please use them to dispose of your fishing line.

Visit ctaudubon.org/fishingline for info and a map.