



FACTSHEET

Eastern Osprey



Eastern Osprey



Common Name: Eastern Osprey

Scientific Name: *Pandion cristatus*

Conservation Status: All Rottnest Island's fauna is protected under the *Rottnest Island Authority Act 1987*.

Habitat: Coastal habitats

Body length: 50-65 cm

Weight: 0.9-1.8 kg

Gestation period: 33-38 days

Number of young: 1-3 (2-3 eggs)

Description:

The Osprey is a large eagle shaped bird. It has a white head and neck. A well-defined dark brown stripe runs through each eye and down its neck. The osprey has a white underside and white feathered legs. Its back, wing surfaces and tail are brown. Its feet are off-white, its bill is black and its eyes are yellow. Ospreys have a greenish-yellow cere. The cere is the waxy, fleshy covering at base of upper beak. The female bird is slightly larger than the male.

When preening, the Osprey is able to waterproof its dense plumage by using the large oil-gland that is located at the base of their tale.

Diet:

Fish, molluscs, crustaceans, insects, reptiles, birds, mammals.

In the Wild:

There are between two and six breeding pairs on Rottnest Island and at least six Ospreys all year round. Around springtime, numbers increase to about 20 birds for the breeding season. Osprey nests are made up of lots of sticks and debris which are woven together.

One of the Rottnest nest stacks has been examined. In this nest, blue plastic wrapping tape used on crayfish bait packets and pieces of nylon rope pieces were used along with matted seagrass. Bits of beach-washed wooden planks (one had 'grenades' stencilled on it) were also used. Rottnest has at least 14 nest sites. The Osprey often returns to their same nest and are



added to each year and can become very large. Some are several metres across and measure more than one metre from bottom to lip.

Ospreys search for their prey by soaring or circling above a body of water and watching below for fish. When they spot their prey, they hover above it and then dive down feet first. They snatch their food from near the surface or just under the water with their taloned (claw-like) feet. They can submerge themselves if necessary up to 1m under water. Ospreys have also occasionally taken flying birds and they can eat fish that weigh up to 2kg!

Threats:

- Habitat loss, degradation, change due to human activity mostly development
- Collisions with powerlines
- Pollution – entanglement with nets or line
- Poisoning through eating prey containing pesticides

DID YOU KNOW?

The scientific name of the Osprey (*Pandion cristatus*) comes from Greek mythology. Pandion was a mythical king of Athens. The Osprey may also be known as a Fish Hawk or White-headed Osprey.