



Ospreys successfully nest at Carlyle Lake

by Travis A. Mahan

Throughout the summer of 2003, Dan Kassebaum noted a banded pair of Ospreys engaging in courtship behavior at the James Hawn Access at Carlyle Lake, Clinton County. The pair was also found to be interested in constructing a nest as they were observed carrying large sticks to a dead tree that stood in the middle of a sheltered cove. Dan approached Dick Connor of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to advise the construction of nesting platforms away from the main cove given the proximity of

the Ospreys' activity to an area of frequent boat traffic. Within a short amount of time, Dan and Keith McMullen were invited to participate in the construction of three nesting platforms, two of which were placed at Whitetail Access and one at James Hawn Access.

The pair of Ospreys returned to the James Hawn Access the next spring and were first noted on 3 April 2004. By 17 April, the pair had completed construction of a nest atop the platform placed in 2003. The female was observed to be incubating by 17 April. No young were noted until 25 June when two downy chicks were visible. The prolonged incubation period from 17 April to 25 June suggests that complications were encountered. Only a single downy chick was observed at the nest on 10 July. It is assumed that the other

chick perished. The remaining chick survived to fledge as it was observed in flight on 21 August 2004.

In addition, a pair of Ospreys fledged one young 15 August 2004 at Lake Calumet's Powderhorn Marsh, Cook County, (pers. comm. W. Marcisz). A nest at Mermet Lake, Massac County, in May and June failed after a storm (pers. comm. K. McMullen).

These confirmed, successful nestings at Carlyle Lake and Powderhorn Marsh represent the second and third successful breeding of Osprey in Illinois in the 20th and 21st centuries. The Mermet breeding attempt marks the fifth nesting location since 1952, although nesting may have occurred there between 1978-1982 (Robinson 1996). The first 20th century breeding attempt was at Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge in 1952 and the second would not be until 1996 at Bergman Slough, Cook County. The birds did not fledge young that year, nor did they fledge young in 1997

when they attempted again at the same spot. However, a pair of Osprey finally fledged young at Bergman Slough in 1998. (Thayer 1999)

Literature Cited

Robinson, W. D. 1996. Southern Illinois Birds. Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale. 432 pp.

Thayer, C. 1999. Illinois' second confirmed breeding Osprey. Meadowlark 8:6-7

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Top: Osprey adult with two chicks in nest platform at Carlyle Lake, Clinton County. Photo taken 26 June 2004 by Travis A. Mahan.

Osprey in flight at Lake Mermet, Massac County. A pair there did not successfully fledge young. Photo taken 4 July 2004 by Eric Walters.

Left: Osprey at nest in Mermet Lake. Photo by Eric Walters.