



## **Natural Resource Protection News** *From the Town of Canandaigua Environmental Conservation Board*

### **Eagles among us**

**by: Patricia Venezia, ECB Member**

Here in Canandaigua, Eagles are among us, as are hawks, osprey, falcons and turkey vultures. These amazing birds are all categorized as birds of prey and/or raptors. The word "raptor" is a Latin word which means "to grasp or seize." Raptors use their powerful, sharp talons to defend themselves and to capture their prey. Owls are considered nocturnal raptors who can fly almost silently due to their special feather structure. In this article I would like to concentrate on bald eagles and osprey.

There are several areas around our beautiful lake where bald eagles have been observed. However, only about 50 years ago this was a very rare occurrence. When the bald eagle was added to the federal Endangered Species list in 1967, the local eagle population consisted of a single pair which nested at the south end of Hemlock Lake. It was one of only 417 nesting pairs found in the lower 48 states. Since then, with the federal ban on DDT and the phasing out of lead



**Adult Bald Eagle**

shot, the bald eagle has made a remarkable comeback. In 1995 the species was reclassified as "Threatened" rather than "Endangered," and in 2004 it was delisted entirely. In New York State, the bald eagle is still designated as "Threatened" by the NYS Department of Conservation (DEC).

Majestic in their appearance, with their brown bodies accentuated by their distinctive white heads, bright yellow bills and feet, bald eagles are one of the largest raptors in North America. An adult can stand 30 inches high, weigh between 8-14 pounds and have a wingspan of 72-84 inches. A juvenile bald eagle bears the appearance of, and can be mistaken for, a golden eagle, which are rare in New York. The primary prey for eagles is fish. They will also take some mammals and waterfowl, which is why they nest near the shoreline of the Lake.

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**Adult Bald Eagle**

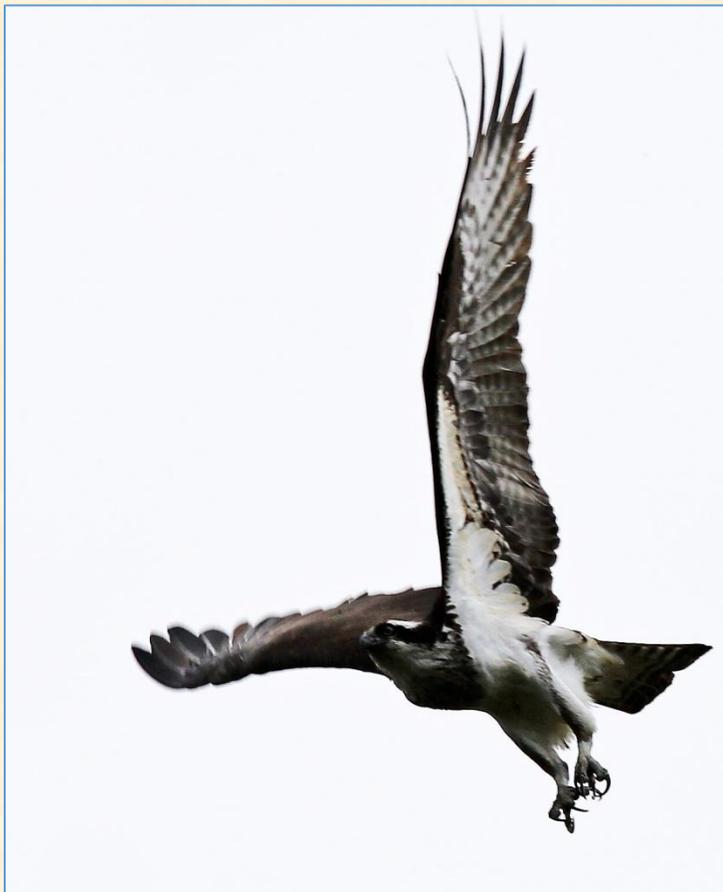
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Adult Osprey

Bald eagles have a pretty long life span of approximately 30 years. They mate for life and return to nest in the general area which they were hatched. The same nest that can be more than six feet in diameter is used by a pair for the rest of their lives, which is why such care and conservation are focused on the nesting pair. In our area, when an individual wishes to construct a new house and an eagles' nest is nearby, there are certain rules enforced by the local towns in conjunction with the DEC which come into play. Each nest is evaluated individually. The DEC recommends minimum buffers of 330-350 feet around the nesting tree to protect

the birds and a secondary buffer zone of 660 for various activity categories based on time of year and visual and noise buffers which already exist. Nests are protected for a minimum of 5 years.

The Osprey, another fish-eating raptor also frequents Canandaigua Lake. Like the bald eagle, the osprey or "Fish hawk" is also a large bird. It measures 22-25 inches in height with a wingspan of 4-6 feet. The female is slightly larger than the male and they are nearly alike in plumage. They have a white head with a dark crown and prominent dark brown streak on each side. Unlike the eagle which nabs its prey from the water's surface, the osprey plunges deep enough into the water to submerge its whole body. Ospreys are also monitored by the DEC and are considered to be of "Special Concern" and no longer "Endangered." Local osprey sightings have been made throughout the Canandaigua area, especially near Airport Road and near Muar Lakes.

*All Photos Courtesy of Brendan Gooding*

## References

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- Murphy, Mike. "What's Up with That Osprey Nest at the Canandaigua Transportation Garage?" *Daily Messenger* [Canandaigua] May 10, 2016: [www.MPNNow.com](http://www.MPNNow.com). Web. February 2019.
- [NYS DEC bald eagle fact sheet](#)
- [NYS DEC osprey fact sheet](#)
- [NYS DEC Raptors of New York](#)