



EduPic Fact File

Osprey - *Pandion haliaetus*



The osprey uses its keen eyesight to scan for fish on the shores of every continent except Antarctica.

Description: The osprey is a large raptor or bird of prey with a five to six foot wingspan. Its forehead, crown, belly and breast are white and its back and wings are black. The osprey's tail and wing feathers are striped with black and gray. It has a black beak and a brown or black eyestripe that highlights its piercing yellow eyes. Its large and sharp talons are specially adapted for catching and carrying fish—its favorite prey.

Habitat: Ospreys build their nests at the top of trees and many types of manmade structures such as telephone poles and duck blinds near large bodies of water. It can be found on every continent with the exception of Antarctica.

Diet: The diet of the osprey is almost exclusively fish. It hovers over rivers, lakes, ponds, and coastal waters scanning for fish. When it spots a fish it dives toward the water bringing its talons forward to clasp and scoop up its prey.

Fun Facts: This bird of prey has physical adaptations of special pads on its feet and claws it can turn inward that help it hold onto the fish. It often carries the fish in face-forward direction to make it easier to carry into the wind.

Photo Log: The specimen was one of nesting pair that had made their nest on top of a power pole at the Dutch Gap Conservation Area located in Chesterfield, Virginia. I was able to get fairly close images because of an observation platform near the nest site. While I was on the platform the raptors would circle around me keeping a close eye on their nest.

References: All About Birds, Cornell Lab of Ornithology.
Animal Diversity Web, University of Michigan Museum of Zoology.