

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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SURVEY REVEALS 975 ACTIVE OSPREY NESTS IN CHESAPEAKE BAY AREA

Biologists of the Interior Department's Fish and Wildlife Service and Maryland's Department of Natural Resources counted 975 active osprey nests in the Chesapeake Bay area during an aerial survey completed late in April.

A total Chesapeake Bay osprey population of between 1200 and 1300 nesting pairs is projected by scientists from the results of this survey. Until similar studies are conducted in future years, little will be known about whether the osprey population, believed highly vulnerable to pesticides and other pollutants, is increasing or declining.

The recent survey, however, produced some uncomfortable findings for specific localities. An osprey colony on the Little Wicomico River on the northern tip of Virginia numbered just 16 pairs; a similar study undertaken there in 1934 had indicated the existence of 56 pairs at that time. This year, only one active osprey nest was seen on the James River, but several inactive nests were spotted, indicating larger populations in past seasons.

Researchers reported that ospreys appeared to be in good supply on the islands of the Chesapeake, especially Martin National Wildlife Refuge operated by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Osprey nests were common on offshore duck blinds, offshore navigation markers, and dead trees along the shoreline. Active nests were found on wooden and steel powerline towers, radio towers, bridge supports, and live trees. One nest was located atop a practice bomb dropped on the Bloodsworth Island bombing range.

The two agencies plan another survey in June in an attempt to learn how many young are produced in nests located.

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